



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Firsthand Witness: My Journey of Working Inside the Abortion Industry – Part 1

Guest(s): Abby Johnson

Air Date: March 30, 2023

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Dr. James Dobson: Welcome everyone to Family Talk. It's a ministry of the James Dobson Family Institute supported by listeners just like you. I'm Dr. James Dobson and I'm thrilled that you've joined us.

Roger Marsh: Thank you for listening to Family Talk. I'm Roger Marsh, and this episode was recorded during the annual March for Life event in Washington, DC this past January. However, I do want to mention that today's episode contains sensitive topics and some adult content. Please use parental discretion, as this program is not intended for younger listeners.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hello and welcome into Family Talk. I'm Dr. Tim Clinton, co-host here of the broadcast. I'm honored to serve alongside Dr. Dobson as the resident authority on mental health and relationships here at JDFI, the James Dobson Family Institute. And in addition, I serve as president of the American Association of Christian Counselors. Thank you for joining us today.

Hey, we're here at the annual March for Life weekend in Washington DC. Tens of thousands of people from all across the country have descended into the capital to stand up and fight for life and the pre-born. Let me tell you, this morning at the march, the streets were packed, packed with participants from all walks of life, young and old, veterans, first timers, college students, young families. And with the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*, the energy has been both a celebration and a renewed commitment to continue fighting for and preserving a culture of life.

Our guests on the program today shares that same zeal for life and protecting the unborn. Her name, Abby Johnson. You may know her from her story of how she previously worked for Planned Parenthood for eight years, working her way up through the ranks to become clinic director in Bryan, Texas. In 2009, Abby walked away from her job after witnessing the abortion of a 13 week old baby during an ultrasound guided abortion. From there, her mission began to advocate for the sanctity of life and to expose abortion for what it truly is.

Abby is now the founder and CEO of And Then There Were None. That's a nonprofit organization designed to help abortion clinic workers transitioning out of the industry. To date the ministry has helped over 630 workers leave the

abortion industry. What an amazing story. It's incredible. Abby's the author of *Unplanned*, which was adapted into a feature film a few years ago, a great film, and she's also the author of *The Walls Are Talking* and a new release, we're going to talk about this, *Fierce Mercy*.

She and her husband, Doug, are the parents of eight children and they make their home in Austin, Texas. Abby, welcome back to Family Talk. Dr. Dobson, his wife Shirley, send their regards. We so appreciate the work that God's doing in and through you.

Abby Johnson: Thank you.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey, as we get started, Abby, we're here in Washington, 50th anniversary of the march, go all the way back to Nellie Gray and Let's Overturn Roe, and that's what this was all about. And I'll tell you what, the energy was incredible. You're down on the Mall. What did you sense? What are you hearing from people?

Abby Johnson: I think that everyone is very excited, myself included, that *Roe* is now in the ash heap of history, where it belongs. I think that many people, like myself, a woman who had two abortions, someone who worked in the abortion industry for eight years of my life, ran an abortion clinic, some of us know firsthand the devastation that *Roe* caused across our nation. We're very thankful that women are no longer going to be harmed by *Roe*.

But I think that we also know that there is so much work to be done and I don't want anyone to think that, well, okay, *Roe* is overturned and so now we've seen the victory, it's over and we can just wash our hands and say onto the next battle. No, absolutely not. There is so much work to be done. As long as sin exists, abortion will exist, and crisis pregnancies still exist, and women still need help. And the bottom line is that the grassroots movement of the pro-life movement, is where we are the strongest. And that's what I see when I look out at the March for Life. I see a lot of young people, I mean the crowd is so young.

Dr. Tim Clinton: It was stunning to me how young the crowd was. That's that pro-life generation showing up in mass. I mean they were everywhere.

Abby Johnson: Yes, but I also see people who are really part of that grassroots movement. It's people who work in pregnancy centers, people who stand out in front of those abortion facilities, people who are marching, people who are like, I'm willing to do anything right? I'll bring a woman into my home. I'll go out and buy diapers. I'll do anything to save a woman from abortion, to save a baby. That's how we win this fight. That's how we make abortion unthinkable.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Abby, when *Roe* was overturned, there was a lot of conversation about how the battle had moved from the federal level to the state level. And at the state level, we know that that's where a lot is happening, a lot of fighting going on, and we would be naive to think that the abortion industry is slowing down in the sense

that they too see this as a massive fight and they're going to get after it. I wanted to ask you for the states that are really legislating hard on this, what happens to a Planned Parenthood in that kind of a state?

