

LEADING
THEM
INTO
HIS
LIGHT

POST-ABORTION
HEALING
AND
RECOVERY
STORIES



TONI WEISZ · MY ASHES TO BEAUTY

LEADING THEM INTO HIS LIGHT

POST-ABORTION
HEALING
AND
RECOVERY
STORIES



Toni Weisz

PUBLISHED by MY ASHES TO BEAUTY, LLC

Copyright © 2020 My Ashes to Beauty, LLC

This is a work of nonfiction. Some names may have been changed for privacy. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, events or locales may be coincidental.

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this book may be used in any manner or be reproduced, stored or introduced into a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means (electrical, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without written permission of the copyright owner.

For more information, email Toni Weisz at:

arwsg4u2@gmail.com

First eBook edition May 2020

All Scripture references are NKJV unless otherwise noted.

MyAshesToBeauty.com

DEDICATION



THIS EBOOK IS DEDICATED TO:



My son Joseph who would be 39 years old this year (2020). What the enemy meant for evil, God turned around for good that many souls would be saved. (Genesis 50:20) My son lost his life to abortion in 1980, but God showed me that his life was not in vain. I thank God for my son Joseph because I believe it was his death that finally broke my pride, and I was able to receive the love of Jesus in my heart and be saved. It was through his death that I received life.

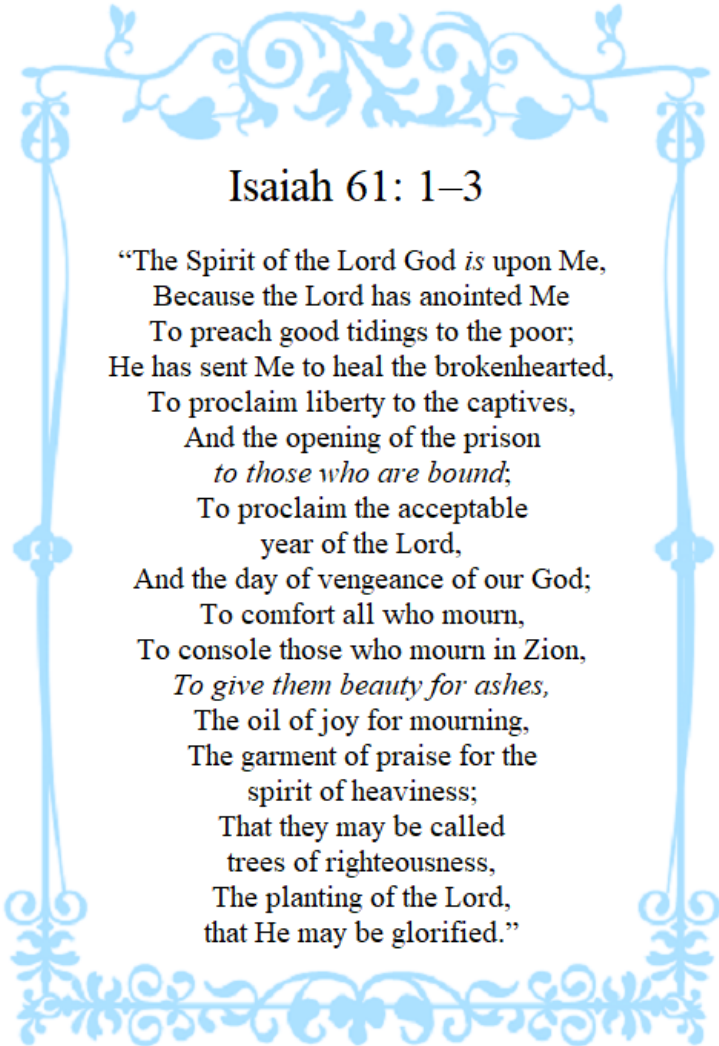


Every precious baby in heaven who was aborted. You are not forgotten.



Every mom who has lost a child to abortion. I want to encourage you that God can take this pain, sorrow, and regret and turn it into something beautiful for your good and His glory.

—Toni Weisz

A decorative blue floral border with intricate scrollwork and leaf patterns, framing the text. The border is composed of a top and bottom horizontal section and two vertical sections on the sides, all connected by small circular motifs.

Isaiah 61: 1–3

“The Spirit of the Lord God *is* upon Me,
Because the Lord has anointed Me
To preach good tidings to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives,
And the opening of the prison
to those who are bound;
To proclaim the acceptable
year of the Lord,
And the day of vengeance of our God;
To comfort all who mourn,
To console those who mourn in Zion,
To give them beauty for ashes,
The oil of joy for mourning,
The garment of praise for the
spirit of heaviness;
That they may be called
trees of righteousness,
The planting of the Lord,
that He may be glorified.”



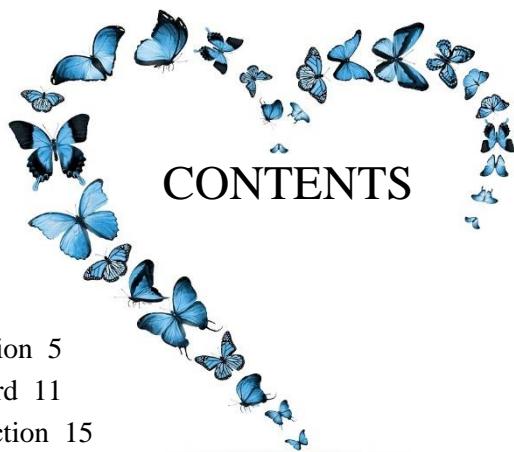
My Ashes
Isaiah 61:1-3
to
Beauty

Abortion Recovery & Healing Support Group



“To give light to those who sit in darkness
and the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Luke 1:79 NKJV



CONTENTS

Dedication 5

Foreword 11

Introduction 15

THE STORIES

My Ashes to Beauty 19

From Broken to Beautiful 25

Victory Rather Than Defeat 29

Full Circle 33

They Said “It’s Not a Baby” 43

My Child in Heaven 49

Growth Through the Pain of Loss 57

My Redemption Through Jesus 63

A Mother’s Cry 67

They Said It Was Just a Blob of Tissue 71

God’s Grace 75

From Adoption to Redemption 81

My First Child 87

Redeeming Love 93

My Broken into Beautiful 99

Samuel 105

Forever Grateful 109

Closing Thoughts 119

About Toni Weisz 121

Resources 123

FOREWORD



I HAVE BEEN HONORED to minister alongside Toni Weisz in the post-abortion ministry for many years at First Care Women’s Clinic in West Palm Beach, FL. I am personally very aware how abortion is a deep wound to the soul. Although the pain lessens with time and healing, I believe the day when we are finally reunited with our babies in heaven, only then will our healing be complete.

“I will go to him one day, but he cannot return to me.” 2 Samuel 12:23b (NIV) This Scripture was penned by King David after his baby died as a consequence of sin.

Toni is passionate about abortion recovery and has made it her life’s ministry to provide hope and healing for hurting post-abortive women. This lovely book where women have

been willing to courageously and with transparency share their personal stories regarding their own abortions will inspire and offer great hope that healing and redemption is possible.

We serve an awesome God who always brings good out of the ashes of loss and pain. “You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives.” Genesis 50:20

Be blessed as you come alongside these brave and honest women sharing from their hearts the sorrow, loss, and ultimately their desire to comfort other post-abortive women.

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.” 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

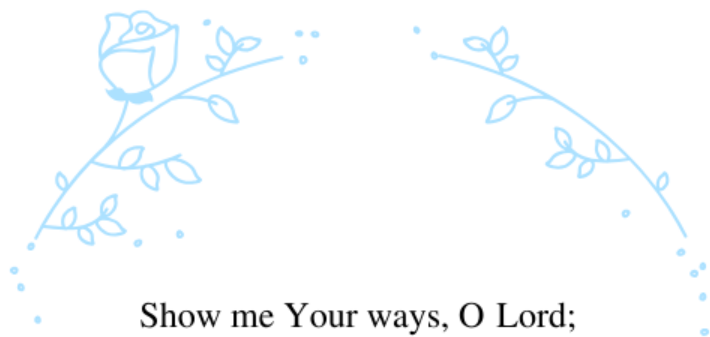
Jane “Goldie” Winn, MSS

Author: *Rainbow in the Night: A Journey of Redemption*

janegoldiewinn.com

Client Advocate at Palm Beach Women’s Clinic

palmbeachwc.org



Show me Your ways, O Lord;
Teach me Your paths.


Psalm 25:4




*Life is a journey,
and we all get to have
our own story...*



INTRODUCTION



How My Son's Death Brought Me Life



I HAD A DREAM ONE NIGHT that I was in heaven surrounded by hundreds of young people, but I did not recognize any of them. One of them spoke and said, “Thank you for helping our moms heal from their past abortions.” Then they all started hugging me and thanking me. I woke with feelings of gratitude and fulfillment; tears were streaming down my cheeks. I said out loud, “Thank you Lord, for showing me that this ministry was helping women because I am not seeing much fruit from my labor.”

I was in a dark place and suffering with deep depression and ready to give up. I just wanted God to take me home. But He said NO and that He wasn't finished with me yet. I was so tired of just surviving. I longed for the abundant life Jesus said He came to give me. (John 10:10b)

I was feeling very overwhelmed, depleted and alone with the work of the ministry. For the first few years, I did not have much help from others, and I was feeling discouraged. It was then in my journaling I asked the Lord, “Should I continue with the Sunday conference calls?”

Then I waited with pen in hand for God to speak to me through the Holy Spirit. God said to me, “Little Bird, (His

nickname for me) it was for your healing that you are doing the calls. I knew you would be faithful if you thought you were doing it for others.” I sat there in awe of this revelation! He was right, I would not have been faithful if I were just doing it for myself.

God called me to this ministry, and I am humbled and overcome with gratitude for all that He has done. I have been given the awesome honor and privilege to walk with these courageous women who have experienced the trauma of abortion, and I want to share their stories with you.

I want you, the reader, to experience first-hand their personal stories and picture yourself in their shoes. I want you to see how God met each of us where we were and pulled us up out of the pit of despair and led us into His glorious healing light. It is truly a beautiful miraculous thing to behold. God has taken our ashes, our shame and guilt, and our destructive behaviors and has exchanged them for beauty, joy, peace, and freedom.

For those of you who have experienced the loss of a child to abortion, I pray these stories give you courage to step out and receive the help you need.

Please go to our website: MyAshesToBeauty.com or email me at: arwsg4u2@gmail.com.

In His endless love,



Teri Weisz





MY ASHES TO BEAUTY



I WAS IN SHOCK AND DISBELIEF when I went to the women’s clinic near the college I was attending in Ohio. My period was late, but I never expected to hear the words, “You’re pregnant.” I didn’t know what to do first: yell, cry, or run away. I did know, however, that I couldn’t tell my parents. I was “the good quiet one” in the family. If I told them I was pregnant, the mask I had created and been wearing for the last nine years would fall off and be destroyed.

Lord knows I kept wearing that mask until I was 50, but that’s a story for another time.*

It was Thanksgiving, 1980. Like most college students, I went home to visit my family for the holiday. Being home during Thanksgiving was always a very busy time. My brother was one of the stars on the local high school football team, so of course we attended the big game. We all loved watching my brother play.

While a few of us were gathered in the kitchen that Thanksgiving, my mom asked, “Guess who’s pregnant?” I held my breath for a few seconds, heart racing. I had no idea how she could have found out. Then again, I believed my

mom had eyes in the back of her head; it was uncanny how much she could find out. Still holding my breath, the conversation continued. Mom answered the question she presented and said, “Your Aunt Kathy.” Aunt Kathy was standing in the kitchen with us during Mom’s announcement, so I kissed her on the cheek and congratulated her. That was a close call, a little too close. I needed to do something about my pregnancy, and I would, when I returned to school.

The night before my planned abortion, I drank and used heavy drugs. By the time my appointment rolled around I was terribly hung over. As I drove myself to the clinic I thought, “This is crazy. What am I thinking? I should have had someone drive me.” Clearly, at that point I was not thinking much of anything.

When I arrived at the clinic, which was very upscale, they asked me if I had eaten anything. “Yes”, I replied. The woman behind the counter said, “You can’t have this procedure today because you ate something.” I was so discouraged. I asked the woman if she was sure. She responded in the same way and added that as per clinic policy, I would not be allowed to have my abortion that day. I couldn’t believe it. It was the beginning of December, well into my second trimester.

On the drive home, the city was desolate. It was 7:30 AM on a Saturday, so no one was on the road. I felt so alone, and now frantic. I had really messed things up this time. I could not have this baby.

For starters, I believed that my child would be severely deformed because of the heavy drugs, alcohol, and smoking I was doing. On top of that, I couldn’t let my parents know that I was pregnant outside of marriage. As for the father of

the baby, well, he didn't have much to say about the situation. He basically allowed me to make the decision on my own.

I decided to make another appointment, this time at an inner-city clinic. You can probably guess that it was not as nice as the previous clinic, but I was prepared this time around and ate nothing before the procedure. The date was December 10, 1980. It was a very sad day in my life, one I will always remember.

Up until then, my past was littered with the debris of unhealthy relationships and people pleasing. For years I suffered silently, feeling unloved, rejected, and unworthy of love because of it. As if that weren't enough, I was about to plunge head long into the throws of deep, dark despair. Depression, loneliness, suicidal thoughts and bouts of uncontrollable crying became my life.

If I could have stopped my 21-year-old self from making that decision, I would have in a heartbeat. It was one of the worst decisions I ever made. As a result of this abortion wound, I would continue to make bad decisions in an attempt to cover up my sins. All the while, Jesus would be watching me, weeping for me. He knew the destructive path I would continue down for many years and His heart broke with mine the day I aborted my beautiful, baby boy.

Now, I am 59 years old. I became a born-again believer in Jesus Christ at the age of 34. I started my abortion-recovery journey on September 11, 2006. I have dedicated my life, my resources, my time, and my energy into abortion recovery and healing for myself and other women.

