



What if we lived in a world where every woman with an unplanned pregnancy always felt empowered to choose life for her unborn baby? With *Help Her Be Brave*, you can discover your part in saving lives and find your pro-life passion.

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SEE HER

Finding the Ones Who Need Us

When I was nineteen, I was pregnant and unmarried. The shame and guilt were crippling. Growing up in church, I knew I was meant to save sex until marriage, but I still messed up. My boyfriend and I loved each other so much, and we had begun looking to each other for validation instead of to God.

I knew abortion was wrong. Even as a child I would prayerfully march outside abortion clinics with my family. If anyone ever asked me about that topic, I would adamantly say I could not understand why someone would choose abortion. But when I found out I was pregnant, fear took the wheel. I convinced myself an abortion would be the easy way out. Ryan and I would never have to tell a soul; we would never have to disappoint our families. Our plan was to pretend this little “bump in life” never happened and just keep going to church every Sunday.

Everything would be just fine.

I came within moments of having an abortion, having made it as far as being in a medical gown and sitting on the cold table. While the nurses were describing the way they would perform the abortion and what was about to happen, I had an anxiety attack, hyperventilated, and passed out.

Then, as the nurses were fanning me and trying to get me to drink some water, one of them looked me in the eyes and said, “You’re too emotionally distraught to make this decision today. You can come back another day, but today you’re not getting an abortion.”

I walked back into the waiting room, and Ryan saw that my eyes were red and my face was swollen from crying so much.

“We’re still pregnant,” I said.

In that moment, we decided to just see what would happen. We were nervous about our future and about how our families would respond to the news. But we were determined to figure it out together and brace ourselves for the hard months ahead.

We were so close to losing our precious son because of fear, because of isolation, because of shame and feeling that no one would understand.

We were so close.

I no longer speak about the abortion debate as I did before. My thoughts haven’t changed; I still know it’s wrong. But now instead of talking about abortion dogmatically, I address it with compassion and empathy. My heart breaks for every momma considering abortion, knowing all the emotions and fears overwhelming her.

I married the father of my son when I was sixteen weeks pregnant. I always loved him and knew He was God’s best for me, but

our marriage didn't begin in the picture-perfect way I'd always dreamed. Shame intensified when we were planning the wedding. Ryan really wanted his mentor, the pastor who had helped introduce him to the Lord years before, to marry us. This pastor lived several hours away, but he and Ryan were still close friends. Ryan looked up to him and respected every word that came out of his mouth. He wanted to honor this dear mentor by inviting him to join us together as husband and wife.

I remember the shock when Ryan shared the pastor's response. Disappointment washed over his face, as he looked at the ground and said, "Well, he declined the invitation to marry us. He said we had sinned so he could not bless the marriage or marry us."

Our first church wound happened in that moment, and it wouldn't be the last. Rejection after rejection crept into our hearts, and the shame became unbearable. We believed we had messed up so badly we couldn't even get married and be blessed by God.

Finally, we found another amazing pastor to marry us, and I tried my best to suck in my belly as I walked down the aisle. It was hard to maintain happy thoughts on my wedding day when I kept wondering who knew about our pregnancy and thinking about how disappointed they must be. *Things will get better after we are married*, I repeated to myself. *Things will get better, things will get better...*

But they didn't.

The burden of shame made it hard for me to walk out of my apartment every day. The ache of rejection kept me from celebrating the life and miracle growing inside me. Though I was

around people frequently, I still felt completely alone.

One by one, all my friends left. Looking back, I realize now that this wasn't because they didn't like me. They just didn't know what to do. Our pregnancy was "the elephant in the room." People didn't know whether to say, "Congratulations" or "I'm sorry." In the end, they didn't say anything at all.

Before getting pregnant I was active in the church and had a lot of friends there. After getting pregnant, I tried going back to church, but things had changed. No one acknowledged the pregnancy and the baby growing inside me. It was as if they couldn't see me. For some, it was hard to make eye contact. I felt invisible.

So I left.

