



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Unplanned: The Story of Abby Johnson

Guest(s): Abby Johnson

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Brian McNulty: Hi, this is Brian McNulty, the Vice President of Broadcast and Media Services here at the James Dobson Family Institute.

James Gottry: And this is James Gottry, Vice President of Public Policy. Her Brian, what do you call an elf wearing earmuffs?

Brian McNulty: I don't know.

James Gottry: Anything you want, he can't hear you!

Brian McNulty: Ha! That's awesome James. Listen, we want to take a moment to say thank you for listening and being with us throughout the year. 2020's going to be awesome.

James Gottry: And of course, we all know the reason for the season is the birth of Jesus Christ. So, from our family to yours, may this be a blessed time of celebrating Christ's birth.

Both: Merry Christmas!

Roger Marsh: Hi this Roger Marsh for Family Talk. Do you remember Dr. Dobson's touching interview with Rebekah Gregory?

Rebekah Gregory: The hardest part of that day was not the physical, though. It was the emotional. It was everything that not only I saw, but my son saw as well.

Roger Marsh: Or what about the powerful interview with Dennis Prager?

Dennis Prager: Nice people can do damage. Nice is not the same as wise. Lack of wisdom creates evil, not lack of niceness.

Roger Marsh: There were so many great Family Talk moments this year. It may be hard to pick your favorite, but don't worry, we've done it for you. We've selected eighteen of the most popular broadcasts of the past year, and present them to you together on six audio CDs, in the 2019, Family Talk Best of Broadcast Collection! These entertaining and informative programs are sure to bless you and become a cherished part of your family resource library. This compelling CD-set is our thank you for a suggested gift of any amount in support of Family Talk. Learn more at drjamesdobson.org, or by calling 877-732-6825. Thank you, and God bless you.

Throughout the entire month of December, we're highlighting our most listened to broadcasts from the past year. Now, before we hear one of the popular shows, I want to share some news with you. A gracious donor of our ministry has gifted us with a generous matching grant for this Christmas season. This effectively doubles every donation we receive, until we've reached our goal. Learn how you can be a part of this match by going to drjamesdobson.org. That's drjamesdobson.org. Or, you can call for more information, at 877-732-6825. That's 877-732-6825. Now let's continue with this popular broadcast, one of our best of broadcast from 2019, on this edition of Family Talk.

Announcer: Today, on Family Talk:

Dr. Dobson: A few weeks ago, an important pro-life feature film debuted in theaters around the country and the response to it has been incredible. You've probably been hearing about it because it's really captured the attention of the American people. In fact, I'm told that the Hollywood producers, they used to be called moguls, have been very surprised by the response to this movie, especially considering its content.

It's a dramatization of a biography and its title is *Unplanned*. It follows the touching testimony of Abby Johnson. She's a former clinic director of Planned Parenthood, who became a passionate and outspoken defender of pre-born babies, and the mothers who are victimized by this wretched abortion industry.

Abby now has her own organization that assists other Planned Parenthood employees in their efforts to get away from this evil. I want you to hear Abby's powerful story. So, we sent Dr. Tim Clinton to interview Abby, and the actress who portrayed her on film, to learn more about Abby's journey and how this movie came to be.

Here is that recorded conversation on this edition of Family Talk.

Dr. Clinton: Hi, everyone. This is Dr. Tim Clinton, I'm at the 2019 National Religious Broadcasters Convention. We're in Anaheim, California. With me today is author, mother, and pro-life activist, Abby Johnson.

Abby is the founder of And Then There Were None, it's a ministry designed to assist abortion clinic workers leave the abortion industry. She has an incredible testimony and she joins us today to talk about, by the way, that new movie that's all over the place, *Unplanned*. It's in theaters everywhere.

Dr. Clinton: Abby, we're delighted to have you.

Abby Johnson: Thank you so much.

Dr. Clinton: And also in studio with us is, they call her a charismatic Carolina girl, her name's Ashley Bratcher. She is most known for her breakout role as Grace Anderson in the award winning romantic drama, *Princess Cut*. Also, she's been featured in *90 Minutes in Heaven*, *Badge of Faith*. She is a named talent in uplifting and redemptive films. Her most recent role, she plays Abby Johnson in the movie, *Unplanned*, that you've seen everywhere.

Dr. Clinton: Thanks for coming and joining us, Ashley.

Ashley Bratcher: Of course, thanks for having me.

Dr. Clinton: Hey, as we get started, the film is out. Social media, everything's blowing up everywhere. I mean, it's insane what's happening. Did you guys have any idea what was going to happen with the release of *Unplanned*.

Abby Johnson: I never think big things are going to happen. So, when I wrote *Unplanned*, I thought, "I don't even know why I'm doing this, nobody's going to read it." And then, you know, it's a best seller. When I started And Then There Were None, I thought, "Nobody's going to come through our ministry." And here we are at like 500 workers.

