



PRAYING
THROUGH
LENT

IMAGINE



Imagine for a minute that you just found out that you were pregnant. In an instant, your life changed. “What will my parents think?” “What will my partner think?” “How can I do this right now?” These are just some of the questions that fly through your mind in the moments following your positive pregnancy test.

You have a choice to make about this pregnancy. What will you choose?

Every day, 5,000 women and men facing unplanned or unexpectedly complicated pregnancies consider making a life-ending choice for their children. In a culture that says abortion is not only a valid option, but the right one for most unplanned pregnancies, many unborn children lose their lives.

While the abortion debate rages in the public square, there are more than 30,000 women and men putting feet to their prayers by serving those considering abortion. These heroes work at Care Net’s 1,100 affiliated pregnancy centers. Every day, they introduce clients to the transformational power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, enabling them to choose life for their unborn children and abundant life for their families.

This devotional tells stories. Forty to be exact. We’ve gathered testimonies from pregnancy center volunteers and clients telling of God’s amazing work in their lives. Some are stories of post-abortion recovery, others of how lives were spared in the nick of time.

Through these testimonies, you will learn of God’s faithfulness, mercy, and abundant grace. These stories offer encouragement, reminding us that God is at work in all of our lives in countless ways. We don’t know what you’re going through, but we pray that these stories give you hope.

Know this: the God who created you loves you; and He is not finished making you into His masterpiece.

Care Net

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SEEING GOD IN AN ULTRASOUND

by Mikelle Challenger



1 PETER 4:10

God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.

JOHN 15:4-5

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me. Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.

I remember when I first heard that a pregnancy center needed an ultrasound technician. I always wanted to serve the Lord with my registered nursing degree, but I never realized it was going to be through the lives of the unborn!

It was Sanctity of Life Sunday and I was sitting comfortably in my favorite spot in our church in Boca Raton, Florida. I had always thought my calling was to the elderly, but as I sat listening that morning to the call for volunteers, my palms started sweating and my heart began to beat wildly. I felt that God was speaking right to me! A new desire to serve God was beginning. It helped that my husband leaned over to me and said, “Mikelle, I can see you doing those ultrasounds”! I began volunteering as a sonographer, but I wanted to know that volunteering was what I was really supposed to do. The affirmation did not truly come until sometime later, during one of the last days of my training.

My client that day was a teenage girl who came with her very angry mother. Her story was complicated. The mother had an abortion when she was a teenager and it was a devastating experience for her. She found out that she was pregnant again, at the age of 17. She had fought the pressure from her parents and had a baby girl, and now that child was pregnant out of wedlock. I thought that the mother would have been pro-life due to her past experience, but she was all the more adamant that her daughter needed to have an abortion, and the sooner the better. The daughter was silent and pale as she listened to her mother’s tirade about how her future would be ruined if she kept this baby. Hopelessness crept over me as I realized that not only was the counseling we had offered ineffective, but the ultrasound seemed to have no impact on them either. I found myself at a loss for words, so I just started praying that God would intervene! He alone could save the life of this unborn baby.

I realized the mother had stopped talking and the daughter began to smile for the first time. They were both looking at the ultrasound screen. I looked over to see a perfect profile of the baby, who seemed to be waving at us - back and forth and back and forth went its little hand. I have never seen a fetus do this before or since that time. It was truly a miracle because of the amazing effect it had on not only the daughter, but the mother as well! I never did hear what the final outcome was with that family, but I do know that all of us were crying as we entered the counseling room together. Their hardened hearts had been softened by a living miracle from God that day!

DAY 1

Today, I am still doing ultrasounds in a pregnancy center. If I ever begin to doubt that God really called me to this ministry, I remember that teenage girl, over 1,000 miles away, five years ago.

I learned that day that counseling and ultrasound technology is nothing if we do not rely on Jesus. He is the One who truly changes the hearts of the scared, hurt, and angry. We can draw encouragement from knowing that we are simply the instruments that He uses to change the hearts of women and men and save unborn children's lives. We can remain in the Vine and trust that He will produce fruit through our actions.

If you are currently serving the Lord with your gifts and talents, pray that the Lord blesses you with confirmation that you are exactly where He wants you to be. As you serve, remember that you are the clay to be molded and worked by His potter hands.

If you are not currently serving the Lord with your gifts and talents, pray that the Lord impresses on your heart exactly where He wants you to be serving. Pray that He will clearly show you in what way He wants you to give. Now get ready, because you are a branch getting ready to bear fruit!

PRAYER:

Lord, I am nothing without You. Thank You for the opportunity to serve You and use the gifts You gave me to honor You. You are the vine and I am the branches; apart from Your power I can do nothing. AMEN.

CALLING

by Gina M. Kennedy



JUDGES 5:7

There were few people left in the villages of Israel—until Deborah arose as a mother for Israel.

ISAIAH 48:15

I have said it: I am calling Cyrus! I will send him on this errand and will help him succeed.

As an Executive Director of a pregnancy center, I have learned that pregnancy center work does not just minister to clients. Often we are also ministering to those called to serve in our centers. Volunteers often doubt their ability to help others, despite feeling called by God to do so. I understand this feeling, but we can put to rest our fear by looking at some examples from His Word.

God shows us over and over that He chooses the unlikely ones. He chose a little shepherd boy, David, to slay a giant and rule a nation. He chose a man with stumbling speech, Moses, to be the voice of the Israelites, plead their case to Pharaoh, and lead them to the Promised Land. He chose a brash talking, mistake-making, Christ-denying man, Peter, to be a cornerstone of His church. He chose a Christian-persecuting murderer, Paul, to lead and teach His followers. And in a time when they were underestimated and under-valued, God often chose women to accomplish His will, such as Deborah, Ester, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene.

If you have a past that gives you pause, or if you feel you lack the proper skills to work in ministry, get out your Bible and read God's history. He doesn't call the prepared, He prepares the called. If what He is asking you to do scares you a little or pushes beyond your comfort zone, you're probably on the right track. He takes our past and uses it to His glory if we will let Him. Don't pull back, just trust Him and move forward. Moses was afraid. Gideon doubted God. But they obeyed Him, and their obedience became part of His great story of redemption. He will bless your obedience!

PRAYER:

Dear Jesus, please grant me the courage to trust You when I feel afraid and unqualified.
Thank You for equipping me to accomplish Your plans. AMEN.

THE IMPACT OF YES

by Leigh A. Russell



JOHN 15:16-17

You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. This is my command: Love each other.

Jeff had every reason not to volunteer as the new General Manager at our pregnancy center. With a daughter at home facing learning disabilities, why should he further complicate his life with a position that would involve tons of responsibility but no pay? No one would have been angry if he had said, *No*. No one would have blamed him.

But Jeff said, *Yes*.

Jeff said, *Yes*, to dealing with declining donations, sagging staff spirits, and working without wages. Following his lead, the staff said, *Yes*, to loving God and loving His children.

Morale improved, and volunteers said, *Yes*, to changing schedules and greater commitment. Donors saw the effort and said, *Yes*, to funding the ministry. Clients felt loved, and many said, *Yes*, to life for their unborn babies.

It is easy to think one choice doesn't make a difference. It is easy to choose preserving self over protecting others, profit over sacrifice, and talk over walk. But one choice ripples outward, inspiring even more to say, *Yes*, to God's leading. One choice can impact eternity. What choice does God want you to make?

PRAYER:

Father, we pray that today, as we say, *Yes*, to Your plan for us, Your love will be multiplied through our obedience, and that through us, You will produce fruit in the lives of others. AMEN.

THE RESULTS

by Lyndsey Sikes



2 TIMOTHY 1:7

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

At 22, I was offered the job of director at a pregnancy center. I had just graduated from college. I had already been working at a job in my degree field that had great benefits. But I felt like God had a purpose for me at the center.

My friends were skeptical of my new job because abortion is one of the most controversial issues in our country today, and they knew me to be non-confrontational.