This is my story; God has turned *My Ashes into Beauty* for my good and His glory! I am so grateful for Jesus' mercy

upon me, His forgiveness of my sins, and for cleansing me from all my unrighteousness. I am a new creation in Christ; old things are passed away; behold all things have become new! (2 Corinthians 5:17)


I have a new life, a new purpose, and a new song all because of Jesus, my beautiful Savior.



Toni Weisz

*Please visit my website to read more on this topic in my blog section.

The article is found at: myashestobeauty.com/my-mask-of-perfection/



*It takes
courage
to be healed...*



FROM BROKEN TO BEAUTIFUL



I WAS 15 YEARS OLD when I fell in love. He was my first love, my forever love...I thought. After many months of dating, I realized I was pregnant. I was feeling sick, and my normally thin frame was slowly changing right before my very eyes. I was so torn! After all, I'd always wanted to be a mommy and have someone to love and to love me back. Yet, I was terrified because I was only a teen! My mind raced! What was I going to do?

I decided to tell my mom, even though I knew she would be upset. My mom and I were close and continue to be even 'til this day. Of course, she was shocked when I told her that I thought I was pregnant, but she was not completely unaware. You see, I had talked to my mom eight months earlier and asked her to put me on birth control pills, as I knew the physicality of my relationship was progressing. She told me that she did not condone our physical relationship and would not put me on birth control pills. So when I told her I thought I was pregnant, she was upset but not completely in the dark.

In the meanwhile, my mom told my dad and my older sister that I thought I was pregnant. My sister told her friend, Elaine. Elaine came to me and told me that I should lie to my

mom and tell her that I had my period. And she would take me to Planned Parenthood for a pregnancy test and an abortion if needed. This way, I could “save face” with my parents, and they would never need to know about the abortion.

I decided to go along with her plan and allow Elaine to take me to Planned Parenthood. I filled out the paperwork, and they did a pregnancy test. I was pregnant! What was I to do? The “counselor” came to talk with me about my pregnancy. She knew I was only 15 years old. She asked me what I wanted to do? I told her I couldn’t have the baby since I did not have the support of my parents. The counselor handed me a phone. She dialed the number and told me to make an appointment and to tell the person making the appointment for the abortion that I was 18 years old. I did it. They made the appointment for a few days away.

When I went home that evening, I told my mom that I had started my period and that I wouldn’t need to go to the pediatrician for a pregnancy test. She looked at me and could see that I was lying. So the next day, she took me to my pediatrician to confirm what I already knew in my heart was true. I was pregnant at 15 years old! My pediatrician and my mom decided it was best for me to have an abortion because a baby would ruin my life. I was scared! I wanted my baby! They gave me no choice and told me not to tell the baby’s father or anyone else for that matter. They wanted me to keep it a secret.

Two days before my “Sweet 16” birthday, my mom took me to have an abortion. I remember it to this day. I remember the smells, the “sucking” sounds, and waking up with tears running down my cheeks. What was supposed to save my

life and my future has changed it forever! I would never be the same!

It's now been 40 years since it happened. I have asked God to forgive me for “my choice” of abortion, and He has forgiven me. However, I live with the truth that I killed my baby. It has taken many, many years to work through forgiving my mother and father, Elaine, the doctors and nurses, but mostly myself!

After much prayer, God revealed to me that my baby is a boy, and his name is Addison, which means God's Helper. I now look forward to meeting my son in heaven one day and spending eternity with him! I'm so thankful for God's forgiveness and redemption! He has blessed me with a wonderful, faithful and loving husband, three beautiful children and two wonderful grandchildren.

I live today in God's forgiveness and wholeness! God has taken my mess and given me a message. I now offer the hope of forgiveness and healing to other ladies, who have found themselves in the aftermath of abortion, through a Bible Study called “Surrendering the Secret” by Pat Layton. For this, I am thankful that I can share my story and my hope!


Lisa



But thanks be to God, who
gives us the victory through
our Lord Jesus Christ.

I Corinthians 15:57

VICTORY RATHER THAN DEFEAT



“Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting? The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
I Corinthiians 15:55-57 (NIV)

MY JOURNEY INTO DARKENSS began when I moved to the most beautiful, practically untouched part of the world: Vail, Colorado. Simply put, in this environment, I fell very much in love.

His name was Greg. He swept me off my feet for a month, and I wish I hadn't let it happen because he left me. My life consisted of running away to different places.

Wherever I moved, my depraved lifestyle moved with me, but I finally moved back to Vail, hoping above hope that Greg would see me again.

On New Year's Eve, there I was visiting his apartment on a snowy evening, listening to his music. I became pregnant that evening, January 1, 1977. The doctor in Vail told me it

was a blob of cells and that I needed to have an abortion. My friends told me the same. Roe vs. Wade was just passed.

So, on February 14, 1977, Valentine's Day, I scheduled my abortion. A complete whiteout blizzard raged outside as I let my little sweet dog out who I adored. She wouldn't come back or heed my loud cries for her! How could I have left her in a whiteout windy cold blizzard! But I did.

My friend drove me to a small doctor's office in Breckinridge. To most, that is a town of beauty as well, but to me that memory is one of bleakness. I cried and wept loudly during the procedure, whereupon the nurse took my hand and asked if I was in a lot of pain.

I was. I knew I was killing my baby that moment. I just knew. I wish I'd had the courage to walk out and leave. But I didn't. The doctor told me it was a boy and that my IUD would have killed him anyway and couldn't give him birth. Tara, my sweet dog, returned home that night, and I wept alone in my room.

Skip forward three years; a young man witnessed the story of salvation to me at a bar. Then the co-teachers I had worked with were somehow evangelicals and ministers of Christ to help me out! I began going to church and living my life for Christ.

It was a process.


My dad, who as an atheist fully loved me and accepted me, passed on a year later, never to meet my current family. I do believe that at his last breath he came to know Jesus as well, but that is another story.

I am forgiven, loved, redeemed, and living my life for Christ. No more rejection. No more self-hate. Even when

my circumstances may be tough, as life can be, I have Jesus. And He has me! He even found me as a little child walking to synagogue, talking to me then. He found me in the bar scene talking to me about being saved. He found me when I traveled reading a Gideon Bible at the hotels. God was there and chose me! I will never cease to be amazed. Tears of joy!



Carel



Restore us, O Lord God of hosts;
Cause Your face to shine,
And we shall be saved!

Pslam 80:19

FULL CIRCLE



MY STORY WAS THE SILENT central narrative in my life until I walked into a room and opened the floodgates of pain and tears to an angel sent by God named Dawn. She put me in contact with Toni, and I started gaining the clarity that allows me to share a part of my story with you.

A new beginning is just around the clockface as I write this on the last day of the year 2019. The minutes of the decade are ticking away. This is how I felt my life was until a few years ago. I started writing my story years before today but never had the courage to share it with anyone else until now. I hope my story helps you in a way that reading and learning about the struggles of others after their abortions has helped me heal.

Thirty years ago, my life was put on pause, only I didn't know it. Innocence, pureness, and moral beliefs all came under scrutiny. A blemish on my soul was placed there, only to be darkened throughout the years with every poor decision and dark circumstance I placed myself in.

I grew up in an inner city in North Jersey. Both my parents were immigrants and became full U.S. citizens within a year of their escape from communism. They met at

work and married after a year. They worked hard to provide a good life for their children. I was placed in religious schools from the time I was three years old, starting in daycare. I learned all about the sacraments and did my first Communion at 7 years old. I remember spending hours in the convent after school, praying the Rosary with the sisters, devoted most of all to our Blessed Mother, the Virgin Mary. How I loved her. Tears of devotion and love streamed down my face as I felt her love envelop me during my youth.

My parents' divorce was hard on all of us. My mother had to pull me out of my colloquial school during my final year of elementary and disenroll me from all extracurricular activities due to financial difficulties. I had to graduate at the local public school, which was very different than the family setting I was used to. It hurt my mother very much, and I guess she took the next year putting things in order so I could return to a private school setting.

In high school, where I attended an all-girl school run by the Salesian Order, I joined many +clubs, was on the cheerleading team, and excelled in biology. I became involved in a club at school dedicated to pro-life and spent hours working on anti-abortion propaganda. I marched down the streets of D.C. with other pro-lifers distributing flyers of aborted fetuses and babies while crying out that all life is precious and that we are God's children and from the moment of conception...there is life. I never understood the complexities. To reject the gift of life is murder, and therefore, an eternal sin. *Damned to hell and guilty of killing your own baby.* Harsh words, true, but nonetheless, words professed in the name of the Lord and the Blessed Mother Mary.

I met my first love in the Summer of '87. He was going off to university in Upstate New York, and I was about to be a senior in the fall. I knew he would be "the one." And on a romantic-filled evening in my very own bed, soon after we became an official couple, I became a woman and was so in love. My mother thought he was a great young man and was happy that I had formed a good relationship with a "nice young man." My heart broke the day he left for university, but we were determined to stay together, even "long distance."

I applied to different colleges and universities and was accepted to the same university where he attended in New York. I packed up my car and headed there. We were both at the same university with dreams of eternal love and fun. Needless to say, we became inseparable. If we weren't in class, we were together with friends or alone in his room.

After a few months of living on campus, I noticed that I had skipped my period and was feeling queasy. We had been together for about two years when the unspeakable happened...a BFP. I remember the achiness in my breasts, the colostrum that appeared from my nipple when I squeezed it, the nausea which occurred all day really but worse in the morning.

Thanksgiving break came, and I went home. After a couple of days, my mother noticed I was opening the refrigerator more often and eating pickles. My mother asked me if I was pregnant. I felt like Judas at that point, denying the very life that was growing inside me. I was scared, confused, and lost. David and I talked about it for days and days. Of course, I wanted my baby, but then reality set in. We can't have this baby; we are not ready. We are in school. We will have to drop out, and what kind of future can we

offer to our child? No, this is not going to work. So, let's be honest here. Yet I found myself rubbing my stomach, thinking of names and loving my unborn child already.

I remember that I confessed to my mom the night I was scheduled to have the procedure. Crying in her arms, I told her that I was indeed pregnant but that David and I had already discussed it, and we decided to not keep the baby. I professed all the reasons why I really didn't want to keep it either, such as: I was too young, I wasn't ready, and I wanted to finish school. For all the reasons I gave, Mom just countered with reasons why I should keep it. "He is a good man. It will be ok. I will help you. I will raise the child with you; it is a gift." I emotionally shut down and replied, "I am sorry, Mommy...I know what I am doing."

The next day, David walked me up those clinic steps. I can remember them being steep and cold. He brought me flowers. Are we mourning already? The waiting room was full of women all with the same look on their faces...blank. Some were accompanied by what I am assuming were their boyfriends, husbands, or just their friends. One was there alone. She sat in the corner, reading a magazine, clutching a tissue she tried to hide. But I saw it as she dried a rolling tear that streamed down her cheek. Was she scared? Was she sad? I don't know. I was. David held my hand. I talked a lot about nothing. I was fighting off the nausea. I was feeling more than the typical morning sickness. I was nervous. The butterflies in my stomach were in a flux. Did my baby know what was happening? Did she sense that something was wrong? I tried to ignore the ill feelings I was experiencing. It seemed like a long time that I was sitting there, but it actually was only about ten minutes.

Then I heard my name being called, and I froze. My heart started to race. I remember a tightening in my abdomen and chest. My legs were shaking, but I got up and walked towards the nurse. I walked into the room where I was met with two other women. David waited outside. Of course, he paid for full anesthesia so I would be knocked out. One of the nurses gave me a gown and instructed me to put it on with the opening in the front. I did what I was told. I looked around the room and noticed that there were no pictures on the wall.

The doctor came in and asked me to lay on the examining table. She rubbed my abdomen with a gel and placed a sonogram reader on my belly. Then I heard it...thump, thump, thump. Before I knew it, she turned down the machine. I didn't hear it anymore. She left the room. I was lying on that table looking up at the ceiling with the staff setting up the equipment, which they explained would act as a simple vacuum to dismantle the contents of my uterus.

I saw empty jars that I imagined my baby would be in. After all, I was familiar with the jars that were filled with bloody contents from abortions. I myself distributed those images to many as I marched on the streets of D.C. protesting the very action I was about to embark on.

The doctor came back in and asked if there was any other questions I had before they put the mask on me. My mind raced, but I couldn't get the words out. "How long was it going to take? Will it hurt? Will I be able to have children later? Can I call my Mom?" However, none of these words that I was thinking came out of my mouth. "No," I heard myself answer though it sounded as if it came from someplace else, outside of myself.

The nurse placed the mask over my nose and mouth and instructed me to start counting backwards and from 10 to 1. I took a shallow breath and started counting, “10, 9, 8,” then I remember crying out the words ...“WAIT...STOP!!!” But no, they were only thoughts that never made it out of me out loud before I was knocked unconscious and unable to speak, move, or save my baby.

I awoke screaming, and I remember crying my heart out. “STOP. DON’T, I want to keep her,” I screamed. The nurse, who was startled by my screaming, sheepishly said, “I am sorry; it is over.” I let out a curdling scream, rubbing my belly, and clenching my very soul. The nurse helped me back on the table. Apparently, I jumped off it as I came to.

I was lying on that table for what seemed like hours, crying, rubbing my belly, feeling the emptiness—a feeling that I did not know until that day. I felt an ache in my heart like no other. Yes, I was sore, and my belly hurt where my baby once was. One of the nurses came into the room with a large pad and told me to get dressed when I was ready. I remember how they looked at me with faces filled with shame and sadness. They must have known that I was remorseful, and to know that they were part of the reason for my distress must have been upsetting. Or maybe I am just imagining that, and all they wanted was to get the room ready for the next woman, and I was just holding them up. I don’t know. They encouraged me to eat something and brought me juice and helped me up.