Abby Johnson: Well, we haven't quite seen it yet. They're hanging on by a thread, but in the state where I live, for example, Texas, these Planned Parenthoods they are struggling right now. They cannot provide abortion services any longer in their brick and mortar abortion facilities. They no longer receive taxpayer funding of any kind in the state of Texas. And that is true in the 13 states where abortion has been banned or severely restricted in the United States. You see a correlation there in those states where abortion is banned and in those states, they also don't receive state taxpayer dollars. So in those states, these Planned Parenthood facilities, they are really struggling, because they're not getting money for abortion, and they're also not getting taxpayer dollars. And so I think that we are about to start seeing those facilities shut down in a large number.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Because I would say, if you look at the trend, they've been closing their doors.

Abby Johnson: Yes, they have been. Absolutely have been.

Dr. Tim Clinton: The pro-life movement is winning.

Abby Johnson: Absolutely. And we have already started to see these smaller facilities, the private clinics, we've already started to see them shutter their doors. The only reason Planned Parenthood has not, is because they have a larger overarching, they're a big corporation, so they can infuse money from different places. But that's only going to last for so long. And I do think that we're going to start seeing these Planned Parenthood facilities shutter their doors in large number very soon. They can only hold on for so long.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Abby, I remember the first time I heard you give your story, and it was very moving. You talked with such graphic detail and about what happened in your heart, and I thought just for a moment, just to reacquaint the audience with you and your story, would you share a little bit about what happened on that day that God did something in your life and it changed everything?

Abby Johnson: Sure. I was a clinic director. I am not medical personnel, not a nurse, not a doctor. I was an administrator, but was asked on that day to come in and assist with an ultrasound guided abortion procedure. Ultrasounds are not typically used during an abortion procedure, but it was that day. Our visiting abortionists that day said that he wanted to teach us something. He wanted to show us something different. And so I was asked to come in and assist and hold the ultrasound probe in place so that he would be able to, in his words, visualize his target, which is the baby, on the ultrasound screen.

And I remember looking up at that screen, we did the measurements. The baby was 13 weeks along, over 13 weeks. And I remember seeing this fully formed

baby, my oldest daughter at the time, she was about to be three. And I remember immediately flashing back to the ultrasound that we had of her when I was 12 weeks pregnant. And we were so excited. My husband and I were so excited, because it was finally an ultrasound where she didn't look like just a little bean. She actually looked like a baby. And I remember all the pictures that the doctor printed out. We had a big roll of pictures from that ultrasound, and we were so excited. Look at our baby, look at our baby. And we took pictures and we showed our parents.

And yet I'm looking at this ultrasound monitor and I'm looking at this baby, and this baby was even a week more developed than Grace was at that ultrasound that we had with her. And I'm looking at this baby and I'm thinking, oh my gosh, Grace was a baby. I remember saying Grace was a baby, but this baby's not a baby? That doesn't make sense. But I was trying to make sense in my mind. And I remember telling myself, I remember repeating the talking points that had been given to me by Planned Parenthood. I remember repeating this abortion science that had been said to me, that a pregnancy is only a baby if the mother decides that the pregnancy is wanted, and this woman's here for an abortion, so certainly this pregnancy is not wanted, so it's not a baby. But what I was looking at on that screen, it really looked like a baby.

I remember seeing the heartbeat. I remember seeing the arms and legs, the head, the profile of that baby. And so I was repeating that over and over again to myself. And I watched the suction tube. The suction wasn't yet turned on. I watched it going into the woman's uterus. And as it got closer and closer to the side of the baby, and it finally touched his side, and when it did, the baby jumped. It was like the baby had been kind of asleep. And then when the probe touched him, he jumped and he began flailing his arms and legs as if he was trying to move away from that instrument. But there was nowhere for him to go.

And when the doctor had everything in the right position, he asked the technician to turn on the suction machine and he said, "beam me up, Scotty." And the suction was turned on, and I just stood there and watched. I was shocked. I just watched as this very powerful suction machine just tore this child into pieces. And when it was over, I dropped the ultrasound probe and I walked out of the procedure room.