Are you sure you want to work there? they asked. *You really need to think about this.*

Others said, *With the economy, how can you leave these great benefits?*

Even in my own heart, I battled letting go of my comfort and security. The first week at the center, I carried both excitement and a fear of inadequacy. I saw women considering abortion, and I saw the compassion of the volunteers and the faith of the staff. Then a client came by with her newborn son.

She walked in and laid her baby in my lap. I unwrapped the blanket to look at his fingers and toes. The client told me how she had wanted to have an abortion; she had felt like she had no choice. But at the center, she found hope and help.

I was holding the result of her choice to choose life.

Right then, I realized that no benefit package is attractive enough and no retirement account padded enough to change my mind. There is no fear of confrontation that could paralyze me on behalf of this precious baby and the thousands like him. Each life is precious. Each life has immeasurable worth.

Each life is worth working to save.

PRAYER:

Father, we pray that You would free those bound by fear and insecurity to speak on behalf of life. We thank You for the lives You have delivered. AMEN.

BEST BIRTHDAY GIFT EVER

by Gina M. Kennedy



ISAIAH 40:31

But those who trust in the LORD will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.

Pregnancy center ministry is difficult. But the difficulties are worth it when God uses you to change the lives of others. Once, this happened on my birthday. A young couple walked in twenty minutes after we closed, but the door had not yet been locked, and our nurse had not yet left.

The couple was looking for an abortion. We offered an ultrasound. During the counseling session, the couple revealed they had known about the pregnancy for six weeks. They were adamant that abortion was their only answer. After counseling, they were still firm in their decision. Within a short time we were in the ultrasound room performing the procedure. The girl was 13 ½ weeks pregnant and this little one put on quite a show for his parents! They were stunned at how developed their baby was.

The young man was so moved emotionally that he could not speak. They left still feeling abortion was their best answer, but needed to think about it. We all prayed for them daily. Two weeks later, we learned they were keeping the baby! In March, their beautiful little boy was born!

When you feel discouraged, remember the stories you have seen - the lives God has changed by using you as His hands and feet. Let Him renew your strength as you continue His work.

PRAYER:

God, please keep me from being discouraged when it takes longer than I want it to for people to be transformed. Work through me to accomplish Your plan in Your time. AMEN.

A HOLY DAY

by Susanne Maynes



PSALM 82:4

Rescue the poor and helpless;
deliver them from the grasp of
evil people.

One morning at the clinic, the front door swung open and ushered in a miracle that rocked my world.

I had been privileged to talk with quite a few young women as a peer counselor. A number of them were abortion-minded when they first came in, but then

changed their minds. *Sooner or later, I thought, I am going to see the fruit of those conversations.*

This was the day. A teenager I had talked to months before was walking towards me, lugging an infant seat. Holding my breath, I pulled back the soft pink blanket to reveal an utterly exquisite five-day-old baby girl. I reached out to touch her downy blonde head as she lay sleeping, feeling like I was the one dreaming. The blanket gently rose and fell with the rhythm of her breathing. I pulled it back further to reveal perfect little arms and legs, fingers and toes.

She could have died, I thought, yet here she is, all because we are here to help people choose life. The sleeping babe stirred a bit. Her tiny mouth opened to form a perfect little *Oh*, then closed again. The right word for a holy moment.

Every baby we see at the clinic is precious, but the fragile beauty of this little girl will be etched into my memory forever—and that day is now a sacred day on the calendar of my life.

PRAYER:

Father, thank You that as You work through us, we can obey Your command to rescue the helpless. AMEN.

TRUE & LASTING TRANSFORMATION

by Beth Pai



3 JOHN 4

I could have no greater joy than to hear that my children are following the truth.

One morning one of our faithful volunteers encouraged us with the story of Melissa, a regular Bible study student.

Melissa wrote, Two years ago I prayed to receive Christ in one of the Bible study classes at the center. Several weeks after I started coming to the Bible studies at the pregnancy center, I was saved.

After accepting Jesus as my Lord and Savior, I knew it was only the beginning. My husband Gabriel was not saved, and was experiencing anger and depression after finding out his mom had cancer. As I kept coming to the Bible studies, the center staff faithfully prayed for me and my husband. A year and a half later, Gabriel accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior. We now work together to encourage our children and teach them about Jesus. We have found a church home, and are currently getting involved in our church. This has been a wonderful transformation. We are getting our friends and family involved, and we are talking to them about how Jesus has worked in our lives. I thank the pregnancy center for all that they have done to help me and my family. From the bottom of our heart, y'all have been a great blessing!

I don't know how many more "Melissas" are out there, but I know that God is moving and transforming lives daily through the work of His people.

PRAYER:

Lord, we thank You that You use these centers to save lives and souls. We pray that we would be attentive to Your call and faithful to obey as you send us out to be Your hands and feet.

AMEN.

SARA'S STORY

by Sandra Ridgeway



ROMANS 1:16

For I am not ashamed of this Good News about Christ. It is the power of God at work, saving everyone who believes....

Sara walked into the counseling room at the pregnancy center with the defeated look I had seen many times before in the faces of our clients. She told me about one bad life choice after another.

While waiting for the pregnancy results, I shared my personal testimony of Jesus' love. She seemed interested, but was anxious about her test results.

We came to my favorite question. *Do you have any spiritual beliefs?* This is powerful and broad because it allows our clients to answer as they believe. It tells us where the client is spiritually.

Sara answered quickly, *I am a good person and try to do what is right.* She gave me the perfect lead-in. We opened the Bible to Romans. The Holy Spirit moved in Sara as we discussed the meaning of these verses. She was eager to ask Jesus into her life. I asked her to say a simple prayer to accept Jesus as her Savior.

I reminded Sara of Christ's love and that she was created to live for eternity with God. Consistently, I have seen women become tearful at this point, overwhelmed by the realization that God loves them personally.

The pregnancy test results were negative. Sara came looking for a pregnancy test, but the Holy Spirit brought her to the center to hear the love Jesus Christ has for her.

PRAYER:

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for the opportunities to share Your good news. Help me be attentive to ways I can share Your love with someone who needs it. AMEN.

GARRETT'S STORY

by Garrett Roney



JEREMIAH 17:14

O LORD, if you heal me, I will be truly healed; if you save me, I will be truly saved. My praises are for you alone!

God transformed a difficult time in my life into a much welcomed blessing. In July 2009, my future wife and I thought we were expecting. Ahna and I had both recently turned seventeen. We were terrified of what people would think and doubted if we would even be able to make it as parents.

We called a local pregnancy center, not knowing what to expect. As Ahna explained our situation, she could sense their compassion, and we scheduled a pregnancy test.

Ahna was indeed pregnant.

So many thoughts flooded our minds. How would we tell our parents, family, and friends? The center volunteers helped us sort through the difficult questions, and Ahna and I began discussing marriage. I loved Ahna very much and planned one day to marry her. I eventually proposed. We continued coming to the center for relationship advice, fatherhood coaching, and pregnancy classes.

With the help of the center and their wonderful staff and volunteers, Ahna and I were able to get the help and support we desperately needed. Now we have a beautiful daughter, Emma Grace. I know our lives may have gone in a very different direction if not for the love and compassion we were shown by those pregnancy center volunteers. I became an 18 year-old husband and father, and it was the greatest experience I will ever have.

PRAYER:

God, please be with the young women and men who find themselves facing unplanned and unexpectedly complicated pregnancy decisions today. Grant them the strength to see You in their situations. AMEN.

APRIL'S STORY

by Sharron Smith



JEREMIAH 29:11

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.”

She was young, confident, and already knew she was pregnant. But April wasn't sure what she wanted to do about her pregnancy. Abortion was definitely an option, but she wanted more information about her choices.

Tell me what you know, she said.

We talked for over an hour, establishing a comfortable connection. In the beginning, she'd arrived with an *I'm in charge* attitude, but at the end of our time together, her vulnerability began to show. April was a senior in high school who maintained good grades and loved her family with a passion. Now abandoned by her boyfriend, she was overwhelmed with the reality of her situation.

