



Broadcast Transcript

Broadcast: Putting An Arm Around Post-Abortive Women – Part 1

Guest(s): Sydna and Tom Masse

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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: Well, welcome to Family Talk, the broadcast ministry of the Dr. James Dobson Family Institute. I'm Roger Marsh, and today's program will touch on one of life's most painful and personal struggles, the aftermath of abortion. For many women, this choice leaves deep emotional wounds that can take years, even decades to heal, but there is hope through God's endless grace and mercy. Our guest today is Sydna Masse, who courageously shares how God transformed her own experience with abortion into a powerful ministry.

Her story begins in 1991 when she joined Dr. Dobson at Focus on the Family, carrying a painful secret that would eventually lead her to establish Ramah International, a ministry dedicated to helping post-abortive women find God's forgiveness and grace. Together with her husband, Tom, she'll reveal how God's redemptive love can reach into our deepest wounds and bring unexpected healing. Now, this issue of the sanctity of human life is so important, especially during this month of January. 2025 is a time for the church to arise once more and to fight for the unborn. The pollsters may tell us that abortion is a losing issue, that people may look askance at us for speaking up.

We might feel outgunned and alone as a pro-life voice, but none of this matters. What truly matters is speaking the truth of God's love in love, and what matters is exposing unfruitful works of darkness and comforting those women who've been victimized by abortion. Our own Dr. Owen Strachan, the senior director of the new Dobson Culture Center, has put together a powerful pro-life resource available for you and your church to better educate the Christians in your community as to how to stand up for the unborn. We encourage you to go to drjamesdobson.org and check out this powerful new pro-life resource. It's available right now.

Whether you're struggling with past choices or know someone who is, the conversation you're about to hear is definitely going to touch your heart with its raw honesty and a message of hope. Here now is Dr. James Dobson to begin this important discussion with his guests, Sydna and Tom Masse.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, this is going to be a very tender broadcast. I really don't even know if I can get through it because there's a history here in our relationship with these two folks that goes back to 1991 when I was, of course, the president of Focus on the Family at the time. And Sydna Masse joined our staff that year. I didn't really know her yet, but she accepted a responsibility in marketing, of all things, for three weeks, and then the Lord made it clear what he wanted her to do.

She received a position serving crisis pregnancy centers all across the country, caring for those young women through the staffs and the directors of these crisis pregnancy centers, which were just burgeoning. They just showed up everywhere. And they were started by people, for the most part, that didn't have any training. They weren't medical people, they weren't nurses, but they loved these young women and wanted to do what they could to help them because they were so lost.

They were so lonely, they were so scared, and they were so unsure of what it meant that they had gotten pregnant out of wedlock. And your job, one of them, was to reach out to both the directors and the workers and these women. And then I began to be aware of Sydna. And approximately a year later, I asked her to come be a guest on the broadcast and to talk about that ministry. And what I learned that day is that Sydna was herself post-abortive, that she had killed her baby.

Sydna Masse: Yes, I was 19.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah, was 19 years old, and had struggled and gone through a lot of grief as a result of that. And that's the source of your passion for the women who are caught in this trap and the lies that are associated with it. And you told that on the air. How hard was it for you that day to admit to the world, and we had several million people listening at that time, that you had aborted the only baby that you had?

Sydna Masse: It was amazingly hard, but I don't believe I did it. The Lord came down and helped me do it.

Dr. James Dobson: It's my understanding that many people, even today, condemn you for that, even though you have been forgiven by the Lord long, long ago. Is that really true?

Sydna Masse: It does happen quite often. I think there's a lot of people out there that misunderstand why women abort and they want to put the serial killer murder title on our shoulders and we don't fit that. We are just normal people. In America, as many as 33% of all women have chosen abortion. This is not our statistics, the pro-life side, this is the provider statistics. So we know that there's millions and millions of us. But even in situations like prison where congregations of churches where grace and mercy is offered, very rarely can you tap this little part of our heart and get us to admit and confess.

Dr. James Dobson: Well, you have a very tender place in your heart even today for women that are caught in this, what I called, a trap. They're dealing with an unwanted pregnancy and don't know what to do and don't know where to go. And you're also still trying to help the crisis pregnancy centers that are serving them. But you left Focus on the Family in 1998 and said goodbye and you weren't sure where you were going, but you did not want to lose or leave this ministry.

