



SURRENDERING THE SECRET

HEALING THE HEARTBREAK
OF ABORTION



PAT LAYTON





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A NOTE FROM PAT

Welcome to the new and updated version of *Surrendering the Secret!*

Some Bible studies allow God to open doors of our hearts and invite Him in to do a supernatural work in our lives. Other studies squeeze us in some areas that God wants to adjust or refine in our lives. Still other studies allow us to nestle into God's gentle arms and just rest in His goodness and promises. *Surrendering the Secret* will take you into all three of these places.

I strongly encourage you to work through this healing journey with a small group or, at the very least, to reach out to at least one other trusted woman to walk with you. This is one of those tender walks that's best shared with someone you can lean on. If you need someone to help you along this journey please contact www.surrenderingthesecret.com for contact information on a trained ministry leader close to you. You'll be encouraged and supported as you allow God into rooms of your heart that might have been sealed for so long a rusty lock secures them. You may have kept your secret for so long that you don't remember the details yourself. God remembers. He wants to set you free. He wants to shine a light on the ways that your abortion has kept you trapped in secrets, shadows, and shame. As you risk looking into your past, evaluating your present, and envisioning your future, you'll discover wounds and barriers in your life that you didn't even know existed. You'll also awaken new desires and possibilities.

Let me be the first to grasp your hand, look you in the eye and say, "I understand. I've felt what you feel. I've been where you are. And I know that you don't have to settle for just surviving—you can truly live!"

You're special to me, and you're beloved by God. His heart's desire is to walk this healing and life-giving journey with you. You've been in the wilderness of secrets, despair, shadows, and shame long enough. It's time to heal. It's time to live the adventure, one that's much like a mountain climb, that God planned for you from the beginning. All you need is to be willing. He will map out your path, He will provide the shade and the water, and, when we get to the top of our mountain, He will provide clear skies, crisp cool air, and a brand new view of our future.

You've been given incredible power—the choice to make life and the choice to take life. In picking up *Surrendering the Secret*, you've made the choice to make life—to begin the journey toward healing and life rather than allowing your life and dreams to die with a past mistake. I can't wait to see what awesome things God will do in and through you.

Let's do this thing together!
In His Grip—

Pat



INTRODUCTION

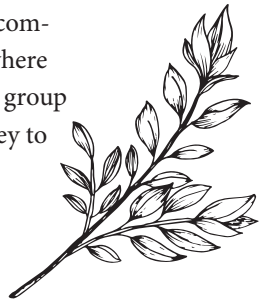
Without question, abortion can be one of the most traumatic experiences in a person's life. Some research indicates that more than 40 percent of women of child-bearing age have experienced the pain of abortion, and as many as 70 percent would consider themselves to be Christians. With these large numbers, that group could include your sister, mother, friends, or even you. Many women hide the secret of abortion deep in their hearts, and they are suffering severe consequences. They carry an incredible burden while wearing smiles on their faces.

Over the years post-abortive women learn to live in silence and secrecy, stockpiling hurts they've buried deep inside. Many struggle for years with repressed memories, guilt, shame, and depression. Most women feel they aren't allowed to talk about their abortion experiences because it was their "choice." They carry a great burden of shame and failure, afraid to reveal their hidden pain. Secrecy and shame are a destructive combination as women are forced to endure long-lasting destructive effects in isolation.

As with any traumatic experience, many post-abortive women experience physical, emotional, and spiritual symptoms related to Post-Abortion Trauma. They may not even realize that their symptoms are directly related to a past abortion. Often the medical community overlooks abortion as a risk factor in a woman's physical and emotional health.

Find the path to healing through honest, interactive Bible study; meaningful group experiences; unique journaling exercises; and caring community. Pat Layton, author, speaker and president of Life Impact Network, knows first-hand from her own healing journey how devastating abortion can be. With more than thirty years of experience in guiding women to healing, the process in *Surrendering the Secret* has proven effective time and time again.

Again—the process in *Surrendering the Secret* is best when shared with a trusted friend or leader. If you're not in a small healing group, find at least one other woman who would agree to be a partner with you as you walk through this study. You can adapt many of the activities if you have a partner. Healing occurs best in the context of a redemptive community. If you need help or support please visit www.surrenderingthesecret.com where you'll find a supportive and confidential environment, trained leaders, and a small group of women who share abortion in their pasts. You have our promise—on this journey to healing, you'll find a renewed sense of hope and purpose for the future.





HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Surrendering the Secret is an eight-part video-supported Bible study. The videos are a powerful part of this healing process. The most effective steps for your journey will be to view each video session prior to working through that particular session.

The study process is divided into five sections that can either be broken down into five separate days or processed through in your own personal timing.

1. Preparing for the Journey
2. Discovering Truth
3. Embracing Truth
4. Freedom Action Steps
5. Walking in Freedom

Think of our next couple of months together as a challenging mountain trek. You'll see the women in the video applying this analogy as well. It's time to confront our fear and pain and begin the slow, steady journey to the summit. It takes faith and courage to tackle this mountain. We're going together because the view from the top is worth the struggle, pain, and sacrifices on the journey upward.

This healing journey through *Surrendering the Secret* will help you to get to the summit. There the stigma of abortion is gone, we experience personal healing, we enjoy reconciliation with God and our unborn children, and we find a life of secrets, shame, and shadows completely redeemed!

If you aren't part of a healing group, decide today whom you'll trust to walk this journey with you. If you are, pray for the other members in your group. They are just as afraid and ashamed as you are. Ask God to help you help one another.

What's your greatest need for prayer and practical support right now?
Record your greatest prayer and support needs and then those of your prayer partner or group.

SURRENDERING THE SECRET PLEDGE

Whether you're going through this study with a group or a trusted friend, it's important that you covenant together, agreeing to live out important group values. Once these values are agreed upon you'll be on your way to experiencing true redemption.

1. I am committed and determined to go through this healing process until completion.
2. During this process I will not numb my feelings by using drugs or alcohol.
3. I will not consider suicide or make any type of self-destructive plan.
4. I understand that although this is a personal journey I have a responsibility to those I love and who love me. We pass on what we have not cleaned up.
5. I understand and agree that if I am part of a healing group, then what is shared in the group stays in the group, NO EXCEPTIONS.
6. I will do the homework that is assigned to me on a weekly basis in preparation for the next session.
7. I acknowledge that this will be hard work, confronting the loss associated with abortion and the effects on my life.
8. I trust that God wants me healed and set free.

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____

PRAYER PARTNER OR GROUP LEADER

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____





SESSION 1:
**WHERE HAVE YOU
COME FROM?**



PAT'S JOURNAL ENTRY

Each tick of the clock seemed like an hour as I stared at the door to the clinic. Abortion had been legal for years so the clinic boldly advertised the service I needed: "Termination of Pregnancy."

The emotions and forces that lead a woman to an abortion clinic are not easily buried or forgotten. Like constant, dependable companions, disillusionment, confusion, anger, pride, fear, rebellion, control, and shame stayed with me through the process and for years afterward.

It was late summer in Florida, and at 23 I was engaged to be married in a few weeks. My fiancé didn't know I was at the clinic. How could I tell him? He was my knight in shining armor who had come into my life to rescue me from years of bad relationship choices and a lifelong search for significance and value.

I was not about to jump off the back of my knight's white horse and walk off into the sunset ... alone and pregnant. Abortion was my only hope. It had to be the right thing to do! I couldn't bear to admit one more failure to my family. And the two men in my life now deserved better from me. My 5-year-old son was the only good thing I had to show for myself at that point, and my fiancé really had no idea what he'd gotten himself

into. Too much power for a young, insecure woman—the power to make life and to take life. I made the choice I thought would fix everything for everyone, especially for me.

The inviting Yellow Page™ ad and the reassuring nurse at the desk affirmed my choice with the promise that this would only take a few minutes. Within a few hours, I'd forget it ever happened. Oh, that it had been anything like a simple solution ... So here I am years later, stepping back into my past again, staring one more time at the entrance to the dilapidated old clinic. This time, though, I'm flooded with gratitude, joy, and peace as I recall all that God has done in my life over these past years. He's rescued me from despair and shame, transforming the messes of my life into a beautiful ministry of grace and healing. My life has meaning as I share my story of redemption with so many others who are deeply wounded by their secrets and shadows. God has restored my marriage and brought my entire family into His salvation.

I could never have imagined that walking back through the pain into my secrets and shadows would begin a healing journey that has led to such a wonderful place of intimacy with God and fullness of life.

