



## Broadcast Transcript

**Broadcast:** The Miracle of An Abortion Survivor: Choosing Forgiveness, Finding Redemption - Part 2

**Guest(s):** Claire Culwell

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**Dr. James Dobson:** Well, hello everyone. I'm James Dobson and you're listening to Family Talk, a listener supported ministry. In fact, thank you so much for being part of that support for James Dobson Family Institute.

**Roger Marsh:** The following program is intended for mature audiences. Listener discretion is advised.

Hello everyone and welcome back to Family Talk, the listener supported broadcast division of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh and today we are sharing part two of a conversation between our cohost, Dr. Tim Clinton and author and speaker Claire Culwell. Claire Culwell is a survivor of abortion and a staunch advocate for pre-born babies. She has been featured on Fox News and recently wrote about and released a book about her story. It's titled *Survivor: An Abortion Survivor's Surprising Story of Choosing Forgiveness and Finding Redemption*. She and her husband, Dave live in Austin, Texas with their children.

Now imagine for a moment finding out at 21 years old that your birth mother had tried to abort you, not just once but twice. And then coming to realize that pro-abortion advocates in the world believe in essence, that you shouldn't be alive. Claire Culwell has faced impossible odds since before she was born, and now she uses her story to encourage others that life is precious and worth choosing. Let's listen now to the conclusion of her conversation with Dr. Tim Clinton on today's edition of Family Talk.

**Dr. Tim Clinton:** Claire, so great to have you back on this edition of Family Talk. Your story is just so moving. *An Abortion Survivor's Surprising Story of Choosing Forgiveness and Finding Redemption*, the byline on the new book called *Survivor* by Claire Culwell. Claire yesterday, we were talking a little bit about what it was like for your birth mother to go through the experience she went through and how God has used that to change your perspective on young women and the narrative. I know there are many stories out there, but this is a one of those that just, it's hard to believe. What we do know is God is always in the midst of it isn't he?

**Claire Culwell:** Yes, absolutely.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Claire, as we get started today, I wanted to have you kind of recap for us a little bit about your thoughts again on your mother and a critical moment where you were coming into thank her for choosing life. And then she changes the whole narrative for you to a place of “wait a second, that wasn't what happened.”

Claire Culwell: I met my birth mother when I was 21 years old and found out that she didn't choose life for me. In fact, the adults in her life, her mother told her that there was one choice for her. And so, my birth mother who was 13 years old, had an abortion procedure that surprisingly, mistakenly missed my body because I had been a twin and the abortion procedure had dismembered my twin, but missed me. And I was born at 30 weeks. I weighed three pounds, had physical complications when I was born, but I was adopted by an incredible couple from Texas and raised on grace and love and forgiveness and was able to forgive my birth mother as she shared this shocking news with me that changed my life forever.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Claire, how did your birth mother react? I think she thought maybe you would hate her. Never talked to her again.

Claire Culwell: She did. She just kept saying, "I am so sorry. Your life is a miracle. I'm so sorry." And she told me later on, maybe a few years later that she thought that I would just get up and walk out of her house and never speak to her again. I mean, she was so ashamed and so hurt by what she had experienced as a 13 year old girl. But because of how I was raised, I was easily, instantly able to forgive her and to empathize with her because I knew Christ had forgiven me for so many things in my life and what He did for me on the cross, He did for her. And regardless of if she had had an abortion, regardless of if my twin had been taken away from me. And so I forgave her and it took a long time. There were years of we had a rocky relationship, but over time she listened to what I said.

And what I said was that I have forgiven my birth mother, but not only that, God has forgiven my birth mother and He wants to do something incredible out of something that was so painful and so hurtful and so evil towards us. And over time, she has been able to truly believe that about herself, especially since she became a believer and accepted Christ's forgiveness for her and what He did for her. And so now I believe that our story and when she sees me and when she looks at me, that it's a reminder of our victory story of our victory over what abortion has done to us, but also just knowing that Christ will come back one day and no other woman will have to experience abortion like we have. And so it's truly been incredible as I've watched her heal over the past 12 years.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Claire, have you heard of other stories of abortion survivors?

