

■ HARD CHOICES

Everything in Heather's life had been normal. She had grown up in a fine middle-class family with two brothers and a sister. After Heather graduated from high school, she completed junior college and became a legal secretary for local law firm.

Heather married her high-school sweetheart, Jerry, who was now a supermarket manager. They were active in the local church and couldn't be happier—except for one nagging problem. For the last five years of their marriage, Heather had been unable to become pregnant. According to the doctors, both Heather and Jerry were perfectly normal. There seemed to be no physiological reason for their problem.

Just as they were about to consider adopting a baby, Heather discovered, quite by accident, she was pregnant. For the past year, she had been experiencing pain in her armpit. At first she thought of the worst—cancer. She saw Dr. Hadley, the family physician, immediately. He checked her and assured her there was nothing to worry about. It was just an infection that required antibiotics.

A year passed, but the soreness never went away. In addition, Heather had begun to experience side effects from the antibiotics. She decided to see another doctor. It was he who discovered that she was pregnant. When told about the pain under her arm, the doctor was concerned. He sent Heather to a specialist. The specialist, Dr. Williams, discovered that the soreness was caused by a growth. Heather had breast cancer. The specialist said that if Heather had been correctly diagnosed a year ago, the cancer probably could have been successfully treated—but not now. The tumor had grown considerably, and the pregnancy prevented proper treatment.

Dr. Williams recommended that the baby be aborted immediately and that a radical mastectomy (removal of both breasts) be performed at once, followed by radiation and chemotherapy.

Heather was devastated. She wanted a second opinion. Two days

and three medical opinions later, the prognosis was exactly the same: Abort the baby and have the surgery.

Heather and Jerry talked over the options very carefully. Jerry wanted Heather to abort the baby and follow the doctors' instructions. Heather wanted to have the baby. Jerry reluctantly agreed to go along with Heather. The doctors were furious. Surgery and radiation treatments could seriously harm the baby. "Then I won't have the radiation treatment," Heather said. "I won't have the surgery either. The baby is too important to me." She decided to wait until after the baby was born before having her cancer treated. All the doctors, Heather's family, her husband, everyone, disagreed with her decision, but Heather wanted her baby, and she would not allow it to be aborted.

Six months later, Heather's baby was born. Unfortunately, the baby was born with a serious birth defect, possibly caused by the antibiotics that Heather had taken early in her pregnancy. After recuperating from the birth of her baby, Heather had the surgery and the therapy. She gave up her job to stay home with her baby.

Jerry never did accept the new baby. He could not forgive Heather for risking her life and possibly leaving him with a child to raise alone. Eventually, he moved out and filed for divorce.

Heather's cancer is now in remission but the doctors cannot say when or if it will return.

- ▶ Rank the following characters from best to worst: Heather, Jerry, Dr. Hadley, Dr. Williams.
- ▶ Provide a reason for each of the rankings.

- Scripture Guide: Psalm 139:13–15
John 16:33
Romans 8:28–29
- Philippians 3:13–14
1 Thessalonians 5:18