She promised to come back. And she did... for the rest of her pregnancy. We had wonderful discussions about the Lord during those months and we became closer and closer. I was thrilled when she asked me to attend her delivery. April was brave, and after a long and difficult labor, she gave birth to a son. It was no surprise that she was a great mother.

After, we didn't stay in touch as often, but one day she showed up at the Center with a heavy heart. *I just don't know why I'm so restless*, she said. It was apparent the Holy Spirit was drawing her close. After a lengthy heart talk, we prayed and April surrendered her life to the Lord. God is faithful, and April now serves Him with joy in her heart.

PRAYER:

Lord, thank You that I may serve You in a ministry that not only meets people's earthly needs, but cares so deeply for their souls as well. Help me to be Your hands and feet today. AMEN.

JUST START

by Carol I. Wilson



PSALM 119:162

I rejoice in your word like one who discovers a great treasure.

I will never forget the conversation I had with a woman considering abortion. Her name was Leyla. It was in that conversation that I realized how important it is to share with someone how they can just start a relationship with God —there are no special classes or

things they need to do in preparation.

Leyla told me, *I love being a mom, but I can't afford to have another child. Besides, I've only known my boyfriend for two months, and I'm supposed to start school soon to become an R.N.*

I think it's great that you're planning to be a nurse, Leyla. What kind of support do you have? I responded.

Leyla said, *I'm not sure if my boyfriend will stick around. Mom helps, but I don't think she'll be happy if I have another baby.*

I understand that having another baby seems overwhelming. Do you feel like you can ask God for wisdom?

I'd like to, but I'm not sure how. I've thought about going to church, but it would feel awkward. I'd feel dumb because I don't know anything about the Bible, Leyla answered.

I can relate to feeling dumb about the Bible, Leyla. A few years ago, I was invited to a Christmas party where everyone was asked to share a Scripture. I didn't know any Scriptures. Someone whispered one to me, but I was embarrassed. After that, I began to read the Bible, and now I treasure it. Leyla, you just start! You need to understand, though, that God doesn't care how much you know. He loves you just as you are. You can talk to Him anytime. Here's a booklet that explains His love. We could do a Bible study together, too, if you want.

Okay, I'd like to do a Bible study, Leyla told me.

PRAYER:

Lord, help me know how to share Your love with those in need and how to empower them to start a relationship with You through Your Word today. AMEN.

THE HOPE OF EVERYONE ON EARTH

by Carol I. Wilson



PSALM 65:5

You faithfully answer our prayers with awesome deeds, O God our savior. You are the hope of everyone on earth, even those who sail on distant seas.

I have two sides. I'd like to lead a respectable life, finish school, and get married someday. But the stronger side likes living dangerously. Besides, there's no one to help me live respectably.

Before I could probe deeper, Lisa abruptly left. However, during our time together, I learned that Lisa was 15, enjoyed having sex, used drugs, and had survived a suicide attempt. She was new to the area because her

parents sent her to live with relatives.

A few days later, Lisa visited again. She confessed another suicide attempt and felt hopeless. When I mentioned hope in Jesus, she changed the subject.

On another visit, she said, *I just want someone to want to be with me.*

Jesus wants to be with you, Lisa. He has a beautiful plan for your life! Would you like a Bible so you can read about Him?

Okay. Will you write something in it?

I was discouraged when we lost contact. *Lord, please protect Lisa. Give her Your hope.*

Finally, she called and explained that she'd been sent back home. *Carol, I'm not doing drugs anymore, and I do believe God has a plan for me. Thank you for helping me and for encouraging me to think about God!*

May God help us always be ready to share His hope with the lost.

PRAYER:

Lord, it's wonderful when we get to hear of Your awesome deeds and answers to our prayers. May we be faithful, whether we hear answers or not, to speak of Your hope. AMEN.

ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

by Susan E. Thomas



ECCLESIASTES 3:11b

He has planted eternity in the human heart, but even so, people cannot see the whole scope of God's work from beginning to end.

I've ruined my life! I thought. I was unmarried, pregnant, and far from home. I was sure all the good things of life were behind me. I was certain fear, shame, and loneliness had come to stay. I had no doubt this was a mistake from which I would never recover. But I was only 22 years old. I didn't have the perspective to realize that while my pain and shame would be temporary, my life—and the life of my unborn baby—are eternal.

So many of the decisions we make are based on the here and now. But we are eternal creatures, and God has placed that knowledge deep in our hearts. When God gives life, He intends it to last. He offers to nurture that life—protecting, guiding, and walking beside us. Still, trapped in a linear existence, we easily succumb to temporary worries and temptations.

When my boyfriend suggested abortion, it was easy to imagine life without the inconvenience of an unplanned pregnancy. And I was frightened of the shame and poverty I would face if I kept my child. But I faced those things anyway, because *LIFE* is eternal. We were designed by God to live beyond the temporary, for our souls are not made for a life within time. With our earthly eyes we see the here and now, but God can open our spiritual eyes to see the long-term consequences, the far-reaching effects, and the spiritual impacts of our decisions.

PRAYER:

Jesus, please open my spiritual eyes so I can see today with an eternal perspective. AMEN.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST

by Linda Fa



1 JOHN 1:1

We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life.

The test was positive. She was not prepared for it. Tears began to fall, quickly turning into sobs and heaving. She did not want to be pregnant. She didn't believe in it, but maybe she should, after all, consider abortion.

Would she be able to find the courage and strength to choose life for her unborn child? Thankfully, our center gave ultrasounds and our nurse was on duty.

Her pregnancy was early along; earlier than when ultrasounds are usually able confirm a pregnancy.

But the ultrasound had to happen now.

Our nurse began the search. On the outside, we were both reassuring the client, but on the inside we were fervently praying that she would see her baby and change her mind.

Suddenly the nurse said, *There it is!* We all saw the embryonic sac on the screen. But the sac looked like a black hole—no obvious signs of life to show the mother.

We were hoping to clearly show her that there was a baby in her womb, and she seemed eager to see. We feared her next stop would be the abortion clinic.

My silent prayers became fervent. *Please God, we need to see more!*

In a few seconds the nurse repeated *There it is!* She found a clear and steady heartbeat—a miracle! The client cried, *That's my baby!* We quit holding our breath.

The nurse measured the sac to estimate the age of the embryo. After the client left, she told me, and I could hardly believe it—that baby was only 5 weeks and 2 days old!

For us to see what we did in the ultrasound room that day was truly a miracle—a gift of Life from the Father of Life! Heartbeats are usually not detectable on an ultrasound until about six weeks from the client's last menstrual period.

But God wanted our client to see her child.

PRAYER:

God, thank You that You daily intervene in our lives. Please work today through Your people so that those in need of a miracle may meet You as they are ministering. AMEN.

FINGERPRINTS

by Patricia Lindley



PROVERBS 19:21

You can make many plans, but the LORD's purpose will prevail.

Choices Pregnancy Resource Center in Chattanooga, Tennessee, has served tens of thousands of women since its founding in 1985. The story of its beginnings is an amazing testimony of God's faithfulness and provision.

A small group of Christians, saddened by the death of innocent children and the grief of their mothers, began to pray and counsel women outside of the Chattanooga Women's Clinic, the city's only abortion provider. As the Lord led, they opened an office across the street where they could share the truth and meet the needs of women who saw abortion as their only option.

Believers continued to pray fervently for an end to abortion in their city, meeting early Sunday mornings in the clinic's parking lot. In 1993, the clinic's building went up for sale, its owner declaring bankruptcy. Members of the Pro-Life Coalition of Chattanooga knew the Lord would provide the funds if He wanted them to purchase the building.

Starting with only \$1,600 on Thursday, the coalition had \$301,000 by Monday.

Through a series of other events no person could have orchestrated, the Lord allowed the coalition to buy the building. The abortion clinic never reopened.

Part of the building was renovated; the section where the abortions had been performed was razed and the space transformed into the National Memorial for the Unborn. Chattanooga remains the nation's largest city without an abortion clinic.

