

Free Indeed



LEARNING TO WALK IN TRUE
FORGIVENESS AND HEALING
AFTER ABORTION

Tori Shaw
with Angelique Perry



KW
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ABOUT THIS WORKBOOK

If you are a woman with an abortion in your past, I wrote this book especially for you. Many of you lead busy lives with careers or families, or both, so this workbook was designed with you in mind.

This study will last ten weeks. Each week contains four days of scripture and questions, including a journal entry for each day. There is also an activity to complete on the fifth day of each week.

It's my hope that this design will allow you to work through the study a little each day, allowing the Holy Spirit to continuously be at work in you as you go about your busy life. If you miss a day, just catch up as you're able.

You will also meet with your Bible study group (in person or online) once each week to discuss all that you've read and learned. This connection with other women wounded by abortion will play a huge role in your healing.

It's important to remember that commitment is key with any Bible study. I encourage you to be fully present as you work on each day's tasks and as you spend time discussing with your Bible study group. Reject the temptation to be a passive bystander. Jesus is ready to heal you, but your participation is required.

*When we are willing, God takes our little
and makes it much!*



Introduction



Abortion is such a tricky topic. The world around us boldly proclaims that abortion is the easy way out, a woman's choice, and has no consequences. But so many of us who have had an abortion know that couldn't be farther from the truth. Abortion doesn't just take the life of a child; it takes the life out of the women who have chosen it.

Abortion does more than make a woman no longer pregnant; it makes a woman the mother of a dead child. Whether the mother acknowledges the child or not, it doesn't make that truth any less reality.

In most cases, when a mother loses a child or when a woman goes through a traumatic event, people gather around her to help her find healing and encourage her to grieve. But with an abortion, frequently, no one even knows what she has gone through. She hides the abortion and all the feelings attached to it. She never seeks help with counseling or joins a support group. She never tries to process her emotions or grieves the child she lost. It's no surprise that when trauma is never dealt with, it begins to fester and leads to a lot of pain. It often ends up affecting many areas of the woman's life. For me, once I was finally willing to come out of hiding and allowed God to heal my heart, I realized that my abortion had a negative impact on almost every aspect of my existence. After accepting God's forgiveness and embracing the healing He wanted for me, I began to experience a freedom I never knew existed.

Notice I said accepting God's forgiveness and embracing the healing He offers. After their abortion, many women say they know God has forgiven them, but they remain filled with shame because of their abortion.

They stay in hiding, hoping no one finds out their ugly secret. It's important to realize that being covered in shame after finding forgiveness is still bondage. It is not of God. Your Heavenly Father has so much more for you.

Remember, Jesus came so that His children might have life and have it abundantly! (John 10:10b)

This post-abortive Bible study was designed to help women with an abortion in their past not only to accept God's forgiveness but also forgive themselves, forgive those around them, work through all their emotions, grieve their baby(ies), change their thinking, and embrace the healing that only Father God can lavish on them. All of this will pave the way for participants to begin walking in true freedom!

Healing is a process, forgiveness is a grace, and mercy is a gift. It's time for women with an abortion in their past to walk out the forgiveness and healing they are blessed to have!

To do so, we must remember,

"So if the Son sets you free, you will be FREE INDEED" (John 8:36 NIV).

By His Grace,

Tori Shaw

Do I Need Healing?

Imagine a teenage boy bringing home a dog even though his parents forbid him to do so. While attempting to keep the dog quiet, he angered the dog, who suddenly became ferocious and ripped a chunk out of the boy's arm with his teeth. The boy was terrified and knew the bite needed a doctor's attention, but he felt he couldn't tell his parents because he had disobeyed them. He didn't want them to know what he had done. He was ashamed and fearful, so he let the dog out the back door and hoped the bite would heal on its own. He cleaned the wound and stopped the bleeding. He put bandages over it and took some pain pills he found in the cabinet. Even though it was summer, he wore long sleeve shirts to cover up the wound so that his parents wouldn't find out. He didn't even realize it, but he was barely using his arm at all because of the excruciating pain.

He continued to hide the pain he was in, which wasn't easy. The wound itself was raw and obviously severely irritated. The skin surrounding it was jagged, and there were no signs of healing. Eventually, the wound became infected. Because it went untreated, the infection seeped into his bloodstream and began to infect every limb of his body. Nothing about his life was untouched by this injury, and as time went by, it would only get worse. The only way for the boy's arm to be healed would be to come out of hiding, take off the long sleeve shirt and layers of bandages, expose the wound to the light, scrape out all of the infection, and let it breathe. He would need to see a doctor, take the prescribed antibiotics, and allow his parents to help him through the difficult healing process. It wouldn't be easy. It would be excruciating and would take a lot of time for the layers and layers of skin to regrow and for the healing to be complete. He would have to admit what he had done. It would be a hard process, but it would be worth it to finally be healed, rid of the pain, and able to walk in wholeness again.

