

Praying for the Abolition of Abortion

In the rain, sleet and snow they come. In the extreme heat and in the bone-chilling cold they come. Sometimes, they stand for hours. Theirs is not a political movement. Theirs is a spiritual movement and it is ecumenical. They are Catholics and Baptists and Pentecostals and Methodists, among many others.

They stand on sidewalks in front of facilities all over the world, including the Bossier City Medical Suite, 1505 Doctors Drive, and pray for the abolition of abortion. They rely on the power of prayer and fasting. They are “40 Days For Life.”

They are not wild-eyed and fanatical. Their vigils are peaceful. They do not scream. They do not harass. They do not harangue. They simply pray, and with God’s help, they are getting results.

They claim to have witnessed approximately 6,700 “saves” since their movement started. A “save” happens when a woman who has made an appointment to have an abortion changes her mind and elects not to go through with the procedure. A life is saved.

That figure, 6,700, is a conservative estimate because those involved in the movement say they have seen numerous women drive up to abortion clinics to keep their appointments, only to drive away when they see representatives of “40 Days For Life” praying in front of the facility. Those are potential “saves,” but it is impossible to keep track, since the pregnant woman may re-schedule her appointment and go through with the abortion at a later date. Still, there is no doubt “40 Days For Life” is having an effect, worldwide.

In Jacksonville, Florida, for example, where “40 Days” began vigils in 2007, abortions have dropped by a staggering 23 percent, going down every single year. The numbers have dropped from 8,437 in 2007 to 6,547 in 2012.

The 6,547 abortions are still a horrendous loss of life, but it is a fact—abortion numbers in Jacksonville have fallen by almost 2,000 since “40 Days” began its sidewalk vigils in that Florida city six years ago. There may be other reasons for the drop, but you’ll never convince the “40 Days” volunteers. They say they believe God is honoring the prayer and fasting with “saves,” and I agree.

Last Wednesday, on Day 1 of this year’s campaign in Orange County, California, “40 Days” reports a “save” in front of a Planned Parenthood facility. A woman came out of the building, and with tears in her eyes, told the “40 Days” volunteers she had decided not to have an abortion. The woman was in her 7th week of pregnancy and has four other children. She believed her family did not have the resources to care for another child.

Another result of the prayer and fasting, participants believe, is the shutting down of abortion clinics. In Michigan, 5 abortion centers have closed in the past 15 months, including a facility in Lansing—a closure that followed a three-month prayer effort. In Greensboro, North Carolina, prayer volunteers were getting ready for their second peaceful vigil outside the Women’s Choice abortion facility, but had to change their plans when the clinic shut its doors. They have now moved to the other abortion clinic in Greensboro to begin their vigil.

The founder of “40 Days For Life” is David Bereit, now the movement’s national director. He became an outspoken pro-life advocate after Planned Parenthood announced plans to build an

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abortion clinic in his Texas town in 1998. He helped to start and build a local grassroots coalition that rallied 60 churches and thousands of people together to seek to reduce abortions or eliminate them in and around Bryan-College Station, Texas. The effectiveness of "40 Days" was confirmed when Planned Parenthood labeled David's town "the most anti-choice place in the nation."

"40 Days For Life" is a focused, pro-life campaign that coincides with Lent. This year, it runs from February 13th to March 24th. The campaign seeks to access God's power through prayer and fasting, peaceful vigil and community outreach to end abortion. The mission of the campaign is to bring together the body of Christ in a spirit of unity over 40 days with the idea of seeking God's favor in turning hearts and minds from a culture of death to a culture of life, thus bringing an end to abortion.

The 40-day campaign tracks Biblical history, where God used 40-day periods to transform individuals, communities, and in some cases, the entire world. From Noah in the flood to Moses on the mountain to the disciples after Christ's resurrection, it is clear that God sees the transformative value of His people accepting and meeting a 40-day challenge.

Each day during "40 Days For Life," individuals, churches, families and groups are asked to join together in prayer for a specific request so the body of Christ, the Church, can unite around a common focus. These specific prayer requests seek God's help for women who are at risk of having an abortion, innocent children who are at risk of perishing, men and women who carry the pain of a past abortion experience and workers at Planned Parenthood facilities and abortion centers. In addition, there is prayer for local, regional and national leaders, for revival and renewal in churches all over the world, and for repentance and healing throughout the nation.

"40 Days For Life" also invites people of faith to fast throughout the campaign because the Bible teaches that there are certain kinds of evil that can only be driven out by prayer AND fasting. "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21). "40 Days" sees abortion as an unspeakable atrocity that can ultimately be abolished only through spiritual warfare.

The prayer warriors may choose to abstain from certain foods, from television, from apathy and indifference, or from whatever separates them from God. Their belief is that when God's people fast with a broken, repentant and contrite spirit, the heavenly Father will hear from Heaven and heal individuals, states, countries, churches, communities and the world.

In Scripture, Jesus says, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matthew 16:24). If you want to follow Christ and work toward the abolition of abortion, go to www.40daysforlifefsb.com for more information about the local "40 Days" effort which will be in progress until March 24th.

Ed Baswell is the host of "Crossfire Radio," Monday through Friday, 7-9 am, on The Promise, 90.7 FM. The show is streamed live at promisetalkradio.org.