Sydna Masse: Well, the Lord showed me through my time at Focus that very little had been done for post-abortive women. And we had done so much through your ministry, through Focus, many broadcasts, wonderful booklets, but there was no training. There was no Christian counseling even looking at this topic of grief. So God opened that door for us to just walk through that, develop some resources, and we've been doing this ever since.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Now, you started a ministry of your own called Ramah.

Sydna Masse: Ramah International, yes.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah. Explain the meaning of that word.

Sydna Masse: It's based on Jeremiah 31:15, "A voice is heard in Ramah, mourning and great weeping, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because her children are no more." Now, that's a biblical outlook on the pain that a woman goes through, whether she's miscarried, had a stillborn, or chosen abortion. Pregnancy loss is something that when you choose it, it becomes a little bit deeper because you have the guilt of that on your shoulders.

The next part of that verse says, "This is what the Lord says: 'Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded,' declares the Lord. 'Your children will return from the land of the enemy.'" It is probably one of the most difficult things anyone could ever ask a woman to do is take out this choice and look at it, talk about it, remember it, and find God's grace and mercy through that.

Dr. James Dobson: It's your observation that many, many women, maybe the majority, who have gone through an abortion, still have not dealt with it. They've stuffed it down, but it is still there and the pain is still very much alive.

Sydna Masse: And the pain, in my mind at the time, and I've talked to thousands upon thousands of post-abortive women, I am very typical, is that if we were ever to look at it and we were to start crying, we could never stop. We are afraid that pain will overwhelm us to the point of suicide. The Lord put me in a place. I was very terrified of working in a pro-life ministry because in my point of view, pro-life people would be the first to judge me. I was very protective of this secret, but I knew the Lord and I knew he had his own ways of doing things.

And when he made it very clear for me to go to Focus, the first thing that I walked in the door was these little feet pin and they were given to us as a gift at orientation. And I flipped it over and it said it was the size of a baby's feet at 10 weeks. And I was struck, "My goodness, my baby was that size." And it wasn't painful. And it was interesting because the card was not judgmental. And before you knew it, I found myself that afternoon in orientation. Everyone was there. I think 350 people were hired when you moved from California.

Dr. James Dobson: Those were interesting days.

Sydna Masse: Well, that was the first day you opened and we were all in orientation.

Dr. James Dobson: We had 10,000 applicants for 300 positions.

Sydna Masse: And Paul Nelson said, "You were all called by God because it is a miracle you were hired out of those 10,000 applicants." So he certainly put the understanding that God wanted me there. I just didn't expect you, Dr. Dobson. They put on a video, Turning Your Heart Towards Home, and you started describing an abortion. And I was sitting there trying to be so very calm and unemotional and unresponsive because if I cried or show any emotions, everyone would know I had an abortion. And I was sitting next to my new boss, very afraid I'd be fired.

And all of a sudden you took a turn and you said the most beautiful words I think I've ever heard from a Christian leader, you said, "I know I'm talking to many women who've had abortions. There is no sin that God can't forgive. And the problem may be you can't forgive yourself and you need help." And instantly the tears came down because you had identified my pain, but you had done something different, you had told me I was safe, that I was working for a ministry that didn't judge me, and that God was there. And that was the first time, as a post-abortive person, I met God.

Dr. James Dobson: To condemn someone who has taken this sin, because it is sin, to the Lord and been forgiven for it and had it removed as far as the east is from the west, for us then to deny that that guilt has been expunged and God doesn't even remember it anymore and continued to condemn that woman, that denies the power of the gospel. That's wrong. That's evil. And yet you say it still occurs and I know it does.

Sydna Masse: There is a lot of emotion around this issue, Dr. Dobson. There's a lot of people that have lost children. Maybe it's the man whose girlfriend aborted and he tried to stop her. All the anger he feels towards her is thrown at the person who is just available. And there's a lot of families, mothers, grandmothers whose sons' girlfriends aborted their child and they're in pain. This is a very difficult issue that wounds those. And for some reason, it's the women that made this choice that is most identified with that pain.

I had a young girl call me last week and I rarely get the call back. Our job is normally to refer them to pregnancy centers. If they're crying, we'll take time. If it's Saturday and the center's not open, we'll talk to them. But she just said, "I'm so upset that I ever considered abortion." And I simply said to her what I say to so many, "But you didn't make that choice. And don't let the enemy beat you up for this. Make sure that you know that God's with you and that he has a design for your child and that he'll bring that child safely into the world."

