

Tab 1



Becoming a Safe Place | Reflection & Group Discussion Guide

Thank you for picking up this discussion guide! The purpose of this guide is to facilitate prayerful reflection and loving group discussion to help solidify and implement the biblical truths and practical tools covered in our booklet, ***Becoming a Safe Place: Shaping a Culture of Compassion Before, During, and After Unplanned Pregnancy***. Our dream for Traverse City and the surrounding areas is that no one in an unplanned pregnancy would have to walk alone, and that anyone considering an abortion due to lack of support would be overwhelmed by the loving response and tangible help of the body of Christ, so they can be empowered to thrive as parents. Thank you for helping make this dream a reality!

– The Thrive Team

Materials: Thrive Medical Clinic's *Safe Place* booklet, along with the other resources referenced in this guide, can be found on our **Supporter Resource Portal:** www.friendsofTMC.org/resources

Note to Leaders: *For those leading this group study, you may find it helpful to also read our more in-depth training guide that we developed specifically for leaders called A Church Leader's Guide to Shepherding the Abortion-Vulnerable. This added biblical and educational context is helpful for guiding these sensitive discussions. This resource can also be found on the Supporter Resource Portal.*

How to use this discussion guide: Each week is divided into 4 sections: *Prepare*, *Verses*, *Discussion*, and *Action*.

Before Group:

- Read or watch the content given in the *Prepare* section, and reflect and take notes on the prompts given.
- Read the *Verses* section.
- Contemplate and jot down notes, answers, and insights to the *Discussion* section.

During Group:

- Open with prayer and review the *Verses* as a group.
- Go through the group *Discussion* questions. Don't feel boxed in by these questions. This is simply a guide to help facilitate meaningful reflection and discussion.
- Read the *Action* section and close with prayer.

Week 1

EMPATHY: Seeing the Abortion-Vulnerable

Prepare:

- Read booklet pages 1-7
- Watch the 2 patient story videos found on page 3 (Amy's Story) and Page 6 (Rowan's Story)
- Reflect:
 - Understanding and empathizing with the barriers that abortion-vulnerable people face is one of the first steps to being able to lovingly support them in ways that will truly make a difference. What does abortion-vulnerability look like? Imagine yourself in these circumstances:
 - Financial struggles or instability
 - Pressure to abort from your partner, friends, or family
 - A difficult living circumstance or overwhelming life struggles
 - Already struggling to meet the needs of young children, without any support

Oftentimes these struggles are unspoken and unseen, so they can feel isolating and crippling, so we should treat all people we meet with unconditional love as Christ has called us to.

- Have you ever experienced pressure - from a person or set of difficult circumstances - to do something that went against your values? How did that make you feel?

Verses: Review as a group.

- "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." - *Romans 8:1*
- "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other. As the lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." - *Colossians 3:12-14*
- "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins." - *1 Peter 4:8*

Discussion: *Discuss as a group.*

- (Optional) Is abortion or unplanned pregnancy part of your story of someone you love? What is something from the study guide and the scriptures above that you can reflect on to bring healing, hope, joy and/or peace?
- Whose story had the biggest impact on you? Amy, Rowan, or Lucy? Imagine yourself in her situation. How would you feel? What would you need? What would you want someone to say to you?
- When has God taken your mistakes in life and turned them into blessings?

Action: *End group with this call-to-action and close with a prayer.*

- This week we encourage you to pray for those facing unplanned pregnancies and those healing from the hurt of a past abortion. Take time to imagine walking with the women and men you're praying for.

Week 2

WORDS OF LIFE: Speaking the Truth *in Love*

Prepare:

- Read booklet pages 8-14.
- Read the blog on Thrive Medical Clinic's Supporter Resource Portal: *Common Phrases that Undermine Our Life-Affirming Influence*
 - friendsoftmc.org/church-resources/2024/5/23/say-this-not-that
- Reflect:
 - Have you ever had something heavy going on in your life that you were nervous to tell a friend about? How have others' words and reactions affected you during those challenging circumstances (positively or negatively)?
 - When has another person's words helped you heal from a deep hurt? What did they say to you?

Verses: Review as a group.

- "To answer before listening - that is folly and shame" -*Proverbs 18:13*
- "If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. -*1 Corinthians 13:1-7*
- "But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ." -*Ephesians 4:15*
- "Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body." -*Proverbs 16:24*
- "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity" -*Proverbs 17:17*

Discussion: *Discuss as a group.*

- (Optional) Review page 13 (The Parent Promise). If you are a parent, young adult leader, mentor, etc. take some time to prayerfully reflect on this section. Is this something you feel you should verbalize? Why, or why not?

- Take time to reflect on the 6 beliefs on pages 9-10. Did any of these shift or broaden your perspective? Which one stood out to you, and why?

- Did any of the phrases/points in the online blog stand out to you? Which one(s) and why?

- Imagine a close friend or family member confides in you that they are pregnant and don't know what they're going to do.
 - How could you react in a loving and Christ-like way?

 - Take a look at page 11 and 12; which of these steps would your natural tendency be to skip? And which steps come naturally to you?

Action: *End group with this call-to-action and close with a prayer.*

- Using pages 9-10 for guidance, have an intentional conversation about one of these beliefs this week - with a friend, family member, church leader/member, etc.

Note: A tip for helping them to slow down (page 11): slow down your own speech, breathing, and movements. We naturally match the energy levels of those around us. By slowing down yourself, it will encourage her to do so as well.

Week 3

HANDS & FEET: Supporting People in Unplanned Pregnancies

Prepare:

- Read booklet ages 15-24
- Prayerfully make a list of your unique skills, gifts, experiences and connections that might be helpful for someone before, during and/or after an unplanned pregnancy. We are the body of Christ and we all have a beautiful role to play in being the hands and feet of Jesus.
- Reflect:
 - Imagine Jesus and how he loved others. Think about what he said and did to show his unconditional love and support for others. Imagine Christ walking with you and guiding you as you walk with those in unplanned pregnancies. Ask him to give you strength and wisdom to be his hands and feet.

Verses: *Review as a group.*

- “Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God’s grace in its various forms” -1 Peter 4:10
- “Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” -Galatians 6:2
- “And let us not become weary in doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” -Galatians 6:9-10
- “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” -2 Corinthians 5:19

Discussion: *Discuss as a group.*

- (Optional) Prayerfully reflect on the list on page 20. In what ways are you helping those around you feel safe to confide in you? Ask God to reveal specific things you can do to reinforce this message that you’re a safe and compassionate listener and support system for friends and family in need?

- It's much easier to simply be "pro-birth," rather than empowering abundant life for the whole family. But that is not the way of Jesus. The best way to love the baby is to genuinely love and sacrificially support the baby's parents; loving the baby *is* loving the parents, and loving the parents *is* loving the baby. How can you use your unique skills, gifts, experiences, and connections to empower abundant life for the whole family within our own spheres of influence?
 - *Tip: look for inspiration in the "7 Things You Can Do Right Now" section, on page 17 and 18, and the "What Does a Safe Person Look Like" list on page 20. Even the Prayer Calendar at the end of the booklet has some great ideas!*

- According to Lifeway research, Roughly half of US women who have chosen abortion don't believe they can be forgiven for this particular sin. We can help our friends who are wrestling with the pain and regret of a past abortion decision know that they are completely forgiven in Christ and deeply loved.
 - What are some practical things you can do to help correct this misperception and bring healing?

Action: *End group with this call-to-action and close with a prayer.*

- Let's all commit to doing at least one thing this week to support or encourage someone we know who has been impacted by an unplanned pregnancy.

Note: The resources on page 21 are a great way to continue learning how to support people in unplanned pregnancies.