I remember going back to my office and I knew my life was going to change. I didn't know how it was going to change, but I knew that everything that I had been told, had been a lie. And I had believed a lie, and I wasn't a victim. I had eagerly believed that lie, but I just thought, I can never do this again. I can never be a part of this again. And I knew that, because I had believed those lies, I had then spoken these lies to so many women. These women who had come into my office, they had looked at me, they had asked these questions wanting an answer, and I had just given them lies. And I thought, I will never do that again.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Abby, I remember after listening to your story, thinking about the issue of personhood, and it really set off in my mind, is baby a person at three months, six months? When do you decide this is a person? Seven months, nine months. And it's wild to me that somehow we can blindly pretend this is not life, that people can actually go there in their mind. But that is the heart of the issue. And at that moment you begin to realize then how precious life is, and that God calls us to protect that. That's why Psalm 139 makes such sense. That's why it's so powerful. "While you were yet in the womb, I knew you." You know that? And in that is where we draw the line.

And so from that, you know how God is a redemptive God, I love that. Your story is of that redemption. God can take that brokenness and turn it into beauty. He brings beauty out of the ashes or he can take a mess and make it your message, and that's become yours, Abby. You're right. And Then There Were None, your new ministry, you're out there challenging abortion workers who are in the industry to leave the industry. You're coming alongside of them trying to encourage them in the midst of, and I love what you said, in the midst of their trauma.

Abby Johnson: Working in the abortion industry is not normal. It is a not normal type of job. It is full of spiritual warfare. When you leave, when you try to leave. Most of the women who leave and come through And Then There Were None, do suffer with some form of PTSD when they leave just because of the things they have seen, the things they have witnessed, experienced.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Makes sense.

Abby Johnson: Of course, most secular psychologists, they don't want to acknowledge that.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Of course not.

Abby Johnson: But we do, and we help to heal them and treat them. We've had some workers that leave that actually have to go to inpatient treatment facilities to get help. That's not normal. You should be able to leave a job and go to another job and be okay mentally, be okay spiritually. They're not okay. And so our ministry seeks to help them heal, but most importantly help them come into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Because we know that the only way that you can really heal, is through the help of our Lord.

And so that's what we're really trying to do. And we don't really consider it a success unless that happens. And so we have been successful with now almost 640 abortion clinic workers. So really, it's a miracle what God has allowed us to do.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Abby, you have a new book out called *Fierce Mercy: Daring to Live Out God's Compassion in Bold and Practical Ways*. In it, you tell a story of a lady named

Annette, while speaking at a conference who at the time was wanting to leave Planned Parenthood. Tell us a little bit about that story, if you would, real quick.

Abby Johnson:

Yeah. That was actually how And Then There Were None was started. I was at a conference very early out of the abortion clinic, and I walked off the stage, I heard this woman desperately screaming my name. And the security that was with me, that had been hired to be there with me, they said, "Ma'am, we don't recommend you go over there." And I said, "I'm going." And I walked over and this woman fell in my arms and I thought she had had an abortion. And I said, "What's going on?" And she looked at me and she said, "I work at Planned Parenthood." And she said, "I don't want to go back." And I said, "Then you're not going back." And I said, "I'll do whatever I have to do to help you." And that was when I started looking. I thought, gosh, there's got to be a national ministry out there to help abortion clinic workers who want to leave.

And I started looking. I realized there was nothing. I started talking to pro-life leaders, people I had recently met, because I was new to the pro-life movement. I started asking them, where's the ministry for abortion clinic workers? And they all looked at me and said, "No, we don't have that. We don't have anything for them." So that was when I decided, I talked to my husband. I said, well, somebody needs to do this. I started praying. I said, "Lord, please put it on the heart of someone to start this ministry." And I prayed that prayer for a few months, and finally the Lord said, Hey dummy it's you. I put it on your heart.

And so my husband and I started this ministry. We didn't know what we were doing. I went to my same pro-life friends, my new friends, and I said, this is what I want to do. What do you think? And they all patted me on the head and said, that's cute, Abby, but you know what? It's just never going to work. Some people are just too far gone for the Lord to save. And I said, "Wow, we must not serve the same Lord. We must not serve the same God."

Dr. Tim Clinton:

That's a good word.