I walked out into the waiting area with all eyes upon me as if they heard me cry out from afar. I don’t know if anyone did...I cried to the angels for I know they must have heard and were weeping for me. We went to a hotel for a few days. I remember crying for hours and then staring at the walls and

ceiling. We would watch television, and then all of a sudden, I would go into a rage, crying, screaming, begging God to please give me back my baby. I threatened death, accused my boyfriend of horrible acts, and blamed the world for my action. “I want my baby back,” I cried over and over again. After this, I was numb and went through life as such. There were other losses, but that is for another time and place.

Full circle. Thirty years, five pregnancies, five losses, one child. I have made countless mistakes, and in my journey, thus far, have picked up many feelings such as shame, remorse, sadness, anger, resentment, fear, insecurity, despair, and all-encompassing guilt. Every day I live with the pain of my losses, including that of integrity, identity, and life.

After the miracle birth of my daughter, I started to feel the regrets from the past. I sought forgiveness and received it through the Sacrament of Confession, but I still did not feel resolved. It has taken years of soul searching, praying, and processing painful memories for me to even say I am on the mend. As I carry my child in my arms and feel her little fingers squeeze my hand in her sleep, I think back to my acts of selfishness and fear that led me to deny life to three unborn babies. I also remember the two babies I carried in my womb for such a short time before they left me. Was it the universe’s way of evening out the playing field? They say we will all be judged at the end of our lives and be given consequences for how we lived our lifetime. I truly believe that the sadness and guilt I carried daily served as my personal demons. But as my faith would have it, God forgives, and I believe it was His love that gave me a most beautiful soul that grew inside my womb. Each time she says, “Mommy, I love you,” I am reminded of the love and

forgiveness I have been given by God, the angels, and Holiest Mother.

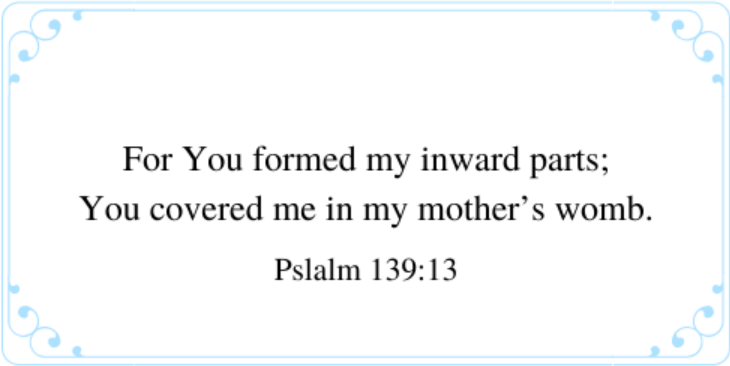
The psychological pain I continue to work through is a constant reminder of past decisions that can have lasting effects on one's own mental health. Through self-reflection, cognitive-behavioral therapy, my own research and my expertise in the field of trauma- and mood-related disorders, I live each day with the renewed sense of healing and vitality.

This topic is starting to come out of the shadows in our society and is being treated as not only a moral and religious dilemma but also as a psychological trauma of which there is treatment and support for. If you are still reading this book, I hope it serves as an example of how amidst pain and loss, one can still experience love and hope.



Diane H.





For You formed my inward parts;
You covered me in my mother's womb.

Pslalm 139:13

THEY SAID “IT’S NOT A BABY”



IN SHARING MY STORY, I hope to provide support and guidance for those who are entering this journey or have gone through it but have not yet experienced healing.

If you are tormented by having had an abortion or still deciding what to do about being pregnant, allow me to share how the love of Christ worked in my life and how He can heal you.

I grew up in a home with 14 siblings and parents that did not connect with their children emotionally or give them self-confidence. I was extremely starved of encouragement and support, especially from my father.

By the age of 25, I had multiple sexual partners and was living a very promiscuous lifestyle, looking for love in the arms of strangers, wanting so desperately to be accepted.

In 1981, I had an encounter with a man, whose name I don't know. He flirted with me and wooed me. He wanted me to have sex, and he assured me there was no way I could get pregnant because he had a vasectomy.

I was drawn to him because he gave me the attention I was desperately seeking in a man. So I had unprotected sex with him and immediately got pregnant.

According to the test results, I was 10–12 weeks along. I was in shock and did not know what to do! Because of the unhealthy lifestyle I was living, I had very few people I could turn to who would give me wise advice and show me all my options.

There was one “friend” I hung out with who was a single mother of a 9-year-old daughter. She was unkind and said hurtful things to her daughter. It was clear she resented her. And her advice to me was, “You don’t want this kid; get rid of it while you can!”

I remember thinking, I don’t want to end up hating my child like she does hers. I thought about what it would be like to be a single mother to a child whose father I knew nothing about. I was scared and alone; I could not see a way past my immediate crisis.

In the absence of much needed healthy support, I made an appointment with the abortion clinic. As much as I wanted to eliminate this huge problem in my life, I was feeling uneasy about having an abortion. My conscience was telling me it was not right.

On the day I went to the clinic, I felt sick to my stomach; I dreaded the process. They led me into a room that had a gynecology table with a big vacuum type machine next to it. I remember thinking, “Oh my God, I’m going to kill my baby!”

I lay there while they put the suction tube of the machine inside my body, and all I could do was lay there and wait. It was over in a few minutes. But as I got dressed, I was

overwhelmed with sorrow and pain. I could not believe that I had just participated in the elimination of my unborn child and I began to cry.

I cried every day for nine months! I had trouble sleeping and tried to bury myself in alcohol and drugs to numb the pain. By then, I had heard about Jesus many times and how much He loved me and wanted to heal me from my suffering and past sin. I so wanted to be free from the intense guilt I was under.

So, I came to Jesus with nothing to lose and absolutely nothing to offer. I asked His forgiveness and for Him to become Lord of my life. And immediately, I felt the love of Christ inside and experienced the freedom of forgiveness only He can provide.

He led me to a pro-life agency (First Care) who helped me in the recovery process of my abortion. I served there for many years, helping others in their healing.

I have been walking with and learning from the Lord by His Holy Spirit and His Word for 37 years, and His love and guidance have been my lifeline! He has restored me and given me so much compassion for others, along with the desire to help them see His healing and acceptance as well.

Are you tired of carrying your burden alone? Do you long to get relief and experience hope in your circumstances?

Jesus said, “Come to me all of you who are tired from the heavy burden you have been forced to carry. I will give you rest. Accept my teaching. Learn from me. I am gentle and humble in spirit. And you will be able to get some rest. Yes, the teaching that I ask you to accept is easy. The load I give you to carry is light.” Matthew 11:28-30 (ERV)

Jesus will give you the Holy Spirit and other believers who will love and care for you in spiritual and material ways. There is help and hope; you just need to reach out and open up your heart.

Because He loves, I love.



Luci B.

Sometimes,
to
get
through
the
moment,

just

BREATHE.



And remember God is there.

LOVE

And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.

Revelation 21:4

MY CHILD IN HEAVEN



WHEN I ARRIVED on my college campus in the late 1960's, it didn't take me long to find the "hippies" on campus. Before long, I was invited to join a "commune." I kept my dorm room for the sake of appearances, but for all intents of purpose, I moved into the commune. Our commune was a stopping place for drug dealers, so we always managed to get free drugs. I became more sexually promiscuous and began hitchhiking to anti-war rallies all over the country.

My grades began to slip, as I became more and more irresponsible. I began to gain quite a bit of weight and was rapidly losing my sense of self. I had such a desperate need to feel loved and accepted by my peers that I would do whatever they asked of me.

One day I went for a routine gynecological visit. The doctor did a series of blood tests that revealed, to my horror, that I was pregnant! When the nurse called me into the office to tell me, I began swearing at her, telling her she was insane, that there was no possible way I could be pregnant! (De NILE is not just a river in Egypt!)

I never used any form of contraception, and somehow believed I was immune to pregnancy! It took a while for reality to sink in, and by the time I came to terms with it, I was already well into the second trimester of pregnancy. I felt despondent. I knew that if I told my parents, they would surely disown me. Their acceptance meant too much to me, and I could never risk losing their love. At the time, abortion was illegal in most states, as this was prior to the infamous Roe vs. Wade case, legalizing abortion nationwide in 1973. I found out, however, that abortion was legal in California. I pleaded with my friends to help me.

I did not even consider making an adoption plan. I was too self-centered and concerned that somehow my parents would find out if I began to “show” that I was pregnant. My friends came to the rescue and began selling some of their possessions to help pay for my trip to California and the ensuing abortion. I flew out to San Jose, California where the abortion would be performed in a hospital clinic. The people in the hospital made arrangements for me to stay in a motel with another girl who was also getting an abortion so we could share expenses.

In those days, before I could be granted the abortion, I had to appear before a panel of three professionals to prove why I should be considered an unfit mother. If they agreed, I would be granted the abortion. One of the people on the panel was a psychiatrist. I managed to convince them that I was too depressed and unsure of myself to even imagine becoming a mother at that stage of my life. I told them about my father and his possible reaction.

They agreed to grant me the abortion but with the caveat that I would never allow this to happen again. Of course, they suggested I take birth control pills and didn't even speak to

me about abstaining from sexual activity. They called the procedure a “therapeutic abortion,” and I would have to check into the hospital.

Because I was in the second trimester, I was told they would perform a “saline abortion.” This meant they would inject a highly concentrated salt solution into the uterus that would poison the “fetus” so that it would die and then be delivered. I was told that I would experience labor pains similar to live birth. I remember the nurse telling me to press the call button when I felt the baby stop kicking, which would trigger the beginning of labor.

It is interesting to note that at that point she used the word “baby” and not fetus. It was obviously much more than a mass of tissue, though at the time that is what I was told. Sadly, coming from a medical professional, I believed it. I remember hearing another girl screaming, “My baby, my baby!”

I went through labor, and actually pushed the baby out. By that time, I was emotionally numb and did not allow myself to feel the emotion too deeply. The painful memory hearing the nurse say it would have been a perfect baby boy sent me into denial mode for many years. I needed to get out of there as soon as possible and get back to school so no one would suspect anything was wrong!

On the plane back to Michigan, I began to feel pain in my body. I was concerned that something must have gone wrong with the abortion. As soon as I arrived home, I called a doctor to examine me. However, when I told the doctor I had an abortion, he refused to examine me without my parent’s permission because I was under the age of 21.

The problem was further exacerbated by the fact that abortion was illegal in Michigan, and therefore, he was unwilling to treat me in the event there were any complications.

The pain worsened, and I began taking more illicit drugs to try and quell it. Finally, I couldn't concentrate in school and received a failing grade in my major performance instrument, the saxophone. I was performing before a music jury and completely lost my place in the music. That was the straw that broke the camel's back.

I knew my parents would eventually find out I failed, but I didn't know what to do. In a panic, I called my sister, Esther, who at the time was married to Joe, and both were social workers living in Connecticut.

When I told her about the abortion, she insisted that I officially drop out of school and fly out to Connecticut so I could stay with them. She assured me they would do whatever they could to get me the help I needed.

When I arrived, she saw how much pain I was in and called the local hospital. When she told them I had an abortion, they too advised her that without my parent's consent they could not examine me.

At that point, my sister insisted I call mom and dad and tell them what had happened. I had built a wall around my heart to protect me from their possible rejection, so I had nothing to lose at that point. I felt numb and scared. By that time, I gained even more weight and was having flashbacks and nightmares, but I had no idea I was suffering from the traumatic effects of the abortion. Today this is known as PAS (Post-Abortion Syndrome).

I finally decided my sister was right. What could possibly be any worse? I picked up the phone, and with trembling hands, dialed their number. I will never forget the conversation that followed: “Daddy, I was pregnant and had an abortion.”

Dad yelled into the receiver, “What did you say? You were pregnant and had an abortion? How could you do this to us? You might as well kill yourself. You are no more use to this family!” He slammed the phone down, and at the moment I realized that I was living in my worst nightmare. I was right. My father loved me conditionally, only when I was a good little girl. I knew this was going to happen.

But much to my surprise, minutes later the phone rang again. My father had a much softer and compassionate tone. His words penetrated deeply into my heart and soul. “Janie, I love you. I am going to fly your mother out to Connecticut, and we will get you help. Right now I’ll call the hospital and give them permission to examine you.”

At that moment, I could scarcely breathe. Was this real or a fairy tale? Was I going to wake up and realize I had only hoped I would hear those words? It took a few minutes, but I realized my father had actually said the words I had longed to hear. I thanked him, and Esther immediately drove me to the hospital where I was examined.

I noticed that as soon as I heard those words—*Janie, I love you*—all the pain I had been feeling in my body since the abortion, completely disappeared!

When the doctor examined me, he found absolutely nothing wrong and discharged me right away. I realized that the pain was in my head. I was so scared that my parents might find out about the abortion, that perhaps the pain was

psychosomatic. I'm sure that the extreme anxiety I was feeling and the post-abortion stress exacerbated the situation as well.

Many years later when I was attending a post-abortion Bible study and went through the various stages of healing, I came to terms that I had chosen to end the life of my baby.

The memory I blocked for so many years was the nurse exclaiming after I went through labor and delivered the dead baby: "Oh, you would have had a perfect baby boy." I began sobbing until I thought I could never stop as the reality hit hard that I had made such a tragic decision.

Thankfully, in time I was able to receive God's forgiveness and close that chapter of my life. I am grateful for the many years I came alongside many post-abortive women in need of healing from past abortions.

However, the abortion wound goes very deep, and I know I will never make total peace with my abortion until I am reunited with my baby in heaven. As King David grieved the loss of his son after the sin with Bathsheba, he knew one day he would see his baby in heaven.

"I will go to him, but he will not return to me."

II Samuel 12:23b (NIV)



Jane "Goldie" Winn, M.S.S.

Goldie has written a book about her amazing journey!