BREAKING THE ICE

REVIEW AND COMMIT TO THE *SURRENDERING THE SECRET* PLEDGE PRIOR TO BEGINNING YOUR SESSION 1 DISCUSSION.

Take some time to share about your childhood dream for your future.
What did you think your life would be like?

How do you keep the photos from your past? Do you organize them or keep them randomly piled in boxes? Regardless of how we store them, why do you think photos are so valuable to us?

Have you ever lost or misplaced something of great value to you?
How did you approach your search to find it?

PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

Strolling down memory lane can be wonderful. Memories come and go when we least expect them. The smell of warm bakery bread propels us back to Grandma's house and we're 8 years old again. Returning for a hometown high school reunion motivates us to drive up and down streets pointing out our elementary school, a dear friend's home, or our favorite burger hangout to a bored spouse or friend. In the same way, bad memories—even when we try so hard to suppress them—roll in and out of our minds and hearts on a daily basis, bringing pain instead of happiness.

For those of us going through *Surrendering the Secret*, memories of a past abortion are seared deeply into our hearts and souls. We're about to embark on this new journey together—a journey to healing, freedom, acceptance, and hope on the other side of our pain. There will be times when the journey doesn't seem to be very healing, but often we must go down before we go up and go back before we can go forward. If you'll trust the process, you'll see God working. When you look back on your life, you can see God's hand in many places where, at the time, you had no idea He was working for you. This is another one of those times. God is here, and He has brought you here. He has a plan for you but cannot take the journey for you. You must take one step: a step of faith to begin walking the path with Him.

OPENING PRAYER

God, thank You for Your supernatural ways and for leading me to this group. I know that You have another great work to do in me. You have known and cared for me since before I was born. I am thankful that I don't have to continue to carry this burden alone because You have promised to take this journey with me. I know, Lord, that many women are suffering just as I am with this secret. Help me, Lord, to know how You can use this in my life.





DISCOVERING TRUTH

Almost everybody has experienced past trouble or trauma that has left deep heart wounds. Trouble and wounds are inevitable, but we have the power to choose how we'll deal with them.

We hide our pain in many ways as we try to escape our heartache or seek pleasure in a harsh world. Some think God couldn't care less about our pain or that He condemns us for past mistakes, but the Book of Jeremiah gives us a glimpse into God's real heart:

They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. "Peace, peace," they say, when there is no peace.

JEREMIAH 6:14, NIV

God was clearly critical of the religious leaders He was addressing. What attitudes toward people's pain and struggles was God criticizing? (Reread the verse.) When God looks at the messes in our lives, how does He feel about us and about our past wounds?

Rather than trying to ignore issues from our past, what might happen if we choose to intentionally remember the past and understand more about that day, that choice, when life changed forever?

How do you think this approach of remembering might be a more effective approach to finding inner healing and a richer life? In what ways would it be more difficult?

God knows superficial healing is no healing at all. True peace will not come until we experience true healing. Let's look at a story in the Bible about a woman, not so different than us, to see how true healing can come.

ONE WOMAN'S JOURNEY BACKWARD

The Bible overflows with stories of women—their losses, challenges, good and bad choices, failures, and victories. The common themes and promises of God's Word are rescue, healing, redemption, and hope. Through these stories God promises never to ignore us, forsake us, or give up on us. Hagar is a woman in the Bible whose dream for family and motherhood didn't go the way she planned—the way she'd dreamed about since girlhood.

¹ Abram's wife Sarai had not borne any children for him, but she owned an Egyptian slave named Hagar. ² Sarai said to Abram, "Since the LORD has prevented me from bearing children, go to my slave; perhaps through her I can build a family." And Abram agreed to what Sarai said. ³ So Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar, her Egyptian slave, and gave her to her husband Abram as a wife for him. This happened after Abram had lived in the land of Canaan ten years. ⁴ He slept with Hagar, and she became pregnant. When she saw that she was pregnant, her mistress became contemptible to her. ⁵ Then Sarai said to Abram, "You are responsible for my suffering! I put my slave in your arms, and when she saw that she was pregnant, I became contemptible to her. May the LORD judge between me and you." ⁶ Abram replied to Sarai, "Here, your slave is in your hands; do whatever you want with her." Then Sarai mistreated her so much that she ran away from her.

GENESIS 16:1-6, CSB

What part of Abram and Sarai's issues became Hagar's (verses 4,6)?
How do you feel about what happened to Hagar in this story?