PRAYER:

Father, I thank You for Your work in the lives of men and women and for showing me Your fingerprints on the events of my own life. AMEN.

GOD'S FAITHFULNESS IN THE FLOOD

by Amy Delay



ROMANS 8:28

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

In June of 2008, our pregnancy center was transformed by a destructive flood. Water rose over desk height on the main level. Even though our situation looked bleak, we never questioned that Aid to Women would reopen. It was only a matter of when. A local church and a free medical clinic allowed us to provide our services in their buildings. This experience reminded us that God is in control and works all things for our good. We were

touched by the support of our community and of other pregnancy centers.

One instance that crystallized God's faithfulness in the situation was that every woman who completed our Post-Abortion Stress class in prior years made a quilt square in memory of her child. These were in a small bin on the floor of our main level when the waters came rushing in. When we were able to return to check on the building, we found furniture overturned and practically nothing in the spot that we had left it in, except the quilt squares. The bin sat untouched, the squares completely dry and protected.

Now those squares have been quilted together and hang as a beautiful reminder to us of God's faithfulness and provision.

Nine months after the flood, we were able to move back into our restored building. God had brought us back from the brink of destruction with renewed vision and provision.

PRAYER:

God, You have shown Yourself faithful to us through the life and ministry of Your Son Jesus. You promised never to leave or forsake us. Jesus, please help us today to see Your faithfulness more clearly and know that You will hold us steady, no matter the flood we face. AMEN.

WHAT MAN MEANT FOR EVIL, GOD REDEEMS

by *Diane Hardee*



PSALM 27:10

Even if my father and mother abandon me, the LORD will hold me close.

Some years ago, just weeks before her 26th birthday, Marie discovered she was pregnant with her seventh child. She made the decision to have an abortion.

She went alone.

After the procedure, Marie drove to a friend's house.

When she got out of her car she collapsed in the driveway. Marie was transported by ambulance to a nearby hospital in Durham, North Carolina; it was the same hospital where she had given birth to each of her six children. When the ambulance reached the hospital, Marie was pronounced dead on arrival.

Marie was my mother, and that was the day she died. There was no pregnancy center available for mom to call in those days. But, if there had been, her story may have ended much differently. Maybe she would be able to share it for herself.

The six of us children, aged 11 months to 7 years, were eventually placed into different homes. Two were adopted, two went to an orphanage, and two lived with relatives for a time. More than 20 years passed before some of us met again.

I was quite young when I was introduced to drugs, alcohol, abuse, hunger, and foster care. For years I felt forsaken by my alcoholic father and my deceased mother. But as a teen I received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. He has been showing me that *even if my father and mother abandon me, the LORD will hold me close*. And our loving Lord has been holding me ever since. Whatever you're going through, He wants nothing more than to take you up into His loving arms today, and hold you fast.

Trust me when I say that He can take the darkest areas of your life and redeem them. His love is real, and it is present today.

PRAYER:

God, please give me the grace to know that You love me as I am. Thank You that You want to redeem all aspects of my life. Please continue to transform me and renew me in Your Truth so I can better reflect Your nature. AMEN.

ALLISON'S STORY

by Sharron Smith



PSALM 139:13

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb.

When I arrived for my usual shift at the Pregnancy Center, a client was already waiting. She looked scared, worried, and very young.

Her name was Allison, and she was a sophomore in high school. Per her story, she'd had sex only once after a football game several months before. The boy was not a real boyfriend, and he didn't even know about the possible pregnancy.

Allison was abortion-minded because a baby would not fit into her life plan—finishing high school and going to college. I shared with her factual information on pre-natal development and abortion, but in the back of my mind I thought she couldn't possibly be pregnant and not know it, because she'd be close to six months gestation.

I was shocked when the test was positive. *Allison, let me see your tummy.* She lifted her sweatshirt to reveal a very round belly. *Haven't you noticed the baby moving?* She lowered her head. *No.* The power of denial gave her the ability to lock out the reality of her changing body.

She cried, but was still determined to abort. When I told her about the procedure, she paled and left in tears.

At the center, we prayed every day, but Allison did not contact me again.

Nearly a year later, a young mom walked in carrying a beautiful baby boy. It was Allison and she was beaming.

Wow, I'm so happy to see both of you!

After Allison told her mom about the pregnancy, she provided the support needed to carry the baby to term. Her eyes filled with tears. *I'm so glad I have him... Thank you.*

PRAYER:

Lord, thank You for the opportunity to share truth with those who are in desperate need and are overwhelmed by the reality of their circumstances. AMEN.

KINDNESS & TRUTH

by Cindy Hopkins



PROVERBS 3:3

Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. (NASB)

After an emotionally tiring season at the center, I began a journey into the book of Proverbs, bent on finding nuggets of encouragement to sustain me during a period of self-doubt. I chose to read a chapter a day, lining up the chapters with the days of the month. On the third day, I carefully began reading Proverbs 3, looking for words that would minister to my heart. They came early, in verse 3:

Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.

That same morning, Jennifer and I spent time in the counseling room. I heard all the reasons she was convinced she needed an abortion. As I shared with her the truth about this option and the hope that could be hers, I stayed mindful of Proverbs 3:3. At the end of our time together, a teary-eyed Jennifer told me that she wanted to have her baby. I was elated and thanked God for equipping me with both the truth and the kindness to touch her heart.

The last thing Jennifer did before leaving the center was complete an exit survey giving feedback about the services she had received. God's ultimate encouragement to me came when I read Jennifer's answer to the question, *What did you like best about the center?* She had written, *The kindness and the truth!*

PRAYER:

Lord, may the truth I share today, and everyday, be girded with an extra measure of kindness. Let me not forget to speak Your truth in love, and give me the wisdom to balance them. AMEN.

BELIEVE IN THEM

by Gina M. Kennedy



PHILEMON 1:20

Yes, my brother, please do me this favor for the Lord's sake. Give me this encouragement in Christ.

One client who touched my heart forever was Jeanne. When she came to us, she knew she was pregnant and wanted an abortion.

Everything she saw said abortion was the best choice in her situation.

Her boyfriend accused her of “making me become a father.” She was just starting a job that could not accommodate her pregnancy. To make matters worse, she was enrolled in college with a busy class schedule. For Jeanne, abortion seemed the best way forward.

But it was clear her heart was divided. Part of her wanted to be a mom.

After talking with her, I looked into Jeanne's eyes and said, *You are a competent person, and I know you will make a good mother. Whether your boyfriend helps or not, you can do this!* After praying with her she looked at me and said, *Thanks. I think I just needed someone to tell me I could do this—to believe in me.*

We prayed for Jeanne and her unborn baby for the next several weeks, hoping she could stick to her resolve under the pressure of her circumstances. Several weeks later, Jeanne walked back in our door and signed up for our parenting program!

A few weeks after giving birth, she came to visit us. Standing in our office, she cooed over her beautiful baby girl, Makenzie. Over and over she said, *You don't know how much you ladies mean to me. I cannot imagine my life without Makenzie. This place means so much to me, and I don't know what I would have done without you!* She has returned over the years just to say *hi* and let us see Makenzie.

Sometimes a woman in crisis simply needs someone to tell her that they believe in her. Never underestimate the power of your words and encouragement! Jesus is the Word made flesh, and He works powerfully even through our fumbling human efforts.

PRAYER:

God, please help me be the encouragement someone needs today. Help me to speak words of life that draw them closer to You and Your love. AMEN.

MARY'S STORY

by Cheryl Keen



ISAIAH 55:8-11

My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts," says the LORD. "And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts. The rain and snow come down from the heavens and stay on the ground to water the earth. They cause the grain to grow, producing seed for the farmer and bread for the hungry. It is the same with my word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it.

A few weeks ago, Mary walked into our center to donate baby equipment and clothing. As Mary was about to leave, she asked if we had a minute to hear her story. Mary told us that she was not raised in a life-affirming or loving environment. At a young age she became pregnant and had an abortion. Later Mary came in contact with a Care Net center and there heard the life-giving message of Christ. Soon after, Mary came to know Christ in a personal and saving way. She then went to another Care Net center and attended classes where she found forgiveness and freedom from the trauma of her abortion.