RAINBOW IN THE NIGHT:

A JOURNEY OF REDEMPTION

Visit her website for info: JaneGoldieWinn.com



GOD
LOVES
YOU

and

HIS
PLAN
FOR
YOU
IS
AWESOME

GROWTH THROUGH THE PAIN OF LOSS



I HAD BEEN SEEING THE FATHER since early that year. He lived in the same neighborhood. I was very emotionally attached to him because I really wanted a man in my life and also wanted what felt like love and affection. I also liked that he was considerably older than me by 10+ years. I liked the age difference because I thought he could protect and guide me in life in general. In spite of this attachment, our relationship was mostly physical, especially for him. I think he genuinely liked and cared about me, but he wasn't emotionally invested like I was.

This guy really was not good for me, and we did not have much in common. I also felt used and manipulated by him on a few occasions. The conception happened about six months after I met him. After that night, I was worried that I could've gotten pregnant but was hoping that I wasn't. About four weeks later, I felt nauseous all day while I was at work and didn't know why. I was waiting for my health insurance application to be processed. but it was waiting for an update on my last menstrual cycle. I was also wondering why my period didn't come, so then it hit me that I might be pregnant. When I got home from work, I took three pregnancy tests that all said "pregnant." I called the father

over and told him. He said he was getting too old to have more kids and wanted a test to prove that it was his child. He also said the decision to keep the baby was up to me. I was already in major shock and fear, so what he said made me feel very alone and abandoned. Making it worse was him saying the choice to keep the baby or not was up to me too because this baby would impact me more than him.

Even though he tried to ask me to wait to abort because he was going out of town, I felt like I had no choice and needed to “get it over with.” So, I terminated the pregnancy that weekend. I went by myself to the clinic on a Saturday morning and got my abortion procedure done. I was completely void of emotion and just numb because I had already decided on what I was going to do. I was even able to drive past the quiet protesters holding up pro-life signs with images of fetuses in the womb without any kind of inkling of doubt or guilt.

Inside the clinic, I just signed in, paid the fee, got my blood work done and waited. The clinic also made groups of women at a time watch a video about the abortion procedure and gave general information. I sat in the waiting area again and then finally got called in to have the procedure done. The abortion itself was not that painful or traumatic. The doctor gave me local anesthesia and did the suctioning procedure. It was slightly painful and uncomfortable, but it could have been worse.

The first thing the doctor did was insert the ultrasound probe to see if I was pregnant, which I was. He said I was right; I was about four weeks along. For a split second on the ultrasound screen, I saw life, but I felt it was too late to change my mind. I already made up my mind and was ready to terminate. I did not physically react or say anything

anyway. So, the procedure got done. I knew the abortion was wrong deep down and even apologized to the baby in my mind, but I felt like it was my only option and that I would've been a bad mom with nothing to offer that child. I was also living paycheck to paycheck and was too embarrassed to tell anyone else, especially my mother or anybody else in my family.

After the abortion, I felt relieved at first, but that feeling waned quickly, especially when the father told me he really did not want me to do it. I became very depressed and regretful after my follow-up visit at the abortion clinic, where I caught a glimpse of the sonogram paper-clipped to my file the nurse was holding in her hand. The full pain and reality of what I had done did not hit me until I was on the subway and saw a woman pushing a stroller. After that moment, guilt and regret set in completely, and I did not know what to do with myself. Not only was I depressed but I was also suicidal. I felt like I deserved nothing good in my life and did not deserve to live at all.

At that time, I was also in between jobs and was not sure of what career I wanted to pursue, which made things worse because I was also struggling with my sense of purpose in life. What also made things harder was that I felt like I had to suffer with this pain and guilt in silence. I was even more embarrassed and ashamed to tell anybody about my abortion. However, I did tell one close friend of mine about it, and she was very compassionate and understanding, which I still appreciate to this day.

Even though I tried to cope with and hide my pain and guilt in my day-to-day life, the grief and heaviness of the abortion were so overwhelming that a year and a half later, I went on the Internet to look for support groups or places that

offered some kind of guidance for women who have had abortions. I found one where I was living at the time. From there, I did the *Forgiven and Set Free* Bible study. This Bible study was such a great blessing because it helped me start my healing journey to recover from my abortion, emotionally and spiritually. That Bible study gave me tools and the Christian-based guidance that I needed to help me understand what led to my abortion.

The study helped me realize that it was a combination of so many issues and factors that negatively influenced my decision to abort my child. Some of those issues/factors included being sexually involved with a man I had no business dealing with, not heeding my instincts or God's warnings to stop seeing him, low self-esteem, job/financial instability, fear, bleak outlook on life, feeling alone and abandoned by the father, believing that I would be a bitter mother, sexual irresponsibility, and weakness. These realizations taught me to love myself, set standards for myself, be selective about who I get involved with, and also to heed God and stay close to Him, seeking support and happiness in Him and not in a man.

The abortion recovery Bible study helped me get back on track in my overall life. It restored my outlook on life and helped me to have hope and optimism, which I had not had since before the abortion. The study also helped me learn the Bible more in depth. I learned so much, including things that still help me in my life years later today, like forgiveness and not judging others. My abortion has humbled me and has helped me understand what it means to feel things in my heart. It also aided me in developing a deeper relationship with God and knowing that God loves and cares for me.

As I write this, it's been 12 years since my abortion, and I can honestly say that I am at peace with myself and the fact that I cannot change what I have done. However, reaching this state of peace did not happen overnight. It has been a very gradual process, but over time, I have learned to forgive myself and move forward. And I could do that because I know that God has forgiven me and wants me to move forward with my life. That abortion recovery Bible study blessed me so much that I now volunteer as an abortion recovery Bible study co-facilitator. It gave me so much that I want to give back to organizations that offer these kinds of ministries. I also want to help women who have had abortions receive the healing that God has for them.



Jessica



REDEMPTION

re-demp-tion/rə'dem(p)SH(ə)n/

1. the action of saving or being saved from sin, error, or evil. 'God's plans for the redemption of his world'
2. the action of regaining or gaining possession of something in exchange for payment, or clearing a debt.

Oxford Dictionary

MY REDEMPTION THROUGH JESUS



I AM WRITING MY STORY to explain how God healed and forgave me so I can pass it on for someone else so they too can be healed. We have a faithful and loving God who wants to wrap His arms around us and love on us. As a result of my healing, God wanted me to share my story with others.

I had a turbulent childhood and came from a divorced family. My father was not physically or emotionally present in my life. I started at a young age looking for love from guys. I dated and became sexually active, looking for love and approval. As you can imagine as a result of my choices, I had low self-esteem. All I wanted was to be loved.

I did not have a close relationship with God growing up. In college, I knew I was missing something or someone in my life, someone to truly love me for me. I stopped going to church, so I was on a quest to find security.

When I was 22 years old in college, I got pregnant at a fraternity party. I knew I could not keep the baby because I was on a golf scholarship, and these were my plans. And a baby did not fit into those plans.

I made a quick decision to have an abortion. I remember the place being very sterile and cold. It did not take long as I was anxiously waiting for this thing to be over. I pretended I was somewhere else because I did not want to feel the pain internally. I went somewhere else in my mind so I didn't have to think about it.

At the age of 30, I realized I wanted more peace, joy, love and contentment. I wanted what my golfing peers had, something that I was missing, a relationship with Jesus. God finally opened my eyes and I saw for the first time that I needed God in my life.

A girl that I was rooming with on the tour led me in the sinner's prayer. I knew in my heart; God was real and that He loved me.

Unfortunately, I immediately starting dating and being sexually active again. This part of my life had not changed yet. I continued in this sinful behavior until I was 34 years old, when I found myself again with an unplanned pregnancy.

I was on the rebound and not in the right frame of mind to be with anyone yet, but I did anyway. My golf career was very important to me, and nothing was going to stop me from achieving my goal.

I did not want to sacrifice my career to raise a child on my own, so I had my second abortion.

After my second abortion, I realized that I needed to get help for the guilt and shame I was feeling. I called First Care and I did a Post-Abortion Bible Study called, "Forgiven and Set Free." The study took about eight weeks, and during this time I rededicated my life to God.

I knew I was forgiven by God for my abortions, and He truly loved me. In Him, I finally found the love I had been searching for all of my life.

I no longer participated in the sins of my past; I was a new creation in Christ. I now lived my life in a way that was pleasing to Him, and it was God's best for me. He became my husband. And when I did start dating again, I let the men know I was keeping myself pure until marriage.


I've learned from my experience that God is merciful, loving, and His grace abounds. And His forgiveness is a gift I am forever thankful for. God has called me to minister His love and healing with others who are hurting. God can turn what was intended for evil around for my good and His glory.

I want others to experience the freedom I now have with God and have the courage to share their secrets with Him so He can heal them too.

Lastly, I want to help other women to become who God created them to be. This is the reason why I serve God through this ministry doing Post-Abortion Bible Studies so they too can be set free. Thank you for letting me share.



Barb Bunkowsky



“And you will seek Me and find Me,
when you search for Me
with all your heart.”

Jeremiah 29:13
NKJV

A MOTHER'S CRY



SITTING ALONE IN A DORM ROOM, I cried my heart out. How did I get here? Who could I turn to? I had just transferred from New York to Florida during my sophomore year of college and found myself in an unfamiliar city and an even more devastating circumstance. Teenage pregnancy. It sounded more like something that happened to other people that would never happen to me. Yet here I was. Somehow, I knew in my soul this wasn't God's plan for me.

The next day I went to the school clinic. When the nurse asked why I was there, I simply looked at her and said, "I need birth control pills." Denial had set in. She must have noticed the uncertainty in my voice as she asked me follow-up questions. After a short conversation, she declared, "You need a pregnancy test." In my denial, I complied to prove her wrong. I can still see her shaking her head with a look on her face saying, "Here comes another one."

As I stood there, she delivered the news that I was, in fact, pregnant. I didn't know how to feel. In a state of confusion, with the news still echoing in my ears, she hugged me, gave me pamphlets, and sent me out the door.

In the following days I tried to figure things out with my 19-year-old problem-solving skills. My boyfriend initially said he would support any decision I made. However, as I leaned toward keeping the pregnancy, he insisted I was ruining my future and urged me to go to a women's clinic. I thought about what he said. I thought about what my parents would think. They would be humiliated and shocked if I went through with the pregnancy. I couldn't call them and explain the situation. I was scared and alone.

So the decision was made. I ended my pregnancy and vowed to never tell a soul or allow this to happen again. I felt so degraded and unloved. I had physical complications after the abortion, but by the grace of God, I got better and didn't have to go back to the clinic.

My relationship with this man ended very quickly, and I cried out to God to save me from the brokenness, isolation, and fear. My prayers were answered when I met my knight in shining armor. My relationship with my husband marked the beginning of my healing as we both got saved. Then God's plan for my redemptive, deep, supernatural healing unfolded.

In 2005, my first home Bible study, *Be Ye Transformed*, opened my heart to the secret that was hidden deep inside of me. What I had stuffed deep down and never dealt with was resurrecting. For the first time, I acknowledged what I had done and the pain that went along with it. I also learned of First Care from another person in that study, and a seed was planted. In the not-so-distant future, I would volunteer for the organization as I grew a desire to help young pregnant women.

Our Gracious Father is gentle, patient and full of grace. He used the same Bible study plan to stir my soul again in

2009–2010. It was the month of February. Advertisements for the Walk for Life were on the radio, and it was also Sanctity of Life month at my church. It seemed like everyone was talking about abortion, and I was getting very uncomfortable.

One night, I had a meltdown and cried for the child I had thrown away. As I wept for my unborn, I knew that God saw every tear. During that same week, I was in the midst of baking cupcakes for Valentine’s Day when I ran out of cupcake liners. Little did I know that I was about to attend a divine appointment. I knocked on my neighbor’s door for the cupcake liners. As she gave me the liners, she also witnessed to me and shared her abortion story. She told me about a healing study she participated in through First Care. Only God could have set up such a perfect meeting.

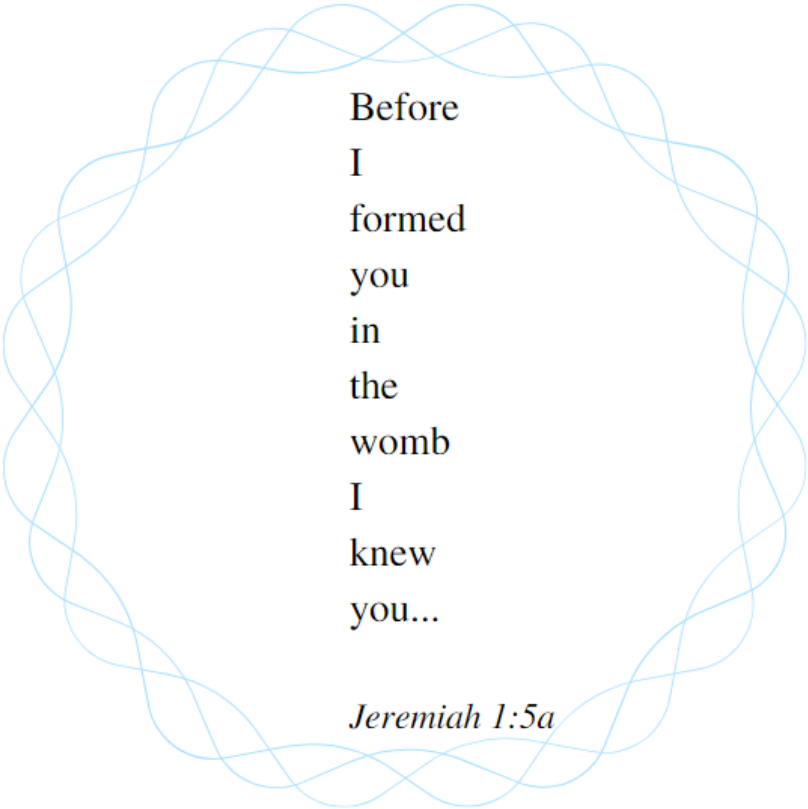
That very day I signed up to volunteer for First Care, and God breathed new life into me. He was healing me in such unique ways. He was using me at the clinic and simultaneously giving me sweet, loving prayer warriors that I am still close friends with today. Later, He would use me by having me help lead these types of Bible studies at Calvary.

