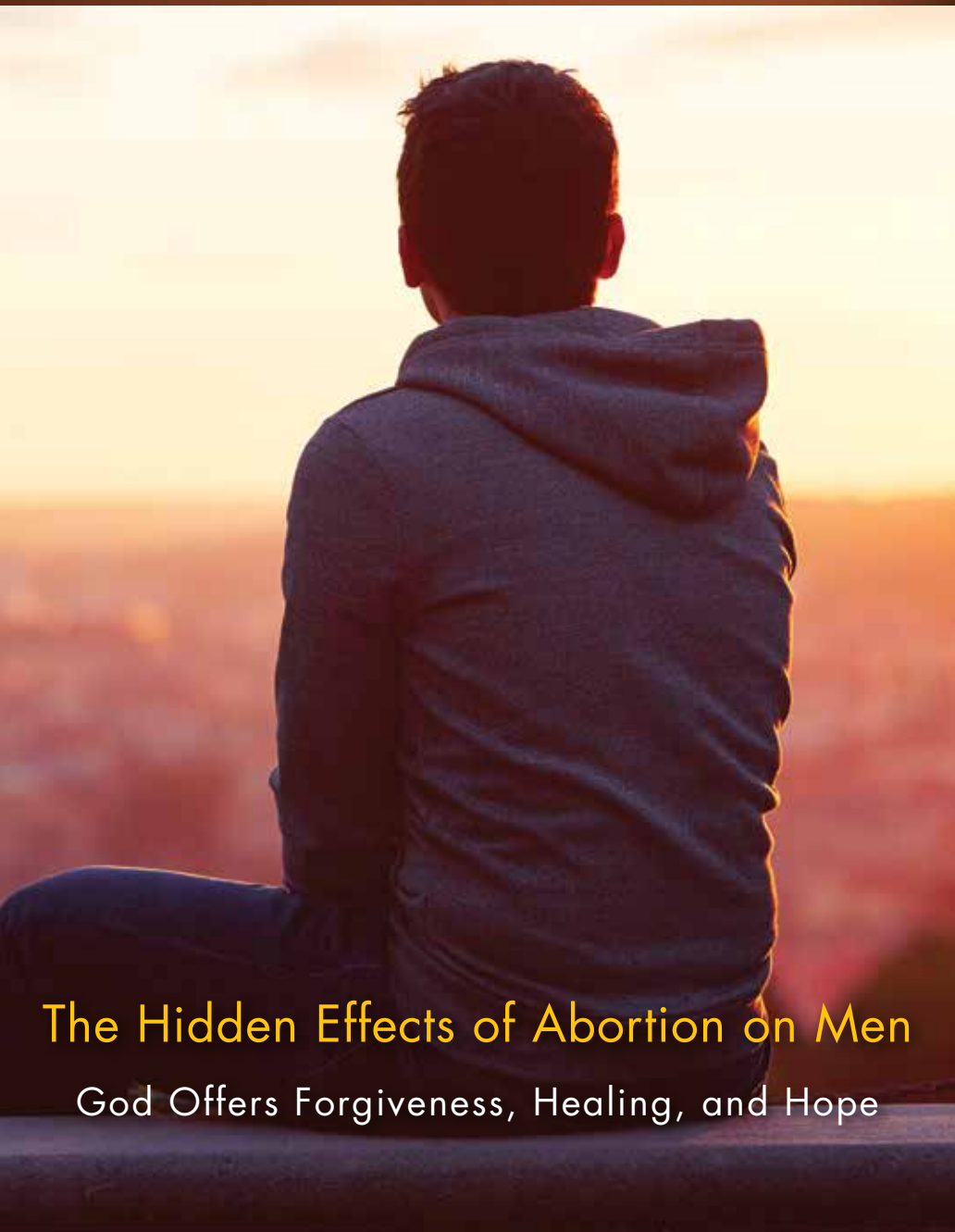


AFTER ABORTION

A Prayer Booklet for Men



The Hidden Effects of Abortion on Men

God Offers Forgiveness, Healing, and Hope

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The Word Among Us Partners
7115 Guilford Drive, Suite 100
Frederick, Maryland 21704
www.waupartners.org

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Theological review: Rev. Joseph F. Wimmer, OSA

Cover design: David Crosson

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About This Prayer Booklet

God longs for *all* men who have been involved in an abortion decision to receive his forgiveness, healing, and hope. If you are in need of such healing, I encourage you to prayerfully read through this booklet—*After Abortion: A Prayer Booklet For Men*—and to receive all the blessings the Lord has for you.

I originally wrote the booklet *After Abortion: God Offers Forgiveness, Healing and Hope* for women in prison after I had learned of two women who were suffering the effects of their abortions. The booklet was later adapted to make it appropriate for any woman struggling with the effects of an abortion.

When I recently received a request to adapt the booklet to make it appropriate for men, I immediately said, “Yes.” But *After Abortion: A Prayer Booklet for Men* would not have been possible without the expert edits of Fonda Luersman, the Project Rachel Coordinator for the Diocese of Venice in Florida. I also received insightful comments and new content from Greg Hasek, a licensed marriage and family therapist. Greg, who has helped numerous men dealing with abortion, shares his thoughts with you on the next page.

And now this prayer booklet is in your hands. In the following pages, you will find seven reflections based on Scripture, together with questions to prompt you in personal heart to heart conversations with God. Begin each reflection by asking God to bless your time alone with him. Don’t rush to finish a reflection in one session. Stay with a Scripture verse or suggested action until you feel you are ready to move on. And revisit a reflection as often as you feel a need. You are a unique person on your own individual journey to a deeper relationship with God and the forgiveness, healing and hope he offers. So let the Holy Spirit lead you.

My prayer is that all who read this booklet will be greatly blessed!

Angela M. Burrin

The Word Among Us Partners

The Hidden Effects of Abortion on Men

If you are a man who has been part of an abortion decision, this booklet is for you. Why? Because there are hidden effects of abortion on men.

As a counselor for over twenty years, I know an abortion decision is one of the most shameful things that a man brings to the counseling office. When a man finds out his partner is pregnant, it is often a shock and can be traumatic.

What was your experience? You may have coerced your partner, abandoned her, reacted passively, or discovered only later that she had an abortion without telling you. Whatever happened, you can heal from the shame you may have carried for years through a greater understanding of grace and how God sees you.

What our culture rarely sees is that men also suffer tremendously over an abortion decision. But often, men “stuff” their pain. While they may mask their pain, it usually comes out through externalized symptoms. Some of the symptoms men may develop after an abortion decision include depression, anxiety, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, addictions of all kinds, anger problems, domestic violence, suicide ideation, attachment difficulties, and intimacy problems.

As a therapist, I understand your hidden pain. I want to validate you for the pain that you might be experiencing inside—it is real. You most likely have not told many people, or possibly no one, about your abortion decision. You may have never considered how the unresolved pain of losing a child and not being a father to that child may have affected you.

It is my prayer that as you read this booklet, you will experience more of God’s grace and mercy. He is waiting with open arms to accept you as you are. As you accept his forgiveness, you can accept your own forgiveness for yourself. You may one day also be able to validate another man’s hidden pain, just as I have validated yours.

This booklet is not intended to replace individual, couples, or group counseling. The intention is to provide comfort and support to you and the many men who find themselves suffering alone and in silence. God loves you and knows what you have been through in your life and how that has affected your abortion decision. He also knows your heart as a father who has suffered a loss. Being able to see God as a loving Father will have a great impact on your ability to heal from not being able to be a dad. God bless you.

Greg Hasek, Southwest Florida Christian Counseling

A Man's Pain from Abortion Is Real

By Reg Platt

I am a male victim of abortion.

Most people don't think men are affected by abortion, but I lost my only child to it. I had no legal say in the matter, so I kept quiet.

I spent the next years suffering in denial, pushing down the grief and pain, and wondering why my life was so messed up. I felt guilty, but I didn't know why. I started pushing away family and friends. The summer after the abortion, I even tried to kill myself.

I tried self-medicating with drugs and booze. I had fleeting, meaningless sexual encounters. I went through two failed marriages, countless relationships, and all the pitfalls that a modern American man is prone to. It was over fifteen years before I could even admit that I'd stood by and did nothing to save my child. I was ashamed of my powerlessness.

And I kept it all to myself. Nobody wanted to hear it. Abortion was a woman's issue, and as a man, I was told that what I felt about it just didn't matter.

But that's not true. A man's pain from an abortion is real, not lesser or greater than a woman's—just different. I started working for pro-life causes. My wife, who married into the problem, went with me to Rachel's Vineyard, which helped me overcome a lot of the suffering. When I discovered Project Joseph, I thought I was over the pain, but the men helping men there opened me up to the damage to my very manhood that remained, and with their help and God's, I was able to lay down that burden.

I now work to help men who find themselves in the same situation. The following meditations and exercises in this prayer booklet work. They work spiritually and mentally to ease the man involved in an abortion out of guilt and helplessness and into a realization of God's loving mercy. To confess our sin and accept God's mercy is necessary because we *are* guilty, and if we allow the Lord's mercy and grace into our lives, it transforms us from being that past sinner into the present man who has learned, accepted, repented, and turned toward God.