Can you relate to that illustration? Abortion has devastating effects for all who are involved. Statistics show that 91% of those wounded by abortion have not dealt with the trauma appropriately. Due to the secrecy and shame surrounding abortion, most men and women have never openly grieved the loss of their child(ren) either.

Our society doesn't acknowledge the tragic loss of life caused by abortion, leaving countless babies forgotten. Typically, abortion happens in secret, is often rushed, and isn't mentioned again. Following their abortion, women usually try to push away all thoughts and emotions associated with their abortion. They desperately try to pretend it never happened. The abortion becomes something they're just trying to get beyond, and they never experience healing from this traumatic experience.

Do you need healing? Even if you don't think so, the answer is probably YES!



Week

ONE

*DO I NEED
HEALING?*



READ:
Isaiah 53:4

Questions

1. After an abortion, many women try to forget what they've done, hide their pain, and shut off their emotions. This may even be done subconsciously. Have you attempted to shove the memories down and hide the abortion in your past? How? For how long?

2. Abortion is a traumatic experience regardless of the situation. People deal with trauma in different ways, but it affects everyone. Isaiah 53:4 tells us that even Jesus dealt with sorrow, rejection, and grief. If Jesus dealt with all of this, is there any reason to believe we would be immune to these emotions after the trauma of abortion?

Journal

Answering these questions honestly will allow you to become aware of the areas of your life that your abortion has affected. As you answer these questions, be aware of the emotions these questions may bring up and understand that these emotions are normal.

1. Do you find yourself stuffing away your feelings or telling yourself to forget about your abortion?
2. When the subject of abortion comes up, do you find yourself attempting to get out of the conversation or change the subject? Do you avoid the topic of abortion? Does the topic cause any physiological reactions: holding your breath, clenching your jaw, or rapid heartbeat?
3. Are you uncomfortable around babies, pregnant women, or baby items? Does the anniversary date of the abortion or the month of the baby's due date cause depression, anxiety, or other strong emotions?
4. Are you angry or resentful toward anyone that was involved with your pregnancy and/or abortion? How do you feel when you think about the man that got you pregnant, friends that encouraged you to choose abortion, or even the abortionist who performed the procedure?
5. Do you find it difficult to be intimate with others (physically or emotionally)? Do you find yourself avoiding some relationships or becoming too dependent on others?
6. Do you ever rationalize why you are better off without the child you aborted? Or why that child is better off not having you as his/her mother?
7. Did you begin to self-medicate after your abortion? (Drugs, alcohol, overeating, etc.) Or did these activities increase after your abortion?

Journal

8. Do you openly talk about your abortion with others? If so, does it cause you to feel ashamed or guilty? If not, why don't you talk about it? Are there specific people you hide your abortion from?

9. Have you dealt with depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and/or suicidal thoughts? Do you ever have nightmares, flashbacks, or vivid memories relating to the abortion?

10. Do you worry that you may have physical damage because of the abortion? Did your abortion cause any problems having future children?

11. If you do have children, are you overprotective, unable to bond with your children, or live in a state of fear that something will happen to them?

12. Do you find yourself in patterns that are harmful to yourself or others?

13. Do you punish yourself or believe that God is punishing you?

14. Did your idea of God or your relationship with God change after your abortion? Does your abortion keep you from going further in your relationship with God?

15. Did the abortion affect your self-esteem or your view of yourself? Do you believe your value as a person changed because of your abortion?



READ:
Isaiah 61:1-7

Questions


1. The Passion Translation names this passage the "Messiah's Mission." What from this passage speaks to you? Do you need strength, comfort, restoration, healing, or renewal?

2. Verses 6-7 describe the children of God. How does it feel to be promised a double portion of endless joy and everlasting bliss?

Journal

Whether you believe it or not, grieving should be a natural process following an abortion. Abortion is loss through death, which causes sorrow and grief to follow, although it is often hidden and is different for everyone. For the woman who had an abortion, relief is often the first emotion.