All the Glory goes to God! He had a plan to wash me clean, love me and use me for His purposes. Today, I am still in awe of who He is. He is a good, good Father!

I am grateful.



Sharon



Before
I
formed
you
in
the
womb
I
knew
you...

Jeremiah 1:5a

THEY SAID IT WAS JUST A BLOB OF TISSUE



IT WAS THE SUMMER of 10th grade. I was young, naive and in love. It all seemed to happen so quickly, and at sixteen years old, I found myself pregnant. You never think it will happen to you, and shock ran through me.

I was a cheerleader with plans to go to college. What would everyone think? My friends and family would be so disappointed in me. I was ashamed, confused and scared. I knew we had to make this go away.

My boyfriend and I made the choice that seemed best considering we were just teens, and since it was legal, we thought it must be okay. We didn't tell anyone, and we took a taxi one Saturday afternoon to the abortion clinic. The counselor said, "It's just a blob of tissue, no bigger than this little dot on the paper." I thought, thank goodness it's not a baby yet! I felt relieved and wanted to believe that was true.

I tried to remain strong through the procedure, but the sound, pain and memory has never left me. I remember telling my mom that day that I was going to a family picnic with my boyfriend. And when I came home from the clinic, I pretended I had a great time, then told her I was exhausted

and needed a nap. I closed my bedroom door and cried and cried feeling so empty and alone.

So many emotions all locked up with nowhere to go, such confusion because I thought the abortion would make it all go away. So why did I feel like this? You can't talk about it. What would you say? I did what I did; I could never take that back. After all, it was my choice, so why didn't I feel okay? I thought eventually these feelings will go away.

But as time passed, the guilt grew deeper, and I still didn't really understand the magnitude of our choice. No one could tell if they looked at me, and I kept trying to tell myself this really didn't happen. And I became numb to my emotions. My shame was buried so deep until God came to take it from me. He was the only one who knew all the pain I carried.

It all began at my first women's retreat when I confessed that I had an abortion. I never thought in a million years I would have told anyone; I was taking my secret to the grave. Just hearing the word abortion made me sick to my stomach. But this time as I said the word, I felt a burden lift from me instantly, and I started crying, releasing tears that had been held back for years.

I kept wondering why God would want to heal me from this unthinkable sin. Why wouldn't He want to punish me? I always secretly wondered why He allowed me to have three beautiful children. But I now know God doesn't work that way. He does not punish us as our sins deserve. He covered me in grace and carried me along this healing journey step by step. He did not bring this to light to punish me but to heal and restore me. I was finally able to stop pretending that it didn't hurt because after 25 years the pain was just sitting at the bottom of my soul like a heavy weight affecting every area of my life in ways I had no idea.

God brought me to a Bible study in 2009 and my heart was forever changed, and my relationship with Christ deepened in ways I can hardly explain. Before all of this, I went to church and I believed in God, but I never knew Christ personally. My relationship with God was paralyzed. I didn't pray very much because I didn't feel worthy of asking Him for anything. So, there was really no relationship because how can you have a relationship if there is no communication?

Through this Bible study, I began to open my heart slowly to Him in places that I kept closed. God revealed His love to me in the most amazing ways, and the God I read about in the Bible became so alive in my heart! This study opened my eyes to God's word and His character in a way that moved me and I fell in love! I felt His immense love and realized He brought me to this group because He loved me and wanted me set free. I saw His tenderness and His strength all at the same time as He carried me in the palm of His hand.

I thank God for searching me and bringing to light all that was hidden. Because of this healing, He is allowing me to share my story. I hold onto His promises, and I will continue to walk in His light and share His truth helping other women on this journey that leads to freedom through Christ.



Julie C.



“The eyes of the Lord are in every place...”

Proverbs 15:3a

GOD'S GRACE



GROWING UP, my father was a “functioning” alcoholic. My mom was angry and frustrated a lot of the time because of her situation. She was married to my dad, working and dealing with two kids. As a child, I felt the turmoil. And although it was never talked about, I learned early on to internalize my feelings, thinking I had done something wrong to cause my family to be the way it was. I remember laying in my bed at night, promising God that I would be a “good girl” if he would stop my dad from drinking and make my mom happy.

Because my mom worked a lot of evenings and weekends, extra responsibility was put on me. I was the girl in the family and “the responsible one.” On weekends, my dad’s friends would come over and drink. They were inappropriate with me. Although both my parents witnessed these acts, they did nothing. I internalized more and believed I was not lovable or valuable enough to protect.

As I continued to strive to be the perfect child, I quickly saw how my rebellious brother was getting all the attention. Through my teens, I developed an eating disorder, severe anxiety, health issues and started drinking and using drugs. I

lost my virginity at the age of 14. I was boisterous, loud and came across as a very confident, independent young woman. Yet, inside I was lost, broken and just wanted to be loved.

Just after college, I met a man. I was convinced he was the one who would make all my pain go away. We quickly married and shortly after he began beating me. The beatings continued on a daily basis for about two and a half years.

One evening I was chopping vegetables in the kitchen and our conversation began to escalate. I knew what was coming, and I remember saying to myself, “I would rather spend the rest of my life in jail for murder than to live like this.” As I turned around with the knife in my hand, it was like I left my body. I saw myself stabbing him. Slowly I came back to myself and realized I hadn’t. Something had stopped me. What was it? When I looked at my husband, I saw fear in his eyes for the first time. I proceeded to let him know never to touch me again. Soon after, I moved out and we divorced.

Settled into my new place, I kept going over my experience. What had stopped me? Who had stopped me? Was it God? I started seeking, and one evening I was listening to Dr. James Dobson on the radio. That night, I gave my life to Christ.

I wish my story completely changed at that point, but it didn’t. I didn’t get plugged into a local church or Bible study as a new believer. So, I continued to live life the way I had been living—drinking, partying and being promiscuous.

When I was 27, I had unprotected sex with two different men in a very short period of time. Not long after that, I became pregnant. I was filled with disbelief, fear, shame and panic. I ended up in a relationship with one of the men, and he said he was not going to raise someone else’s child. He

took it upon himself to call and set up my abortion appointment. Like every other time in my life, I internalized and said nothing.

I followed through with my abortion. It was a blur for me, like I wasn't a part of my body. I was so scared I couldn't even speak. People were talking to me, but I didn't know what they were saying. I remember laying on the table. The room was so cold, and I was so cold. The nurse held my hand. I remember the noise and the pain and wishing someone would save me, help me. I shut everything off inside.

I drank more after that, numbing myself. I broke up with the guy and moved on. For years I never even thought about it, because when I did, it hurt so badly, like I was being punched in my stomach. My heart ached so badly; it took my breath away. I lived like this for 16 years.


One day, I found an abortion recovery ministry flyer at my church and decided to call. My healing journey finally began; it's been about four years now. I found a safe place where I can be honest and talk about my abortion. I participated in a "Surrendering the Secret" Bible study last year, which allowed God to bring so much healing and forgiveness into my life. My relationship with God is on track and my marriage is healthier.

Through my continued work and healing, God has given me the boldness and courage to talk about my past, my abortion and how He has removed the shame and unforgiveness I carried for so long. I can now help other women who have had an abortion. I made the choice to kill my baby, but through God's healing, He has given me a voice. You are not alone in this journey; I pray that you step out in faith and allow God to begin healing you.

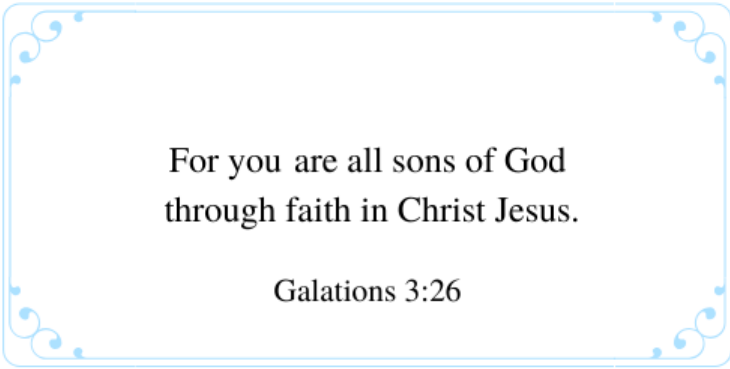
“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”
(Matthew 11:28-30)



Rhonda Bouchlas



LET
THE
FRAGRANCE
OF
GOD
FILL
YOUR
LIFE



For you are all sons of God
through faith in Christ Jesus.

Galations 3:26

FROM ADOPTION TO REDEMPTION



MY STORY BEGINS with my adoption. I was given the chance to live a beautiful life. I always felt loved and cared for. I was told from very early on that I was adopted. It never came as a shock or surprise; was always good. I felt chosen and loved while growing up. My parents worked hard and did all they could to show love for my brother (not adopted) and me. Our family was close. I felt special.

As I got older and started getting attention from boys, I liked it, of course. There were times I was unsupervised and got just a little too much attention. Ironically, I attended Catholic schools and Mass. However, I never understood one single word of those hymns I was singing and Scripture verses I was reciting. I didn't receive anything personally meaningful from anything I heard while attending. Nor did my parents talk to me about the Scripture verses we heard during Mass. We never opened a Bible in school or at home. I'm not sure we owned one.

Fast forward to graduation from college. I was looking for a teaching job and wanted to be close to my boyfriend who lived across the coast. He knew some people and got me an interview to teach in a good elementary school. The teachers there, as opposed to where I lived, earned considerably more money. I got the job. Done. I moved.

We were on and off for 4 years. I made the choice after a couple years to move in with him. It made sense, right? I was always at his place anyway, right? Why pay additional monthly rent, utilities, etc., right? Besides, he had been asking me since to live with him since I moved there. “We needed to get to know each other in living circumstances. It made sense, etc.” WRONG!

As I mentioned, I wasn’t strong in my faith, if there was any. I didn’t have a relationship with the Lord. I made life decisions based upon...well, what I wanted and not what would be pleasing to God. At 27 years old, I found out I was pregnant. I was teaching elementary school with students I loved. They knew I was not married. I was one of their most influential role models. He did not ask me to marry him. Nor did he want a baby. He did not want any part of this “problem.” Intuitively, for me, it meant he didn’t want me either; such a lack of character he was displaying. Why would I want him?

Regardless, I wanted this baby, *my baby*, very much I was as torn as a frayed rope being pulled apart in 1000 different directions. My thoughts during this tumultuous time: “I want my baby, but I have no support from the father emotionally or financially. I want my baby, but everyone will notice I am pregnant and unmarried. What kind of an example would I be to my students? I want my baby, but how am I going to do this without help?” My parents were NOT an option.

“Just take care of it,” he said. I caved under the pressure and had an abortion. I wasn’t as courageous as my own biological mother who gave me LIFE twenty-seven years earlier when there was so much more stigma. What a coward I was! Shame on me!

I cannot say where or when it was, the day, the place or the location. The only specific measurable detail I remember is that I was 27 years old. The great emotional pain and regret I felt immediately afterward would be ongoing and immeasurable. I went alone for this heinous procedure. I don’t even remember why I was there *alone*. I definitely felt alone. It wasn’t something I wanted to share with anyone. I definitely WAS alone. I also remember pizza, that evening through my sick, sad tears...looking at pizza. That is the extent of my recollection.

I’m now 55 years old; looking back, I see so many bad decisions and reckless behaviors exhibited because of my self-loathing and feelings of unworthiness. I felt inferior and made repeated attempts to numb my feelings. I stayed in the very relationship with the man that I knew didn’t want our child, the child that I already loved! My life was a mess. How could I have done this! I still struggled with my decision to abort my baby.

Although I was not following Christ, I knew what I had done was so profoundly, painfully and regretfully wrong. I couldn’t take it back. This much I knew: God did not intend this. It was counterintuitive to the way He made me. I would live to regret this for the rest of my living days on this earth!

When I was 30 years old, I married a good Christian man, now my husband of 25 years. His gentle, consistent leadership would begin my journey toward my very best friend, my biggest advocate, my healer, my savior and the

only one who would love me, truly love me, unconditionally! I *knew* before, on some level, I was forgiven for this, but I did not understand how to *receive* forgiveness. I didn't know that in receiving Him I would also have some requirements made of me. I would have sought His forgiveness in order to receive it.

To *receive* His forgiveness for this monumental mistake in my life was completely different than simply knowing I'm forgiven. *Receiving* God's forgiveness gave *knowing* I'm forgiven an amazing new meaning that words cannot describe. It facilitated a deeper ongoing relationship with Him. I could feel it. I never knew this feeling was possible. I knew I loved Christ, and I knew He was my savior and certainly loved me beyond measure. This changed EVERYTHING!

There was no denying that God had been working on me, seeking me out and protecting me all along. Although it took me 28 years, He knew all along what was happening. We make mistakes. God does not.

After being encouraged by a dear person in my life to "serve Him" better, I reached out to hurting girls, women who had found themselves at this crossroad and were considering abortion. In order to do that, I was encouraged to complete a (needed) study.

During and after completing the study offered by the open arms and hearts of some facilitators, a book author, other students of the study, ministry leaders, etc., I figured out they had probably done this a few times, and the difficult things that they were asking would bring light and awareness and true healing. Their love for hurting women like me and their clear evidence of God's love and His shining light

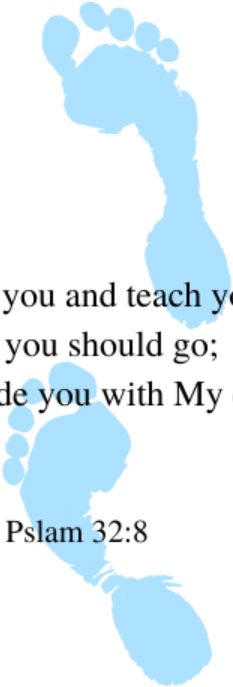
profoundly changed me. It changed my heart. I saw God in them. How could I not?