That's why there is greater rejoicing in heaven over the return of one sinner than over the one who has always been righteous. That sinner turns into the "new man" that we must all put on (Colossians 3:10). The old man—the one who

forced, suggested, paid for, or drove to an abortion, the man who fought it and lost, or acquiesced and stood by—that man is dead. In Christ, all things are transformed, and we become new men who will never make that choice again (2 Corinthians 5:17).

These exercises and meditations serve as guideposts, and are designed to lead those still in the mire of self-recrimination into the cleansing waters of repentance and rebirth. May we lay down our burdens at the feet of Jesus and walk together as brothers.

God bless you in your recovery.

Reflection One

The Father's Heart

I Am a Beloved Son of My Heavenly Father

“I have loved you with an everlasting love” (Jeremiah 31:3).

God, how could you love me? I've been part of an abortion decision. I failed to protect both my partner and my child.

“You are my child, and I am your Father” (see 1 John 3:1).

But God, I've played a role in taking my child's life.

“It is my desire to lavish my love on you” (see Ephesians 1:3).

God, I don't deserve your love.

If you've had a conversation like this with God, you are not alone. Many men who are suffering emotionally, psychologically, or spiritually, from an abortion have such thoughts. But starting today, your heavenly Father wants you to know and experience—for the first time or at a deeper level—that yes, he loves you, and yes, you are his child, his beloved son. That is his heart's desire. And he is saying to you,

I am my Father's beloved son. And he delights in me.”

I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and I will bring you back from captivity. (see Jeremiah 29:11-14)

Your Father knows everything about you—your past, present, and your future. But how well do you know him? Do you know that God is love? Do you know that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three persons in one God, a communion of love, who from all eternity longed to share their love with others? That's why our Father created Adam and Eve, our first parents.

God's love also flowed over into the beautiful world that he created for Adam and Eve. The Bible tells us that everything God created was *good*! And every evening, Adam and Eve had the joy of walking and talking with their heavenly Father in the Garden of Eden.

Action!

Take a few minutes to think of some of the *good* things God has created that you can see, hear, feel, or taste.

Now thank God for his love in giving us so many *good* things. Only an all-loving God could create such a universe!

And while God was creating the world, *you* were in his mind. Yes! He was actually thinking about *you*. You were not a mistake—even if your mother's pregnancy was unintended or if she tried to abort you.

The Bible is filled with truths about God's love. Here are five more for you to think about today.

- God chose you even before creating the world (see Ephesians 1:4-6).
- God knew you before you were conceived (see Jeremiah 1:5).
- God knew the date of your birth and where you would live (see Acts 17:26).
- God knows every hair on your head (see Matthew 10:30).
- God knows everything that you think, do, and say (see Psalm 139:1-4).

Action!

Read these scriptural truths again. What thoughts do you have? Which passages do you most identify with being loved by God? How do they make you feel? Which Scripture passage makes you feel especially loved and very special to God?

Do you sometimes ask yourself, "Why did God create me?" Well, the reason is that God planned for *you* to be one of his beloved sons to experience his love, and to love him in return. He wanted every man and woman on earth

to be baptized into his family. Did you know that God longs for you to call him “Abba,” which means “Daddy” (see Galatians 4:6)?

Action!

If you’ve never called God by these affectionate names, do so now.

Next, quiet your mind and listen as your heavenly Daddy says,
“_____ (insert your name), you are my beloved son. I love you.”

Another scriptural truth about God is that he is always the same. God never changes. He was, is, and always will be full of love. The abortion decision in your past that you made—for whatever reason—can’t change God’s love for you. Whatever you are experiencing—guilt, anger, grief, regret, shame, self-condemnation, loneliness, depression, or even indifference to your abortion decision—can’t change God’s plan. When you were baptized, you became his beloved son, and you will be for all eternity. That is an awesome truth to repeat to yourself every morning when you wake up or whenever you look in a mirror. “I am my Father’s beloved son. And he delights in me.”

But how do we learn more about who God is and how he wants us to live day by day? Just like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, you can walk and talk with your Father. He longs to have a close relationship with you. He wants to make himself known to you, and he wants you to experience his love.

So try to find some time every day to pray and to read a few Scripture passages. It is especially during your prayer times that you can talk and listen to your Father. He has such a personal love for you. Don’t wait any longer. Start having a prayer time—a quiet time alone with God—today. Your heavenly Father is waiting for you!*

*See p. 45 for a guide to beginning a prayer time.

Truths to Review!

- God created me to know him, to experience his love, and to love him in return.
- Everything that God created is *good*.
- I am my Father's beloved son. That has always been his heart's desire for me.
- My Father invites me to spend time alone with him every day, talking and listening to him.

Following Up!

- Talk with your heavenly Father about whatever is on your heart. He is a safe person to talk to. And he will always listen to you. You can tell him whatever is on your mind. Ask him to reassure you that you are his beloved son.
- Memorize:* “I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (see Jeremiah 29:11-14).
- In a journal, write a letter to your heavenly Father. Then listen, and write your Father's answer to you.**

Pray!

Heavenly Father, thank you for creating me in your image and likeness. I'm grateful that you call me your beloved son. Help me to know that truth, not only in my mind, but also in my heart (where the pain of the past is stored)—and not just when I'm having a good day. Holy Spirit, reveal to me, especially in my prayer times, more about who my Father is and just how much he loves me.

*See p. 46 for tips on memorizing Scripture passages.

**See p. 47 for tips on keeping a prayer journal.

Reflection Two

The Father's Unconditional Love

My Heavenly Father Loves Me—No Strings Attached

Your heavenly Father has always loved you and will never stop loving you. Unlike so many of our other relationships, our relationship with God has no strings attached. Nothing you do could ever make your Father love you more. And nothing you have done wrong—including having been part of an abortion decision—could make him love you less. His love for you is unconditional. Do you believe this truth?

Jesus understood his Father's heart of love and wanted his followers to believe and experience it, too. So he told them the parable of the prodigal son:

There was a man who had two sons. The older son was content to live at home with his father. But the younger son wanted more excitement in his life. So after getting his share of his inheritance, he left his father's home and lived an irresponsible way of life until he became penniless. After trying to survive on pigs' food, he decided to go back home. He resigned himself to the fact that the best he could expect to be was one of his father's servants. How could he hope to be a son after turning his back on his father? But the father had never stopped loving his son. Every day he looked out into the distance in the hope he would return. When at last the father saw his son far off, he ran to him and hugged him. He put on him a robe, shoes, and a ring. Then the father threw a big party for his son. (see Luke 15:11-32)

In the parable of the prodigal son, the father, who represents our heavenly Father, agreed to giving his son his share of the inheritance, which would allow him to leave home. He knew that the life his son was choosing would not fulfill his dreams. But he didn't stop him. How his heart must have broken as he watched his younger son turn his back on the life they had lived together, in search of happiness elsewhere.

But no matter what the son had done—or would do—the father’s heart was filled with love and compassion for him. The father decided that he would never give up hope of seeing his son again. And every day, he eagerly watched and waited, longing for his son’s return.

Nothing can change who you are in his eyes. Your Father’s love for you has always been unconditional.

Whatever past choices you have made that you *now* know to be wrong, you have never stopped being your heavenly Father’s beloved son. Nothing can change who you are in his eyes. Your Father’s love for *you* has always been unconditional. Although his heart was grieved when you chose abortion, he still loved you.

Action!

Your Father’s unconditional love for you is such an important truth. Take a few minutes to reflect on this truth. Talk to your Father about it.

Write in your journal about anything you feel might be preventing you from experiencing this truth. Then write down anything you hear from your Father.

Of course, important decisions are never easy. Sometimes, when we have a major decision to make, there can be a tug of war going on inside of us. We might know what is right, but we still struggle with our decision. The apostle Paul knew all about the struggle we experience between right and wrong. Paul wrote, “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (Romans 7:15).

Chances are, the prodigal son also struggled with the choices he made. Perhaps he struggled with the decision to ask for his inheritance early so that he could leave his father’s home. While enjoying his newfound freedom, perhaps he struggled with accepting his new friends’ invitation to join in activities that challenged the godly values his father had taught him. And then, perhaps he struggled with the decision of returning to his father and wondered whether he could bear the pain of living as a servant—not as a son—in his father’s house.

In your own life, have you experienced any struggles with decisions you had to make? How about the day you learned about your partner’s unintended

pregnancy? Did fear paralyze you? Did you panic? Did you find yourself in shock, saying, “Oh, no, this can’t be happening”? Then, when you began to think about whether your partner should have the baby or have an abortion, did you find it difficult to make a decision? In such situations, our thinking is often clouded by shock and fear. And those feelings can lead us to make an impulsive or panicked decision that may not be based on what is right. This is especially true if you have had past trauma in your life.

On the day of the abortion, you may have felt torn. Part of you was seeking relief from the crisis you and your partner found yourselves in. But that relief only lasted a short time when the reality of what happened started to sink in. The days after the abortion, you may have cared for your partner during her recovery but quickly stuffed your thoughts and emotions about how the abortion affected you. But remember! You weren’t alone. Your Father was there with you. His eyes were on you. He never left your side in all that you were going through.

Remember! You weren’t alone. Your Father was there with you. His eyes were on you. He never left your side in all that you were going through.

Action!

Journal about any of the thoughts and fears you may have had when your partner first came and told you she was pregnant. What did you say to her? If you sense that your Father is speaking to your heart, be sure to write down what he says. That way, you can go back later and read it over.

The prodigal son lost his inheritance because of his personal choices. But he remained his father’s child. You, too, may have lost family, friends, reputation, or material belongings because of your choices. But you have never stopped being your heavenly Father’s beloved son.

Of course, not all of the prodigal son’s choices were wrong. In the end, he decided to return to his father—even if that meant that he would have to live as a servant in his own home. His father, who had completely forgiven him for everything he did, was overjoyed to see him. Even though he was elderly,

the father ran toward his son as soon as he spotted him on the horizon. What an emotional reunion that must have been!

In the final scene of the parable, the father throws a big party for his younger son. However, his older son had a very hard time accepting his father's unconditional love for his brother. When he complained, his father replied with these beautiful words: "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found" (Luke 15:31-32).

Where are you in your relationship with your heavenly Father? Are you still a long way off, beginning to turn back, or actually reunited with your Father? Is he inviting you to make a decision today that could change the rest of your life? Remember. Your Father's love for you is unconditional, and he wants nothing more than to have you come to him!

Truths to Review!

- My Father loves me unconditionally.
- My abortion decision does not change my Father's love for me.
- We struggle with choosing what is right because of the sin that entered our hearts through the disobedience of Adam and Eve.
- My Father is always with me. I am never alone.

Following Up!

- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you imagine your Father hugging you tightly in his strong arms. Listen to him saying, "I love you. I've never stopped loving you." Receive his all-perfect love. Stay with this experience as long as you want.
- Memorize: "I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate" (Romans 7:15).

"Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found" (Luke 15:31-32).

- Journal any of your thoughts and feelings related to this parable. If any questions come to mind that you want to ask your Father, write them down. Over time, many of them may be answered.

Pray!

Father, just like the prodigal son, I have made many wrong choices—especially my role in the abortion decision—and have often turned my back on you. Father, I thank you for loving me unconditionally and always waiting for me to come back to you. Please pour more and more of your love into my heart every day. And Father, please give me your comfort today. Let me see your smiling face and hear you say, “I will never stop loving you—and there are no strings attached.”

Reflection Three

Jesus' Birth and Public Ministry

Jesus Wants to Have a Personal Relationship with Me

Our heavenly Father is always faithful! And in his perfect timing, he sent his only Son, Jesus, to this earth. “And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Jesus was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of a teenage Jewish girl named Mary, who was engaged to Joseph, a carpenter. Around the time of her due date, Mary went with Joseph to Bethlehem for a census count. This was a hard trip for Mary, who had to ride on a donkey for over two hundred miles. They found Bethlehem crowded and the inns full. Joseph anxiously searched for a safe place for Mary. Fortunately, a stable was offered to them. And in that humble place, Jesus, the Son of God, was born.

Jesus’ first visitors were some shepherds from the hills around the town. Angels had appeared to them, singing, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors” (Luke 2:14). And some time later, led by a new star in the sky, three wise men came to bow down and worship Jesus, offering him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (see Matthew 2:1-12).

Action!

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you picture the stable in Bethlehem in your mind. Place yourself in it. What are the sights and sounds? What are you doing or saying? Enjoy the moment!

If you are experiencing turmoil in your life—especially over your abortion decision—look at Jesus lying in the manger. He is the “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). Ask Jesus to give you his peace. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you” (John 14:27).

Jesus was thirty years old when he began his public ministry. And in the gospel of Mark, we can read Jesus' first recorded words: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (Mark 1:14-15). What a powerful message! But it wasn't Jesus' own. Jesus said, "I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise" (John 5:19). The message came straight from God's fatherly heart.

Once Jesus had started his public ministry, news about him quickly spread across the countryside. So wherever Jesus started to teach, whether on hill-sides, in towns, around the Sea of Galilee, or in the temple areas, crowds gathered around him and hung onto his every word. Jesus wasn't prejudiced; he welcomed everyone. And for this, the religious leaders often criticized him—especially when he ate with tax collectors and sinners (see Matthew 9:9-13).

Jesus' disciples were also taken aback by some of the things he did: that he not only taught the crowds but miraculously fed them (see Mark 6:30-44); that he welcomed parents to bring their little children to him for a blessing (see Mark 10:13-16); and that he talked to those who were not of the Jewish faith—such as the Samaritan woman at a village well (see John 4:1-42).

Jesus is always ready to meet our needs, too.

The more we read the gospels, the more we will come to appreciate the fact that Jesus was always ready to meet the needs of those who came to him. Day after day for three years, Jesus performed miracles—healing the sick, casting out demons, cleansing the lepers, and raising the dead (see Mark 1–5). And Jesus is always ready to meet our needs, too!

Action!

Read some of the Scripture passages mentioned on the previous page. Picture the scenes in your mind. Enjoy learning more about Jesus!

Journal about your thoughts and feelings. If a particular Scripture verse jumps out at you, write it down, and tell why it is so meaningful to you.

One day a tax collector named Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was coming into his town. He wanted to see Jesus, and because he was so short, he climbed a sycamore tree. To his surprise, when Jesus passed by, he looked up at him and said, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today” (Luke 19:5). So Zacchaeus came down from the tree and was warmly welcomed by Jesus. When Jesus went with him to his home for a dinner, the onlookers grumbled, saying, “He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner” (19:7). But Jesus replied, “The Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost” (19:10).

Action!

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you re-create this scene in your mind. Place yourself in it. What would you be feeling and thinking as you looked down at Jesus? Why did you come to see him? What did you feel when he called you by name? What do you hear him say to you? Stay with this scene for a while. Allow Jesus to fill you with his love.

Journal your thoughts and feelings about this scene. Write down anything you hear Jesus saying to you.

Jesus was full of love and compassion for Zacchaeus. And he is full of love and compassion for you too. If you feel unworthy of coming to Jesus because of your abortion decision, or if you are afraid that he will reject you, remember what he said to Zacchaeus. Jesus loves you. Your dignity and worth are not based on what you have or haven’t done, but upon the fact that you are his brother and a beloved son of his Father.

You may be tempted to think that Jesus wouldn’t want a personal relationship with you because you have been involved in an abortion—or because you have done other things that you’re ashamed of. But that’s not true. He does! Let this Scripture verse reassure you of his love for you: “Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me” (Revelation 3:20). There is a famous painting of Jesus standing outside a door. But Jesus can’t open the door because there is no handle on his side. *You* have to open it!

Be confident that Jesus wants to be *in* your life. He wants to be your first love. All you have to do is open the door of your heart and invite Jesus in. He is faithful. He will come into your life. The kingdom of God is at hand!

Truths to Review!

- Jesus is the Word of God and the Prince of Peace.
- Jesus reached out to tax collectors and sinners. He spent three years teaching and healing *all* who came to him.
- Jesus knows about my abortion decision. And he loves me anyway.
- Jesus wants to have a personal relationship with me.

Following Up!

- Respond to Jesus' invitation to have a personal relationship with him. In your own words, invite him to come into your heart. Or pray,
 "Jesus, I hear you saying to me that you want a personal relationship with me. Jesus, thank you for accepting me just as I am. I am sorry for my sins. Please come into my life. I want very much to experience your loving presence and to do what pleases you."

If you already have a relationship with Jesus, take a few minutes to recommit your life to him.

- Memorize: "Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me" (Revelation 3:20).
- Journal a letter to Jesus. Write about whatever is on your heart, including any thoughts about your abortion decision. Take time to listen to Jesus. Write down what Jesus says to you.

Pray!

Jesus, you are my Father's beloved Son, my brother. Thank you for leaving the glory of heaven to come into this world. During the three years of your public ministry, you revealed your Father's heart through your words and actions. You welcomed and loved everyone—even those rejected by others. This fills me with hope. Jesus, you don't want anyone to be afraid of coming to you. Jesus, thank you for accepting and loving me. I'm so grateful that you have invited me to have a personal relationship with you. Oh Jesus, I need you in my life!

Reflection Four

Jesus' Death on the Cross

Jesus Offers Me Forgiveness

Have you ever asked yourself why Jesus had to die on the cross? It is because we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (see Romans 3:10). When Jesus died on the cross, he took upon himself the punishment we deserved for our sins. And the precious blood that flowed from his wounds cleansed us from the guilt of those sins. By dying for us, Jesus opened the way to heaven. Now we can stand, pure and spotless, before our heavenly Father. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Jesus, who is our Savior and Redeemer, willingly endured horrendous suffering because of his love for us:

- “They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and after twisting some thorns into a crown, they put it on his head. They put a reed in his right hand and knelt before him and mocked him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ They spat on him, and took the reed and struck him on the head” (Matthew 27:28-30).