She may be relieved that the pregnancy is over and even glad that the entire situation has ended. Once she gets past the initial relief, her mind may wander back to the abortion experience. Denial often follows at this point. It's easier to defend her choice, justify why she chose abortion, or even deny it altogether than to accept responsibility. This stage often lasts years. When denial ends, anger usually begins. Women tend to deflect the blame onto others who played a part in the abortion. They may focus on how the baby's father persuaded them to abort, how the clinic workers misinformed them, or how no one tried to talk them out of it. Regardless of the situation, it is easy to find others to blame. Anger will linger until she can truly forgive. Depression often pops up as a result of anger toward herself. She is often filled with shame, guilt, self-pity, self-loathing, and/or fear. She may self-medicate with drugs and alcohol or feel the need to punish herself. Once a woman has taken responsibility for her actions, forgiven those around her, and accepted God's forgiveness, she can break free from the bondage brought on by her choice to end the life of her child. She can begin to grieve the loss in a healthy way and live the abundant life God desires for her.



For this God
is our God for
ever and ever;
He will be our guide
even to the end.

Psalm 48:14 (NIV)

Journal

Does this grieving process make sense to you? Which feelings or emotions have you experienced? Which ones are you currently dealing with? Does it feel impossible to grieve the loss in a healthy way?

Journal

Women with an abortion in their past are often bound by shame, guilt, and fear. Just as Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, He wants to raise us up out of our pit of despair.

How does unbinding the cloths wrapped around Lazarus compare to a woman wounded by abortion? What might Jesus desire to unbind from around you? Are you willing to allow this unbinding to occur?

Journal



READ:
Psalm 38:3-8
Psalm 30

Questions

1. Psalm 38 was written by David after he slept with a married woman, got her pregnant, tried to cover it up, and then killed the woman's husband. (2 Samuel 11) Are David's emotions appropriate? Can you relate to any of David's words?

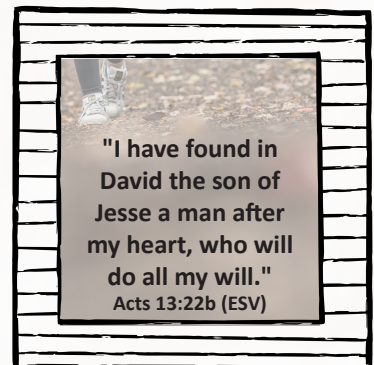
2. Psalm 30 was also written by David but seems to describe a completely different man. What descriptive words do you see here? Do you believe it's possible for the same man to go from utter anguish to singing God's praises? How?

Journal

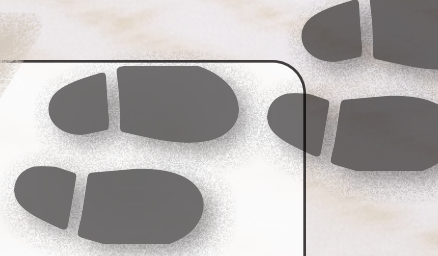
Acts 13 describes David as “A Man After God’s Own Heart.” Consider that for a moment. David was an adulterer, a liar, a manipulator, and a murderer.

How could God say he was a man after His own heart? What does this tell us about God’s view of His children? When God looks at us, what does He see? What does this mean for us?

Journal



Week One Activity

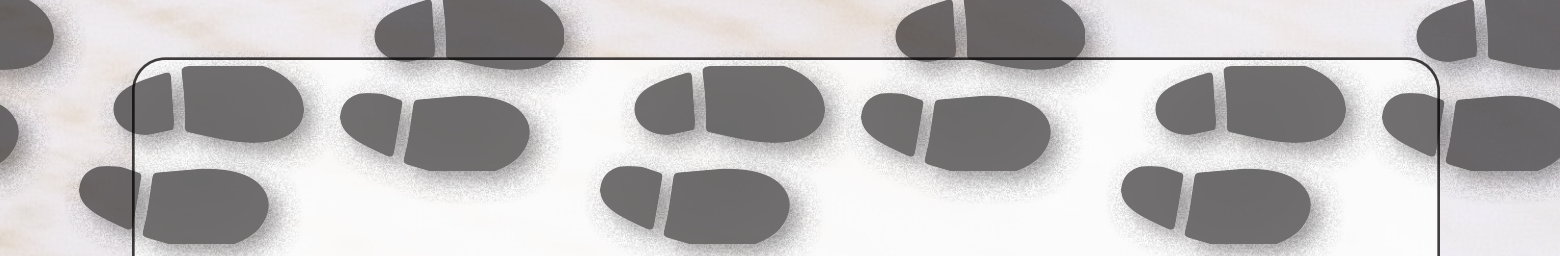


Use these questions to think back through your abortion experience. You will be sharing your story during the next group meeting.

1. What were the circumstances surrounding your life when you found out about your pregnancy?

2. What caused you to decide on abortion?

3. What memories do you have about the actual abortion experience?



4. What changed for you after the abortion?

5. What area(s) of your life do you suspect are still negatively affected by the abortion?

6. What would healing look like in your life?