We asked Mary if she had ever told the original center of her final decision and how they had impacted her. She said, *No*. That was why she wanted us to hear her story, so that we could be encouraged by the knowledge that sometimes we don't get to hear the end of the story, but God does. God follows through with His plan to water and feed the seeds planted in the lives of

those we serve, even if we never see them grow. Peace, assurance, trust, and contentment are all byproducts of keeping our eyes on Christ and remembering that He is at work, even when we are too small and limited to see or understand the full story.

PRAYER:

Lord, remind us that You are using the daily work of Your Kingdom that we are about—raising our children, serving in our churches, and sharing Christ with our neighbors—in ways we may never see or understand on this side of Eternity. We stand in awe of You for writing a story so much bigger and more beautiful than we can grasp. We praise You, God, for You are faithful! AMEN.

PRESS ON

by Gina M. Kennedy



PHILIPPIANS 3:14

I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

At times in pregnancy center ministry, it can feel like we are talking to a wall instead of a person when counselling clients and trying to convey truth. But the reality is that God is in control and we are vital parts of His plan.

I recall a time when I met a client, Elle, who was like a brick wall. She had returned to us several times for services. After learning of her history, I engaged her in a conversation about her lifestyle and the choices she had been making. I used all the tools I have learned to draw her innermost feelings on these issues out. Nothing worked. Elle left our office, and I felt as if the whole time with her was a waste. I didn't feel she had listened to anything I had said. I was afraid we would have no impact on her future decision making.

A few weeks later, Elle came back when I was out of the office. When I returned, the counselor who met with her told me that Elle sat down and immediately began weeping and pouring out her soul. Elle not only had listened to me, but had been reflecting on my words and decided she wanted to change. And she wanted our help.

Remember, we are called to love, and to obey Christ's call to speak truth. We may never know that the loving words we gave to a client have changed their lives. But once in a while, God shows us that fruit to encourage us. Press on. We may not see all the fruit today, but one day we will!

PRAYER:

Lord, please give me the patience to wait for the harvest. Help me have the faith to know that You are working in and through my life to accomplish Your purposes. Thank You for Your love and grace. AMEN.

YOU ARE NEVER INVISIBLE

by Sue Marks



PSALM 139:7-10

I can never escape from your Spirit! I can never get away from your presence! If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go down to the grave, you are there. If I ride the wings of the morning, if I dwell by the farthest oceans, even there your hand will guide me, and your strength will support me.

PSALM 139:15-16

You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.

She was thrilled about becoming a mother for the first time. But, simultaneously, she was worried that she might not be able to bear the responsibility of motherhood. I asked if she would mind if I read her a few verses from the Bible. She wanted to hear from God's Word, so I opened a Bible to Psalm 139 for her, and then did likewise for myself. I turned my head downward as I read aloud this beloved passage. Several verses into the text I could see her hand coming towards my knee.

Rats! I thought, *She wants me to quit reading.* I stopped and looked into her face. Tears were flowing down her cheeks!

Is this true? Is this really true? Does God always have His eyes on me and my baby?

She left the Center with a peace and joy she had never known before.

These words showed her that God sees her no matter the darkness she's caught up in.

PRAYER:

Dear God, thank You that You see me no matter what I am going through. I pray that I may take comfort and joy in Your presence and share this knowledge with someone who needs it. AMEN.

SIMPLY PRAY, PRAY SIMPLY

by Lynn Trogdon



EPHESIANS 6:18a

Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion.

I sat across from a distressed, distant, and uncomfortable woman who just received the results of her pregnancy test. I felt disjointed and out of sync with the natural flow of conversation and paperwork. As I explored her situation and collected necessary information, I mentally

wrung my hands over my stumbling attempts to connect with her.

The test was positive, and her emotions bubbled to the surface. Still, I struggled to connect deeply with her. She declined information on her options or fetal development. I received no response when I asked about a church home. The time didn't seem right to jump into Scripture or the presentation of the Gospel.

Just let her go, I thought, sighing inwardly. So, as is my custom, I asked, *May I pray for you before you leave?*

OK, she said.

Our prayer focused on her need for guidance as she made this difficult decision. God's promise to give wisdom generously (James 1:5-8) was gently woven into the prayer.

She lifted her head and made eye contact. Her countenance softened as she gave me a hug. God had softened her heart through one simple prayer.

The following week we talked after her ultrasound appointment. She smiled and talked about her difficult home life. *I've decided to take responsibility and have the baby*, she said. *I shouldn't take a life.*

Here I thought that the prayer failed to make an impact when in fact it helped save a life!

PRAYER:

Thank You, Father, for hearing our prayers and changing hearts as only You can. AMEN.

SHE SEES ME HERE

by Carol I. Wilson



HOSEA 11:4

I led Israel along with my ropes of kindness and love. I lifted the yoke from his neck, and I myself stooped to feed him.

She wanted stuff—clothes, a car seat, a stroller, a crib—and she was picky. Karen visited the center often to receive and exchange items. This visit, she asked for a car seat. She'd received one already, but it wasn't acceptable.

When clients receive material items, they're asked to watch a video or meet with a peer counselor. Karen chose to see a counselor, which fell to me. While I tend to be task-oriented, I have adopted a *people are always more important than paper* maxim. This day, I adopted a disgruntled attitude instead. I wanted to plow through paperwork.

Karen was guarded and only allowed shallow conversation, so I didn't expect much when I asked how things were going. Within minutes, though, we engaged in meaningful conversation. She talked about a difficult relationship and past hurts. She confessed anger towards God and thought she'd go to hell. I asked if she believed that Jesus was the Son of God who died and rose for her sins. She did. I asked if she had asked Jesus to be her Savior. She had. We then talked about a relationship with Him. At one point, she said, *It's obvious everyone here is Spirit-illed.*

God pierced my heart.

She visits often because she sees Me here. I've drawn her to this place.

PRAYER:

Thank You, Lord, for loving clients so much that You use material needs to bring them through doors where spiritual needs can be discovered and satisfied. Please help us to show love to the people around us, not because they deserve it or don't deserve it, but because You first loved us. AMEN.

HOW TO FIND JOY IN THE MIDST OF PAIN

by Jay Cunningham



PSALM 94:19

When doubts filled my mind,
your comfort gave me renewed
hope and cheer.

We live in the tension between the contrasts, tension which can be alternately frustrating, creative, terrifying, thrilling, joyful, and calm. We prefer to revel in those moments of wild joy even as we know that walking through the valley of the shadow of death might be just around the corner.

All the while, questions haunt us. Why did her husband die of a heart attack at 66? Why did one friend find a job with so little effort, but another struggled? This is life as we know it, seeing through the glass darkly, never quite satisfied with the answers we receive to all of these difficult questions.

I ricocheted between the contrasts during a recent Memorial Day weekend. It was a glorious time spent with our three birth children and our two children by marriage. (In jest, we call them SIL and DIL—for son-in-law and daughter-in-law.) We played games, we laughed heartily, we poked fun, we canoed and kayaked, we feasted, and we celebrated SIL’s birthday.

Our daughter declared yet one more birthday gift to open. But instead of giving a box to her husband, she handed each of us a tissue and beribboned package. Seven little packages were opened at once featuring little wooden train pieces each with a different letter carved on them. Our son quickly arranged the letters to spell out the most amazing birthday announcement: **BABY FOX**. Almost faster than I could process the range of emotions blitzing my brain, my mind raced to the obvious conclusion: my daughter and son-in-law were pregnant—with our first grandchild! In that moment, a new reality permeated that tiny kitchen. In a heartbeat—with a new little heartbeat—our lives, and our family, would inevitably change. We were no longer seven, but eight. Another person was very present. A moment before, we were perfectly content as parents.

Now the sudden reality of being grandparents became up close and personal.