- “And carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull. . . . There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side” (John 19:17-18).

- “Jesus cried with a loud voice, . . . ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ Then Jesus cried again with a loud voice and breathed his last” (Matthew 27:46, 50).

Action!

Read about Jesus' suffering and death in one of the gospels—Matthew 27; Mark 14–15; Luke 23; or John 18–19.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you visualize in your mind the scene of Jesus hanging on the cross. What are some of the sights and sounds? How does this make you feel? What are your thoughts?

Imagine Jesus' precious blood flowing from the crown of thorns on his head and from the nails in his hands and feet. Only his mother, a few women, and his disciple John are there to comfort him.

Now put yourself at the foot of the cross. What are you saying to Jesus? Do you hear Jesus say, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34)? How does this make you feel?

Journal about some of your thoughts and feelings.

Jesus' death is not just something that happened two thousand years ago. It has meaning and significance for your life today. Jesus died so that *all* your sins—including the abortion decision—could be forgiven. However, to receive forgiveness, we have to first repent of our sins. How do we repent? Repentance means to admit that what we did was wrong in God's eyes, tell God we are sorry, and turn the direction of our lives toward him and away from sin.

All life is precious, from the moment of conception to natural death.

But many ask—and maybe you have, too—if aborting a child is wrong. Yes, it is. Abortion is a sin because it takes a new life. Life is a gift from God. All life is precious, from the moment of conception to natural death. When we do anything to harm or destroy life in the womb, God grieves, because his son or daughter has been killed. If you have been involved in an abortion in any way, you need to acknowledge that it was wrong and ask God to forgive you.

These may be hard words to accept. But remember: since Jesus has died for *all* our sins, he has died for the sin of abortion, as well. God is merciful. And the precious blood Jesus shed as he died on the cross washes you clean from the sin and guilt of abortion. Let these Scripture verses assure and comfort you: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:7). "As far as the east is from the west, so

far he removes our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12).

Do you ever think that the sin of abortion is too big for God to forgive? Satan wants you to believe that, but it’s a lie. It is important for you to acknowledge that Satan “is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). His lies can make a man feel guilty, even after he has repented. Sometimes these lies can be so persuasive that a man shuts down emotionally, even with those people who are closest to him. If you find this happening to you, say this prayer: “Jesus, in your name, I say *no* to these lies of Satan. Please cover me with your precious blood.”

If you have not previously repented for your role in the abortion decision, do so now. Asking forgiveness is the doorway to receiving full peace and healing. So don’t let anything hold you back from seeking God’s merciful forgiveness.

Action!

Kneel down, and then look at a cross or imagine one in your mind. Pray, “Jesus, I ask you to forgive me for my role in the abortion decision. I admit that it was wrong.” If you have played a role in more than one abortion, ask specific forgiveness for each one.

Continue by praying, “Jesus, thank you for dying on the cross for my sin of abortion and for all my other sins.”

Remain quiet. Give Jesus an opportunity to speak to you. Listen as he says, “Your sins are forgiven.”

Rejoice in God’s forgiveness. Thank him for sending his Son to die on the cross for you.

You may also hear Jesus saying, “You need to forgive yourself for the abortion decision and not protecting your partner and your child.” Ask now for the courage and help to do that.

Now go a step further:

Ask yourself if there was anyone involved in any way with the abortion that you need to forgive—the child’s mother, your parents, the doctor, or a friend? Ask the Holy Spirit to bring their names to mind. Maybe you need to forgive those that caused previous trauma in your life that would later affect your decision-making process about abortion.

Forgiveness is not a feeling; it's a decision. So don't wait for the feeling. Often, it is only through prayer and God's help over time that we can truly let go of the anger and resentment toward those who have hurt us.

Now pray, "God I am sorry for any unforgiveness, anger, or resentment I have felt toward _____ (mention their names). I give them the free gift of my forgiveness."

On one occasion, Jesus said to the religious leaders, "I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). What a glorious thought to end this reflection! So listen carefully. You might hear the saints and angels rejoicing!

Truths to Review!

- On the cross, Jesus died for all my sins—including my abortion decision.
- My Father is merciful. When I ask him to forgive me, I am forgiven. No sin that I have committed is too big for God to forgive.
- My Father asks me to forgive myself for my role in the decision to abort my child.
- Forgiveness is a decision, not a feeling. It is important to offer forgiveness to all those who have hurt or offended us.

Following Up!

- Most men have never told anyone about their involvement in an abortion or abortions—it's their dark secret. They often suffer in silence. Because of gender and cultural conditioning, they usually "suck it up" and appear as if it has not really affected them. Unfortunately, later the suppressed pain comes out in externalized symptoms such as addictions. Many of these men carry a deep-seated shame that they don't tell anyone about, often not even their own wives. If that's the case with you, ask the Holy Spirit to give you courage to open up to someone you can trust.

- If you are Catholic, make an appointment to go to confession. Talk to the priest about your abortion decision, and receive the healing grace of the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
- You may want to contact one of the support groups mentioned on page 47–48.
- Memorize: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3:16).
- Journal a prayer to Jesus—a prayer of gratitude for his death on the cross for all of your sins. Take time to listen to Jesus. Write down what you hear.

Pray!

Jesus, I’m so sorry for the role I played in the abortion decision. Please forgive me. I don’t want to make excuses; I just want to receive your forgiveness. Jesus, thank you for dying such a horrific death on the cross so that all of my sins could be forgiven. Jesus, I deserved to die for my sins, but you took my place. Because of your cross, I am no longer separated from my Father. I can now look forward to spending my life with God here on earth and for all eternity in heaven! Jesus, I proclaim you as my Redeemer, Savior, Lord, and Friend. Thank you, Jesus, for your great sacrificial love.

Reflection Five

Jesus' Resurrection from the Dead

Jesus Offers Me Healing

“Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb” (John 20:1).

Alleluia! Jesus is alive! Death could not keep him bound. Jesus has won a glorious victory over death, sin, and Satan!

Action!

In your Bible, read the full story of Jesus' resurrection (see John 20:1-18).

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you re-create in your mind the scene of Mary's meeting with Jesus. His appearance was so changed that she didn't recognize him until he said her name.

Now put yourself into the scene. You have just met Jesus. What are your thoughts and feelings? What are you talking about with Jesus? Is he showing you the wounds in his hands and feet? Are you touching his glorified body?

In your journal, record some of your thoughts and feelings about your meeting with Jesus. Include anything that Jesus said to you.

Jesus' resurrection isn't just something that happened two thousand years ago. It has significance for your life, here and now. The great news is that Jesus, now raised from the dead, invites you to participate in his *new life*.

The new life that Jesus offers you is one of hope, joy, and confidence in the truth that you are a beloved son of your Father. It is a life of victory over sin and all those things that drag you down. Through the power of the Holy

Spirit, you now have the power to say *no* to sin and temptations and *yes* to living a life pleasing to God. And Jesus' new life offers you *freedom* from any guilt, shame, anger, regret, or indifference associated with anything you have done that you know to be wrong, including your abortion decision.

These are the truths of our Christian faith. But if you are experiencing any doubt about whether you have new life in Jesus, he is saying to you, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who *believe* in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" (John 11:25-26). Jesus said these words just before he raised his dearest friend, Lazarus, from the dead.

Jesus' resurrection isn't just something that happened two thousand years ago. It has significance for your life, here and now.

Action!

Read the story in your Bible about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11). Underline any words that jump out at you, or write them in your journal.

Now draw a cross. If you are suffering from guilt, shame, regret, indifference, anger, or bitterness related to your abortion decision, write the names of those feelings (or any other negative feelings) on the cross.

As you write each one, pray, "Jesus, I believe in you and in the power of your death and resurrection. Please forgive me and free me."

Read this Scripture verse several times: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

Imagine Jesus' blood washing all your sins and negative emotions away. Now accept the freedom that is yours!

Now listen to Jesus say to you, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10).

After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, you may recall that he shouted to Lazarus to come out of the tomb. Jesus then asked some of the startled crowd to unwrap the binding cloths that had been wound around his body

before he was buried. Jesus didn't want his friend to be bound any longer by anything having to do with death. He wanted Lazarus to be free to experience his new life abundantly. Jesus longs for you to experience his new life abundantly, too.

Healing of Memories

Sometimes memories can keep us from experiencing the fullness of the *new life* that is rightfully ours because of Jesus' death and resurrection. Memories can be like chains. Perhaps this story will help you understand how controlling they can be:

An elephant trainer was showing a visitor around the zoo. The visitor noticed a large elephant with a short chain around one ankle. The chain was staked to the ground, and its links were thin. "I'm curious," said the visitor. "How can such a weak chain hold such a large animal?" The trainer replied, "Well, it doesn't." He went on to explain: "When an elephant is born, we place a chain like this one around his ankle. No matter how much the baby elephant pulls, he can't break the chain or pull out the stake. At some point, he stops trying. By the time he's full grown, he's still being held by that same chain. It's not the chain that holds him, though. It's the memory of the chain."

Jesus wants to set you free by healing any shameful memories. "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

Jesus doesn't want you to be chained by any memories of your abortion decision. He wants to set you free by healing any shameful memories. "So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36).

What does it mean that Jesus can heal our memories? When Jesus heals a memory, it no longer drags us back to the past. We can move forward in our life. This doesn't mean you will never have a memory of your abortion decision. You may even still occasionally experience pain, and you may still miss your child and the ability to be a father. You may also regret your part in his or her death. However, when Jesus heals you, you won't be paralyzed by the pain or the condemnation.

Up until this reflection, the suggested **Action!** steps have been for you to do alone. However, for the actions outlined here for the healing of memories and grief, you may want to ask your pastor, priest, or a trusted friend to pray alongside you. Their presence will be very comforting. Having emotional and prayer support would be particularly important if you find thinking about your abortion decision overwhelming or traumatic. Jesus wants to heal your memories, and he will. But he also wants you to be supported in this healing process.

If you are supporting someone in this time of healing, help them through these action steps while you reassure them of Jesus' presence and his great love.

Action!

Begin by praying, "Jesus, I don't want to be chained any longer by memories of my abortion decision. Please come and heal me."

Now ask the Holy Spirit to bring up any memories of the abortion decision: perhaps of the day you discovered your partner was pregnant; the reactions of your partner or your parents; feelings of resentment or anger; the dilemma of making the decision to go to the abortion clinic; the day of the actual procedure; the days following the abortion; or any other memories or flashbacks you find troubling.

As a memory comes back to your mind, ask Jesus to come into the memory. Then wait, and expect to *see* Jesus in the midst of your memory. Now simply allow yourself to feel the pain. What is Jesus doing now? Is he reaching out his hands to you, hugging you, or maybe drying your tears? Say to Jesus, "Please heal this memory so that it no longer keeps me chained."

Finally, listen to what Jesus says to you. Perhaps he is saying, "I was there all the time with you. Receive my peace. I bore the pain of this memory when I died on the cross. I'm your risen Lord. I have healed your memory."

Don't rush. If there are tears, allow them to flow. Crying is healing. "May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy" (Psalm 126:5).

And don't worry if you can't see Jesus in your mind or hear him say anything. Not everyone does. But trust that Jesus is with you. He sees you, and he hears the cries of your heart. Jesus is holding you. He's crying with you. Jesus is feeling your distress. He's taking all your pain upon himself. Jesus is healing you.

Healing of Grief

Are you grieving because of the loss of your child or lost fatherhood? Have you perhaps lost someone close to you because of the abortion decision? Although identifying and acknowledging your losses is painful, it is an important step toward being healed of your grief. Minimizing or denying your losses will only impede the healing process.

Action!

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you identify your losses. Then write them down in your journal.

What is grief? Grief is a deep sorrow and sadness. Grief is painful and emotionally exhausting. Grief can leave a person feeling empty and numb. And grief is normal after a loss. So give yourself permission to grieve the loss or losses you've identified. Don't be afraid to feel the grief and the pain of your losses. Your grief is real. And your pain is real. But if you allow yourself to heal, the pain you are feeling now will diminish over time.

Action!

Talk to Jesus about your grief and your pain. Jesus is the Healer. He is listening and is right there with you. When you are ready, say, "Jesus, I give you my grief and my pain. Please take it all."

Allowing yourself to let go of the pain doesn't mean that you are going to forget your child or that your love for him or her is any less. It is giving yourself permission to accept the freedom and healing Jesus won for you by dying on the cross and rising from the dead. Accepting that freedom and healing will

enable you to move on in the life your heavenly Father has for you. Remember! Your Father loves you unconditionally, and he doesn't want you to suffer for your entire life because of what you did.

Action!

Again, quiet your mind, and focus on Jesus. Perhaps picture him alive and risen from the dead, walking out of the tomb! Feel safe in Jesus' presence.

Pray, "Come, Jesus. Heal me, comfort me, and give me peace." Then listen to Jesus speaking words of love and encouragement to you.

If you are able, listen to some Christian music. This will help you to stay focused on Jesus' presence with you. And keep praying, "Jesus, I love you. Jesus, I trust you."

It is important to mention that Jesus is able to heal grief completely after one prayer session. However, healing is often a process—a very personal and individual one—and not a matter of following a series of steps. Be patient with yourself. Everyone moves through the grieving process differently, some more quickly than others. For example, one blind man that Jesus prayed for didn't recover his sight immediately, but only after Jesus prayed with him again (see Mark 8:22-26).

Some men can get stuck in their grief and don't seem to be able to move through it. You may have a memory that is still very distressful, or you may not be able to move through the grief of losing your child (or another relationship). If so, you are not alone. Other men struggle, too. But during this time, try not to entertain thoughts such as "I'm not healed because I lack faith" or "I must be doing something wrong." Rather, ask Jesus every day to continue his healing. Also, seek the prayer, support, and guidance of your pastor, priest, or another person you can trust. And remain hopeful that Jesus is healing you.

Healing the Shame

Many men have expressed in their experience of an abortion a sense of shame. Have you experienced a shame within yourself since the abortion? A feeling that you failed or fell short in your responsibility as a father? That you

didn't come through with what God expected of you as a man? God is your Father and he wants to take away, and heal, your shame.

Action!

Spend some time in prayer with your eyes closed, and ask God your Father to come in and heal this wound of shame in your heart. Identify the pain in your heart or wherever you feel it, and ask God to place his healing hand upon you, and to come in and heal that pain. He desires to do this. You may want to repeat this prayer over a period of time (days) as God your Father heals your wound.

Healing of Your Body

Now let's focus on physical healing. An abortion can take a physical toll on the man as well as the woman. Many turn to alcohol, drugs, or sexual addiction to numb the deep pain they are experiencing. Others become work-alcoholics to escape the memory of the abortion.

Jesus wants to heal our physical bodies as well as our memories and emotions..

In the Scriptures, a blind beggar named Bartimaeus was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, the man began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stopped and said, "Call him." He sprang up and went to Jesus. And Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man asked that he might see. Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well" (Mark 10:46-52).

Jesus wants to heal our physical bodies as well as our memories and emotions. So if you have experienced any injury or abuse to your body as a result of the abortion decision, ask Jesus to heal those, too.

Action!

Jesus asks you, as he asked the blind man, “What do you want me to do for you?” Imagine him standing before you and from your heart, tell him what you need.

Remember! Jesus’ deepest desire for you—his brother—is to experience the fullness of life that is yours as a son of his Father. May your heart be filled with joy as you realize—either immediately or over time—that you have received healing. That’s the power of Jesus’ death and resurrection transforming your life! Alleluia!

Truths to Review!

- Jesus’ resurrection offers me new life, freedom, and healing.
- I can have hope in my life because of Jesus’ resurrection.
- Jesus alone can heal all the effects of my abortion decision—spiritual, emotional, and physical.
- Jesus longs for me to experience the fullness of life that is mine as a son of my Father.

Following Up!

- Ask for prayers for healing from your pastor, priest, or a trusted friend.
- If you are Catholic, receive the Eucharist whenever possible. Jesus’ presence will be a source of further healing for you.
- Memorize: “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25-26).

“He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

- Journal about today’s time of healing prayer.

Pray!

Jesus, you are the resurrection and the life. I'm so grateful for the new life that I have in you. Jesus, for so long I have suffered from the effects of my abortion decision. But today I believe you have begun to heal me. At this difficult and painful time, reassure me of your love and your presence with me. Jesus, I praise you for what you have done and what you will continue to do in my life so that I can experience your new life abundantly. Jesus, you are my hope.

Note: If you have been involved in more than one abortion decision, take time to bring all the circumstances of each one to prayer. This can be done over several prayer sessions. Remember! Jesus longs to heal you completely of the effects of each abortion decision.

Reflection Six

Pentecost: Jesus Sends His Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit Wants to Transform Me

Saying goodbye to a loved one can be a very painful experience—especially if we don’t know when or if we will see them again. Jesus’ disciples must have had heavy hearts as they walked with him to the mountain where he would ascend to his Father. Knowing their thoughts, Jesus gave his disciples a reassuring promise: “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

Action!

Take a moment to hear Jesus say, “I am always with you, _____ (insert your name).”

If you have any memories of people letting you down, lying to you, or not being there for you—especially regarding your abortion decision—stop for a few minutes. Ask Jesus to forgive you for any anger or resentment you still feel. Then follow the steps in the previous reflection for the healing of memories. Jesus is your Healer.

Remember! Jesus has always been with you. And he will always be there for you. Call upon his name with confidence whenever you feel alone.

Before his ascension, Jesus promised his disciples that he would send them his Holy Spirit (see John 14:15-31). Not knowing what to expect after Jesus returned to heaven, the disciples went back to the upper room in Jerusalem and locked the doors, because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. There they waited. After ten days, the Holy Spirit came! There was a loud rushing sound like a strong wind and tongues of fire, which settled on the heads of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit (see Acts 2).