I was safe to dig deep and go to the depths of a very painful place—this wound that was covered up by just adding one band-aid after another. It was challenging and took time. I was a bit resistant, stubborn even. I did it. It was work. It was required. I received so much more! I look forward to sharing with others what I have received as it's been powerful for me in such a way that I want others to experience it too.

God doesn't ask anything of us, except to just believe in His Son and what He did on our behalf, simply because of a love for us that we cannot understand. When we do, and that applies to our lives and our way of living, we want to seek Him in all we do. He then blesses us, and then we desire to seek and please Him even more as we continue that journey toward heaven. For all, I believe this to be true, but for those who bear shame from this regretful experience and who have suffered, such is a more beautiful life, I truly believe than we can imagine.

We then KNOW we will meet our beautiful beloved unborn child who has always only known forgiveness and who is cheering us on toward the Lord in the hopes that we will be reunited!





I will instruct you and teach you in the
way you should go;
I will guide you with My eye.

Pslam 32:8

MY FIRST CHILD



I BECAME A MOM at 23 years old, although I didn't realize it at the time because I aborted my first baby. I thought I became a mother at 32 years of age when my son John came into this world in 1987. But was I wrong?

After about six months of dating this man who I thought was the love of my life, while walking into Howard Johnsons, we bumped into this woman who was “just” so excited to see him. Her first comments were, “Is this your wife? Did you find a house yet?” He, of course, did not answer her and changed the subject *very* quickly. We went to sit down at a table to eat, his face looking like he had just seen a ghost.

I said to him, “I thought I heard her say ‘Is this your wife?’”

He said, “She’s goofy, don’t have any idea what she was saying.”

Naïvely, I said, “I am so relieved.”

So, that afternoon as we sat eating, chatting and laughing, I think he was trying to figure out how to take any suspicion out of my mind because I was so blinded and in love with him. But what that woman said never left my mind. I believe

that day I found out he had a son. He also had a daughter, which I would later find out. He said he was also madly in love with me, and I do believe he did care for me a lot. He finally admitted to me that he was married with two children: a nine-year-old boy and a little girl. I should have left at that time, but I didn't. He told me he was getting divorced and not to leave him. I again believed whole heartedly he was going to get a divorce.

Prior to him leaving, I became pregnant. And even though his divorce was not settled, I was quite happy to tell him I was pregnant. I mean, we "were" going to get married someday in the near future, and he "loved" me so much.

I remember running up to his office to tell him that we were going to have a baby. His reaction was not ANYTHING like I expected. He was in shock and kept telling me, "What am I going to tell my son?"

After a few days, he said to me, "You are going to have to get an abortion."

I said "No, please!"

And he then said, "What am I going to tell my kids?"

I was devastated, to say the least. He said "I've made some phone calls, and there is a place right in West Palm Beach. I will pay the cost of the abortion. \$200.00 cash." I left there and didn't have contact from him and was so heartbroken. I called him and said, "Okay, I understand. I would never want to tell your children. Let's just make an appointment." I was sure if I did this, we would still get married and have another baby later.

He kept telling me, "It's only a teeny little blob of tissue, not a baby."

We drove to the Planned Parenthood center. He led me to the door and then he left. I went in and sat in a chair and then quickly ran out. He was there down the hall and said, “You have to do this, Faith; just think about my kids and how much they will be damaged if they find this out.”

I said okay, went back inside. And the next thing I knew, I was in a hospital setting with my feet in the stirrups. The nurse kept saying, “It’s just a little blob of tissue, and it will be quick and on your way.” They gave me something to calm me, which made me very dizzy. The doctor asked how far along I was. They said, “She told us 8 weeks.”

I remember so clearly as the procedure began and the noise of the vacuum hose when the doctor said, “This woman is over 10 weeks.” I was in such a groggy state there was nothing I could say. Before I knew it, it was over, and they put me in a room with a bunch of other girls who had just had the procedure. Some were crying (me, one of them), but the silence was deafening.

My “boyfriend” picked me up and brought me back to my apartment, put me in bed and made a phone call to someone (I was thinking it must be worked-related, but it was not). It was his wife, and he had to get home. He left and went back to his home, and I was left all alone feeling horrible and tried and tried to call him but no answer. It truly was such a horrible feeling that I didn’t even want to live. In that bed all alone, I tried to cut my wrists. It was a weak attempt, but I definitely drew blood.

I honestly don’t remember when and how I found out that he and his family were on their way back up north for various reasons, some which included money and career issues. I believe his turmoil of loving me and loving his family drove him to destruction.

The next thing I remember, I was in my car, now 23 years old, driving from West Palm Beach to San Diego to start a “NEW” life, but it didn’t ease any of the pain. I remember sitting in my car in downtown San Diego just weeping, a cry that was very necessary. I wasn’t crying for my baby, because that day and those memories were pushed so far down, I didn’t even give that a thought. I was crying for him and because I was so alone. I would remain there for four years then return back to Florida and would meet my now husband.

Finally, after one or more years of trying to get pregnant, the day came, and my husband Dick and I were going to have a baby. I remember going to the doctor and getting all the information of what to do to protect this precious life inside of me. I followed the growth of my baby daily by reading and looking at pictures, never acknowledging my first baby until I was at 10 weeks. Then the memories flooded my mind and so did the words of the doctor.

I was utterly devastated when I saw how developed my baby was at 10 weeks. “Oh my God, what had I done?” I quickly pushed those images and thoughts down even farther. I went back to focusing on the baby inside me and put those thoughts in a place in my mind that would allow me to function.

When my son was born, it was the most wonderful day of my life. I was super protective of this special boy, almost to a fault. I found out later, this is one of the many symptoms of women who have had abortions. And 22 months later came my daughter. She was the most beautiful baby girl I had ever seen.

How could God have blessed me so much with these two perfect children after what I had done with his very first gift

of a baby He had given me. I never consciously thought or said that to anyone because for one reason, with the exception of my husband, no one knew that I had an abortion at 23, no one. The shame of it was too great, and it stayed deep down in my heart but affected every area of my life, which I found out later.

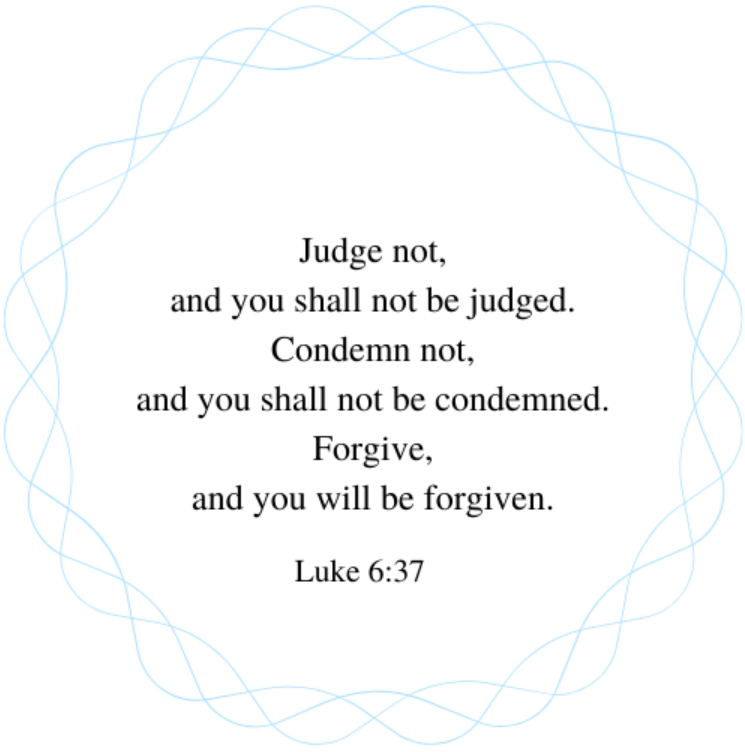
During this time in 1992, I gave my life to the Lord at a women's conference. But again, when I thought of all of my sins that I asked His forgiveness for, my abortion was not one of them because like I said, it was so deep down. I never even thought of it until one day in 1995.

My healing journey began that morning, when I realized what I had lost and mourned the loss of my daughter's life. God led me to an abortion healing class with other women who were just like me. One of our assignments was the revealing of the sex of our children and their names. God had revealed to me that my child I aborted was a girl and her name was Catherine.

God showed me my justification for my abortion was wrong, and I asked for forgiveness. And I finally received His peace. This peace of knowing I was forgiven and that God had my baby in heaven with Him was an incredible gift that I am so grateful for. As a result of my healing I have co-facilitated many Bible studies through First Care and *Surrendering the Secret*. I am still amazed how God heals us when we are willing to let Him in.



Faith



Judge not,
and you shall not be judged.
Condemn not,
and you shall not be condemned.
Forgive,
and you will be forgiven.

Luke 6:37

REDEEMING LOVE



MY ABORTION STORY started to take shape when I was in college. For me, college was a nightmare. I was very insecure and extremely lonely. Most nights were spent drinking myself into blackout, while the days consisted of skipping classes. Sure enough, my college career came tumbling down. I remember it well. I was sitting in class, right after students returned from Christmas break. My professor gave me a notice that said the dean wanted to see me. My dean was also the president of the school.

So, after class, I went to his office. I sat down in front of him. He had a strange look on his face. He said, “Melissa, what are you doing here?” I was shocked; I didn’t know what he was talking about. He continued, “Melissa, you have been dismissed from school.” I just sat there not knowing what to say. He said, “You have been expelled because of your grades.” I knew my grades were bad; I was never in class. But I did not know I had been expelled!

Apparently, a letter announcing my expulsion was sent to my home, but we did not receive it. After divorcing my stepfather, my mom sold our house, and spent her time traveling with her boyfriend. So, the letter never reached

either of us. I was stunned. Silence filled the room. Finally, I responded and said to the dean, “I have nowhere to go.”

After I explained the situation to him further, this precious man said, “Melissa, I will let you stay under a few conditions. One, you have to start receiving counseling for your grades as well as mental counseling.” He then looked at me and said, “Melissa do you realize you have a bad reputation around here?” Those words stung. I knew that was true, but I didn’t know everyone else knew too. He said, “Some days I see you walking into the cafeteria and you look so beautiful, and some days you walk in and look like death.” I knew that was true also.

I had given up on myself and didn’t care anymore. I was just so desperate for someone to love me. Sex was a way to feel loved, even if only for a few minutes. Then, drugs and alcohol were used to numb the pain that came afterwards. Don’t get me wrong. I wasn’t standing on a street corner or anything. But I did have a lot of boyfriends. I think I really knew I had hit rock bottom when someone told me my name and number was written on the boy’s bathroom wall: “For a good time call Melissa...”

So, I did what I was told. I started seeing counselors and tried to get better. But it didn’t last. At the time, I was seeing a man who was twenty years older than me. He was very wealthy and wanted a wife. He didn’t know my reputation. My therapist told me I should break up with him because of our age difference. So, I did.

On weekends, I went to my friend’s house to get away from school. He was a hairdresser and makeup artist. During that time, after some encouragement from friends, I entered a modeling contest for *Cosmopolitan* magazine. At this point, I had gotten back in touch with “S” (my old boyfriend

and now husband). We started talking, and eventually he moved to Atlanta to be with me. I quit school and started pursuing my modeling career.

I remember my friend, the hairdresser and makeup artist, telling me not to get pregnant. I laughed, thinking, “It hasn’t happened yet. I doubt it will ever happen to me!”

S and I moved in together in March of ‘84. Two months later, I was pregnant. I was sitting in the living room of our new apartment, and the phone rang. A few weeks earlier, I had gone to the doctor because of pain in my abdomen. They ran a pregnancy test and told me they would call me. So, there I am, on the phone with the nurse and she says, “Melissa, you’re pregnant.”

I turned and looked at my boyfriend and hairdresser friend. Neither said a word, but both knew it wasn’t good. My friend said goodbye and left. S just looked at me. I went into the bathroom and sat on the side of the tub and wept. I really don’t know what I was thinking at the time, but the first words out of my mouth as I was rubbing my stomach were, “I am so sorry, but I can’t keep you.”

I didn’t let myself think about the situation any other way. Looking back, I don’t know why! I had a screwed-up mindset and just didn’t think it through. I walked out of the bathroom. I don’t even remember saying anything to S. I just felt like I had to go see my mom. She was staying at a hotel with her boyfriend; my aunt was there as well. I remember crying as I walked into the room. I said, “I’m pregnant.” I was hysterical. My mother’s boyfriend was in the bedroom, and we were in the living area. My mother quickly closed the door and said, “Be quiet!” Then, she looked at my aunt and asked, “Can you take care of this?” My mom was leaving for Europe that evening. My aunt said

yes. Mom was angry at me. She had warned me not to move in with S.

The next thing I knew, I was in the hospital having an abortion. I really don't remember any details except waking up in a private room with S sitting beside me, asleep.

The next morning, I went to my aunt's house. I stayed there for a few days. I didn't want to go home. I was so depressed I could hardly move.

One day while I was taking a nap, my precious cousin came in and sat by my bed. She told me she knew how I felt because she had been through it before. It was the first nice word I had heard from anyone since arriving at my aunt's house. Unfortunately, I didn't feel very welcome there despite being close to my aunt. We had had a big fight before I found out I was pregnant, and she wasn't over it.

S came over every day and would ask me to come home. So, one day, I got up and went back. S asked me to marry him after that. I said yes, and a few months later we were married.

After that, I didn't speak of my abortion. It wasn't until years later during some counseling for depression that I brought it up again.

I had never put the two together (my abortion and depression). But looking back, it was a huge part of my recovery. After we were married, the Lord gave us three sons. I am so thankful for them! At the same time, I still had so much unresolved pain.

After years of therapy, the Lord has been able to use my story to reach many women. I was a guest speaker at the First Care Banquet, shared my testimony at a women's prison,

and have led small group Bible studies on recovery from abortion.

The most healing thing I've learned on this journey is that, even though I ended my baby's life here on this earth, it doesn't mean it's over! If you are a believer, you and I will see our babies again one day! God still had a purpose and plan for my child, and He knows our hearts.

I'm comforted knowing the Scripture proves that babies go to be with the Lord when they die. After King David's baby died because of David's sin, he said:

“While the baby was still alive, I fasted, and I cried. I thought, ‘Who knows? Maybe the Lord will feel sorry for me and let the baby live.’ But now that the baby is dead, why should I fast? I can't bring him back to life. Someday I will go to him, but he cannot come back to me.” 2 Samuel 12:22-23 (NKJV)

God knows my baby and knew that she would be aborted. God made a way for my sweet baby to be with Him in heaven. He does the same for us too. Scripture after Scripture speaks of His goodness toward me and you (*see Psalm 103:8-12*).

I hope my story helps you today. We serve an amazing God and He loves you so much! Come to know Him as your Lord today and ask for forgiveness. He says if we are sincere in our faith, we will be forgiven. I pray you will receive this amazing grace today.



Melissa



He heals the brokenhearted
And binds up their wounds.

Pslam 147:3

MY BROKEN INTO BEAUTIFUL



IN SHARING MY ABORTION STORY with you, I want to give you a little background into what may have contributed to my decision to get an abortion. Also, in contrast, I'll share how God took what the enemy intended for harm and used it for good. My hope is that you will be encouraged and inspired to trust God even in your darkest hour.

I grew up in a home with my mother and two brothers. My mother later had another child with a man who was not my father. My siblings and I grew up with very little supplies and supervision. My brothers and I were not close. In fact, I had one brother who was abusive towards me. There were many events in my life that I would not wish upon those who might be against me.

I was the little girl from the projects searching for acceptance, approval, support, protection and love. Little did I know that my childhood and the events that took place during it would lead me down a dark path. I walked in fear of my own shadow, always wondering where I belonged and fixing my eyes on others who appeared to have more.

To sum up my childhood, I would say it was dark, deceptive, cold, lonely, unkind and scary. Because of my upbringing and minimal supervision, I started to call my own shots. I was a high school dropout at the age of fifteen and partied myself into an oblivion almost every night of the week. As a result of the lack of love at home, and my growing reckless behavior, I ended up in places and situations that were unhealthy for my mind, body, and soul. To cover up what I didn't want to see of myself, I numbed my mind with drugs, alcohol, and sex on a regular basis. Needless-to-say, I was a broken vessel in need of repair, but no one came to help.

At twenty-one years of age, I was in the world with no family to report to and freedom from accountability. My behavioral patterns had not changed. In fact, they began to evolve into major insecurities. I was very impulsive and could not hold a job. I never felt smart, beautiful, or wanted. I had very few values and didn't think twice about another person's concerns.

It was 1987 in New York City. I lived in the West Village. I had a group of friends that I hung out with on a regular basis. One particular night, we all stayed together. I woke up in the morning and saw that I was lying next to one of my male friends. One thing led to another and we had intercourse. The strangest thing about having sex that morning in comparison to the other times was that after we were done, I felt different.

Fast forward one month later. I was expecting my period and feeling nauseous. I knew I was in trouble. I was with my roommates and I shared with them what I was feeling. They suggested I take an over-the-counter pregnancy test. I purchased the test and followed the instructions. My results

were positive. In my mind, I was convinced that there was no way I could have a child. Although I was old enough, I did not feel prepared. Also, the father was a friend. There was no way; it didn't make any sense to me.

At that time in NYC, abortion was an option, and I was going for it. I contacted the father. He seemed calm. He offered to get his parents involved if I wanted to keep the baby, but I immediately rejected that invitation. Shortly thereafter, I went to the abortion clinic alone. The staff there informed me that I would need to wait until I was further along (6 to 8 weeks) before they could terminate my baby. I thought the day could not come soon enough. My heart was hardened.

The father and I decided to go to the clinic together for the procedure, and we agreed to split the expense. The morning of the abortion, we met outside the clinic. I was cold toward him and could not wait for the abortion to be over. I remember walking into the waiting area and signing in. I also filled out a waiver and waited for them to call me into the room where the abortion would take place. The father stayed outside in the waiting area. I don't remember much about the actual abortion besides waiting for them to give me the anesthesia.

After I woke up from the abortion, I felt light-headed and hollow inside. I basically walked into the clinic ready and nervous and walked out feeling empty and confused. The father offered to take me home, but I wanted nothing else from him, not even his friendship. Broken I remained.

I never felt the same after the abortion. Even though my nature was still wild and reckless, there was something different going on inside me. One year after my abortion, I fell in love and married. We have three children. Having my

children was the best experience of my life, next to marrying my husband. However, even after having my children, I always felt that there was something missing.

I began to fear for the safety and the future of my children. I knew there was a God, but I didn't know Him. I began to seek Him and questioned His power. I knew that if He was a mighty God and if He was who they say He is, He would be the perfect protection for my children. I felt prompted to seek God further.

The deeper I searched for Him, the more He revealed to me about His character and nature. The more I saw Him, the more I wanted to be with Him. The more I wanted to be with Him, the more I wanted to obey Him. That is when He revealed to me that all I have is His. He is pure Love. I was convicted in my heart to love Him, and it was/is well with me.

Since my salvation and as I walk in obedience, I am inspired to share God's love and promises. If I had known Him as a child, perhaps my decisions in life would have been different. But praise be to God, I am not condemned; for what the enemy intended for harm, God used it for His glory.

Because of what Christ did on the cross, I am redeemed. I have been set free to love and to experience what it is like to be loved by Jesus. I have been forgiven completely for my past, present, and future sins. He made a Way for me when there was no way without Him. Jesus changed my life, character, nature, values, the way I look at the world today, and the hope I have for my future.

My children are loved because God is love. As they are on their own journeys, my prayer and hope for them is that they will never feel alone. God said He will never leave us

or forsake us, even in our darkest hour and when all seems hopeless.

“Fear not for I am with you; Be not dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” Isaiah 41:10 (NKJV)



Ivette Naftal



And we know that all things work
together for good to those who love God,
to those who are the called according
to His purpose.

Romans 8:28

SAMUEL



BRUCE AND I MET IN SEPTEMBER of 1977, and I resisted dating him because I didn't feel he was my type. And I was struggling in my life, but I said yes to going out with him.

Shortly after that, I made a trip from Baltimore to Florida to see my mother. Bruce asked me if he could join me in Florida. I said yes, and he made the arrangements, booked the flight that day and came to see me in Florida. My mother was okay with it. I didn't expect him to come. Anyway, we just got together for a week. Bruce really fell head over heels in love with me and wanted to marry me. There was no question about it in my mind.

When we got back to Baltimore together after the trip, we decided to live together, so I closed up my apartment and moved in with him in his house that he owned in downtown Baltimore. Then He asked me to marry him; basically I asked him. I believe that was the day I conceived.

When I realized I was pregnant after a missed period, I was terrified and unsure about my future and especially about being pregnant without being married. I wasn't even sure I was ready to get married, but I would.

I kept going to doctors because I was in a lot of discomfort. I believe the pregnancy was healthy, but on the other hand, I didn't believe that at the time because I was in so much pain. So I went to a doctor who performed abortions (sad to say, it was very easy to obtain an abortion in the 1970's). I had the abortion because my thinking and reasoning were totally wrong. I was so sensitive to my own body, and I didn't want to be pregnant when I walked down the aisle on my wedding day.

When I went in for the abortion, they put me in a room where I waited for the doctor for two hours, and no one ever came in to talk to me. They put tape on my diamond engagement ring although I don't know why. My mind is kind of blank about what went on after that. When I woke up, I was in a great deal of pain. I believe it was the contractions, and the doctor assured me that it would pass. But that pain, I'll never forget.

When I got home, I felt freedom. I felt liberty. I felt like everything was going to be okay and that I was going to be okay without "that," which I felt was like a demon seed. "It" was gone, and I was fine.

Later, I became very ill. The doctors said it was chronic fatigue, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, but they really couldn't figure out what it was.

Ten years after this, I accepted Yeshua as my Savior and Lord. The regret for my abortion and the heartache, pain and agony during those ten years led me to surrender my life to the Lord. I'm not sure I would have ever accepted the Lord otherwise.

During those 10 years that I was very, very ill, there was never a solid diagnosis. Some said it was all in my head, and

whether it was or it wasn't, my body and my mind were so stressed out from that whole ordeal. And it never went away. As I write this, it's now 42 years later, almost to the day, and I am still physically not feeling well. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about what I did.

It's something that is always with you. It's not something that you can live with, without thinking about it. It's a spirit of death.

Here is one of my favorite Scriptures that gives me strength to keep going: *"I can do all things through Messiah who strengthens me."* *Philippians 4:13 (TLV)*

The only other regret I have is what I did to my husband, Bruce (my then fiancé). His pain and heartache is probably just as bad as mine, but it manifested in a different way. We could have had a baby and probably a very healthy one.

We were far from God when we did this, but the Lord in His mercy and grace redeemed it. What was meant for evil, God turned to good with three kids, four grandchildren and a thriving ministry where my husband became a pastor. Many have heard the gospel through our ministry.

The Lord revealed to us that our child was a boy, and we named him Samuel. The heartache, regret and anguish of an abortion is beyond description. Although my husband and I know God has forgiven us, and we have forgiven ourselves, the loss remains, and not a day goes by without a remembrance of Samuel. Our comfort is that one day we will be reunited in heaven, by the mercy and grace of Yeshua.



Suzi E.



My Tribute
Song by Andraé Crouch

FOREVER GRATEFUL



I WOULD NEVER DO THAT. Those five words would come back to haunt me a few years after saying them to myself when I heard a friend had chosen to have an abortion. How judgmental and self-righteous I was. And now I had done the very thing I said I would never do. Obviously, I knew it was wrong. No one really had to tell me that. Nothing about it could possibly be right. It's true, you never know what you're capable of (good or bad) in certain circumstances.

It was 1976. My boyfriend and I had been living together for a couple of years. I was on the "pill" during that time, but after reading a book about the pill causing tumors, I immediately stopped taking it. What was I thinking?

My parents were divorced when I was eight years old. My mom suffered much heartache and misery because of my father's unfaithfulness and multitude of affairs. It took her many years to forgive him, but until she did, I heard the stories over and over while growing up. At some point, I made a pact with myself that I'd never put up with unfaithfulness in a relationship. Ever. It was the deal breaker, and that promise to myself was sealed in my soul. Hmm, there's that word "never" again.

Sure enough, shortly after going off the pill, I became pregnant. My boyfriend and I were “surprised” and apprehensive when we found out but still happy to be having a baby. My biggest dream in life was to be a wife and a mom and have a big, happy family. But a lot changed very quickly.

We both worked at the same country club. He worked on the golf course, and I worked in the restaurant. One day he came into the club’s kitchen to see how I was doing. He hugged me and rubbed my belly telling everyone there that we were going to have a baby. It all felt nice at the time although scary because all the “what ifs” started flooding my mind daily. Kind of late for that.

Within minutes after my boyfriend left the kitchen, a girl approached me with a confused look on her face and asked, “That’s your boyfriend?” Then she proceeded to tell me he was cheating on me and gave me details. I was in shock. Later at home, I asked him if it was true, and he admitted he’d been unfaithful and cried with sorrow, pleading for forgiveness.

I was forced to face some things I had hoped were not true, and in retrospect, there were several red flags during our relationship that I overlooked.

I was devastated, heartbroken and crushed. It brought back many of the nightmare stories of unfaithfulness that I’d heard about while growing up. And here I was, at 19 years old and about to turn 20, at a major crossroad in my life. I was in that situation because I’d done things my way and not God’s way.

My promise to myself went into high gear, and I immediately packed a bag and left him. I went to stay with a

lady who was like a second mom to me. She and her husband said I could stay for as long as I needed to.

After about a week of his continual calling and coming over to try to talk to me, which I refused, I finally broke down and agreed to talk to him. He pleaded for another chance and begged me to come home. He convinced me how much he loved me and how sorry he was for his cheating and lying, so we got back together.

Well, things were okay for a few days because I really had missed him even while working through the betrayal and heartbreak. I was having severe morning sickness (actually, morning, noon and night), and he was loving, attentive and supportive. But nothing was ever quite the same for me. Trust was completely gone. There was no way I was going to marry a guy who was unfaithful. No way.

One day while I was reading the newspaper, a tiny ad about abortion in the upper left corner of the paper caught my attention (I'll never forget that moment). I wasn't in a good frame of mind. I was depressed, heartbroken and devastated because I truly loved my boyfriend, but I couldn't forgive or trust him. My mind became a battleground. I called the number, asked some questions and made an appointment. I remember asking the lady if I could change my mind once I got there. Basically, her response told me that if I want an appointment, a change of mind upon arrival was not something I should be thinking about.

When I told my boyfriend what I'd decided, he was surprised and disappointed. We talked about our relationship and financial struggles. He didn't try to talk me out of following through with my decision.

The day of the appointment, we were both very quiet and somber. When we arrived, I remember noticing a full waiting room. I remember being called into a tiny room with a small group of girls where the procedure was briefly explained and how they attempted to sedate everyone's conscience by telling us it's not a baby at this point but only tissue. I forced myself to accept their information. They showed some kind of picture, but I don't remember what it looked like.

I was taken to the procedure room and put in stirrups. I remember feeling horrified and had a change of mind but everything started happening so fast. I became hysterical, crying and saying I didn't want to do it. But it was too late. I remember the assistant holding my hand, trying to calm me, saying something like it was almost over and that I would be okay.

Not only did my baby die on that table but also a big part of me died as well. I couldn't stop crying, even while in the recovery room. After some time in there, I was led out to the waiting room where my boyfriend was waiting for me. I was still sobbing as we left and got in the elevator. I remember a girl saying to me before getting into the elevator, "You shouldn't be crying. You should be happy that it's over." I couldn't believe my ears. Those words sent me into more hysteria.