Memorial Day also crystallized something else to me: the reality of missing my father. Dad was a WWII soldier who survived Normandy Beach and the rest of the war by God’s grace, but lost the battle with cancer almost eight years ago. Dad (“Pop-Pop” to my kids, and who knows what honorable name he would have enjoyed from the mouths of his great-grandchildren? would have been so proud to learn this news just like he was when we told him he’d be a grandfather to our daughter many years ago. Why did dad beat one war only to lose the cancer war? Why couldn’t he have been here to share in this extraordinary news?

As random memories of dad replayed in my mind, I was in that tension of contrasts between the poignancy of loss and the possibilities of a new life. My thoughts turned to my heavenly Father, the Father of all that is living. When does our Father experience joy? Was it in the moment (if we can even use such time-bound words) that He thought about BABY FOX eons ago before the foundation of the world? Was it in the moment of conception wherein we too participate in creation? Was it in the moment our daughter and son-in-law discovered their great news? Was it this weekend as we huddled in the kitchen opening up those seven little packages?

I think the answer to all of these questions is yes. Our Father's delight is in us, His children, and in our mutual joy of reveling in His creation. Psalm 149:4a says it pretty plainly, *For the LORD delights in his people.*

This joy is an ever-present one. May God grant us new perception of His joy, and may it empower us as we encounter the difficult questions of our lives.

PRAYER:

Oh God, please help me to see anew Your joy in my life. May I not lose sight of this and the hope it provides, no matter the trials I face. I thank You that You rejoice over me and my family. May I carry this hope to all who need it today. AMEN.

SHE FELT ME

by Linda Hester



PSALM 139:13-14

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it.

PSALM 139:23-24

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

She felt alone. The house looked rundown and risky, and she felt worried, so she cried out to God. She checked the paper to make sure that she was at the right house, and she felt the need to close her eyes and pray. She walked around to the back of the house with no hope, and she felt her heart skip a beat as she took a deep breath. She walked up the rickety back stairs, and she felt her knees tremble. She was led to sit down on the living room couch to wait, and she felt God say...

Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Don't be discouraged, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand. [Isaiah 41:10]

She felt God's strength as she got up off the couch and walked out of the living room. She felt her knees regain their strength as she walked down the rickety back stairs.

She felt her heart beating strong as she took a deep breath, and she walked around to the front of the house with renewed hope. She felt the need to close her eyes to pray, and she crumpled up the paper that had taken her to the house. She felt relieved after crying out to God, and she now saw the house in a totally different way, because...

She felt me, and she was not alone.

This is my mother's story of how she went to an illegal abortionist in 1948 to take my life. As she sat on a couch in someone's living room, her mind was miraculously changed; she then got up off the couch and left. She wanted me to know this: that God loved me, and He wanted me to live, and that she loved me too.

PRAYER:

Please, God, help me feel what You feel. Let my life move to the beat of Your heart. May the women and men today facing difficult pregnancy decisions feel Your love for them and their babies. May Your people reach out to them with Your grace. AMEN.

NATALIE AND NICOLE: A STORY OF TWO ADOPTIVE MOMS

by *Melissa Macy*



1 JOHN 3:1a

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are!

Natalie could not see how she could possibly raise two little girls on her own. Her husband was in jail again, and the welfare checks never covered all the expenses. She thought, *What have I gotten myself into? Life is so unfair!*

Nicole, however, desperately wanted to be a mother and could not imagine her life without children of her own. She and her husband, Eddie, had been trying to have a child for years, without success. She thought, *Is God telling me I should not be a mother? Life is so unfair!*

Then the call came from the social worker. *Nicole, we have found a child for you. Actually, we have two sisters in need of a loving Christian home. The girls are 18 months and 3 years old. Are you ready?* Nicole's mind was spinning! *Two girls! Not a baby? But, I want a baby,* she thought to herself. *Could this be God's plan?*

My name is Melissa, and I work for a pregnancy center. My sister and I were adopted into Nicole and Eddie's home 40 years ago. We came into their lives as scared little girls in need of loving, caring, Christian parents. My sister and I would not be the women we are today without the love and support they provided to us. We are both married to Christian men and between us have seven children, both biological and adopted. Nicole and Eddie enjoy playing with their grandkids and are looking forward to the day when they can share the story of how their mothers came to them one bright spring day.

If you know a family in your church who is in the process of adopting a child, why not give them a baby shower or a welcome home party? Families spend thousands of dollars to complete an adoption, and a little extra support could go a long way.

PRAYER:

Father, I thank You for orchestrating the paths of our lives. Thank You that You adopted us into Your family. Thank You that Your love for us is greater than our sins, mistakes, and regrets. Empower us to show that love to those in need today. AMEN.

IT'S A MIRACLE!

by Valerie Mangrum



ECCLESIASTES 11:5

Just as you cannot understand the path of the wind or the mystery of a tiny baby growing in its mother's womb, so you cannot understand the activity of God, who does all things.

I am a miracle! I don't say that from pride and arrogance, but from the knowledge that I should not have been born. When I had been in my mother's womb for almost three months, the doctors declared a miscarriage and performed a dilation and curettage [D & C] abortion. Two weeks later my mother knew she was still pregnant, and around her initial delivery date, I appeared on the scene, a healthy 9 lb. 22 inch baby, without a scratch on me!

I knew this reality from the time I was a little girl. I met the doctor who performed the D & C years later. *Valerie*, he told me, *I know I did a good job. You shouldn't be here.* That experience reminds me every time I sit across from a woman considering abortion that life is a miracle.

God's work is a mystery. It was never my "plan" to work at a pregnancy center. But here I am, every day, embracing my own God-given story. How I survived the D & C only God knows. But I am alive, and in the mornings I pray that I am living God's plan when I offer hope and a future to women frightened about the unknown.

PRAYER:

Thank You, Father, for my life. Help me to live into the purpose You have for me. AMEN.

HEALING

by Patricia Giffin



DEUTERONOMY 32:10

He found them in a desert land, in an empty, howling wasteland. He surrounded them and watched over them; he guarded them as he would guard his own eye.

PSALM 32:3-5

When I refused to confess my sin, my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat. Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, "I will confess my rebellion to the Lord." And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.

I locked a secret away in the pages of my diary—I buried my pain so deeply that I could barely recognize the circumstances and despair that led to my abortion on that Good Friday. The pain of my choice was forever branded upon my heart and soul. Despite my denial, an intense need to replace the baby I had lost led me to a promiscuous lifestyle and more broken relationships, shame, and regret.

After 31 years, my soul was malnourished and sick; chronic pain and illness controlled my life and defined who I was. I felt empty, alone, and unfulfilled despite the blessing of a wonderful marriage and three beautiful children. Lost hopes and dreams led to guilt, feelings of failure, and a constant struggle with depression. My abortion remained hidden within my heart, until I confessed my sin at Bible study, and began to volunteer at Life Choices pregnancy center, where I finally opened my heart to God's forgiveness and healing touch.

I continued to find healing at a post-abortion recovery workshop. It was the hardest thing I'd ever done, but together we shared our stories, cried, and affirmed our deepest hurts and regrets, which allowed us to minister to one another, and be open to God's healing touch. We found comfort, acceptance, and fellowship in our pain. I could feel my burdens being lifted a little more with each day, and my feelings of shame and failure were replaced with the affirmation of my worth and purpose in God's eyes. By Sunday morning, beauty and wholeness had grown up from the ashes of my sin and brokenness. I was a new creation, able to honor my baby with dignity and release him to Jesus in heaven, where we will be together one day! Once I accepted God's forgiveness, and was able to forgive myself and others, my guilt was lifted, and I found the peace and freedom to finally name and grieve the son I had lost.

DAY 30

I am so grateful to God for the freedom, and peace of mind that have come with sharing my story. I thank my Father for His unconditional love, mercy, and kindness and pray that His blessings may flow through every part of my life to offer hope to women facing a crisis pregnancy or to come alongside them with understanding and compassion as they also walk the path of forgiveness and healing. I may never completely understand my long pathway of pain, but I am holding fast to God for everything He promises and for the faith and daily strength to go forward in service. Most of all, I thank God for loving me so that I may now love others with the same comfort and compassion that I have been given through His everlasting mercy and saving grace.