Surely Hagar's decision to run away from her home and life was one of panic (verse 6). How must Hagar have felt about her circumstances, herself, and those she should have been able to trust? What kind of life could she expect with the problems she had and the choices she'd made?

⁷ The angel of the LORD found Hagar beside a spring of water in the wilderness, along the road to Shur. ⁸ The angel said to her, "Hagar, Sarai's servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?" "I'm running away from my mistress, Sarai," she replied. ⁹ The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority."
¹⁰ Then he added, "I will give you more descendants than you can count."
¹¹ And the angel also said, "You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael (which means 'God hears'), for the LORD has heard your cry of distress. ... ¹³ Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the LORD, who had spoken to her. She said, "You are the God who sees me." She also said, "Have I truly seen the One who sees me?"
¹⁴ So that well was named Beer-lahai-roi (which means "well of the Living One who sees me"). It can still be found between Kadesh and Bered.
¹⁵ So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him Ishmael.

GENESIS 16:7-11,13-15, NLT

Hagar and her unborn son were going to die in the wilderness, but Hagar turned to God in her time of crisis. What was His first instruction to her through the angel (verse 9)? Why did the angel instruct her to name her unborn son Ishmael (verse 11)?

It was common in biblical times for people to give God a new name when they discovered another exciting characteristic about Him. Given the way Hagar named God and the place where He met her, what fresh, life-sustaining truths do you think Hagar learned about God and the way He related to her personally?

A RESPONSE OF PANIC, A LIFE OF SECRETS

For thousands of women every day, abortion is a response to panic. While abortion promises to be the simple solution to the problem of an unwanted or unexpected pregnancy, it doesn't solve all our problems and it creates new problems for us. Sooner or later, we run to the wilderness of fear, shame, abandonment, anger, and self-protection only to find ourselves just surviving—not really living—in a foreign, desolate land.

Describe a time in your life, apart from your abortion, when you tried to run from a problem or tried to slide out of your situation without anyone noticing. How did it work out?

The amazing news is that God longs to come to us and rescue us. When God found Hagar feeling abandoned and hopeless in the wilderness, she embraced her pain rather than trying to cover it up or ignore it. You may feel as though you've been wandering in a desert since your abortion experience, ever aware of your losses. Or you may have made a futile decision long ago to try to put that desert experience behind you, to bury it and try to disconnect your heart and life from it. God hears your heart's cry! He sees you and feels your pain. He longs for you to look back on this time in your life and ask with Hagar, "Have I truly seen the One who sees me?" (verse 13).

My heart's desire is that this *Surrendering the Secret* study will be your angel in the desert, walking with you back to face the secrets, shadows, and shame that have kept you from really living for too long. As difficult and scary as it might be, you must confront your pain head on. Just like Hagar, you have a promise that God will meet you personally at your place of need.





EMBRACING TRUTH

GOD SEARCHES FOR THOSE WHO ARE LOST

Often the greatest obstacle to healing is our own resistance to the journey. There are many reasons to hold back, but one with which most of us struggle is doubting God's heart toward us. Given the pain and struggles in our lives, it's no wonder we ask ourselves, *If God is good, how could He have let this happen to me?* It's also understandable, given the way most of us have been raised, that we focus on God's judgment and greatly underestimate His incredible desire and passion for each of us. Let's consider His words to us.

¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ... ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God.

JOHN 3:17,21, NIV

¹² As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.. ...

¹⁵ I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign LORD. ¹⁶ I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.

EZEKIEL 34:12,15-16, NIV

⁴ Suppose one of you had a hundred sheep and lost one. Wouldn't you leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the lost one until you found it? ⁵ When found, you can be sure you would put it across your shoulders, rejoicing, ⁶ and when you got home call in your friends and neighbors, saying, "Celebrate with me! I've found my lost sheep!" ⁷ Count on it—there's more joy in heaven over one sinner's rescued life than over ninety-nine good people in no need of rescue.

LUKE 15:4-7, THE MESSAGE



According to John 3:17-21, what was God's desire and goal for sending Jesus into our world?



Have you ever considered that God is devoted to a save and rescue mission for our messed up world and for you in particular? How does this truth change your perspective?



Face it, sheep aren't too bright, and they clearly can't protect themselves. According to Ezekiel 34:12,15-16, how does God deal with us when we get lost in the fog or darkness of life? How does God's promise apply to our own life issues, wounds, addictions, and spiritual struggles?

