

The Post-Abortion Review

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Beyond the Bars

Post-Abortion Ministries Reach Out to Women in Prison

Manda is serving time at a women's prison in Coldwater, Michigan. This is her second imprisonment. Her life has been scarred by many traumatic events: placement in foster care at the age of six, marriage to an abusive husband at 15, an abortion, imprisonment.

Yet behind prison walls, Manda has found hope. This hope appeared one night in May 1996 when a group of volunteers from Prison Fellowship and the Pregnancy Resource Center in Grand Rapids visited the prison to promote post-abortion healing. Although Manda is still in prison physically, she has been freed from the emotional and spiritual bondage that has troubled her most of her life.

"I have lived all my life believing I was unworthy of love," Manda wrote. "I had many years of troubles and bad choices . . . I did not realize I was carrying around so much pain from my abortion. . . [But now] God has shown me I am worthy, loved, forgiven, and healed. For the first time in my life, I feel Him in my heart and it is so peaceful."

**Manda's healing
from abortion
was just one of
many miracles.**

Many Miracles

Manda's healing was just one miracle in a string of events through which God has used post-abortion ministry leaders to reach out to women in prison. One of these events happened in 1992, when Sydna Massé, then the manager of Focus on the Family's Crisis Pregnancy Ministries, was working on a Bible Study about forgiveness. At the time, Massé was struggling with the loss of a good friend who had been murdered. The woman who had killed her, Jennie, was serving a life sentence in prison for the murder.

"I asked God whom I needed to forgive, expecting it would be someone connected with my abortion experience," Massé said. "I did not want the answer I got: Jennie. I pleaded, 'Lord, she killed a mother of three and my friend!' Immediately I thought to myself, 'And I killed my first child. How am I any different?'"

Reluctantly, Massé wrote Jennie a letter asking forgiveness for her anger. Soon after, Jennie wrote back to apologize for killing Massé's friend. Then, during a personal visit a few years later, Massé learned that Jennie was struggling with deep emotional pain over two abortions she had experienced. And Jennie also mentioned that "easily 60 to 80 percent" of the women she had encountered

in prison were also post-abortive.

In 1996, Massé shared this experience at a talk she gave at a volunteer appreciation brunch for the Pregnancy Resource Center (PRC). She reminded her audience of a famous quote by Mother Teresa: "Abortion is the greatest destroyer of peace." What if, Massé asked her listeners, we could prove this to be true in women's prisons?

Massé's words struck a chord with two women in the audience: Laurie Velker, a PRC staff counselor, and Valerie Cook, a PRC board member whose father is the executive director of Michigan Prison Fellowship. The staffs of these two ministries got together and began looking into ways to bring a healing message to post-abortive prisoners in Michigan.

"Prison Fellowship was very enthusiastic when we talked to them," Velker said. "They agreed that abortion recovery could have a positive impact on the lives of the inmates and really improve their rehabilitation. We really felt the Lord's leading on this."

Planting Seeds of Hope

After much prayer, discussion, and planning, volunteers from PRC and Prison Fellowship put on an outreach program for women prisoners at two correctional facilities in southwest Michigan. "A Journey to Hope and Healing" was held back to back on the same evening at the two prisons.

Nearly 200 women attended the two events. Velker said the number might have been even higher, but internal events within the prisons prevented more women from coming.

The evening opened with a musical performance by Kathy Troccoli, a popular Christian recording artist who has done extensive prison ministry. After Troccoli warmed up the crowd with her performance and message of Christ's love, several post-abortive women shared their testimonies. Then Velker encouraged the women to come forward for prayer and one-on-one counseling with the volunteers.

"The women really responded," Velker said. "When Kathy performed, they danced and sang and cheered her on. But when she sang 'A Baby's Prayer' (a song written for post-abortive women)

it got really quiet. Women cried when the presenters told their stories. They came forward to be prayed with. And they heard that there was help, there was hope, and there was healing available for them.”

After the program, the women were invited to sign up for ten-week abortion recovery/Bible study program to be held at the two prisons. Sixty-four women signed up, including Manda.

“Before I came to the concert I didn’t realize I was carrying around so much pain from my abortion,” she said. “I found myself crying through the concert and the testimonies. It was at that point that I realized I was grieving deeply for my child.”

Velker said the groups were designed to offer the women a chance to share, pray, and work through their experiences. The various group facilitators told of their own experiences with abortion and healing, setting the example for the other women to share their own stories.