Dr. Clinton: Wow, hey, listen, it's the talk. It really is the talk.

Ashley, playing in the role of Abby in the film, what was it like?

Ashley Bratcher: Well, I knew it was going to be huge because Abby's so incredible and her story is so transformational. It just really grips you and it's causing a lot of conversion and healing and it's such a beautiful testimony to the love of Christ. Abby, you do such a wonderful job of speaking to people in love.

Dr. Clinton: Let's dial this thing back for a second. Let's go back to, I think the moment that really this entire film is built around, and the book, it was an ultrasound for you. You're a clinic director of Planned Parenthood facility. Take us there, Abby.

Abby Johnson: Yeah, I had been there with Planned Parenthood for eight years. I was a director, like you said, of that facility. To my knowledge, an ultrasound guided abortion procedure had never been performed at my clinic. Abortions are usually performed in a blind manner, so the doctor has the instruments and he

just sort of blindly pokes around in the woman's uterus until he thinks he has enough blood and tissue in a glass jar.

That's all I had ever known. That was the protocol that I knew. But we had a visiting physician come in and he was explaining that at his own private practice facility, he performed abortions only using ultrasound guidance. And so he wanted to demonstrate that to us to show us what that looked like.

So, I was asked to come into the room. When we did the measurement, we found that the woman was 13 weeks along in her pregnancy and just for clarity, by 13 weeks everything is formed on the unborn child. So arms, legs, fingers, toes, heart's beating, brain waves are functioning. Every internal organ that we sit here with today is formed by 13 weeks in the womb. So the baby is formed, it just needs time to grow.

I watched in horror as this baby fought and struggled against the abortion instruments, trying to get away. I had been taught by Planned Parenthood for those eight years that what happened in the womb didn't matter. The life of this child didn't matter. The humanity didn't matter. You're really-

Dr. Clinton: That there was no real personhood.

Abby Johnson: Right. In order to participate in abortion anyway, you have to really disconnect yourself from the child.

Dr. Clinton: You've got to remove yourself from it.

Abby Johnson: And I had successfully done that for eight years. But here I was staring face to face with it. And I had to make a choice, I could either stay the course that I was on, continue making a ton of money, continue on the path that I was on to become the COO of the third largest Planned Parenthood affiliate in the country. I could try to justify it somehow in my mind, or I could turn away from it. I could flee from it.

Honestly, the choice was pretty easy, but it was hard to walk away because there was so much uncertainty. I didn't leave with another job. My husband was a teacher, so we knew that we were going to have to make great financial sacrifice if I left my job.

Dr. Clinton: Abby, what was it in the ultrasound that changed everything for you? Because it seems like if a woman sees an ultrasound and she's pregnant, it really changes the outcome in terms of her actually going into a pro-life decision. She opts for life. What happened in that moment, after eight years, you've been there all those ... and you saw something. Something switched for you.

Abby Johnson: Yeah, I think it was truly seeing the humanity of this child. And seeing that and recognizing that ... I couldn't pretend that this child in the womb, number one,

wasn't a child in the womb. I could no longer pretend that. I could no longer pretend that this child didn't have equal dignity and value and worth. And I wanted to, right? I wanted to pretend, I wanted to keep doing that because that was the easier decision to make, was just to keep pressing on, on this Planned Parenthood path.

But I could not stop thinking about that little boy. I could not stop thinking about what I had seen on that screen. And there was no amount of justification that could make it okay.

Dr. Clinton: It was almost like a snuff film or something. It's just like, here's the taking of a life.

Ashley, let me come over to you for a moment. When you played that role and you're in that moment, I know in a lot of ways, when people say they do film, that you literally just take on that persona. You're in the moment, you've got to feel it. People have got to be able to believe you on screen. What was it like to be in that moment?

Ashley Bratcher: Well hearing that moment, first of all, after I had auditioned, that just blew me away. Because I didn't know Abby's story until after I had auditioned. So hearing her describe what happened broke my heart. And I knew from there on out that my life had been changed. She had ripped the blinders off of my eyes.

When it came time to film that scene, what a lot of people don't realize is I'm just looking at a sticker on a monitor. I don't have the CGI in front of me to actually see what she saw. All I had to lean on was her description. Of course I did research to look at ultrasounds and I did look at *The Silent Scream*, which I think is probably the closest thing you can see to *Unplanned*.

And after I did that, I just kept praying, "Okay, God, take over. Break my heart for what breaks yours." Because it was such a traumatic thing for me to hear and to feel so ignorant that I had never known that that's what was happening. I felt like I was experiencing it even though I wasn't seeing it. It really was breaking my heart while we were filming.

Dr. Clinton: Abby, back to you. So, inside it's like something trips a switch. You shift. How are you feeling and what are you saying to yourself in that moment? We all know the story, but what are you saying to yourself?