Ryan and I did not go back to church until five or six years later. I tried different congregations but didn't find the perfect fit until I came to Gateway Church in Southlake, Texas. My family and I became involved right away. I began to feel God healing my heart. An unexpected part of that healing came when we got a phone call from an old friend.

The pastor who wouldn't marry us called my husband and asked for forgiveness. He said it was the worst mistake he'd ever made in his pastoring years. Of course Ryan forgave him. In fact, their relationship is a testimony to the healing power of love. They remain best friends to this day.

A few years ago, this same pastor asked me to come speak at his church on Mother's Day. He told me he had been prepping his congregation for a few weeks before I came. He had been very honest with them and told them how years ago he had refused to marry us. He confessed that he'd had a Pharisee heart at the time.

On that Mother's Day, I shared my deep convictions about how God's grace changes people. After my message, the pastor asked me to stay up on the platform, and he also called up my first-born son. In front of the entire congregation he said, "Amy, years ago I asked your husband for forgiveness for what I did. Now I'm asking *you*. Will you forgive me?"

Through tears, I said yes.

Then he turned to my teenaged son and said, "Jess, will you forgive me for planting seeds of rejection in your heart before you were even born? While you were still in your mother's womb, I rejected you. I am so sorry. Will you forgive me?"

Jess forgave him, too.

It was a powerful moment of freedom. Throughout the room, people were crying, as God healed old church wounds in many hearts. Everyone was changed in some way that day. God can restore broken relationships. But I still wish someone had reached out in love and acceptance years before.

WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT FINDING THE ONES WHO NEED US

Cathy was leading her first Embrace Grace group. She was excited, and her team had spent months dreaming and planning for the group of women who would be attending. The first day of class finally arrived, and to her surprise, only *one* mom showed up.

For a few more weeks, she held out hope that others would join, but no one else came.

Cathy was sharing her disappointment with God one morning,

and she heard the Lord say, “Cathy, would you do it all for just the one?” She realized she needed to see this situation through the eyes of her heavenly Father.

In Luke 15:1–7, we read,

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn’t he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

Don’t miss how Jesus uses the word *until* in this passage. He doesn’t say He goes after the lost sheep *until* he gets tired or *until* it gets dark. The Shepherd goes after the one “until he finds it.” And He doesn’t come back annoyed with the sheep or frustrated from the search, either. He comes back rejoicing, ready to celebrate that the lost one was found.

Christ’s mission on earth was, and still is, to seek and to save that which is lost. He would gladly leave the ninety-nine to go after the one. The same search-and-rescue assignment has been

given to us. We are to be actively looking for the wandering, the weak, and the weary. The Good Shepherd wants us to step out of our comfort zones to bring the lost back home.

DISCOVERING YOUR PLACE

As God's search-and-rescue team, the church waits expectantly for the Holy Spirit to guide us. Sometimes we overcomplicate the mission, questioning whether that still, small voice that prompts us to reach out is just a thought of our own. Too many times, we have missed moments when God was tugging on our heartstrings to look for the lonely.

Some of the thoughts we might have are, "The weather is not cooperating; I'll just pray at home instead of out on the sidewalk at an abortion clinic today." Or maybe if we hear of someone in our circle who has a son or daughter experiencing an unplanned pregnancy, we think, "I wanted to respect their privacy and not embarrass them by reaching out." Or maybe the Lord leads us to speak a kind word to a stranger who appears to be pregnant and not wearing a wedding ring, but we talk ourselves out of it because we worry it might come across as judgmental to ask.

How odd that we wait for a divine moment to happen when God Himself lives in us. With God's Spirit enabling us, *every* moment can be a divine moment.

So many times women with an unintended pregnancy will

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We can be the sign!**

say, “There is no way I can have this baby. I told God, ‘If You don’t want me to go through with this abortion, then I need you to give me a big sign so I know You are going to help me. Otherwise, I’m going through with my appointment.’” This is a common thought process for women who are scared about their future. But we can be the sign! God can send *us* to her! We can’t miss opportunities to lead single and pregnant mommas back home.