“Many women in these groups experienced tremendous healing and reconciliation,” said Velker. “Some were led to forgive family members and others in their recovery process. They were able to connect their abortion experiences with other events and attitudes in their lives. But most important is that for the first time, they were letting go. They were learning to trust in their Heavenly Father for the future.”

At times, Manda said, the pain of reliving the past made it difficult to remain in the group. But she, like most of the other women, stuck with it for the full ten weeks. One woman even postponed a transfer to a minimum security facility in order to stay with her group for the entire program.

Manda said, “During my time in the recovery group, I have experienced deep pain and shame. But I knew God wanted me to continue so He could heal me and work through me. I’m so glad I persevered! I feel worthy, loved, forgiven, and healed. I feel peace within. I never, ever knew or believed the love of my Father. Now I do, and I want to share it with others. I know He has set me free.”

Velker said she was surprised to discover that not all of the women who had signed up were post-abortive. “We had some women who had had miscarriages and were grieving the loss of their child, especially if they felt that their lifestyle at the time had contributed to the miscarriage. And we had other women who had lost custody of their children because of their incarceration or for other reasons, and just wanted to talk about that.”

There were also some women in the groups who had killed or abused their children. “I’m sure there was some connection between their abortions and their later experiences, but it’s hard to say for sure,” Velker said. “There are so many other factors involved. Some of these women were abused as children themselves. But most of them weren’t at a stage to really understand the possible connection. We talked about it, but there was only one woman in my group who seemed to really understand it.”

A Growing Ministry

Velker says PRC is planning to make the prison outreach program an ongoing ministry for their center. They are preparing to return to the two prisons to hold another series of post-abortion Bible studies. They are also hoping to expand their ministry to include another women’s prison in the Detroit area.

“We’ve been doing follow-up with the chaplain to see how the women are doing, and we are planning to get some other groups going later this spring,” she said. “I also have one woman who has been transferred to the county jail near here awaiting release, so I’m able to see her every week to talk and pray with her. She’s really been doing very well.”

Another possibility would be to expand the ministry to include a program for male inmates. Velker said many of the women in their groups have asked that they take their healing message into the men’s prisons as well.

PRC’s prison ministry is just one of a growing number of outreach ministries to prisoners that are springing up across the country. One group in Illinois is currently holding their third round of post-abortion Bible studies in a women’s state prison, and plans for similar ministries are also underway in Arizona and Ohio.

“There has been a lot of interest from various groups who have a heart for this work and want to reach women and men behind bars,” said Sydna Massé, who now runs a post-abortion healing ministry called Ramah International. “It’s really been incredible to see what doors God has been opening in this area.”

-ARS

Ramah International will hold training sessions for those interested in doing post-abortion ministry at two upcoming seminars. The seminars, which will include sessions on prison outreach, will be held May 13-15 in Colorado Springs, Colo., and July 22-24 in Columbus, Ohio. For more information, call Sydna Massé at 719-573-7707, or visit Ramah’s web site at w3.n-gate.com/ramah.



A Path to Hope

Illinois prison ministry helps inmates find freedom from the pain of abortion

As director of the Women's Pregnancy Center in Peoria, Illinois, Myfanwe Saunders had never thought about doing prison outreach. But a television interview with convicted murder Carla Faye Tucker—who was executed by the state of Texas despite pleas for leniency from religious and anti-death penalty groups—planted a seed in her mind.

“As I was listening to Carla Faye Tucker speak, I began wondering how many incarcerated women are post-abortive,” Saunders said. “This led to the thought that I should start investigating this. I didn't know how to go about it, so I just prayed that if God wanted me to look into this, He would open a door to make that possible.”

The next day, Saunders said, she received a call from Sydna Massé of Ramah International. Massé told Saunders she had received a letter from an inmate at the Logan Correctional Center in Lincoln, Illinois, asking for help in dealing with her post-abortion pain.

“Sydna asked if I could meet with this woman in Logan,” Saunders explained. “I really felt God had been preparing me for Sydna's call. Even a week before I would have been very hesitant about meeting this woman—very fearful and doubtful. This was just not a segment of the population that I had ever really thought about before.”

But, seeing the phone call as an answer to her prayer, Saunders told Massé to give the woman her name. Shortly thereafter, she received a letter from “Sally,” the female prisoner who had asked to meet with her. Enclosed was a card from the prison chaplain, whom Saunders would have to contact before visiting Sally.