Abby Johnson: I think for a period of time it was sort of ... it was almost impossible for me to really deal with the burden that I knew I would eventually have to face. I remember the first time that I did. It was about two weeks after I had left, it's funny because I'd been taking a shower and I'd been sort of talking to God and I had said, "I wonder, you know, God, if I'm ever going to feel like I should go back out to the clinic and pray with those people who pray outside the clinic?"

And I didn't think it would ever happen and then right then, I felt God say to me, "Go now. Go right now. You're supposed to go now." And I thought, "Ew. Okay, well that's uncomfortable." But, I was like, "Well, it's 10:00 at night, so no big deal, right?" So I go tell my husband, I say, "I'm going to go back out to the clinic." And my husband goes, "To vandalize it?" I was like, "No, to pray in front of it." He said, "Oh, okay, well that makes sense."

So, I go out there. He said, "Do you want me to go with you?" I was like, "No, I just want to go by myself." So I went out there and there was this couple who was out there praying as well. And I didn't know them and I thought, "Well, it's going to be weird if I walk up and they recognize me. Then they're going to be worried. You know, why is Abby Johnson out here with us?"

And so, I thought, "Well, I'm going to have to tell them that I'm not working here anymore." So I walked up to them and I told them who I was and that I had quit a couple of weeks earlier. And this couple, oh my gosh, they just lost their minds. They were jumping up and down, they were hugging me, hugging each other. They're crying, they're just so excited. And I said, "Well, I'm going to go pray." So I walked away, I just wanted to be by myself.

It's a busy road in front of that clinic and that was the first time that I really had to face my sin and facing that building and recognizing that I had been complicit in over 22,000 abortions.

Dr. Clinton: 22,000.

Abby Johnson: I just couldn't even stand up anymore. I was just so overcome with emotion and that burden. And I remember just sort of sitting on the ground and I was crying. And then to see these other two people who are just praising God for me leaving and I'm having this really sorrowful moment in front of that clinic. That was really the first time where I had to take on that burden. And once I felt it, I realized I had to give it to somebody, because I couldn't bear that burden on my own.

That was when I really ... I had to make a decision. I had to practice. People were like, "How do you forgive yourself of something like that?" And I just say I had to practice. Every day I had to wake up and make a decision. Do I live in the past? Or do I live today, for the present and this gift that God has given me, where he wants me to live with him.

Abby Johnson: And so every day I had to wake up and make that decision. And sometimes I made the wrong decision.

Dr. Clinton: Guttmacher Institute a few years ago said that an estimated 40% of American women have had an abortion. That's a lot of women. There are a lot of women listening, they've been there. And it's a secret that they keep down inside. Why is it so difficult to release that? You've got a lot of women who, your story, what

you're saying, is speaking to them right now 'cause they want to hear God say, "I forgive you."

And I really believe that is an army of women who could be such, they could be such a voice for hope and life.

Abby Johnson: We all have things in our past that keep us bound up. And I think that as long as we hold those there, there will always be a barrier between us and God, because our pride is not allowing us to just let it go. I think it's easy for us to understand that God forgives us, 'cause that's what he does. He's God. But we hold on to it.

I tell women all the time, Satan runs rampant inside of our secrets. You can confess it to God privately, but confessing that sin to someone who you trust, man there's such freedom.

Dr. Clinton: Ashley, let me bring it back over to you for a second. So, when you were playing this role and you come to this moment of facing your sin and your brokenness, that, to me it's like the heart of the message of the film. There's a release here, you know that? What did the release feel like to you?

Ashley Bratcher: I think it's something that we can all relate to. Everyone has something in their life that we feel like we've just been holding on to. And being able, like Abby said, to confess it and let it go is so freeing. Even if that means forgiveness. Forgiveness is something that is for you personally, even if it's forgiving someone else, holding that in and not forgiving someone or forgiving yourself is toxic. It's like drinking your own poison.

So being able to let it go and being able to portray that moment for Abby, it was really freeing for me, 'cause I was really ready for that part of the movie to be done. I was ready to move on to a more joyful side in my portrayal.

But I just think it's so powerful because it's something that every single human can relate to. We all have something that we've held on to that we want to be able to let go and find peace.

Dr. Clinton: Ashley, this isn't just an acting role. There's some real personal elements here that I think probably resonate deep down inside of you that helped bring you alive on the screen. Do you mind sharing some of that with us?

Ashley Bratcher: Most definitely. When I first got cast as Abby, I only got a five hour notice to get on the plane. Yeah, it was not a traditional casting process. I had already had my heart prepared by the Lord. I knew this was something I was meant to do, so I said yes without hesitation. Got on the plane, landed in Oklahoma with just a couple of days to go before we started filming. Over 100 pages of dialogue to memorize, didn't know Abby's story fully yet. And I was just in the middle of pre-production. Everything was happening really fast. I didn't have time to tell

anybody where I was, my husband knew, my son knew, my sister knew, and that was it.