Dr. James Dobson: Let's talk to her, okay? Let's talk to her right now. What do you want to say to her? First of all, you're a child of God. He loves you. He's got a place for you. You're in his arms and he's going to walk with you through whatever the future holds. Yes, you made a mistake and you have been forgiven for it and you will live someplace in heaven. Do not condemn yourself anymore. It's passed. It's done. There is no more guilt.

I love that scripture where the scribes and Pharisees brought this woman, caught in the very act of adultery, brought her and threw her on the ground in front of Jesus. And He knelt down and wrote something in the sand. I would love to have known what He wrote. And He asked her, "Who are your accusers?" And they had left by then and she didn't have any accusers and He said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more." What a beautiful story.

Sydna Masse: The story, the one I feel I live every day, is Luke 7, Jesus anointed by a sinful woman. She walked into the Pharisee's house where Jesus was eating and she just got down on her knees and started to cry and cleansed his feet with her tears and used her hair as the towel. And the Pharisee was judging her that she was a sinner. And this is the one thing I probably will say the most to post-abortive people is what Jesus said to that Pharisee. Suppose two people have a debt. One is, in American terms, \$1,000, the other is a million dollars. Both debts are forgiven by the President of the United States. Who's going to be more grateful? And the Pharisee responds, "The one who had the greater debt." And this is who I am. I am the one who had the greater debt, but He saw fit to forgive me and help me forgive myself because--

Dr. James Dobson: Have you done that, Sydna?

Sydna Masse: Forgiven myself?

Dr. James Dobson: Mm-hmm.

Sydna Masse: Yes. I can look back at the former girl who was Sydna. I can understand her, I can know why she made her choices, and I can know that my child, whose name is Jesse Hawthorne Masse, my husband actually adopted my child in Heaven. And I can know that his life had great value because of the work that I'm doing. The love that God gave to my heart for these women is His love because He forgave me.

Dr. James Dobson: When Focus on the Family was young and I was younger and I came with this passion for the unborn child because I had been on a journey, but I had walked a path that took me back to my graduate school years, and I shared this with you in my office a few minutes ago, where the professors were not sympathetic at all with the pro-life issue. There was no pro-life movement at that time. And my professors would talk to me in very racist terms and I can't believe they would say these things, but this is what I remember.

They would say, "You have to understand what's going on in the inner city. You've got these African American kids whose fathers are a mystery and their mothers, some of them are on cocaine and they can't take care of the children. They're raised on the street and they're raised by gangs and they're just a sociological mess. And it would really be better if they had never been born." And when you're a student and your professors talk to you like that, you weigh those things and you think about them and, "Who am I to argue with them?"

But I would come home and tell my dad and my dad would look at me and the big tears would run down his face and he would say, "No, no, no, that's wrong. Don't you believe it. That is wrong. That's an affront to God Almighty. Those children are precious. Every single one of them is precious." And then he would say, "I would never cast one vote for any politician who would kill one innocent baby." And I began weighing that and thinking about it. And the Lord was talking to me. And by the time Focus on the Family came along, I knew what I believed largely because of the birth of this young man here who sits with us, Ryan Dobson, who was adopted.

And I realized that a young mother carried him to term and then, even though she didn't know us, put him in our arms and that I had him because of the pro-life sentiment that she must have gotten from somewhere. And from that point on, boy, I was committed to the teeth to preserve those unborn children and I still am today and you were part of it-

Sydna Masse: Amen.

Dr. James Dobson: ... for me, Sydna.

Sydna Masse: It's been a wonderful journey. To take a sin like this, to have it healed, to have God remove it, and then to say, "Okay, you get to talk to these girls who are right where you were."

Dr. James Dobson: Sydna, let's take our remaining moments to talk about the crisis pregnancy centers today. They have a different name that-

Sydna Masse: They do.

Dr. James Dobson: ... they are called.

Sydna Masse: We refer to them as pregnancy centers now.

Dr. James Dobson: Yeah.

Sydna Masse: A very gentle term.

Dr. James Dobson: How are they faring? The support for these centers is not quite so available.