From His story in Luke 15, what is Jesus' approach to leading and caring for you as one of His sheep? How does the way He values and even treasures you affect your willingness to be "found" by Him?

OUR RELENTLESS LOVER

God uses many metaphors to communicate the depth of His feelings for us—from shepherd-sheep, to potter-clay, to father-child, and even lover-beloved. The metaphor of lover to beloved best expresses the depth of intimacy He longs for with each of us.

⁴ Long before [God] laid down earth's foundations, he had us in mind, had settled on us as the focus of his love, to be made whole and holy by his love.⁵ Long, long ago he decided to adopt us into his family through Jesus Christ. (What pleasure he took in planning this!)

⁶ He wanted us to enter into the celebration of his lavish gift-giving by the hand of his beloved Son. ⁷ Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah, his blood poured out on the altar of the Cross, we're a free people—free of penalties and punishments chalked up by all our misdeeds. And not just barely free, either. *Abundantly free!*

EPHESIANS 1:4-7, THE MESSAGE

As a bridegroom rejoices over his bride,
so will your God rejoice over you.

ISAIAH 62:5b, NIV

² When you're in over your head, I'll be there with you. When you're in rough waters, you will not go down. When you're between a rock and a hard place, it won't be a dead end—³ Because I am GOD, your personal God, The Holy of Israel, your Savior. I paid a huge price for you: all of Egypt, with rich Cush and Seba thrown in! ⁴ *That's* how much you mean to me! *That's* how much I love you! I'd sell off the whole world to get you back, trade the creation just for you.

ISAIAH 43:2-4, THE MESSAGE

What does it mean to be the “focus” of someone's love (Ephesians 1:4)? How does a bridegroom feel about his new bride (Isaiah 62:5)?

As a bride, how would it feel if your lover would give away everything in exchange for your love (Isaiah 43:4)?

What other phrases in Ephesians 1:4-7 and Isaiah 43:2-4 explain the depth of God's desire for a deep, personal relationship with you?

In what ways is a good husband-wife relationship more intimate and joy-filled than any other human relationship? What does the lover-bride image tell us about the depth of intimacy and joy for which God created us?

God is thrilled about you, and He longs to see you enthused about a freer and deeper life with Him. All too often, we fall into a pattern of "lookin' for love in all the wrong places" rather than turning to God to meet our deepest needs for intimacy, acceptance, and meaning. God is a relentless lover, but He's also a gentle lover. He wants you to rest in His arms, comforted in those times when you're lost, trapped, or struggling. Take comfort in knowing that even in those dark places, He's still coming for you.



FREEDOM ACTION STEPS

Surrendering the Secret will walk with you through some secrets that have been stored away in your heart but not forgotten. This process will help you cope with memories of bad choices that drop into your heart and mind when you least expect them. Remember, God has a way of taking us backward to take us forward and inward to take us outward.

MY WILDERNESS

The wilderness we wander isn't a literal desert; it's a wilderness of our hearts and minds. When we carry a heavy burden, it's only natural to feel trapped by the shadows that surround us. Like Hagar, we grow weary and feel ready to give up in despair and shame.

As if that weren't enough, there's a villain in the story who always follows us into the wilderness. Instead of seeing the "God who sees me" and who works tirelessly on our behalf, we hear the inner voices of condemnation and shame—and the lying voice of the tempter.

Take a few moments to read each statement in the following survey and mark the appropriate answers:

PAST TRAUMA SURVEY

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
1. The abortion happened over a year ago.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I don't know the name of the doctor who performed it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I was more than three months pregnant when I aborted.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I was a teenager at the time of the abortion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I was forced by others to abort.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. The baby's father wanted me to abort.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. The baby's father left the decision up to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Less than six people know about the abortion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I always felt abortion was wrong but had no choice in my situation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I have experienced nightmares or flashbacks about the abortion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	YES	NO	NOT SURE
11. Nightmares or flashbacks occur at least once each month.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. There are details about the abortion I can't remember.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I avoid places, people, and things that remind me of the abortion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I fear that my life may be short.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Since the abortion, I have lost interest in things I used to love.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I often have trouble sleeping.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I often feel angry and irritable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Concentrating is often difficult.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I feel guilt and shame about the abortion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. I have cried over the abortion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. I use alcohol and/or drugs at least once per week.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. I usually have sex with the men I date.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. Sometimes I regret having the abortion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. I feel sad and depressed often.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. I had physical problems after the abortion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. I feel bad emotionally from the abortion at times.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. I feel that I made the right decision to abort.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. I feel OK about the whole experience.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. I would abort again to deal with an unplanned pregnancy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. I have had more than one abortion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TOTALS:	_____	_____	_____