WHAT SEEING HER MIGHT LOOK LIKE

In my first book, I share Jordan’s story. Jordan was nineteen years old, pregnant, and unmarried. She joined the Embrace Grace class a little late in the semester, but after we heard her story, we made an exception and allowed her to join us.

Jordan had just found out she was pregnant and was scared. She was an only child, and her mom had left when she was a baby. Their home comprised just Jordan and her father.

When her dad found out about the pregnancy, he was angry and hurt, telling her she was unfit to be a mother and insisting she choose either abortion or adoption. Jordan felt conflicted; in her heart, she wanted to be a mother, but no one in her life agreed. One day, as she tearfully drove herself to work at the UPS shipping store, she cried out to God and asked Him to send someone in whom she could confide, someone who would help her know what to do. In desperation, she said, “God, just send someone today with a package that says the word *church* on it, and then I’ll know it’s safe for me to ask for help.”

The rest of the day crawled by. Lots of customers came to her

counter, but none with the package she was looking for. Five minutes prior to the store closing, a man came in with boxes labeled *church!* She knew it must be a sign from God.

She excitedly asked him, “Do you work at a church?” He answered, “No, I have a business that helps churches.” As her heart started to sink, the man explained he attended Gateway Church, conveniently located across the street from the store. That was all she needed to hear; this must be her help from God.

Jordan poured out her heart to this stranger, explaining her pregnancy, her loved ones’ reactions, and how desperate she was for answers. The father of four listened patiently and reassured her that the church might be able to help. Before he left, the man said some encouraging words and told her he would pray for her. A few days and a few phone calls later, Jordan found herself in our Embrace Grace group, sitting at a table with other single and pregnant young women. As she shared her story, I saw hope in her eyes: finally, someone understood.

What touched me the most is something Jordan said at the end of her story. The subtle beauty of her statement didn’t hit me immediately, but it had a time-released impact on my heart: “My dad said I would be a bad mom, but that guy I met at the UPS store said he thought I would be a good mom.”

Life-giving words are a rope that can rescue.

That follower of Jesus had spoken words of life into her, right there at the shipping store. He didn’t say some profound and beautiful statement that should be hung on a wall somewhere; he just shared from his heart. He may not have thought twice about those words, but to Jordan, they were all she had to hold on to.

Someone believed she could be a good mom, even if that someone was a perfect stranger.

People like Jordan are everywhere. They are working at our grocery stores, bussing our tables, and delivering our packages. We can be searching for the lost everywhere we go. And what then?

Then you are kind.

That's it.

Life-giving words are a rope that can rescue.

There are two kinds of people who stand outside abortion clinics: the ones who yell and scream and the ones who peacefully pray and offer help and hope. The first one makes a woman want to run faster to get inside.

The second one might just make her want to slow down.

Ideas for How to See Her

- Look for wedding rings when encountering pregnant women and engage in an intentional and Holy Spirit-led conversation. Smile and encourage her. See if she will open up and share how she might need support.
- Pass a note of encouragement and hope to a single mom you encounter.
- Lead a 40 Days for Life campaign in your community that aims to end abortion through prayer and fasting, community outreach, and a peaceful all-day vigil in front of abortion businesses.
- If the idea of praying outside an abortion facility intimidates you, try praying from your car and park at an angle so you can

see the women walking in. God works through your prayers no matter where you are!

- Find out who leads your local sidewalk counsel group or sidewalk prayer groups and offer to host a meal for the volunteers or provide snacks and water on a hot day when they are serving.
- Ask sidewalk counselors to speak to your church or small group about what they've experienced and how people can get involved.
- If you have artistic gifts, offer to make signs for your local sidewalk groups that are encouraging, uplifting, and full of love.
- Sign up with Sidewalk Advocates for Life for training on how to reach women walking into abortion clinics through a peaceful, prayerful, law-abiding sidewalk advocacy program.
- Connect with a sidewalk counseling ministry and go through their training. Ask a friend to do it with you!
- Create a list of local ministries and resources you can have ready for when you meet a single and pregnant mom—especially your local pro-life pregnancy center, complete with phone numbers. Share that list with friends so you're prepared when God connects you with someone who needs help.
- Reach out to your local high school/college counselors and nurses to make sure they have information about local pregnancy centers or other community resources that can help a new mom who just found out she is pregnant. Also, share your heart and passion with any high school teachers you

know and tell them that if they hear or know of any pregnant women in the schools, you would love to connect with them to offer help and support.