Claire Culwell: I have, I actually have friends who have survived abortions. I have people reach out to me on a monthly basis who say, "I just found out I survived an abortion." And there's actually the Abortion Survivors Network that was founded by my friend, Melissa Odin who's also an abortion survivor, and there have been almost 400 abortion survivors connected through that network. But currently,

there are no reporting requirements in most states. There is nothing holding doctors accountable to provide medical care to babies who survive abortions right now in our country. You can leave a baby to die after they survive an abortion. And so it's truly shocking, I know. But so many people who have survived abortions are adopted or are being raised by their biological parents. And so they may or may not know their story. And without that data, without those reporting requirements and doctors being required to provide proper medical care, we'll never know how many babies have survived abortions in this country.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Claire, when a lot of this went down, you said "My geography was about to become my destiny." Take us to College Station, Texas, what was happening and how to God begin to weave a whole new direction for you?

Claire Culwell: A couple of months before I met my birth mother, I was in school in College Station. Couple months before I met my birth mother, I stopped and asked the people who were praying outside of the local Planned Parenthood, what they were doing. Because I lived in an apartment and I could stand on my balcony and I could see the people outside praying. And I thought, "What in the world are they doing standing in front of this medical clinic?" I didn't know they performed abortions. I knew very little about Planned Parenthood or abortion facilities. And so I stopped one day and asked them what they were doing. And they told me that they were there to provide alternatives to women who were seeking abortions, that they had seen what abortion does to unborn babies, but also to women and to families. And they believed that they deserved better than what was available inside of an abortion facility and that they could provide that.

And I thought, "I'll never do that. I'm an introvert. I'm going to stay in my lane. That's great that God has that for y'all, but He certainly doesn't have that for me." And so, I walked away and little did I know that two months later, I would meet my birth mother and find out that I survived her abortion and that she regretted her abortion. And so, I sat on that news for a few weeks and I finally got the courage up to go back to those people who I had said, "Nope, sorry, I'm not interested in that." And so, I approached the people on the sidewalk and said, "Hey, I don't know if you remember me, but I met you a couple months ago. And I just met my birth mother and found out that I survived her abortion." And of course their jaws dropped, crying, just can't believe what they're hearing.

And they said, "Well, do you want to meet Abby?" And I'm like, "Okay, sure. Who's Abby. I don't know." And little did I know it was two weeks after Abby Johnson had resigned from her job at that exact Planned Parenthood. And the day that her story had gone on the news was the day I walked back into the Coalition for Life office, which was next door to the Planned Parenthood, where the volunteers prayed. It was crazy for God to put a former abortion clinic director and an abortion survivor in the same room on the same day is just how God works. He began a healing journey in both of us and called both of us to

stages across America that day because the people at the Coalition for Life said, "Yeah, we'll share your story, but you should too. Imagine what God could do if you shared your story with other people."

And so eventually they encouraged me to do that. And I stepped foot on a stage in December of that year. I watched as these kids, it was a youth group of middle schoolers and high schoolers. I watched as these kids were able to see the humanity of the unborn and what they were fighting for, in my face and in my humanity. And it changed my life forever because I saw the impact of what my story could do.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Abby Johnson had resigned as an eight year clinical director of Planned Parenthood after witnessing a live abortion procedure on an ultrasound monitor. Interesting piece, we've had Abby on the program here many times. Also, the movie *Unplanned* is connected into this whole process. Claire, back to you, you were certainly pro adoption. And this began to take you down a road of becoming pro-life. What moved me was how you took what seemingly looked like a mess, a disaster, and it becomes your message, your platform. And God takes you from a very uncomfortable place and says, "Hey, you've got something that we need to share with the world." And you began doing that. What I found interesting was when you went back to Oklahoma to an adoption agency and you were a keynote speaker at one of their events, Claire, tell us what happened there. Who did you meet? How did it all connect together?

Claire Culwell: I actually was asked to speak at my own adoption agency's fundraiser. I think it was the year after I had met my birth mother. It was pretty quick. It was one of maybe my first 10 speaking events. And it was the first time that I really had to look into the eyes of people that had affected my life. My parents were there, Debbie who answered my phone call when I called my adoption agency to search for my birth mother was there. She had also been my birth mother's caseworker 21 years before and she was there. And I was able to thank them. They were able to see the face and hear the name and know the story of somebody that had come out of this adoption agency. But not only that, somebody that had survived two abortions and then experienced the incredible gift of adoption.