Saunders tried unsuccessfully to contact the chaplain for two weeks, only to be told that he no longer worked at the prison. Instead, she talked to Jim Simmons, who serves as a liaison between the prison and the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Many women in the prisons have children who are in the foster system or who are being cared for by relatives.

“I talked to Jim and explained the situation,” Saunders said. “He was very interested and asked me to tell him about our organization and what we would have to offer these women. He invited us to give a presentation to the women at Logan. I explained that we would be talking about God and asked if that would be a problem. He said, ‘If we don't have God and family, what do we have left?’”

In response to this invitation, Saunders and two other volunteers from her center went to Lincoln last spring, to give a presentation to the women prisoners at Logan. The first two speakers talked about parenting and abstinence. Then came Saunders' part in the

program: to talk about post-abortion issues.

“When I got up to talk about post-abortion, suddenly a lot of the women had to leave the room to go to the bathroom,” Saunders said. “There was a little gal in the front row who reached down and got her coat and crawled right under it. The pain in that room was so evident. But afterwards, there were so many women who came up to us and asked us to do a program for them to help them work through those issues.”

With the help of the new prison chaplain, Saunders and several volunteers were able to do two post-abortion Bible study programs at Logan last spring, helping about a dozen women through the programs. They repeated the post-abortion healing program Bible studies last fall, with about another 15 women.

This February, they began their largest program yet. About 28 women meet with the volunteers for the Bible-based programs on one of two days each week. Also for the first

time, Saunders is holding an “Aftercare Program” for women who have gone through the Bible study program but would like more support in continuing to work through their post-abortion pain.

“Altogether we've had about 55 women in the program so far,” Saunders said. “We do an orientation program each time, and the chaplain and Jim [Simmons] keep their eyes and ears open for new women who might be interested.”

Changing Lives

“Doing these programs has changed my life,” Saunders said. “We have a great working relationship with the chaplain and the response to the programs has been tremendous. It is such an honor to work with these women and have them entrust so much of their lives to us. I really feel that we wouldn't be here without God opening these doors for us.”

Most of the women she and the other group leaders encounter have never shared their post-abortive pain with anyone, Saunders said.

“One thing I've found is that many of the women don't trust counseling that is provided by the facility because it can be used against them,” Saunders explained. “We promise them confidentiality, and they know we do not have anything to do with their parole, etc. That helps them to trust us.”

Saunders said trust is an important aspect of prison ministry. The women who come to their groups need to know that they can trust both the counselors and each other. To make that possible, the counselors need to show their willingness to be vulnerable with

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the prisoners.

“I haven’t had an abortion myself, but I’ve had some painful experiences in my life and have shared those with them,” Saunders said. “We always share our stories first, so they know that we share their pain. It helps to break the ice.

“We also have them sign a contract promising that they will keep whatever they hear in the groups confidential. We will confront them if they don’t, and we have had to do that a few times. That way they know we mean business.”

Building trust can be a gradual process, Saunders said.

“Today a woman who has been in my group since last September finally opened up to share her story with me when we happened to be the only two in the room. It was such an awesome opportunity to work with her when there was so much that happened to her in her life. She has basically handed her life to us. She told us afterwards that this was the first time she has ever done that with anyone.”

Offering Hope

“I think the number one thing we offer these women is hope,” Saunders continued. “For example, we have a number of HIV-positive women in our groups, and for the first time they are feeling some hope in their lives. They have told us they feel like they can make it now.

“I’ve told all these women, ‘You may be behind bars and a fence with razor wire stuck in it, but you are far more free than many people who are walking around out there.’ When I say that, you can see their chests kind of swell. That’s hope for them.”

Saunders said that although the Women’s Pregnancy Center is planning to cut back the days they go to the prison from two days a week to one, they have no intention of slowing down their ministry.

“We will just have more groups on that one day,” she said. “We already have a waiting list for our next program.”

Their plans don’t end there. One of the things Saunders would like to do is follow up with the women after they are released from prison. One idea, she explained, would be to start a half-way house to help women who have been through the post-abortion healing program make the transition back into society.

“One of the things you fear most is what will happen to these

women when they get out and go back to their old neighborhoods and situations,” she said. “One woman who got out a few months ago told us she was very scared but knows she can make it because of what she learned through the post-abortion group. It’s so important to give them that, but we’d like to be able to do more.”