Sydna Masse: No. Because of your work at Focus, many of them have ultrasounds now. They're able to open up and show the women their wombs and bond with their babies. They bring the fathers in. The problem with this is it's a beautiful, wonderful life-saving tool, it's expensive. It's a medical element of pregnancy center work, which has changed the structure and the funding. I can get on airplanes even today and when I talk about a pregnancy center, most people have never heard of one.

Dr. James Dobson: Unbelievable.

Sydna Masse: They don't even know they exist. The work, half the time I do, is just explaining, first of all, pregnancy centers are there for the abstinence education. They go into public schools. They have been the foundation and cornerstone of abstinence education. I'm working now in secondary virginity and how those who've already lost their virginity can come back and become whole again. They're there for the intervention side.

When the woman's pregnant, she calls and goes there and finds free and confidential help. The most beautiful thing about pregnancy center work to me though is that there is nowhere else in our world, outside of a few churches that have adopted this, that actually offer ministry services to post-abortive women. They're not just there for saving the baby, they're there for the women who've made this choice to help them be better wives and mothers, to help them come to grips with this choice they made and heal.

Dr. James Dobson: To help them grieve. And that's what the Pregnancy Resource Center attempts to do, to be there for these girls. It's not just to bring the baby to term, but it's to minister to her.

Sydna Masse: And as much as to the fathers as well. We're seeing this huge expansion of young boys in men's ministry beginning because there's two to this issue. And so many times the men just need a little coaxing to understand what this woman is going through and why this is too big of a decision for her to make on her own. And I want your listeners to know that adoption has changed. Most of the time when women are thinking of adoption, they think when she gives birth, she'll never know where her child went.

And through open adoptions, just by saying to a young girl who's considering abortion, "Did you know that you can select the parents, that you can actually

get photos, you can keep in touch if you want to?" This is a whole different world. Adoption has transformed and we are all here because we were adopted by Christ. I'm not Jewish. I was adopted by my stepfather. I know the beauty and strength of having parents that care, whether they're your biological children or not.

Roger Marsh:

Well, you've been listening to a special edition of Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk and a deeply moving conversation about God's healing grace featuring Sydna Masse and her husband, Tom. Now, if you'd like more information about their ministry called Ramah International, or if you'd like to share this message of hope with someone who needs to hear it, go to drjamesdobson.org/familytalk. And keep in mind, you can also share this program from our app using the JDFI app as well. Now, a couple of new mobile applications to tell you about here as 2025 kicks off in earnest. First of all, you can follow the JDFI on the new YouVersion Bible app that we have created, a nice partnership with the folks at YouVersion. You can join over 75,000 people who have subscribed to the 3-day devotional plans with practical biblical insights to strengthen marriages and to equip parents.

Now, you can get started with one of these popular plans, Dr. James Dobson's 3-Day Marriage Plan to improve communication skills or the 3-Day Marriage Plan for true love in your marriage. How about the 3-Day Parenting Plan for a mother's impact on her children, or opting for effective discipline? These programs and more are now available when you follow the JDFI on the YouVersion Bible app. And for more information on how you can do so, go to Google Play or the App Store. Keep in mind that we also have a brand new app just rolling out, and it's the JDFI Family app with more of an international flavor. You can find it now in the App Store. Soon you'll be able to find it in Google Play as well. Now, this is a powerful resource that features all of our Dr. Dobson minutes, Dr. Dobson's new 60-second short feature, in addition to the new Dobson Marriage Podcast and the Dobson Parenting Podcast.

Now, to access the new JDFI Family app, go to the App Store and download it. It's really very simple, it's absolutely free, and you'll find all the materials there in English as well as Spanish. Later on, we'll be adding up to three new languages this year and also making it available for Android users in the Google Play Store. But for more information, go to the App Store right now. Download the new JDFI Family app. You'll be glad you did. Well, I'm Roger Marsh. Thanks so much for joining us today here on Family Talk. For Dr. Dobson and the entire team here at the JDFI, we appreciate your prayers and your faithful support of our ministry. Join us again next time right here for part two of a powerful conversation with Sydna and Tom Masse. It's coming up next time, right here on Dr. James Dobson's Family Talk.

Announcer:

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

Dr. James Dobson:

Hello, everyone. Do you need help dealing with the everyday tasks of raising a family? I'm James Dobson here, and if you do, I hope you'll tune into our next

edition of Family Talk. Our main purpose in this ministry is to put tools into your hands that will strengthen your marriage and help you raise your kids. Hope to see you right here next time for another edition of Family Talk.