PRAYER:

Thank You, Father, that You are greater than our deepest pain and ready to heal and restore. Please comfort the hurting hearts of those who turn to You in their loss, and strengthen those who minister to them. AMEN.

YOU ARE A BEAUTIFUL TAPESTRY

by Gina M. Kennedy



GENESIS 50:20

You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people.

Many of us who work in pregnancy center ministry have a past history that draws us to this work. I am no different. My mother was 24 years old when she found herself divorced, with three little boys ages five and under. Then she found out she was pregnant again. The day of her scheduled abortion, she paced the sidewalk out front, crying. She determined that if God would

give her the strength, she would give this baby life. She walked away. I am forever grateful because I was that baby. And she is forever grateful because I am her only daughter.

Sixteen years later, I understood the pressures she faced. I was pregnant. With positive counsel from a pro-life pregnancy center, my boyfriend and I decided to keep the baby despite the voices calling for us to terminate the pregnancy. Three months after we married, our baby was born. Or rather, babies. We didn't know we were having twins until after the first one was delivered.

Now, 30 years later, my husband and I are so grateful we didn't listen to others.

When our own son was 18, he announced that his 15-year-old girlfriend was pregnant. We encouraged life. Months later, after they broke up, we learned our grandchild may have Down Syndrome. We prayed all the tests would be negative, as I knew the probable fate of this baby if they were positive. The tests were negative. Three months later, our first grandchild was born a month premature...and with Down Syndrome. My husband and I now have the great privilege of raising this precious child.

My history is complicated and messy, including an abusive childhood at the hands of others. I am one of those lives whom many say would have been better off if I had never been born. But the messy side of my life is only one side of the tapestry. If viewed from the other side, my life has been beautifully woven by God Himself. Because I live, He now uses my tapestry daily to save the lives of others.

PRAYER:

God, please grant me the faith to know that You are weaving my day into Your plan. Help me understand that all of my life, the good and the bad, is coming together as part of a beautiful tapestry. Thank You for Your work to transform me into Your image. AMEN.

WHAT WE LOSE WHEN WE JUDGE OTHERS

by Gina M. Kennedy



MATTHEW 7:1-2

Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.

Shortly after I became an executive director at our pregnancy center, a man walked in and hesitantly announced that the Lord told him to come and volunteer. He had heard one of our speakers and felt the Lord was calling him. As this man and I began talking and touring the center, he poured out his story, talking so fast he fumbled over his words. Many years ago, he had been a part of three abortions—one at 22 weeks. After years of being haunted by this and going down

dark roads because of it, he was rescued by Christ.

I gave the man an application and he left. One of my staff said, *You aren't seriously going to let him volunteer here, are you?* I answered, *Let's see if he returns the application.* A few days later, he did. He completed training and began working in the center. Today, almost six years later, Dan still volunteers as our men's ministry coordinator. He has transformed a struggling program and changed the lives of many men, including other male counselors. He has a natural gift for working with clients, and no one can get them to do a Bible study like Dan can!

Sometimes our ministry is not only to our clients, but to those who come to work in our center. God allowed Dan to find healing by serving in this ministry and helping others avoid his mistakes.

Don't ever allow a first impression to sway you. Find out what is underneath. Dan is proof that we should not turn someone away because of their past. Like Paul, God can use those who've committed grave sins to advance His kingdom.

When we judge others, we miss the opportunity to be part of God's transformation in their lives.

PRAYER:

Dear God, please show me the "Dans" in my life. Help me see them with Your eyes and have Your heart of compassion. May I be part of Your plans to transform and redeem the lost. AMEN.

HEALING GRACE

by Susanne Maynes



JOHN 3:17

God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

The young couple in the counseling room was quiet, a deep sadness etched on their faces. They had experienced a miscarriage and wanted to talk through their feelings of loss. Adding to the depth and complexity of their pain was the guilt over their tragic decision to abort a previous child.

We talked about how confusing it is that our society has legalized an immoral act. While this couple knew in their hearts that their decision had been wrong, they agreed that our culture makes no provision for the guilt and grief that follows an abortion. They had been suffering in silence, feeling alone and anguished. I shared with them that forgiveness for sin is found in Christ and prayed with them to receive that forgiveness. Tears were shed, and much gratitude expressed.

Several weeks later, the young woman told me she had been near the point of an emotional breakdown just days before coming in. After the abortion she had experienced a confusing and sudden depression. But after coming to the clinic to talk and pray, she and her husband both found relief and no longer felt the weight of guilt like before.

No matter how our society has rationalized it, the guilt of abortion is real, and only the gospel breaks the power of its shame. God allows us to be agents of His grace to those around us who desperately need it.

But we must obey Christ's calling and reach out with His compassion if we are to see lives transformed.

PRAYER:

Lord, may we never speak words of condemnation, but only words of life, to those You came to save. May we always speak the truth in love and obey Your call to serve. AMEN.

GOD SAVES

by Mailee Smith



PSALM 13:6

I will sing to the LORD
because he is good to me.

I have always been a planner. And I have always been pro-life. So when we learned we were having a third baby, I faced a crisis of convictions.

At the time, there was turmoil in my husband's job, with hostility directed toward our family. Our son was taking it very hard, and our 9-month-old daughter had a mystery illness. We had no family nearby. Worry suffocated me. So when we learned our third child was coming, I cried out to God, *Why now?*

Then four days later, we thought we lost her. You never know how much you want something—how much you need something—until it is gone. I cried out to God again, *I wanted this baby!*

And I learned the most important lesson of my life: God can do all things. When I went back to my doctor the next day, she was still there! God had answered my cries—all of them. He assured me that we could, with His help, handle all that was coming at us. If He could stop a miscarriage, then certainly He could provide for my family—new baby and all.

Today, I can't look at her without being reminded that God loves me.

We needed her, and God knew it. We gave her a name which means *save, please!* and *my LORD has answered.* Indeed, He did. He saved her. He saved us with the joy she brings.

PRAYER:

Lord, may all expecting mothers—planned or unplanned—have the opportunity to know Your love and goodness through their children! AMEN.

RESURRECTED TO HEAL

by Carol I. Wilson



2 CORINTHIANS 5:18

And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him.

I was lonely and longing for love. He, too, was lonely. So we connected and quickly turned to physical intimacy to fulfill our emotional needs. No sizzle, just temporary sparks of connection. Then, the connection broke. We had to fix it! The solution? A romantic evening, in a hotel, on Valentine's Day. But we remained broken. Then, the news: *You've conceived a baby.*

He offered marriage. I declined. He got angry. I aborted.

She was the only child I'd ever conceive.

Failure spiraled in flames. With vodka, beer, peach schnapps, marijuana and another guy, the fire fizzled. But, winds blew. Flames charred my soul—day after day, month after month.

Then, Jesus arrived during the Easter season the following year. He resurrected my charred soul from the flames and applied healing salve. *Now, apply My balm to others who've conceived, then aborted, He told me.*

I can't, Lord. My burns are still red. And I'm new—new to You, new to Your Word. And, I'm...I'm still a failure. I haven't even finished the study You want me to facilitate. I haven't done the grief work, haven't named my daughter. Lord, I can't.

You can. And, her name? It's Genevieve DeAun. It means victorious heart, beginning anew. She, like you, was born into new life. You can.

And so now I am. God redeems the broken. If He did it for me, He will surely do it for you and anyone you are ministering to.

PRAYER:

Jesus, please infuse each volunteer with renewed enthusiasm to apply Your healing balm to those who've conceived, then aborted. Help me to see that Your redemptive power is already at work in my life. AMEN.

FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

by Regina Wooten



COLOSSIANS 1:13-14

For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.