Saunders also said the center is checking into expanding their ministry to include women at a federal prison in Pekin, Illinois, about 25 miles from Peoria.

“This is really a developing ministry for us,” Saunders said. “Laurie Velker [of the Pregnancy Resource Center in Michigan] has said she believes the doorstep for revival in this country is in the prisons. When I talk to these women, I just wish I could load them into my car and drive them to Washington and let them tell their

stories before the Supreme Court.

“We are pouring all this money into our penal system. We’ve become the most incarcerated country in the world. Yet every woman we have worked with believes that in some way the abortion was related to her incarceration. For instance, many who have been imprisoned for drug crimes were using drugs to help them cope with their abortion. They can all identify the horror of abortion closely enough that they know it contributed to their incarceration.”

This, Saunders says, is something that can change through healing. “God is working through this ministry,” she said. “It’s really a privilege to be a part of it.”

-ARS

These prisoners are far more free than many people walking around out there.

Quotable:

“Instead of a Right to Choose, abortion has become a woman’s Right to Lose.”

-Carol Crossed

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Called to Love

Reflections on Ministering to Post-Abortive Women in Prison

Laurie Velker

“ . . . I was in prison and you came to visit Me.”

— Matt. 25: 36(b)

I had asked God many times to allow me the opportunity to minister behind prison walls. I didn't know how He would open the door for me, but I never stopped asking Him.

Then others in our ministry were inspired to move in that direction by working with Prison Fellowship to hold an outreach event and Bible study/recovery groups in the prisons. I knew then that God was going to allow me to be a part of that ministry outreach and I couldn't wait to go! I'm post-abortive myself and I already felt a strong tug on my heart about reaching post-abortive women in prison.

In May of 1997, the Pregnancy Resource Center and Michigan Prison Fellowship held an “Evening of Hope and Healing” at two women's prisons in Coldwater, Michigan. Following the program, which included a concert by Christian recording artist Kathy Troccoli, I invited the women to participate in a post-abortion Bible study that was to be held at the two prisons for the next ten weeks.

The evening was incredible. The personal testimonies of the speakers and the ministry of Kathy Troccoli moved so many women. The women sang along with Kathy; they danced and cheered her on. When Kathy began to sing “A Baby's Prayer,” it got very quiet.

As several post-abortive women shared their testimonies, the sound of weeping women filled the gymnasium. When I invited the women to come up for prayer, they flocked forward. Many of them confessed their abortions and said it was the first time they had done so. It was a powerful evening, filled with hope and an invitation to healing.

Sixty-four women signed up to participate in the ten-week abortion recovery Bible study groups. I personally felt challenged in every way as we went forward in forming our groups. How could we minister to such grief and shame? Were we in over our heads? In the midst of much prayer, I realized that the Father was at work. He had invited us and He would see it through. I knew He had a plan for these women and that we were simply called to love them, be ourselves, and minister His word.

I facilitated a group with Tammy, a Pregnancy Resource Center volunteer. We had seven women in our group, each of whom faithfully attended the group for the full ten weeks. Each of their stories was heart-wrenching. They had suffered horrendous wounds and had made extremely poor choices.

Their time in prison was difficult, chaotic, loud. They admitted their hearts were somewhat hardened to others. They all agreed that trust within the prison was nonexistent. Nobody opened up. There was too much fear that anything they said could always be used against them later. Anger was rampant among the inmates as well. No one knew how to control their anger.

Yet this little group of seven women bonded in a way that was almost unheard of within the prison system. They agreed to tell their stories to one another. They opened up and took the risk of becoming vulnerable. They cried tears of pain, shame and grief. They embraced God's word and spurred one another on. It was an incredible privilege to be a part of the Father's work.

One woman in our group, Lois, was raped when she was 13. This was her first sexual experience. She never knew her father, and she lived with her mother in the inner city. She was pulled into an abandoned building by a neighborhood man and assaulted. Afterwards, as she began to walk home, he told her, “I'll watch to make sure you make it home okay.”

When she got home, her mother was extremely angry at her for being late. She told her to remove her clothes and proceeded to beat her with an extension cord. Lois has said that her anger burned at that moment. She had carried it ever since.

Lois became pregnant as a result of the rape, and released the child for adoption. After that, she no longer cared about life too much. She started drinking and became promiscuous. She also turned to drugs and developed addictions. She was arrested and incarcerated.