And so that was one of my, for me personally, one of the more impactful moments of sharing my story, a moment that spurred me on to continue as I saw how people were able to respond. And so there's so many instances like that where I've been able to share my story on a stage. And I figured out what God wants to do with someone like me.

Dr. Tim Clinton: And we stand with you, a strong tip of the hat to the unsung heroes, those who remain faithful every day in this tapestry of saving children, saving babies. Claire, your story doesn't end here. There's a chapter in your book and when I got to it, and then I saw the title, it stopped me for a moment. And it's entitled "My Personal Unplanned." Can you tell us what happened?

Claire Culwell:

Absolutely. I, like my birth mother found myself in an unplanned pregnancy and this was around two years after I had met my birth mother. And I was living in a time where I was truly navigating what it meant to be an abortion survivor. And I was navigating it living in a world that didn't want me to exist. That didn't have a support system for me, that didn't ever ask me if I was okay. The incredible piece to this I think is that one, I found myself in an unplanned pregnancy with a man that I loved, who supported me, who stood by me. He was actually a single dad and he was moving to Texas to start his life over. And we met on an airplane after my birth mother had told me, "Don't come see me", when I planned to go see her.

And so, it was another moment of rejection for me, which was a hard thing to swallow. And I made choices that I probably wouldn't have, but isn't that how trauma works? But there's a hopeful message to my unplanned pregnancy too. I was surrounded by people, including my parents, including my good friend Abby Johnson, who I'm still good friends with, who was the maid of honor in my wedding years later. God surrounded me with the support system that my birth mother never had. And instead of hearing, "This is what you're going to do, and you're going to shut up about it. And you're going to pretend like life can go back to normal." The words that I heard, were "You're supported, and we're going to walk alongside you and you can be proud of the life that's inside you because God created that life with a purpose, just like He created yours."

And so, you can hold your head up high, knowing that this is just another piece of your story. And even though it might be embarrassing, even though it might hurt some people or feel shameful or whatever, I knew that God was just writing my story, how He intended to all along. And the day I had my daughter, she's eight years old now, but the day I had her, I saw. I saw in her humanity, in her precious life, I saw what God was trying to show me. Because I realized the domino effect that abortion has through the birth of my daughter, because she wouldn't be here if that abortion had been successful. And so many lives have not only been impacted by my life and my humanity, but they can also see it in my daughter. It's said that there is a face for choice, there's a name for choice, choice is a person. And you can see that. I'm not as cute as my daughter, so it's fun for people to see it just through her life. And her life was intended by God.

Dr. Tim Clinton:

Claire, as I read through the chapter myself, I couldn't help but enter into the world of a girl who had a pretty broken story. Someone who in the midst of it also, recognized her behavior. You owned your behavior. The two of you, your new husband, David decided to wait a while until you were, let's say mature enough, ready, responsible to engage in marriage. After you went through the process, your dad walked you down the aisle, and your dad married you, and you celebrated this new life together. And now God has restored you to a place where your message, I think, has exponentially exploded. For this message of hope and healing, especially for brokenness out there in this world that we live in.

You have become Claire, a real staunch advocate in the pro-life movement. You're concerned about a lot of issues. Obviously you've worked with a lot of people there's so much we could talk about, but I want to go to this issue of your concern about a lot of the bills and laws that are out there. You have been involved with the Born Alive Abortion Survivor Act. You've been involved with the Heartbeat bill. Tell us a little bit about why you're so passionate about those issues now.

Claire Culwell: I believe that we can change a culture, not just through a changing laws, but through changing hearts. But I don't think it's one or the other. I think it's both. And abortion has become this political thing. So many Christians are afraid to even talk about it. So many pastors are silent about it because it's this political thing. And I want people to hear my story so that they know that my life is not politics. Abortion is a human issue. It is a love issue. It is a humanity issue. It is a God issue. And so when I go before state legislature, and even I was part of a press conference in Congress for the Born Alive Abortion Survivor Act, it's because I want people to know that this is something that matters for me and for you. And it's not something that can be politicized, even though it has been today.

