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We lost our son, Jonah, on May 16th, 2015.

My husband and I, with six highly educated doctors, chose to terminate our pregnancy for medical reasons.

Justin and I have been married for seven of the 14 years we've been together. We began trying to expand our family after a year and a half of marriage and had our son Jude. When Jude was eighteen months, we decided to try for another baby, becoming pregnant a few months later.

At our anatomy scan around 21 weeks, the ultrasound technician told us the baby wasn't moving much and she couldn't get good measurements. My heart sank when she said, "You're meeting with the doctor today? The doctor will go over everything with you." I remember thinking, "something is wrong." She did a few more measurements, printed a few pictures, and sent us to the waiting room.

Our doctor told us it looked like Spina Bifida. An emergency meeting with a perinatologist confirmed inoperable Severe Myelomeningocele (Spina Bifida) and a "poor prognosis for life". The perinatologist told us that *if the baby made it to term*, he would need around-the-clock care until his short life ended; there would be surgery after surgery, and endless pain. Essentially, our child would be born onto life support.

We knew immediately that protecting our baby from suffering would require termination. Our doctor urged us to make a decision quickly because we were at 21 weeks; Missouri law states you can only have a termination until 21 weeks 6 days.

Did I have a choice? No, the alternative was not acceptable.. There wasn't a "choice" to make. Having already had a thriving two-year-old, there was no way on earth I would let my child suffer the way these doctors were describing. There would be no playing, singing, thinking – nothing. What kind of life is that? Would you make your child suffer this way? I wouldn't. I didn't.

A third opinion found even more: our baby was paralyzed already due to the severity of his Spina Bifida, his left foot cleft and clubbed, his heart on the wrong side, huge scoliosis, and a hump on the back, near the neck.

We were stricken with sadness. Our hopes and dreams for our child went out the window. The doctor carefully explained the two procedures: labor and delivery or a dilation and curettage. We chose to labor. We wanted to hold our baby, both for closure and to remember what was so perfect about him, not his diagnoses. I wanted to hold our child and kiss him goodbye.

I asked our doctor how she could do her job, that it must be so hard to think about all day. She replied that she knew she was giving families peace of mind and helping them make decisions no one should ever have to make.

On Thursday, after we felt every second of the 72 hour state-required waiting period, we went to see another doctor who would give me a pill to soften my cervix. I sat in an

isolated area so I didn't have to see these pregnant women and their bliss while I waited for what seemed like hours. I had to sign papers, take the pill in front of the doctor, and keep it down for at least 15 minutes.

During the 15-minute wait, the doctor told me that he, too, looked over all of the ultrasounds and findings. He said our baby had "0% chance of life" and that we were doing the "compassionate thing." We talked about the word "abortion," and how it's such a broad word. He told me that I would go to labor and delivery the next morning for induction. As expected, we didn't sleep at all.

After 30 hours of labor, I gave birth to my stillborn son. Very quietly, the doctor said, "It's a boy." Our sweet little boy, Jonah Michael, was born fully intact, not breathing and with no heartbeat, on Saturday, May 16th. He was bathed by love and a peaceful quietness. Everyone in the room silently cried.

My nurse quickly wrapped him so we could hold him. We spent the next 24 hours with him – holding him, taking pictures of him, telling him how sorry we were that because of his diagnosis, he wouldn't ever have the life his older brother did.

That afternoon, the nurse wheeled me as my husband and mom walked me out of that hospital. As we were waiting for our car, the doctor who went over the termination with me pulled up, got out of her car, and hugged me as I wept into her shoulder. I will never forget her or anyone else we came in contact with during this extremely difficult time.

My child died painlessly in my womb, floating in peace and love. At the end of each day, I'm the same as any other mother who has lost a baby. Heartbroken. Lost. Bewildered. I don't think this will ever change, but other mothers who have been through similar experiences tell me that it will become easier to manage over time.

I'm thankful every day that abortion was available to my family. I will never stop telling Jonah's story. I hope that sharing his journey will help some who are anti-choice see that abortion is never black and white – there is a LARGE grey area that MUST be discussed.