The Holy Spirit, who has loved you from all eternity, lives in you, too! “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

And now the Holy Spirit wants to fill you—as he did Jesus’ disciples on the day of Pentecost—with the fire of his divine love. He wants to have a per-

Now the Holy Spirit wants to fill you—as he did Jesus’ disciples on the day of Pentecost—with the fire of his divine love. He wants to have a personal relationship with you—as intimate as you have with your heavenly Father and Jesus.

sonal relationship with you—as intimate as you have with your heavenly Father and Jesus. “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, because he will take what is mine and declare it to you” (John 16:13-14).

Action!

Pray now with great expectancy, “Holy Spirit, come and baptize me with the fire of your love.”

Don’t rush. Sit for five or ten minutes, and allow the Holy Spirit to minister to you in whatever way he chooses. Perhaps you will experience a special sense of his presence. Perhaps a word or thought you know is not your own or a few words from a Scripture verse will pop into your head. Or perhaps you will see a picture in your mind. Whatever it is, it will be something very personal, just for you!

Write about this time of prayer in your journal.

Being filled by the Holy Spirit transformed the disciples’ way of thinking and behaving. Do you remember how Peter immediately went from a fearful person who denied knowing Jesus at his arrest to being a self-declared disciple?

The disciples were empowered by the Holy Spirit to teach with boldness and clarity about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; to heal in the name of Jesus; to tirelessly travel to distant countries; and to suffer persecution and even death because of their love for Jesus. You can read all about these events in the book of Acts.

The Holy Spirit wants to transform your thinking, too. He wants to empower you to do things—perhaps related to your abortion decision—that you previously found impossible to do. Let these words from St. Paul encourage you: “Be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2).

What are some areas that the Holy Spirit will want to transform? If you think about yourself as unlovable, as a failure, or as a disappointment to others, he will want to change your thinking so that you will see yourself as he does—as a beloved and cherished son of your heavenly Father. He may also want to change the way you think about others who have hurt you, betrayed you, or let you down.

The Holy Spirit also wants to empower you to act. Perhaps he will inspire and give you the courage to share the story of your abortion decision with someone who would be helped by hearing it.

Action!

Take some time to think about these or other areas of your life. Then pray, “Thank you, Holy Spirit, for being in my life. Come now, and transform my thinking about _____ (name the areas) and empower me to do _____ (name the actions).”

Quiet your mind. Remain in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Expect to receive an encouraging word or some thoughts about how to perform a particular action.

In your journal, record what happened in your time with the Holy Spirit, so that you can go back to it later.

The power of the Holy Spirit is so awesome that some ways of thinking are transformed immediately. However, other thought patterns can take longer to change.

So continue to pray. Remember to watch out for the lies of Satan, who wants to keep you feeling unforgiven, unloved, insecure, or depressed. Always try to replace the lies from Satan with a truth from Scripture. It is at times like this that the Scripture verses you are memorizing will be helpful.

The word of God is an essential weapon for every Christian in the battle against Satan.

It is also helpful to share your struggles with someone else and ask them to pray with and for you. Bringing an area to light is another way to fight the lies of Satan. There is also awesome power in the name of Jesus. So keep his name on your lips. And remember that your Father loves you unconditionally—actually, he is crazy about you! He is merciful and faithful, and with him nothing is impossible (see Mark 10:27).

Remember that your Father loves you unconditionally—actually, he is crazy about you!

One particular area that the Holy Spirit longs to transform is the negative thoughts a man may have about the child he lost through abortion. Many men have fears about where their child is, what he/she thinks about them, or whether they and

his child will ever be reunited. These are normal thoughts. But the good news is that if you have any such fears, the Holy Spirit wants to replace them with these truths:

- Your child is a beloved son/daughter of God.
- Your child loves you—his/her father—and is praying for you and wants you to forgive and love yourself.
- Your child has forgiven you for aborting him/her.
- You can, with sure hope, entrust your child to the Lord.

Action!

Read the truths above. If possible, say them out loud so that you can hear yourself speaking them. Put a check mark next to any that you find hard to believe.

Now ask the Holy Spirit to give you an assurance, deep within your heart, about any truth that causes you to doubt or to say, “I’m not sure about that.” Pray your own prayer, or say, “Holy Spirit, help me to believe that my child _____ (name the truth).”

In your journal, write down what you asked for. That way, you can go back at a later time and give thanks for your new way of thinking.

Here's one more thought about your child: why not choose a name for your child? Remember! You hope to be living with your child in the presence of the Lord for all of eternity.

Action!

Think about what name you would like to give your child. You can do this over a few days or weeks. You could even chat with a trusted friend about your favorite names.

Say to your child, "I am naming you _____!"

Enjoy this time thinking about your child. Receive all the inner healing that the Holy Spirit is doing in your life right now. Remember! The Holy Spirit loves you and wants to fill you with his awesome transforming power.

Truths to Review!

- Jesus promised that he is always with me.
- The Holy Spirit can empower me to do things I thought I could never do.
- The Holy Spirit can transform the thoughts I have about my child.
- With sure hope, I entrust my child to the loving care of the Lord.

Following Up!

- Make a plan to begin learning more about Jesus' disciples and other early Christians by reading the Acts of the Apostles in your Bible. Perhaps you could read one chapter each day.
- Memorize: "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

"Be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect" (Romans 12:2).

“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own?” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

- In your journal, write a letter to your child, starting with “Dear _____” (insert your chosen name). Many men have found this to be a very healing thing to do.

Pray!

Holy Spirit, I love you and thank you for being in my life. Fill me with more and more of your love, peace, joy, and even laughter. Please come and completely renew how I think about my child, my life, and my future. And Holy Spirit, when I have a negative thought or Satan feeds me a lie, I ask you to bring to mind a scriptural truth that I can repeat to myself. I want to begin living my days grounded in the truths of who my Father is and who I am as his beloved son.

Reflection Seven

Jesus' Second Coming

Jesus Offers Me Hope for My Life

Salvation History

Creation	Old Testament Prophets	Jesus' Birth Life and Death	Resurrection Ascension	Pentecost Holy Spirit	Birth of Early Church	You Are Here *	Jesus' Second Coming
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Let's start this final reflection with more good news: Jesus will come again! Many people speculate about when this will be, but no one knows. Only the Father, who has a wondrous plan of salvation for all his beloved children, knows when his Son will return in glory.

We can, however, get a glimpse from the Book of Revelation of what it will be like when Jesus does come back to earth:

See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away. (Revelation 21:3-4)

And so the Church waits in great hope for that day when Jesus will return in glory!

Look at the *salvation history* time line at the top of this page, and find "You Are Here." You are some place in the period between the early Church and Jesus' second coming. Whether you are alive when Jesus comes again or not, your Father's intention is for you to spend eternity with his beloved Son, Jesus. For the Church—made up of all Christians—is Jesus' beloved bride.

For the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure. (Revelation 19:7-8)

And while the Church waits for Jesus' return, our Father gives us the privilege of continuing Jesus' mission—bringing God's kingdom to earth. What a great calling! How do we do this? By listening to the Holy Spirit and doing what he asks of us, so that we can bring Jesus' love to others through our words and actions.

If you are thinking right now, "That call is impossible for me because I've been part of an abortion decision," don't let that thought go any further. It's a lie. Everyone who proclaims that Jesus is their Lord and Savior can be used by God to spread his message of love and mercy. What St. Paul said of himself is also true of you:

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:19-20)

So be filled with hope! Think back to the time when you chose to ask Jesus for forgiveness for your sins and invited him into your life. Whether it was the first time or when you recommitted yourself to him, these were such blessed moments! Think about them often.

Action!

What has happened since you asked Jesus to come into your life or since you recommitted your life to him?

What would you like to happen in your life?

Record your thoughts and feelings in your journal.

The history of God's children includes the stories of many people who through the help of the Holy Spirit turned away from sin and then were used by God to bring his kingdom to earth. For example, there was King David, who committed both adultery and murder. He wrote the psalms, including Psalm 51 on repentance. There was Peter, who denied knowing Jesus three times. Jesus named him the "Rock," and he became the first head of Jesus' Church (see Mark 14:66-72 and Matthew 16:18). And of course, there was Paul, who persecuted the followers of Jesus until Jesus appeared to him on

the road to Damascus (see Acts 9:1-22). He became a great apostle, tirelessly preaching the good news of Jesus throughout the ancient world.

Action!

Take some time to read about these people in your Bible. Their stories will fill you with hope of what the power of the Holy Spirit can do in a person who says yes to God.

But don't stop there—the list goes on right up until today! Who are some of the men you know personally or have heard about who have experienced a personal conversion to Jesus? What are their strengths and talents? How are they using their God-given gifts to build the kingdom of God?

Ask other men for their suggestions.

Saint Teresa of Calcutta, a nun who started homes all over the world for the poor and those with AIDS, said, “Do something beautiful for God.” That’s an invitation for you, too.