For instance, the Born Alive Abortion Survivors Act, it was blocked 95 times, I believe in 2019 in Congress, which means that Nancy Pelosi refused to hear it. It wouldn't even go to the floor for a vote. And this is a bill that says that if a baby survives an abortion, it gets the same medical care that any infant that's born under any other circumstance would get. I mean, that's a no brainer. To me and you, sounds like, of course-

Dr. Tim Clinton: It's unbelievable, yes.

Claire Culwell: Everyone should be for this bill, but they're not because it's being clumped together as abortion rights, as a woman's right to choose. When really, it's taking the life of someone like me and someone like you. And so, my hope as I testify across states and even share in Congress, is that people know the names and the faces of women like me, women like my birth mother, and that they would put aside politics and realize that what matters to the heart of God, and how He intended to create life with purpose and in his image, that that would impact us enough to say, "You know what, this isn't a political issue. This is a heart issue. And it's something that matters to the heart of God. And so now it matters to me too."

Dr. Tim Clinton: Amen. So Claire, how's your relationship with your birth mother today?

Claire Culwell: Our relationship is so wonderful. My birth mother has had the opportunity now to share her story through video, and it has been shared across the world. And as she's been able to see just how her willingness has impacted other people. And she came to see me speak just a couple years ago. And it was the most terrifying moment for me as I looked into her eyes and shared our story, but I invited her on stage after that. And I remember she grabbed my hand and she

put our hands up and it was like victory, like I am free. And that's what she said to me after she shared her story for the first time. She said, "Claire, thank you so much for giving me this opportunity. I feel free."

And so, because of that, because of what Christ has done in her life, and because of the freedom that she finds in that, she's free from what abortion has done. And that has really impacted our relationship. And so, there's been so many God's stories, so many moments that have led up to our redemption story, but she's doing really well, and we keep in touch.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Claire, as we go, I can hear my five sisters and my wife and my daughter saying this, "Tim asked her how she's doing." And what's the one thing you would want us to remember?

Claire Culwell: I am just so humbled for God to use somebody like me, a broken, sinful, just regular person. I'm a mom that drives a minivan and lives on soccer fields on the weekends. For God to use somebody like me and spare my life for such a time as this has been so humbling because I've seen how life-changing a story like mine can be for other people.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Claire, we'll pray for you and pray that God continues to expand your borders as you champion life. On behalf of Dr. Dobson, his wife, Shirley, the entire Family Talk team, we want to salute you. And we stand with you.

Claire Culwell: Thank you so much.

Dr. Tim Clinton: Thank you for joining us.

Roger Marsh: Claire Culwell is really proof that choice has a name and hers and her mom's stories are beautiful pictures of the redeeming power of Christ in our lives. Regardless of our history, our sins, or the sins of others against us, Jesus Christ is able to restore us and to bring us to freedom and victory in Him. We have to remember though, that abortion is truly a heinous assault on humanity. As Christians, we cannot turn away from the plight of the pre-born in the name of being quote unquote, "politically correct." When all the political discussions are finished, the argument is simple. It is a matter of life versus death.

On today's edition of Family Talk, Claire Culwell talked about the importance of being an advocate for pre-born babies and survivors of abortion in the political realm. If you want to stay up to date on issues of public policy that affect life and other issues that affect your family as well, be sure to sign up for our weekly JDFI public policy emails.

Our goal is to equip Christians to think critically and biblically about what's going on in the world around us so that we can understand the truth and then get involved. To sign up for our public policy emails, be sure to go to [DrJamesDobson.org/policy](http://DrJamesDobson.org/policy). That's [DrJamesDobson.org/policy](http://DrJamesDobson.org/policy). To learn more

about Claire Culwell, her ministry, and her book be sure to visit our broadcast page at [DrJamesDobson.org/broadcast](http://DrJamesDobson.org/broadcast). That web address again is [DrJamesDobson.org/broadcast](http://DrJamesDobson.org/broadcast). And remember, you can also give us a call as well, request a copy of the CD of the entire conversation between Dr. Tim Clinton and Claire Culwell. The number to call is (877) 732-6825. Well, that's all the time we have for today. I'm Roger Marsh, and from all of us here at the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, God's richest blessings to you and your family.

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