

Petra Church

January 23rd, 2022

A Culture of Life & Healing

Good Morning Petra Church! Thank you for inviting me to come and share with you this morning. It's truly an honor. Believe it or not I rarely get asked to come and share at a church service. I think that's because no one wants to talk about abortion – which I totally understand, because I don't like to talk about it either.

But here's the truth - Jesus Christ does want to talk about it, (and that's the only reason I'm here today). He wants us (His Church) to not only talk about it, but to do something about it.

So, I honor your pastors, elders and the leadership team of this house for not only wanting to be hearers of the word, but also doers of the word. Thank you!

Let me start by saying...(And- I can assure of this) – **Even if abortion is not your story...it's the story of someone you love.** So please don't "check out" or think this doesn't apply to you... maybe you need to hear the words I'm going to speak this morning **for someone you love.**

- I want to first give you a glimpse into the BIG PICTURE of what's going on in our world about abortion,
- Then I want to share with you what Deeper Still (the ministry I represent) is doing to help turn the tide.
- And then what Petra Church can do - as one of the "lampstands" in this community and as far as your reach goes.

When it comes to the wounds from abortion, **it applies as much to the men and fathers of aborted children as it does to the women and mothers of those children.** 70% of American women who have abortions identify themselves as Christians.

I was part of this statistic. I had an abortion in 1981 (41 years ago this month). I was a Christian then. I've asked myself over the years -What was missing in my walk with the Lord - and in my Christian community? Why did I fall between the cracks? I'll touch on that later.

1 in 3 or 4 people (in the US) who attend church have been involved in an abortion. **Lifeway (books & retail) Research revealed that 76% of women, who had an abortion, said the local church had no influence on their decision to abort.** This is truly alarming!

We are in **a war for the soul of our nation.** It's a war of **life and death** and the **consequences are enormous.** 63 million abortions in the US since 1973. (The entire population of Canada is only 38 million.

The abortion wounded – are made up of millions and millions of women and men.

- They have been gagged and silenced by the prison of guilt and shame
- They are in bondage and are not spiritually or emotionally free to speak the truth about abortion and about the life-long torment that it brings.
- They are **The Biggest Silent Army on Earth**

Video (Before abortion)

In any war of combat, you have a medical tent/ hospital. **Deeper Still is the hospital for the abortion wounded.** Deeper Still has been raised up to bring healing and lasting freedom to these casualties of war.

- We receive the wounded, and we do the surgery that brings healing and freedom.
- We equip them to go back and live out their God-ordained destiny.

When this abortion wounded army is healed and set free – they will be the biggest and most powerful force to stop abortion in our nation and the nations of the world.

Isaiah 61:1-3 The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted; He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and freedom to prisoners; To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; To comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.

Isn't this beautiful, good news?

The Underground Church

Deeper Still is like the underground church – Most everything we do is in secret and in a “hidden place” where abortion wounded women and men come to receive their healing and get set free from the bondages of sin and death.

We have weekend retreats which is the perfect environment for this healing to happen, our retreats are free of charge.

Our home office is in Knoxville, TN, but **our mission is to multiply leaders** who will start chapters in their area. Right now, we have 24 chapters in the US. We also have an outreach to Chinese in the US as well as in SE Asia.

Of our 24 chapter leaders, 21 of them were once abortion wounded and couldn't even say the word abortion. But they received their healing and now their voice can be heard, and they have joined the healing movement that is setting the captives free.

Today **Deeper Still of Eastern PA**, in Reading is with us. Trish Sclafani and her team have a booth in the lobby you can visit. Trish is also one of our new trainers that help equip new chapter leaders.

Video (After Abortion)

What can you do as a church body?

You can start by doing a **self-assessment of your church culture**. I've looked at your website and have read your values and mission statement. I was very encouraged. **I believe Petra has already put into practice many of these practices.**

- **1st What do you have in place right now that demonstrates that Petra Church cultivates a culture of life?**

- Does your discipleship curriculum and sermons include Biblical teaching on the value of Human life?
- Are your children being taught that God knit them (and everybody) together in their mommy's tummy right from the beginning?
- Are you helping those who are pregnant and needing help?
- Is the vital role of mothering and fathering being affirmed and fostered in your community (spiritual, physical, fostering, adoption)?

- **2nd How does Petra Church cultivate a culture of Healing?**

- How many ways do you communicate that this is a safe community to bring my sin into the light?
- Start by asking – Who in my church community would I go to if I was struggling with a sin or a decision, or with temptation?
- And what would they do with me if I did? You want to have that question answered for people before they're ever in trouble.

I think one of the reasons I fell between the cracks of my church community back in 1981 was not because I didn't think it was a real baby inside me, but because I didn't even know how to talk to someone about my sin struggle.

- **3rd Does Petra Church have a culture of healthy transparency?**

- Do we model how we don't judge people that bring their struggle to the light, but rather here's how we support you. Here's how we practice the **truth in love**.
- For me -I was stuck in my embarrassment, pride, and people-pleasing. I had never seen this kind of openness modeled.

- **4th Has Petra Church established a pathway to healing for people?**

- This starts by establishing what we do with people that confess their sin or ask for help?

- What are the steps from when someone first comes forward for help - to getting them a Deeper Still retreat? Is this pathway clearly understood by your ministry teams?

I've spoken in

- Churches where people run from me afterwards. **Why is that?**
- Churches where people come up to me in secret (after everyone has left the building and the parking lot).
- And honestly, I can only remember one church where **there was enough of a culture of healing and freedom that people openly came forward when the invitation was given for prayer, confession, and help - that church had cultivated a culture of life and healing. The people knew it was a safe place.**

I believe that Petra Church is well on its way to becoming a body where Jesus knows He can send the brokenhearted to be healed and the captives to be set free.

There is a case before the Supreme Court right now that has the potential to reverse Roe vs. Wade and begin to dismantle the stronghold of abortion in our nation.

This will be the most important victory for human life in our lifetime. **But with this victory will come a tidal wave of wounded, desperate hearts that can no longer hide their pain or justify their past abortions.**

This is our hour for the grace and mercy of God and the power of the Cross of Christ to overflow from our church walls.

Petra Church, will you be part of this great movement of God to bind up the broken hearted and set the captives free?

William Wilberforce (I consider him one of my historic heroes) served in the British Parliament for **20 years. His leadership and perseverance ended the slave trade in England, 1807.** The battle to end the slave trade has so many parallels to the abortion battle of our century. (Movie – Amazing Grace)

Wilberforce's great, great grandson is often asked if Wilberforce was alive today what cause would he take up. **He says at the top of the list would be abortion.**

Wilberforce greatest speech against slavery to parliament was 3 hours in length. Afterwards, he said to them – “You may choose to look the other way, but you can never say again that you did not know.” His influence and perseverance changed the minds and culture of the 19 century British Empire.

May we be found faithful, as the 21st century Bride of Christ to do the same. Thank you for the honor of sharing with you today.