- Watch and follow your Facebook Buy/Sell/Trade pages or Marketplace pages for single moms who are asking for gently used baby items or mention needing help. Reach out to see how you can help connect her to people, churches, or ministries in your community.
- Purchase Love Boxes from EmbraceGrace.com and keep one or two in your car, to be available when you might meet someone with an unplanned pregnancy. It's a great tool that inspires a life decision and encourages a young mom who might need hope and community.
- Print an ad in your church directory, bulletin, or website with contact information for the local pregnancy centers and Embrace Grace Support Groups.
- With the permission of the owners of stores that sell baby clothes and supplies, place business cards or flyers that offer help and resources for single moms.
- Connect with your local OB/Gyn offices and place business cards or flyers offering help and resources for single moms.
- Pastors, share from the platform, on occasion, that leaders are here to help if anyone ever experiences an unplanned pregnancy.

- If you are a restaurant owner or have a company with a large number of young workers, try placing help and support flyers in your employee bathrooms with information on where to find help. Provide support hotline phone numbers they can access if they need help or that they can share with a friend who needs help.
- Become a volunteer advocate for your community with LoveLine, an organization that helps single and pregnant moms who feel they have exhausted all opportunities for resources in their area. Through LoveLine, you can search for resources in your area to help women who can't find physical and emotional support in their community.
- Do you love to drive? Become a Stork Bus Volunteer Driver! If you have a flexible schedule, are passionate about ministering in the pro-life movement, and love road trips, connect with Save the Storks or a local pregnancy center near you that has a mobile medical unit. Many pregnancy centers have sonogram machines on vans and busses and will park close to abortion clinics and offer free ultrasounds. The mobile units are beautiful and inviting, with licensed and professional medical staff providing free counsel and medical services.
- On your social media pages, make it known that you are a safe person to talk to if anyone knows someone who needs help because of an unintended pregnancy.
- Marketing and SEO companies, find a pregnancy help organization you love in your community and offer to help with

their search engine optimization so women with unplanned pregnancies can find them quickly online. Consider financially supporting pro-life marketing and SEO ministries like Human Coalition and Heroic Media.

- Connect with social workers in your area and provide materials about resources in your community that they can share with women with unplanned pregnancies.
- Organizations with a pro-life focus on outreach for women at abortion centers have all the usual volunteer needs for writers and editors, graphic designers, technology assistance, etc. What might you uniquely offer to support their ministry and keep the ship running?
- Volunteer to make literature packets or “Blessing Bags” for local Sidewalk Advocates. A tutorial is at sidewalkadvocates.org/blessingbags.

National Ministries and Resources

<i>40 Days for Life</i>	40daysforlife.com
<i>Heartbeat International</i>	abortionpillreversal.com
<i>Heroic Media</i>	heroicmedia.org
<i>ICU Mobile</i>	icumobile.org
<i>Human Coalition</i>	humancoalition.org
<i>ProLove Ministries</i>	loveline.com
<i>Save the Storks</i>	savethestorks.com
<i>Sidewalk Advocates for Life</i>	sidewalkadvocates.org

Alliance Defending Freedom created a Legal Guide for Sidewalk Counselors manual to educate you about your legal rights when engaging in sidewalk counseling. Go to adflegal.org for your free download.

Heartbeat's Option Line (800-712-HELP): call or text 24/7 for unplanned pregnancy support.

Prolove Ministries Loveline (888-550-1588): call or text 24/7 for unplanned pregnancy support.

Abortion Pill Rescue (877-558-0333): call or text 24/7 for women who have taken the first dose of the abortion pill (Mifeprex or RU-486) and now regret the decision and wish to reverse the effects.

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