It is very possible for you to “do something beautiful for God.” You can start today. What do you think you could do? Could you talk to someone who is often alone? Or could you give an encouraging word, smile, or promise of a prayer to someone having a hard day? It doesn't have to be something big, but it does have to be done with great love.

Don't let anything—including your abortion decision, feelings of unworthiness, or a lack of confidence—hold you back from doing something beautiful for God. Watch out for those fiery darts from Satan, who doesn't want you to do anything good for another child of God. To combat Satan, you can shout from the rooftops, “I'm my Father's beloved son!”

Action!

Think about some of the things that you are good at doing.

How are you using these gifts? How could you use them?

Now think big! What beautiful thing for God would you like to do?

Share your thoughts with a friend.

Read 1 Corinthians 12. What spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit would

you like to receive? Pray: “Holy Spirit, I ask you to give me the gift of _____ (name it).”

Journal some of your thoughts and any decisions you have made.

Remember! God, who has started a good work in you, will bring it to completion (see Philippians 1:6). This will come about as you begin to cooperate more and more with the Holy Spirit throughout your day. Like so many other areas, it’s a process—so take it one day at a time.

How can you begin to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and live for Jesus? The answer is to pray every day. Spending time with the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit will change your life. There’s a guide on page 45 of this booklet that will help you to develop a daily prayer time. And every morning, even before you get out of bed, pray, “Good morning, Holy Spirit! Please be with me throughout this day in all that I do, think, and say. I want to please Jesus and my Father today.”

The answer is to pray every day. Spending time with the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit will change your life.

Jesus is our best example of someone who loved to pray! Jesus would slip away early in the morning to have a conversation with his Father (see Matthew 14:23). Then, knowing his Father’s will and having been renewed in the strength of the Holy

Spirit, Jesus was empowered to meet all the needs of those who came to him.

It’s such a blessing to be able to walk and talk with God throughout our days. But sadly, many don’t know that this can be a reality for them. Rather, they live their days without hope. They don’t know that God loves them. They can’t break out of some of their patterns of sin, because they’re unaware that they can receive the power to live a new life because of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

And this is where you have an important role to play. Jesus wants *you* to speak the truth to them. He longs for them to experience the love, joy, and peace that are now flowing out from you.

Every day as you walk in God’s love, ask for opportunities to share with others the truths you have read about in this booklet. And also share what your loving Father has done for you. Through you, they could experience his forgiveness, healing, and hope. Wouldn’t that be awesome? Pray especially

that the Holy Spirit will bring to you those who have been involved in an abortion decision. You could be an answer to prayer!

Truths to Review!

- Jesus will come again. As we wait for him, we can bring the kingdom of God to earth.
- I have been personally called by my heavenly Father to build his kingdom.
- By the power of the Holy Spirit, I can live every day for Jesus. Having a time of prayer every day is vitally important.
- Sharing with other men what God has done in my life could help them find forgiveness, healing, and hope.

Following Up!

- Decide on the best time in your day for a prayer time—perhaps early in the morning. Share your decision with one other person.
- Memorize: “See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away” (Revelation 21:3-4).

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:19-20).

- Journal about what the Holy Spirit has shown you today through this reflection. Also write about any resolutions you have made to help you move forward in your journey of faith.

Pray!

Jesus, thank you for all the healing that you have done in my life, especially while I've been praying through the reflections in this booklet. Please fill me with more and more of your Holy Spirit so that I can be used to bring the truth of your love to others, including those men who have had an abortion experience. Remove any barriers that hold me back. Make me bold and courageous but also sensitive and compassionate. And Jesus, please help me to never forget that you are always with me and will never stop loving me. Father, I love being your son. Thank you for your unconditional love!

A Guide to Prayer

Decide on the best time of day to have a prayer time. That way, prayer will become part of your daily schedule. Try to choose a time when there aren't too many distractions or too much noise, such as very early in the morning. Experiment, and find what works best. This guide to prayer can help you stay focused when you spend time with the Lord:

- Begin your time of prayer by saying, “Father, Jesus, and Holy Spirit, thank you for being here with me.”
- Now, quiet your mind. Focus your attention on Jesus—perhaps picturing yourself walking along the Sea of Galilee with him or sitting next to him at a village well.
- Take a few minutes talking to Jesus about what is on your mind and how you are feeling. Give him all your burdens.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you examine your conscience. Quickly repent of any sins that he shows you, and accept your loving Father's forgiveness (see Psalms 51 and 130; Matthew 6:9-15).
- Now it is time to recall some scriptural truths and to praise and thank God for them in your heart:
 - I am my Father's beloved son (see 1 John 3:1).
 - My Father loves me unconditionally (see Jeremiah 31:3).
 - My Father wants to lavish his love on me (see Ephesians 1:3).
 - My Father sent Jesus to die for all my sins (see John 3:16).
 - Jesus calls me his friend (see John 15:15).
 - Jesus wants to give me his peace (see John 14:27).
 - Jesus sees me as his brother (see Mark 3:33-35).
 - Jesus is always with me (see Matthew 28:20).
 - After repenting of my sins, I become whiter than snow (see Psalm 51:7).
 - I am a temple of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
 - I can be strong in the Lord and his mighty power (see Ephesians 6:12-19).

- Jesus will come again (see John 14:1-3).
- Add your own: _____.
- Next, spend five minutes reading your Bible. If you have *The Word Among Us* magazine, read the Scripture passages and meditation for the day. Talk to God. Listen to him.
- Now, take a few minutes asking God to bless your family, friends, and all the intentions on your intercessory prayer list.
- End your time of prayer by writing in your journal. Be sure to include
 - what you have prayed for;
 - what God has said or shown you; and
 - what you want to carry into the day so that your prayer will bear fruit.

Memorizing Scripture Verses

Memorizing verses from the Bible will give you a supply of scriptural truths you can call on throughout your day, whenever you need them. Here are some tips to make memorizing easier:

- Read the Scripture passage to yourself at least four or five times. Try imagining pictures in your mind to go along with the passage.
- Break the Scripture passage into parts—perhaps sentences or even phrases. It will be much easier to memorize a few words at a time instead of the whole Scripture passage at once.
- Read the first sentence. Close your eyes, and try to say it again in your mind. Open your eyes, and see how well you did. Repeat this process until you can recite the first sentence aloud without any mistakes. Don't move on until you are confident.
- Do the same for the second sentence, just concentrating on it alone. Once you can say the second sentence aloud, try to recite the first and second together.
- Repeat until you have the entire Scripture passage memorized.

If you can memorize Scripture with a friend, it will be much easier!

Keeping a Prayer Journal

Keeping a daily journal is a great way to talk to God, to keep track of what He is saying to you, and to record Scripture verses you want to remember. Writing your thoughts can help you organize them, and it allows you to go back and read them later—either as a starter for prayer or to see how far you’ve come. Here are some tips for starting a journal:

- Find a notebook to use as your journal.
- Keep your journal with this booklet or with your Bible in a special place, together with a pen or pencil.
- Begin each journal entry by writing the date.
- Write down your thoughts and feelings.
- Take time to listen to God. He is longing to talk to you.
- Write down what you think God is saying to you.
- Write down any Scripture verses that speak to you in prayer.
- Write down your prayer requests.
- Begin a “praise sheet” of answered prayers. Rejoice in God’s love!
- Every so often, go back and read over your journal entries.

Resources

Project Rachel: Hope After Abortion: www.hopeafterabortion.org.

A network of specially trained priests, counselors, and laypersons who provide a team response of care for those suffering the aftermath of abortion. 888-456-HOPE

Project Joseph: A life-changing opportunity for men who struggle with the emotional and spiritual pain of abortion. Project Joseph is designed specifically for men and led by men. It is a unique and effective process to help men experience the mercy and compassion of God. On a Project Joseph day of healing, you will be able to deal with the repressed grief, anger and guilt often associated with the loss of a child from an abortion, and to take steps toward real psychological and spiritual healing. All

contact is confidential and handled by two bilingual teams of men. Messages are responded to either in English or Spanish: 469-416-2101.

The National Office of Post-Abortion Reconciliation and Healing: E-mail noparh@juno.com. 1-800-5WE-CARE.

NOPARH sponsors a nation-wide referral service for those seeking help after abortion.

Lumina/Hope & Healing After Abortion: www.postabortionhelp.org. E-mail: lumina@postabortionhelp.org. 1-877-586-4621.

A ray of light in abortion's darkness! A network of women and men who have walked through the pain of abortion are ready to accompany you through the darkness, into the joy of a renewed life. Living with the pain of abortion can be overwhelming. Feelings of anxiety, panic, grief, guilt and shame can often seem insurmountable, but there is a way out of the pain. You do not have to suffer alone! Countless women and men have reached healing through Lumina's services, which include group programs, referrals to professional therapists, post-abortion ministries, and clergy members trained in post abortion stress.

Rachel's Vineyard Ministries: www.rachelsvineyard.org. 1-877-HOPE-4-ME.

A psychological and spiritual weekend for healing after abortion.

