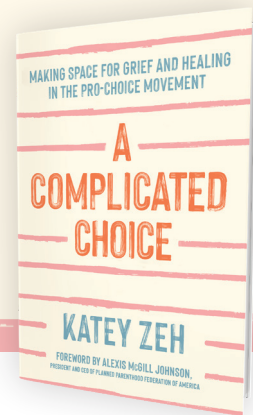


# A COMPLICATED CHOICE: MAKING SPACE FOR GRIEF AND HEALING IN THE PRO-CHOICE MOVEMENT

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## REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE



### CHAPTER 1

1. How does the courage of the hemorrhaging woman—both in approaching Jesus and in telling her story—mirror the courage of people getting abortions?
2. What are issues in your life—related to reproduction or not—that you have been afraid to tell others for fear of judgment? How have you responded when people have confided in you? How would you have responded to the hemorrhaging woman if she approached you?
3. The story in Mark 5 is one of healing, physical and otherwise. In what ways have you seen abortion portrayed as a healing procedure? Alternatively, in what ways has abortion been portrayed as a harmful procedure?
4. In what ways do you see how interlocking systems of oppression (for example, racism, sexism, classism, Christian supremacy) may impact a person's decision to terminate a pregnancy and/or their experience of abortion?

### CHAPTER 2

1. Think of a time when someone came to you in need of compassion. What might be a compassionate response to a person telling you they needed an abortion?
2. How does being pro-choice but morally opposed to abortion compound the culture of silence and shame surrounding abortion?
3. Have you seen faith leaders advocating for abortion access the way the Clergy Consultation Service on Abortion did? How might having visible pro-choice clergy change your views of abortion?
4. The Religious Right was strategic in making abortion one of the centerpieces of their political agenda. How does the centering of abortion both highlight and distract from the systemic racism of their political aims?
5. How has purity culture shaped your understanding of sex, sexuality, and abortion?
6. How does anti-abortion storytelling like Sydna Masse's paradoxically encourage silence and fear about abortion?

## CHAPTER 3

1. How do phrases like “the tragic conflicts of life with life” both disempower pregnant people and also provide a moral shield for anti-abortion activists to hide behind?
2. Sarah’s story makes clear how important access to reliable and high-quality medical care is for reproductive health. What struck you about her medical journey?
3. Have you ever participated in a ritual in the aftermath of a difficult life event? Was it cathartic, painful, or both?
4. Decisions about pregnancies are a matter of religious freedom. How do barriers to abortion care impact a person’s ability to live according to their faith values?
5. Alexandra’s story shows how vital thriving is in a person’s life—that a pregnant person’s well-being includes so much more than avoiding death. How do laws that allow for abortion only in cases of life-threatening illness devalue the full humanity of pregnant people?
6. How does access to abortion contribute to the value of abundant life?

## CHAPTER 4

1. How might abortion be a sacred answer to a call for help?
2. The Hyde Amendment compounds the oppression of marginalized populations. Why do you think Congress has passed the Hyde Amendment every year since 1976, even with Democratic majorities? What does this say about the stigmatization of abortion in the US?
3. Many argue that the decision to have an abortion can be a responsible parenting choice. How might being a parent impact a person’s decision to have an abortion?
4. How can you help people who might be feeling isolated after having an abortion?

## CHAPTER 5

1. Young people who can’t tell their parents about a pregnancy are put in a bind. How might an adult’s support for reproductive health and justice help a young person?
2. What were you taught about abortion, sex, and gender roles as a young person? How was it talked about in your household and in your community?
3. Lori’s advice is “Just because you feel sad doesn’t mean it was the wrong decision.” What other words or messages might be comforting to those who are struggling with feelings of sadness after an abortion experience?
4. Veronika and CoWanda are involved in WeTestify, an abortion storytelling organization. How can sharing stories with a group of people who have gone through the same experience help a person process their emotions?
5. CoWanda describes her abortion experience as “spiritual.” How can we support the spirituality and spiritual needs of pregnant people who have abortions?

## CHAPTER 6

1. What is your vision of the way the world could be? How does abortion figure into that?
2. If you are white, how have you centered whiteness in reproductive matters? If you are BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color), how have you felt and seen your needs being sidelined in reproductive matters?
3. Trans people face additional medical barriers when it comes to reproductive health. How does transphobia add to these barriers in medicine? How can you work to be more supportive of trans people who become pregnant?
4. Erin called abortion “a gift” because of how it connected her to her soul and helped her understand her place in the world. How does this framing resonate with your understanding of abortion?
5. Having multiple abortions is often discussed as more shameful than having one. Why do you think this is?

## CHAPTER 7

1. Adriana turned inward in the aftermath of her abortion, and her healing was not linear. Does this align with how you process big life events? Do you turn outward or reflect inward, or a bit of both?
2. Adriana couldn't share her abortion decision with her parents. How does not having support from parental figures make abortion harder?
3. Misinformation about abortion is rampant. Have you encountered any anti-abortion literature or resources masquerading as pro-choice services that help pregnant people?
4. Clinic protesters are common at abortion clinics. Have you experienced this while passing or walking into an abortion clinic? What do you wish you could say to them, and to the pregnant people walking into the clinic?
5. Jocelyn had difficulty accessing abortion in a large hospital in San Francisco. Why do you think abortion care is marginalized even in the medical community?
6. If you have had an abortion, did you feel that God was with you during the experience? How did God manifest in your life?

## CHAPTER 8

1. Rev. Chorley thought that married people don't have abortions, and many people don't think clergy have abortions. What are some assumptions you hold about people who have abortions?
2. Rev. Chorley mentions the feeling of being a “bad person” in part because of messages she received from childhood. What messages would you like to see passed on going forward? How does this differ from messages you might have been given in childhood, about being “too much” or “too difficult”?

3. Religious symbols like the Christa statue can help people going through a difficult time find hope through a physical reminder of their divinity. Have you relied on physical symbols or other rituals, like praying a rosary or saying Kaddish, to help you through difficult times? Are there particular icons you come back to in order to be reassured of God's presence in your life?
4. God's compassion and joy run through Afua's story. How did God show compassion and joy in her experience? Where are some unexpected places God has shown up for you in your life?

## CONCLUSION

1. Throughout the book, Bible quotes head the chapters. Look back through them. Which verses resonate the most with you?
2. You have read the stories of many people who have had abortions. What are some common themes running through the stories? What lessons can you take from them?
3. You may have felt shame or guilt while reading this book. What can you do to be more compassionate with yourself moving forward? How can you keep thinking about these issues so that you have full compassion for people going through an abortion experience, yourself included?
4. You may or may not feel comfortable talking about abortion with friends and family. Who are the people you would feel safest talking about abortion with first? What would you like to say to the people you feel you can't discuss abortion with?