Upon release to a center, Lois became pregnant again. This time, she said, the corrections officer told her that she would have to have an abortion if she didn't want to go back to prison. She had the abortion, but was sent back to prison anyway.

Again, her anger burned. She said that at times she would walk down the prison hallways and feel like striking anyone within her reach. She didn't know what to do with her anger. It had gotten her into trouble in prison before. She isolated herself from others. She felt sadness about losing her children. As she reflected on her life during the abortion recovery group, all she could see were patterns of anger, sadness, isolation, loss, and victimization.

One night, I woke up and was burdened to pray for Lois. I asked the Lord to release her from her anger. I went to a book and looked up the literal and spiritual meaning of Lois's name. Her name meant “famous warrior maid.” I told Lois about this. I felt she was created

Our group bonded in a way that was almost unheard of in prison.

and destined to be one with a warring spirit. But she was directing it in the wrong places and at the wrong people. I told her that she was to use that anger for something good, something positive and just. I believed God would powerfully use her.

Lois broke down and cried. All of the women in the group gathered around Lois and prayed for her. They wept with her. Lois acknowledged the stronghold of anger in her life and her desire to be released. She asked forgiveness. She let it go. It was one of the most moving moments of my life—witnessing this woman rising above her circumstances and allowing her Father to take control.

Lois directs the choir in the prison now. After she had released her anger, she told me she woke up in the middle of the night, hearing the word “stand” in her mind. She thought it was the Holy Spirit speaking to her, so she got out of bed and stood up. She asked, “Okay, Lord — now what?” And the reply was, “S.T.A.N.D. Lois, that’s the name of the ministry I’m calling you to. **Start Taking A New Direction.** Minister to others.”

Recently, Lois sent me copies of her new letterhead. She fully intends to reach out to others. She believes that the Lord has rewarded her for her obedience and faith, and she longs to tell her story and help others find a new direction in their lives. Lois’s heart and life have been forever changed. She has begun writing family members and asking forgiveness for the wrongs she has

done towards them. She says she feels a freedom deep within her spirit that she can’t explain. She says it’s quiet.

I started out facilitating this group, asking God how one with such a tragic life could possibly overcome it? How does one rise up out of abuse, alcohol, poverty and crime to become whole again? God showed me time and time again, with so many of these women (who each had their own tragedies to share) that when we draw near to God, He will draw near to us. When we commit our way to Him, He is faithful and will come alongside us. God is the great physician. We are His instruments of peace.

Laurie Velker is the coordinator for the prison outreach program at Pregnancy Resource Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan. For more information on this program, contact the Pregnancy Resource Center at 415 Cherry St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503, (616) 456-6873.



News Briefs

Australian Woman Wins Landmark Abortion Case

An Australian woman has created legal history in her country by winning a case against a hospital that she says failed to warn her about the psychological risks of abortion. “Ellen” settled out of court with the Royal Women’s Hospital and a Melbourne gynecologist for an undisclosed amount of damages after suffering severe depression after an abortion.

The “Pregnancy Advisory Service” pamphlet given to Ellen at the hospital before the abortion stated, “Nor is there any evidence to suggest that women who have had a termination suffer from any long-term psychological affects.” Ellen’s lawyer says her case could encourage other women who have been emotionally traumatized by abortion to bring lawsuits of their own.

California Court Halts Abortionist’s Murder Case

The California Supreme Court has halted the murder prosecution of abortionist Bruce Steir, pending a review to determine whether pro-life politics motivated the charge against him. Steir is charged with second-degree murder in the death of Sharon Hamplton, who bled to death after Steir performed an abortion

on her in 1996.

Although prosecutors say Steir showed a “conscious disregard” for Hamplton’s life during the abortion, Steir countered that he is being “singled out” because he performs abortions. Despite dozens of maternal deaths from abortion in California, Steir is the first abortionist in the state to be charged with murder in more than 25 years.

Abortionist Sentenced for Tax Evasion, Fraud

A Texas judge has sentenced an abortionist to a year and a day in federal prison for tax evasion and Medicaid fraud. Abortionist John Alderman pleaded guilty to failing to pay more than \$100,000 in taxes to the IRS. He also was charged with filing more than \$25,000 in false Medicare claims for abortions that the women had already paid for.