Tricia came to our center in a desperate state. Addicted to drugs and alcohol, involved in prostitution, and held captive by sin, she wasn't sure how she could possibly keep her baby. The counselor meeting with her worked to meet her physical needs, as well as share Christ's love. Over the two-year journey with our center, Tricia found help and support through our classes and programs.

Most importantly, Tricia gave herself wholeheartedly to Christ and has never looked back. God began to renew her from the inside out. Family relationships were restored, drug and alcohol abuse completely ceased, and she found healing from past abuse. Tricia is a new person! She speaks to audiences of hundreds of people, sharing her story through her artwork. Tricia also has dived headfirst into ministering to those in need and counseling others with addictions. She continues to help our center achieve our mission as the first former client serving on our board of directors.

God rescued Tricia out of the grasp of sin and brought her into a renewed life of joy. It was my privilege to witness this transformation, which occurred as a result of her surrender.

Tricia's eternal destiny was altered because her counselor took a step of faith in love and obedience to the Father and shared the Gospel of Christ.

Let us take time to pray for others who hang in the balance between spiritual and literal life and death, that they also may be brought into God's amazing light!

PRAYER:

Dear God, please surround those facing difficult pregnancy decisions today with Your love, grace, and compassion. Place people in their paths who will point them to You. AMEN.

UNEXPECTED BLESSING

by Susan Elizabeth Thomas



JEREMIAH 29:11, 13

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope... If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.”

Getting pregnant out of wedlock was never my plan. Yet, there I was, single and the new mother of a baby girl. Life was lunging forward—taking me places I was not prepared to go. I succumbed to diapers, breastfeeding, and looming responsibilities. The entire world had, in an instant, been placed squarely on my very incapable shoulders.

Tears came easily. Depression beckoned. Self-pity screamed for my attention. If I was ever looking for a way to make myself upset, all I had to do was consider what I had, in my infinite foolishness, denied my child. I had made a terrible mistake. But then I made the most remarkable, most astonishing, most heart-rending discoveries of my life. Despite all I did to turn my back on Jesus, He never punished me. Instead, He chose to bless me with a beautiful baby girl! Despite all my self-loathing, I couldn't deny that her adorable little face was a reflection of God's goodness and mercy. Even in the darkest, most rebellious moment of my life, God, instead of raining punishment, had showered blessings. And in doing so, He romanced my heart.

PRAYER:

Thank You, Jesus, for sharing our pain when our hearts are shattered, for staying true through all our poor choices and tears of regret, and for listening as we ask for a renewed relationship with You. AMEN.

PIECES TO WHOLENESS

by Pat Carpenter



PSALM 145:7

Everyone will share the story of your wonderful goodness; they will sing with joy about your righteousness.

Last summer, the children of a local church made quilts to donate to our pregnancy center. Each child received a block of fabric to decorate. The blocks came back, each one different and special, and an expert quilter joined the blocks and added borders, batting, backing, and binding to create cozy gifts for the women, men, and their babies who have come through our center.

This reminds me of how God knits together our pregnancy center family. The donors, volunteers, churches, Director, Board, and staff all contribute our unique “blocks.” God joins us together and adds what we lack to create the centers—warm, welcoming, and safe places where hurting women and men can come. Here they see God’s love in the practical help they receive, and discover how much He cares about their needs through the story of Jesus.

God’s grace has brought our center and now our satellite center through “the dangers, toils, and snares” of the last 25 years. God’s grace will continue into the future and will raise up a new generation to carry the vision forward. So now we pause to celebrate His abundant goodness and joyfully sing of His righteousness.

PRAYER:

Dear Jesus, thank You for Your love and care. Please knit our hearts together so that we may be a strong and effective community of faith for the furtherance of the Gospel and Your Kingdom. We pray this in Your precious name. AMEN.

A CHANCE TO GLORIFY GOD

by Carol I. Wilson



PSALM 50:15

Then call on me when you are in trouble, and I will rescue you, and you will give me glory.

I don't really want an abortion, Cheri said, but I want to do what's best for Tom. If he wants me to, I'll have one. I know God will forgive me. I'm also worried that my Dad will have to resign from his position at church.

Tom said, I'm worried how an abortion could hurt Cheri, but I'm not ready to be a dad. I'd be embarrassed when she starts showing.

I prayed for wisdom. I knew God was already at work because they visited the center immediately following a visit to an abortion clinic.

I am so impressed that you're each concerned about the other person and that you're exploring all of your options. Let's talk about your concerns with various scenarios. We talked and then they watched a video about the consequences of abortion.

I know this is intense. You've got a lot of information to process. I think it'd be good if you just go on a date tonight. After that, I recommend you take a week to think and pray—individually. I believe you'll make a wise decision. We all make mistakes, but this is an opportunity for you to glorify God.

For several months, I did not know what they decided until the day they brought Elise, their newborn daughter, by for a visit.

Tom's grin lit the room; Cheri's face showed peace. They shared with me how they had just gotten married and were excited about their future together. A few years later, I got to meet Elise's little brother. She loved teaching her brother songs about Jesus.

PRAYER:

Lord, thank You that even when we make mistakes, we have opportunities glorify You.
Thank You that You work all things for the good of those who love You. AMEN.

IT'S TIME TO RISE

by Roland C. Warren
President & CEO, Care Net



The testimonies we have read the last 39 days have reinforced for me the power of Christ's resurrection. I don't think once a year at Easter is often enough for us to meditate on just what Christ accomplished that Easter Sunday. Here is a devotional I wrote as a reminder of what the resurrection means for each one of us, especially when we feel like darkness is winning.

What a difference three days can make. On Good Friday, the apostles went home dejected and afraid. Their dreams of God's kingdom inaugurated, evil vanquished, and peace on earth, bled and died on a wooden cross.

The twisted and marred body of their rabbi was buried in a tomb and placed under guard.

This wasn't how things were supposed to work out. Jesus had walked on water, given sight to the blind, healed the deaf, and even raised the dead. If He was not the Messiah, who could it be? Peter, the leader of the fledgling band of disciples, felt worst of all. He had knowingly denied Christ, the man he considered to be the Son of God, when Christ needed his support the most.

Peter struggled to sleep that night, knowing that he was a traitor and coward. As much as he wanted there to be a way forward, he could see nothing ahead but bleak darkness.

Little did Peter know that the grave could not stay shut, the guards could not keep their posts, and death could not hold Jesus back. On Sunday morning, Jesus Christ rose from the dead, forever vanquishing sin and death. After enduring the full brutality of a religious and political elite bent on maintaining power at all costs and the weight of sin itself, He rose.

Every day women and men across our nation experience their own "Good Friday" as they face unexpected—or unexpectedly complicated—pregnancies. Abortion activists tell them that their dreams, finances, and life plans are dead if their children live. Our society leads them to believe that abortion is their only option.

However, we know the Resurrection story. We are people of the risen Jesus. You see, because Christ rose from the dead, we know that these women and men can also rise from the darkness of their circumstances and find abundant life in Him. The same power that took the bloodied, broken, body of the Son of God and raised Him from the dead is at work in His people. He can breathe life into any situation or circumstance.

If they hear the news.

Peter and his fellow apostles woke up Sunday morning knowing nothing of what had transpired at the tomb. The sun may have been shining, but they were still trapped in darkness. It took the message of the women who found the empty tomb to transform their situation with the hope of the resurrection.

That is our job and privilege. We get to run into the darkest corners of our society with the glorious message that the grave is empty, death is defeated, and abundant life is possible.

And here's the best part: NARAL, Planned Parenthood, and the entire abortion industry have no greater power to prevent our success than the entire Roman empire had to try and keep Jesus in that tomb. **Because He won, so will we.**

My prayer is that we would not simply say those timeless words, *Christ the Lord is risen today*, but that we would truly act like they are true. CHRIST IS RISEN. This means that *NO* circumstance, *NO* situation, *NO* image bearer of God is beyond His reach, or the transforming power of His death and resurrection.

May we be more than “people of the cross.” May we be known as people of the empty tomb. It is here that our hope—and the hope for every woman and man considering abortion—is found.