SURVEY INTERPRETATION

If the number of checks in your “yes” column is nine or more, Post-Abortion Trauma is probably already affecting your life. If the number is higher than 14, you have numerous symptoms that need attention. If you answered “yes” to five or more questions in numbers 10-18, you may be struggling with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) resulting from your abortion or some other trauma in your life.

Share with the group or your prayer partner your overall survey score and key symptoms you recognize in your own life, even if you don’t directly associate these symptoms with your abortion(s).

Were you surprised by the connection between any of the symptoms in the survey and the condition that medical and counseling professionals refer to as Post-Abortion Trauma? Explain.

If you’re working on this study alone, I encourage you again to ask a close Christian friend or female ministry leader to work through this process with you. Post-Abortion Trauma is real and it’s deep. You need someone who will pray with you, someone who will help you through this, and someone you can trust. God has someone for you; find her!

CHOICES

Most of us have learned to accommodate our past. We live with it, we ignore it, we justify it, we blame others for it, and we carry it into our fears, attitudes, and relationships.

Every woman has the choice to make life and the choice to take life. We exercised that choice in going through with an abortion, but more importantly we exercise it now. Will you take the journey to healing and life, or will you allow your life and dreams to die with a past mistake?

Remember, God is with you. If you’ve chosen to take this journey on your own, He is with you. If you’ve chosen a partner or friend to help you, He is with you. If you’re taking your journey with a group, He is with you. You matter to God! He wants you whole, healed, and free!



²³ A [woman's] steps are established by the LORD, and he takes pleasure in [her] way. ²⁴ Though [she] falls, [she] will not be overwhelmed, because the LORD supports [her] with his hand.
PSALM 37:23-24, CSB (feminine pronouns added for emphasis)

JOURNAL EXERCISE

Take some time to doodle, draw, journal, or cut and paste some magazine pictures that express a bit about how you see yourself and the life journey you've experienced so far.

MY PRAYER AND SUPPORT NEEDS

MY GROUP'S PRAYER AND SUPPORT NEEDS





WALKING IN FREEDOM

Each week this section will contain an introspective question to ask of your heart or a question to take to God. There may also be journaling or other activities to help you in your healing process. Some journal pages are included in this study book; however, journaling is a powerful tool to accelerate healing and spiritual growth. You may want to begin a separate journal during this healing journey and continue it on your walk with God.

This part of your study will help you to look into your heart and into God's heart as you move closer to Him with the deepest and darkest places of your soul. This first week your assignment will be challenging, but it's vital to our journey together. There are two elements this week—questions to take to your heart about the lies we believe and a time to journal of your abortion experience.

QUESTIONS TO TAKE TO MY HEART

The following questions ask you to look into your heart and focus on your deepest feelings about yourself and God. Our behaviors are the best indicators of what we really believe deep down. Look deep into the underlying beliefs in your heart where your truest attitudes and motives live. To prepare yourself, read and reflect on Psalm 51:6. Don't settle for a quick answer. Be sure to capture your thoughts.

⁶ Surely you desire integrity in the inner self,
and you teach me wisdom deep within.

PSALM 51:6, CSB

Which of these lies has the tempter whispered in my ear about myself, my secret, or my relationships?

- Need: Burying secrets and shame and keeping my pride are critical to my survival.
- Fear: I won't be able to cope without my secrets and coping mechanisms.
- Inferiority: I'm a bad, unworthy person. Nobody could really like me.
- Isolation: I'm all alone anyway, so it's up to me to take care of me.
- Failure: I'm a failure anyway, so why even try?
- Shame: My behaviors and addictions are the truest things about me.
- Self-hatred: I should loathe myself for who I am and what I've done.

- Escape: I must find a way to avoid the pain and isolation.
- Disillusionment: There's no hope. No one could understand or love me.
- Other:

Which of these lies has the tempter whispered in my ear about God?
Which false belief about God is my biggest obstacle in the journey to healing? What do I really believe about God's heart toward me?