The U.S. Attorney said that Alderman would charge women for abortions, then turn around and file false claims to Medicaid for reimbursement. However, because Medicaid pays for abortions only in cases of rape, incest or to save the life of the mother, Alderman billed Medicaid for other kinds of services.

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arguments, lying, and other women. In his anger and drunkenness, he became physically abusive, and there were times when I was scared for my life. I stole money from my employer to try to move away, but I was caught and sentenced to prison again.

While I was serving this prison sentence, Kathy Troccoli came and gave a performance. She talked about healing, deep within. She talked about hope. When she sang "A Baby's Prayer," my inner spirit jumped and I cried and cried. It was then that I realized all of the pain, shame, and guilt I felt had been bottled up inside of me.

Women from the Pregnancy Resource Center were also here and some of them gave testimonies. When they offered a post-abortion Bible study, I knew I needed it. I had always believed in God, but I had felt that He was punishing me for certain things. I thought He didn't love me or want me anymore.

I'm so thankful that God used Kathy to open my eyes and ears to the healing I needed. I'm even more thankful for the volunteers who faithfully showed up for ten weeks to help us through the Bible study. Through God's word, I have been healed of things that had lingered with me for years: anger, guilt, shame, hurt, loneliness, depression. I found, without a doubt, that God wanted me to sit still and listen to Him. This time in prison is my training ground: a time to heal, listen, wait on Him, grow, and allow His work in me.

I needed healing. I always thought no one loved me or cared for me. Today, I know that God is always with me. He never left me; I'm the one who left Him.

I want to do His work now. I want to reach out to other women who feel alone and have nowhere to go. I'll tell them, "Go to God. He's always there. He's faithful and forgiving." I want to reach out to others to make the right choice, to help them know that with God there is always a way to prevail over all other things.

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I grew up in a physically and verbally abusive home. My youngest sister drowned when I was seven years old and my mother blamed me for it. I cooked, cleaned, cared for my siblings, and received daily beatings from my mother. I was told to be quiet, take what was coming to me, and not talk about our family. I did just that.

When I was 13, my mother told me I was fat, ugly, and unlikable. She told me no one would want me. She also said that if I ever talked with anyone about her I would be sorry, because anyone would believe her before they would believe me.

I did everything I could to win friends. I wanted so much to be liked. At age 17, I became pregnant. My mother told me she would not help me raise a child and that I must have an abortion. I did as I was told.

Right after the abortion, I shut down emotionally. It seemed to be the last straw for me. I didn't receive any counseling and there wasn't anyone to talk to. When I came home from the abortion clinic, my mother was angry and screamed at me, "You killed my grandbaby! You're worthless." I was confused and hurt. I had killed my baby and got my mom even madder—and realized that no one cared. I withdrew even more. I was filled with loneliness, guilt, and shame.

Eventually I moved in with a man who let me do as I pleased. When I found out that I was pregnant again, I told myself that this time I was going to keep it. I gave birth at 27 weeks to a one pound, two ounce baby girl. I married her father, and we went straight into alcohol, pot, and cocaine. I started stealing to support our habits, and ended up in and out of jail.

During this time, I had five miscarriages. Then I gave birth to a

boy. I smoked crack cocaine up until my arrest at eight months of pregnancy. My son was born while I was in a county jail waiting to go to prison. He was perfectly normal. I know God had His hand on me; His mercy and grace saved my life and my little boy.

I didn't see my children for ten months after that. While I was in prison I got into some religion, so I thought maybe I would be okay. Actually, I knew God in my mind but not in my heart. After I was released, I returned home to my family, and a few months later I was using drugs again. I continued using for six months, and then checked into a Christian-based 12-step program. I learned to pray. I changed. But my husband continued to use drugs. I couldn't return to that, I told him, so he left me and moved out of state.

I had been sober for six months when I became pregnant once again. I wasn't using drugs but I wasn't in the right frame of mind. I was still doing anything to be liked; I wasn't ready for another baby. My friends suggested adoption, but I said, "No way. I can't carry a baby and then give it up." Abortion was my choice. I was still running from responsibility.

A few months after that second abortion, I got involved with the "man of my dreams." Things seemed to be working out so well. I became pregnant again and wanted to keep the baby. I was in love, had been sober for two years, and was working. I felt things would work out, but I miscarried again. I believed I deserved to be punished by God for the abortions and for using drugs. I went into an emotional tailspin.

Then my boyfriend started drinking again. Next came gambling,

**This time in prison
is my time to heal.**

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