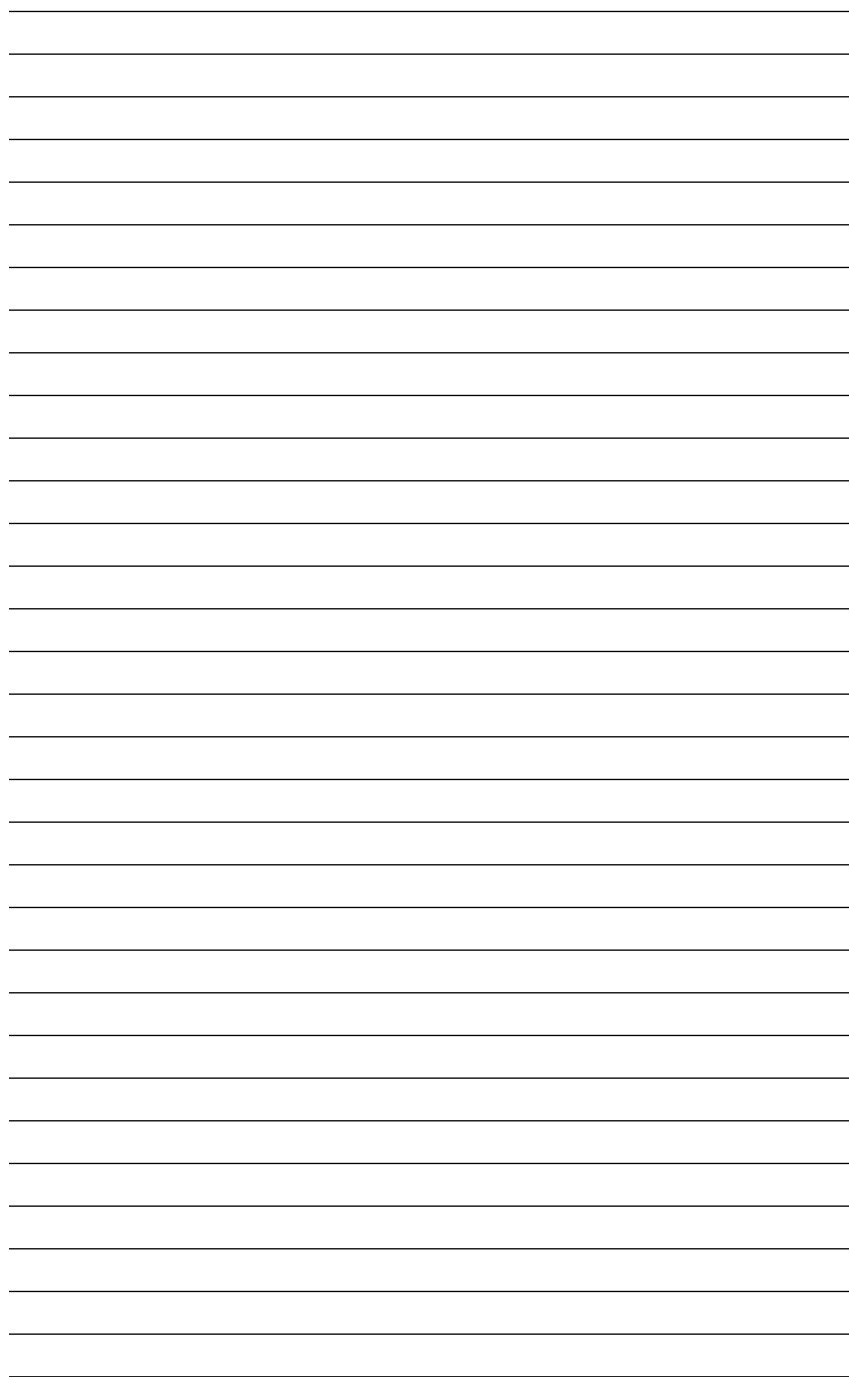
Abortion Changes You: www.abortionchangesyou.com.

An on-line refuge for those who wish to begin the process of healing.

Gregory Hasek, Licensed Mental Health Counselor, Southwest Florida Christian Counseling. 24840 Burnt Pine Dr., Suites 1 and 2, Bonita Springs, Florida. 34134. 239-301-4464. www.swflchristiancounseling.org. Email: swflchristiancounseling@gmail.com.

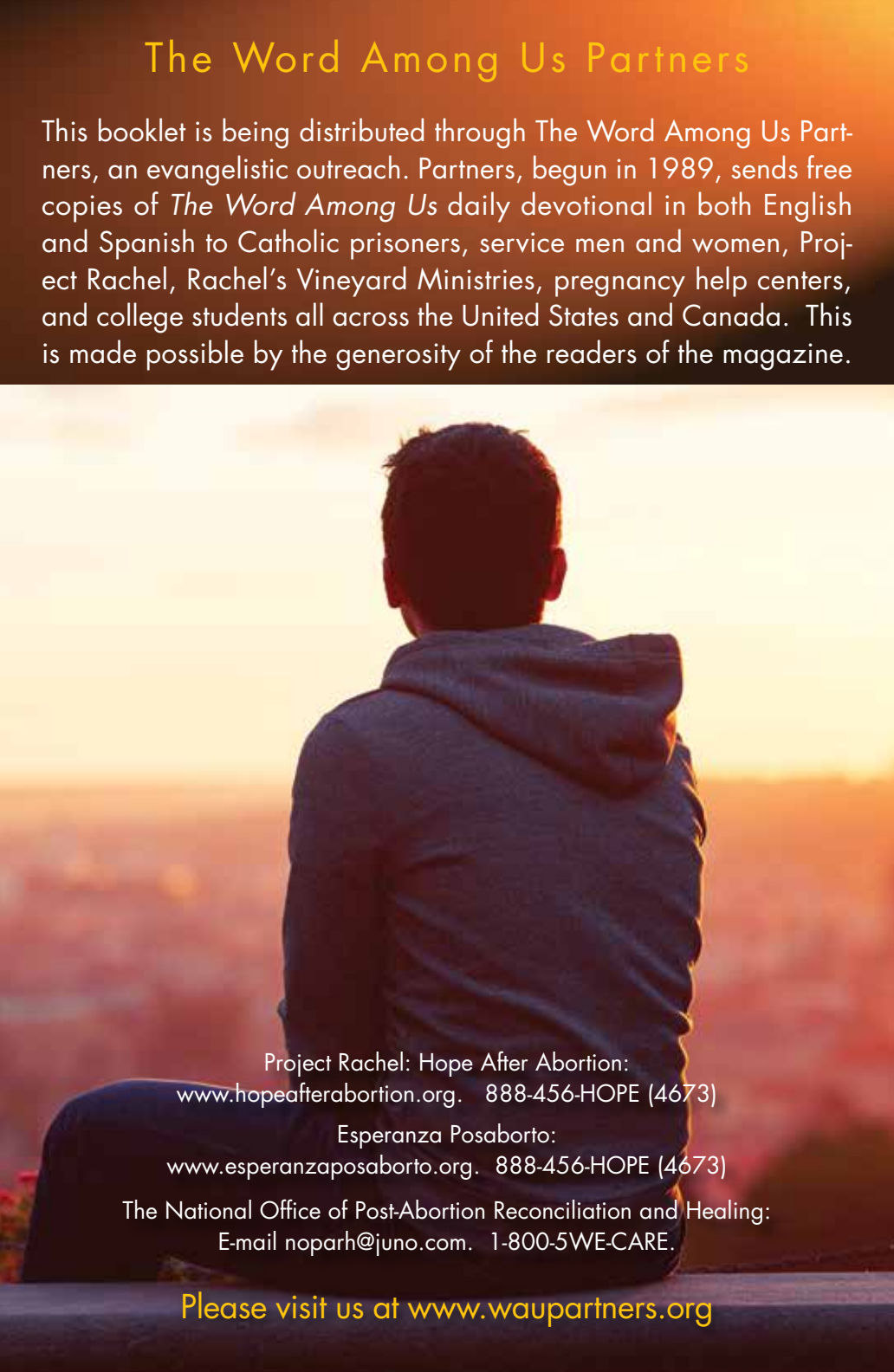
The Word Among Us. www.wau.org. 1-800-775-9673.

A Catholic daily devotional, which features meditations on the daily and Sunday Mass readings.



The Word Among Us Partners

This booklet is being distributed through The Word Among Us Partners, an evangelistic outreach. Partners, begun in 1989, sends free copies of *The Word Among Us* daily devotional in both English and Spanish to Catholic prisoners, service men and women, Project Rachel, Rachel's Vineyard Ministries, pregnancy help centers, and college students all across the United States and Canada. This is made possible by the generosity of the readers of the magazine.



Project Rachel: Hope After Abortion:
www.hopeafterabortion.org. 888-456-HOPE (4673)

Esperanza Posaborto:
www.esperanzaposaborto.org. 888-456-HOPE (4673)

The National Office of Post-Abortion Reconciliation and Healing:
E-mail noparh@juno.com. 1-800-5WE-CARE.

Please visit us at www.waupartners.org