So, on the fourth day my mom called me and I wanted to explain to her what I was doing and where I was, but I was very hesitant because my mom had shared with me that when she was in high school she had had an abortion. Very casual conversation, we didn't talk much about it. But in doing this movie, I didn't want her to think that it was judgmental or that it was condemning. I didn't want her to think that I thought anything less of her. But again, I was really proud of Abby's story, it was so beautiful.

And as I started explaining the transformation that Abby had to my mom, she began weeping. I mean, just completely broken, sobbing through the phone. She said, "Ashley, I need to tell you something that I never told you before. What you don't know is that when I was 19, I was in the clinic for the second time. My name was called, I was on the table being examined by a very pregnant nurse. I got very sick to my stomach, I knew that I couldn't go through with it. I got up, I walked out and I chose to have you." And that was a pretty overwhelming, profound moment in my life because I never knew. I had no idea.

I went from being middle of the road, kind of pro-choice, kind of pro-life, telling Abby Johnson's story to not having ever known I had my own story. That my life was spared on an abortion table. Literally could have ended within minutes and never had the opportunity to tell Abby's story.

For me it was really proof that God had planned my steps from conception. That He had just brought this story full circle to align with telling Abby's story and it really gave me confidence. I was never angry at my mom, I was so grateful because her telling me that had empowered me and it gave me confidence to really fulfill this role and to take it on for Abby.

Dr. Clinton: And to fight for life.

Ashley Bratcher: Right, exactly.

Dr. Clinton: That's beautiful. They say that God often takes our mess and makes it our message. That's what I think I heard you saying a moment ago, Abby, and that was, "Tim, as I look back on my past, I don't look back with horror ... I mean, I do, but I don't because I see the handiwork of God in my life and he has decided to use this as an opportunity to bring about good." And he's doing that.

You turned it into action. You go to a place where you've started a new ministry. Your goal is to call out - basically, God using you to call people out of that abortion industry and it's happening. Some 400 plus people. Tell us about how it got started. Do people hate you? I mean, it's ... serious, this is light and darkness. I mean, this is bad stuff, you're a bad person.

Abby Johnson: Yeah, Planned Parenthood is not a fan, I can tell you that, of Abby Johnson. But I realized that there was no national ministry to reach out to abortion clinic workers. And I thought, "Well, that's ridiculous. We've got ministries for everything under the sun. Why is nobody reaching out to abortion clinic workers?"

And I started talking to people who are considered leaders in the pro-life movement, asking them that same question and they just kept saying, "Oh, well, they're just too far gone. They would never come to our side." And I said, "Well, I did. So what about me?" And they said, "Well, you're different." And I thought, "No, I'm not, actually. I'm not different at all. I'm the same." I thought if it happened to me, it could happen to other people too and where are they going to go?

So, we got this started, not really knowing if it would be successful or not. But here we are, now almost at 500 abortion clinic workers who have left, seven full-time abortion doctors. And there's just something really special about accompanying people on a transformational journey.

Dr. Clinton: Ashley, come back to you, was there like triumph in all this, in the film? And did it bring joy? Did it bring fear? What did it do inside of you as you begin to, I mean you're acting out ... not some script somebody wrote, you're talking about a story, a real life story here.

Ashley Bratcher: Yeah, it was a huge responsibility and I wanted Abby to be proud of what I was doing. In that final moment where we see Planned Parenthood shut down and the sign comes down and everything that she had been trying to redeem, this moment of redemption, it was just so powerful to see everyone coming together and healing. The way that you spoke to that crowd and you said, "Let's honor the lives that were lost here." And they just surrounded that building and prayed over it. And the fact that in real life, now it's the headquarters for 40 Days for Life blows my mind. And then her ministry, my goodness, I was so proud to know everything that happened in real life after the movie had ended.

Dr. Clinton: You know I think about the film and I think about the applause at the end, the joy really a lot of people sensed or feel because of this statement. Then my mind goes to the applause of heaven. I wonder how much joy and how God must look down on what is taking place in and through your hearts and your ministry, your work. You know that, for such a time as this. We rejoice and celebrate in your great work.

Thank you for coming and joining us here and for the life and testimony and the mission that you guys are on. Thanks for being a part of it.

Ashley Bratcher: Thank you.

Abby Johnson: Thank you so much.

Roger Marsh:

This is Roger Marsh and I pray that you have been touched by today's Family Talk broadcast.

Abby Johnson's story is one of redemption and second chances. Learn more about Abby's story when you visit today's broadcast page at drjamesdobson.org.

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Well, that's all the time we have for today. I'm Roger Marsh, have a blessed day.

Announcer:

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