My boyfriend and I cried all the way home. I felt dead inside. Anything that was left of our relationship also died that day. We stayed together for a few weeks or so afterwards. But I was in mourning, crying most of the time. I would have outbursts of hysteria crying out that I wanted my baby back. He would hold me and cry with me, saying

he was sorry and telling me he can't bring our baby back but that someday I'll have lots of other babies.

I just wanted to go home to my family, so I did. We parted as friends, and I got on a plane and flew home. He would call me now and then to see how I was, and then after time, no more calls because we both knew there was no going back.

After three years of mourning and feeling like my life was over (and often wishing it were over), life took a new turn. I received the revelation of God's mercy, forgiveness and amazing grace through Jesus Christ. The enormous, heavy load of guilt that I carried was lifted, and I saw hope and a future. Although I had received Jesus as my Lord and Savior when I was five years old in 1961, it was on August 8, 1979 that I turned from going my way to going His way and began my walk with the Lord.

I wish I could say everything was just coming up roses from that point. But it took about seven more years before I could even talk about my abortion without breaking down again. Yes, I knew God in His great mercy had completely forgiven me, and for that alone, I will forever love Him and be grateful beyond words. As the Scripture says, whoever is forgiven much, loves much. But it took MANY PAINFUL YEARS for me to forgive *myself*. Shame became my shadow when my sin of abortion shattered me into a million pieces. I felt broken beyond repair and like the worst sinner on earth until I began to comprehend that Jesus *not only* took my sin and punishment upon Himself on the cross *but also* my shame and anguish. I realized that I'd been trying to somehow "pay" for my sin by not allowing myself to be *completely* "free" from my sin.

Actually, according to the Bible, the *wages* for my sin was death, separation from God and punishment in hell and

the lake of fire for eternity. If I were going to “pay” for my sin, that was what I owed. Thankfully, I CHOSE JESUS and gratefully accepted that He paid my debt in full on the cross.

Going through a post-abortion recovery program and some trauma counseling has helped me to heal and receive more of what Christ has done for me. It’s a journey that continues. I can’t undo what I did. I can’t bring my baby back to me. The loss and regret remains; that’s a consequence of my sin. But I can carry on knowing that I’m forgiven and that my baby is safe in heaven with the Lord.

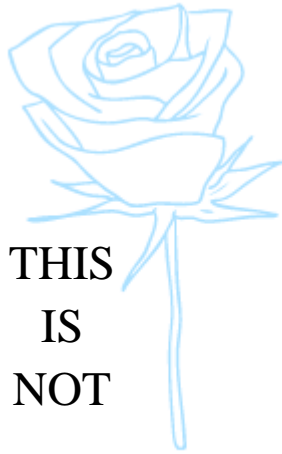
According to God’s Word in 2 Corinthians 5:17, I’m a new creation in Christ; old things have passed away, and all things have become new. I have assurance of eternal life in God’s glorious presence through faith in Jesus Christ and what He did for me. Because of Jesus, I can look forward to being reunited with my baby in heaven someday, and what a glorious day that will be! Thank You Jesus! And God has graciously given my husband and me five wonderful children who I love beyond words and am forever grateful for.

“The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end.” Lamentations 3:22

Sharing my story is still painful. It would be easier just keep it to myself. But if my story saves even one baby and prevents one woman from experiencing the horrors of abortion, it’s worth it. And for the women who have experienced abortion, I pray you know Jesus because He’s the one who has a beautiful healing journey for you.



Cynthia T.

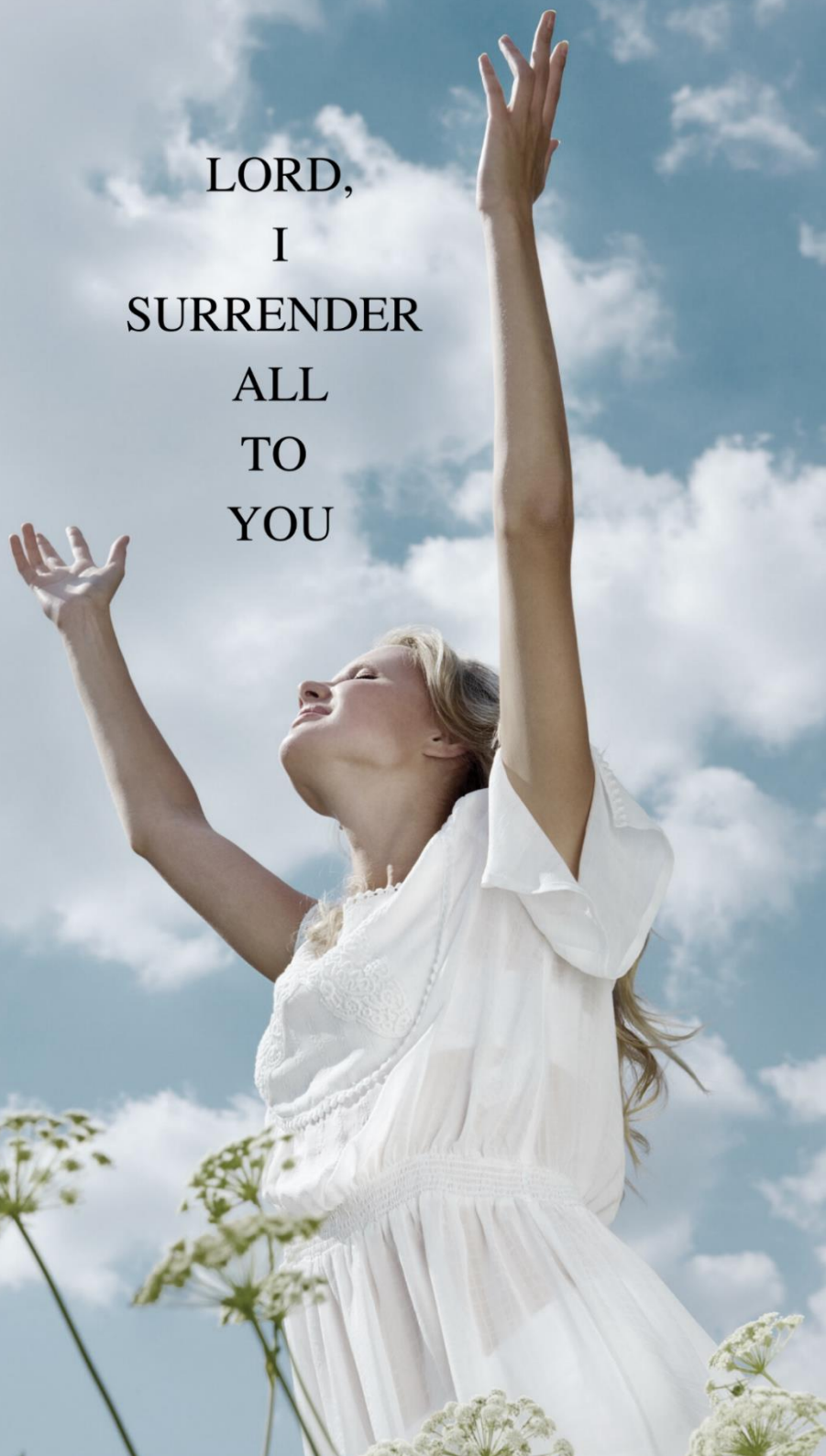


THIS
IS
NOT

“THE END”



LORD,
I
SURRENDER
ALL
TO
YOU



CLOSING THOUGHTS



We've taken you on an amazing journey of healing and redemption as you've read the stories of these very courageous women in *LEADING THEM INTO HIS LIGHT*.

We have shared our personal abortion stories to give you, the reader, a first-hand account of our lives, our choices, and our unhealthy coping mechanisms to deal with the pain, depression, and self-hatred we've experienced as a result of terminating the lives of our children.

Then God in His great love and mercy toward us, moved in our lives to lead us out of the darkness, torment, and bondage into His glorious healing light.

My hope and prayer is that God will use our stories in a powerful way, so you can see from our perspective, how abortion has affected every area of our lives. The purpose of this book is to expose the truth about abortion and how it not only takes a life but also hurts the mother. I believe abortion shatters the very soul of a woman into a million pieces. And Jesus is the only one who can gather all those broken pieces and put them back together again, and heal us completely.

My Ashes to Beauty was created to give women a safe place to share about their past abortion in a loving and caring environment, so they can start moving out of hopelessness and despair into a place of joy, peace, and freedom. For the first time in their lives, they can share their hearts and use their voices, which is critically important for their healing.

Only God can take our broken lives, our poor choices, and our sins and make something beautiful come out of them for our good and His glory.

If you have experienced an abortion in your past, will you step out and trust Jesus to heal you, too? Please email Toni at arwsg4u2@gmail.com, we are ready to minister to you and help you on your healing journey.

ABOUT TONI WEISZ



MY NAME IS TONI WEISZ (aka Little Bird), and on January 15, 2006, on Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, while sitting in Sunday school class, my teacher challenged us, “What is God calling you to do?” All of a sudden, I heard the Holy Spirit say, “I want you to help other women feel forgiven for their past abortion.” That was the first time God revealed to me what my calling was. I contacted First Care, a local resource center, because I wanted to volunteer there, but they said I had to attend a post-abortion Bible study first. I didn’t think I needed it, but I wanted to volunteer, so I agreed. Little did I know, I was about to find out just how sick I really was. We are all familiar with the old saying, “Ignorance is bliss.” I had no clue how wounded and dysfunctional I was until I started my healing journey.

On September 11, 2006, I started *Forgiven and Set Free*, a post-abortion Bible study, as a participant. For the next 4 years, I co-facilitated these types of Bible studies. And then in 2010, after a severe bout of depression, I began my Adult Child Recovery work. God told me to stop all volunteering

at church and First Care. My reaction was, “No God, I can’t do that.”

He said, “Yes you can, and you need to because you are really sick and need help.” Over the next 2 years, God and I went to a desert place, where I was away from my regular routine, so He could show me my deep wounds and my faulty thinking. Then He could start healing me in the deepest part of my soul.

In January 2013, the Lord birthed *My Ashes to Beauty*, a ministry that integrates the Word of God, prayer, recovery tools, and a safe, loving environment for women to share their abortion stories.

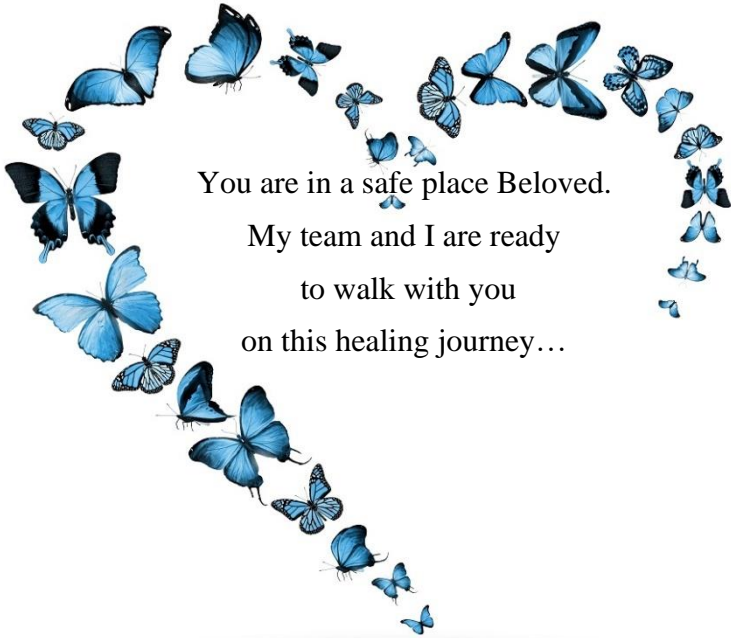
On our website (www.myashestobeauty.com), there are blogs to read and meditate on, resources, videos, information about our weekly Sunday afternoon topical conference call, Bible studies, and individual support when needed. All inquiries are confidential.

God has sent us (My Ashes to Beauty) to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent us to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prisons to those who are bound (Isaiah 61:1). This ministry is being used by God to set women free from torment and bondage associated with a past abortion by leading them into His glorious healing light. I am so humbled and honored to walk with these courageous women as they seek to be healed by God from their past.

In His service,

Toni Weisz

RESOURCES



You are in a safe place Beloved.
My team and I are ready
to walk with you
on this healing journey...

myashestobeauty.com/post-abortion-recovery-and-healing-resources/



To
everyone
who
made
this
eBook
possible...



THANK YOU



Are you or someone you know hurting from a past abortion?

RECOVERY & HEALING IS AVAILABLE FOR YOU

You CAN have a new beginning!

In this book you will read true stories about women who have experienced the pain, agony, sorrow and regret of having an abortion. For many, it took YEARS of suffering the crippling effects of sin, guilt and shame before coming to know the ONE who took all their sin, guilt and shame upon Himself. Although you can't turn back time and undo a sin, you can turn from sin and receive AMAZING GRACE and complete forgiveness, recovery and healing through Jesus Christ. These women have found the answer to being HEALED and FREE from the chains of darkness. **You CAN have a new beginning—TODAY!**



TONI WEISZ, founder of MY ASHES TO BEAUTY, LLC has a passion to bring recovery & healing to women suffering from post-abortion trauma. Millions suffer in silence for fear of judgment and condemnation from others. Toni ministers with the love and compassion of Jesus Christ along with wisdom from God's Word as she leads many INTO HIS LIGHT.



- "I was able to come to terms with what I had actually done, found forgiveness and have peace that my child is with my Lord in heaven, and one day I will be reunited with him." Rhonda
- "Amidst pain and loss, one can still experience love and hope." Diane
- "My hope and prayer are for many women to take a courageous step and begin this transforming healing journey." Julie
- "There is help and hope; you just need to reach out and open up your heart." Luci
- "I now look forward to meeting my son in heaven one day and spending eternity with him!" Lisa

Toni Weisz • MyAshesToBeauty.com