- God only puts up with me; He doesn't really love and delight in me.
- God can't be trusted to have my best interests at heart.
- God is demanding; He's only satisfied with perfection.
- God really doesn't care; He's abandoned me.
- God doesn't want "damaged goods."
- Maybe this whole God thing is a sham.
- God only helps those who help themselves.
- Other:

Are there particular times or situations in which you're more susceptible to the inner voices of shame and the devil's lies? Explain or give an example.



JOURNAL EXERCISE

In Session 2 we'll take the first step at looking honestly at Post-Abortion Trauma and how it may have or is currently affecting your life. We'll dig into the truth about physical, social, emotional, and spiritual aspects of abortion. Every woman who has chosen abortion as a way of escape has been sold a lie. Lies create secrecy, bondage, darkness, and shame. God wants to set you free, but you'll have to fight for your freedom through a sometimes uncomfortable journey. Some ideas to help you get started are on the following pages. Two common lies we buy are that our stories are worse than anybody else's and that we should have known better than to let our lives take such turns in the first place. We must remember that these self-centered lies feed our pride and will hinder the healing process. We must let go of our pride and be honest with ourselves about our pasts in order to avoid staying stuck there.

In the space provided on the next page or in your personal journal, write down events that led up to your abortion. Describe the events of the day and write down what you remember thinking and feeling during that time in your life. Raw thoughts and fragmented sentences are fine; the key is to get your story on paper. Some questions are provided below to help you think through the details.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER FOR YOUR ABORTION STORY AND JOURNAL ENTRY

1. How old were you when you had your first abortion?
2. What was your lifestyle at the time of your abortion?
3. Were you making poor choices in relationships with men?
4. What was your relationship with your parents?
5. Was there anyone in your life you felt you could trust completely?
6. What was your relationship with God?
7. How did you view abortion at the time (for example, right, wrong, OK for some but not for me)?
8. When you discovered you were pregnant, what was your first thought?
9. Did you tell anyone about your pregnancy?
10. What emotions tended to overwhelm you as you thought about the pregnancy?
11. When did the idea of abortion first enter your mind? Was it suggested to you by someone?
12. Did you feel you had no other choice in the situation? What circumstances made you feel this way?
13. Did anyone offer support for the pregnancy?
14. How did you find the abortion facility?
15. Did you go alone or did someone take you to the abortion appointment?
16. When you first arrived at the clinic, how did you feel? (Some women report that they continued to hope that someone might rescue them.)

17. When you first entered the clinic, what did you see, hear, and feel?
18. What do you remember about the abortion procedure?
19. While you were recovering, what thoughts were playing in your mind?
20. Were there any complications with your procedure?
21. Who took you home?
22. What about you changed the day of the abortion?

MY ABORTION STORY



IT'S TIME TO HEAL THE HEARTBREAK OF ABORTION.

Without question, abortion can be one of the most traumatic experiences in a person's life. You are not alone. Millions upon millions of women hide the heartbreak, shame, and loss of a past abortion. It's time to heal!

Surrendering the Secret is a powerful 8-step Bible study that helps hurting women find the path to healing and freedom through the hope of Scripture; meaningful hands-on experiences; unique journaling exercises; and a confidential, caring community. Through this study you will understand:

- how looking back helps you get ahead;
- the truth about abortion as one of the most common surgical procedures for women in the U.S. and its devastating aftermath;
- why confronting anger and embracing forgiveness *sets you free*;
- the guaranteed path to forgiving yourself;
- how God wants to use your past to find freedom and purpose in your future.

Author Pat Layton knows from her own healing journey how devastating abortion can be. With more than thirty years of experience in guiding women to healing, her time-tested *Surrendering the Secret* process has proven effective all over the world. This unique experiential resource is perfect for any woman, or group, who has experienced the heartbreak of abortion. Pat is a popular and engaging speaker and trainer for several national organizations and women's events. Contact her at www.PatLayton.net.

ALSO AVAILABLE *Surrendering the Secret* group leader support resources, including a new leader guide and promotional materials, are available at www.SurrenderingTheSecret.com.

DIGITAL RESOURCES To guide in leading the 8-session study, group use bundle or individual videos of the teaching sessions are available for rent or purchase at www.LifeWay.com/SurrenderingTheSecret.

Bible Study / Women