Abby Johnson:

Because the God that I serve is the God that saved me. The God that I serve, is in the business of conversion, and I believe this is going to be successful. And knowing me, if you know me, that just made me want to do it even more. So we got it started. We thought that if we had 12 workers leave that first year, that would just be extreme success. And that first year, the Lord led 56 workers out of the abortion industry and into our ministry, and into a relationship with Him. And since then, we've just been going strong. And now we're 10 years in. Almost 640 workers into a relationship with God, and seven full-time abortion doctors who have left. God has been so good, so faithful, and we just keep at it, 27 abortion clinics closed.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

That's breathtaking.

Abby Johnson: Because these workers then turn around and say, we're going to close down the places where we once worked. So God has been faithful and merciful. It's been miraculous.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Abby, I want to ask you and to wrap up the broadcast today, the road forward. Where's God taking you? What's in your heart? What do you see? Where are you going?

Abby Johnson: Tim, I think that we're in a scary time right now, with the expansion of medication abortion. And my biggest fear, honestly, Tim, is not even the physical repercussions of this, which that's going to happen. There are going to be women that die from this. There are going to be women that experience severe hemorrhage, infection, sepsis, that's going to happen. My greatest fear is the psychological ramifications from this. What does it do to a woman? She thinks she's going to just have a heavy period, a moderate period, and that this problem is going to go away.

But instead, at 12, 14 weeks pregnant, she actually goes through something similar to labor and she passes her fully formed baby into a toilet, and she sees her baby floating there in a toilet. And what does she do at that moment? Does she flush her baby down the toilet? Does she scoop her baby up out of the toilet? Does she bury it? Does she put it in the freezer? What does she do? And what does that do psychologically to that woman? I believe that we are going to see increased depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and possibly suicide in these women.

And we're calling that progress in women's healthcare. And women are going to be dying, and they're going to be harmed because of this. And we as a pro-life movement, we have a responsibility to sound the alarm, to sound the alarm right now, before women make that terrible decision to take those pills to walk into that pharmacy. We have a responsibility to be bold and to raise those flags and to say, ladies, there's something better out there for you. To share our own testimonies if we've had an abortion. To share our regret, to share our pain, to share other people's testimonies. We have a responsibility. Our stories will save lives. And so we have a responsibility to be bold, to be loud, to help, to save lives.

Dr. Tim Clinton: We join with you on that call, that mission. We need to pray that God would raise up generations who would be strong for life. Abby, I wanted to ask, in closing, you've moved my heart today, and I know in the hearts of many listening. If they want to learn more about you, your ministry, maybe how to get involved, where do they go? What are you recommending?

Abby Johnson: Sure. If they want to know more about you know what we're doing, they can certainly go to my website. It's abbyj, A-B-B-Y-J.com. If they want to see more about what we're doing directly at And Then There Were None, they can go to abortionworker.com.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Hey, Abby, we're fighting the clock. And I'll tell you what, the conversation has so enlightened me, encouraged me, because we share a common bond, if you will, around mental health. This whole thing on trauma, PTSD, and more, I'd love to have you back tomorrow to talk a little bit more in depth around those issues and what's happening in this abortion industry and with these workers.

And by the way, for those who are out there on the front lines and trying to step into this world, what are they really looking at? What are they seeing and how can they be best used by God to help other people in that moment of life? I so look forward to it. Thank you for joining us.

Abby Johnson: Thank you.

Roger Marsh: Wow. Well, that was Abby Johnson sharing her powerful testimony. It's truly heartbreaking to hear how the abortion industry is hurting so many people. However, God's redeeming love is mighty. In 2 Chronicles 7:14 we read, "If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and heal their land."

Join us again tomorrow to hear the conclusion of Abby Johnson's message about God's love and salvation, which is available for everyone, including those who've worked in abortion clinics. As you may know, the work to protect life is not yet done, but Jesus has already defeated death. If you have a neighbor who has not yet heard that Good News and would be open to God's encouraging words, consider giving them a Life Basket this Easter. Now, if you haven't shared one before, a Life Basket is a way to bless a neighbor with a basket of treats and goodies, and it introduces them to Jesus Christ and invites them to enjoy a loving Christian community at your local church. Life Baskets are a fun activity you can do with your family or with even your friends in the neighborhood. And if you have any other questions or if you'd like more information about Life Baskets, just call us at 877-732-6825 or visit lifebaskets.org.

I'm Roger Marsh. Join us again tomorrow for another edition of Family Talk and the conclusion of Abby Johnson's powerful testimony. Till then, from all of us here at the JDFI, thank you for spending part of your day with us.

Announcer: This has been a presentation of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute.