

Father of 10 Children Stands Against Planned Parenthood—Through the Power of Prayer

Parents of 10 children, six of them through adoption, Randy and Kelsey Bohlender have more personal experience than most involved in the adoption process. Just this year, the Bohlenders re-launched their own state-licensed adoption agency—naming it Zoe’s House, after their first adopted daughter.

This determined couple places their pro-life convictions front and center in their work.

“The idea that children are unwanted is a farce,” said Randy Bohlender in a recent interview. “We can find homes for these kids.”

It’s not by accident their agency opened less than a mile from the local Planned Parenthood clinic. Now Bohlender addresses recent concerns over unethical practices at Planned Parenthood, what he’s hearing in the adoption community and how prayer gives his family strength for challenges they face everyday.

Bound4LIFE: With Zoe’s House Adoption Agency located near a local Planned Parenthood clinic, what are your team’s hopes for local women facing an unplanned pregnancy?

Randy Bohlender: Our hope is that they would always choose life. We wanted to be near the local Planned Parenthood clinic when we established this agency.

But it is a major mental leap for a woman to go from “I’m

going to abort a baby” to “I’m going to make an adoption plan for my baby.” You cannot navigate that path in one conversation; it takes several steps.

So we’re glad to be near Planned Parenthood, and some may see them as our competition; what we’re really focused on is serving birth mothers well.

Bound4LIFE: This past weekend, a tragic incident of violence occurred at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs; three people were killed and many injured. As one whose pro-life convictions define your journey, what is your response?

Randy Bohlender: Obviously, this is a tragedy that pro-life advocates mourn.

This was a mental health incident, not a pro-life incident; any truly pro-life protest is characterized by peace and nonviolence. I am saddened for the loss of life, as are people on both sides of the abortion issue.

I’m also somewhat embarrassed at the conservative pundits who were trying to spin the shooting as not targeting the Planned Parenthood office, even as the bullets were still flying. Sometimes the purely political arm of the conservative movement needs to put the phone down and just wait to see what’s happening.

Bound4LIFE: There’s been much talk about the undercover investigation of Planned Parenthood this summer, which exposed many citizens to the realities of abortion. What response have you seen to these videos?

Randy Bohlender: Because our agency just launched, we have nothing to measure any uptick in interest. Anecdotally, I’ve heard from agencies in Ohio that say they are seeing a lot more expectant mothers come in and ask about adoption than they have in the past.

These videos from the Center for Medical Progress have really placed the issue of abortion back into the forefront of discussion, at a level we have not seen for decades.

I think we will see a wave of young women who find themselves pregnant, have a very different impression of Planned Parenthood than they had a year ago and ultimately decide to give their children life.

Bound4LIFE: Since Zoe's House Adoption Agency re-launched this fall, do you see the preparation paying off?

Randy Bohlender: It absolutely has. We did have an adoption agency several years ago. You know, the Bible talks about being as wise as serpents and harmless as doves. I had the dove piece figured out pretty well, but the wisdom part I did not have—in terms of how it was launched and how it was positioned for donors.

The Lord brought alongside us a couple of business people who are brilliant at organization and have contacts I don't have. They offered such wisdom and help to re-launch Zoe's House.

They've formed the core of our board and are a source of getting us in front of other people. We're in a much healthier organizational place than we ever were.

Bound4LIFE: You and your wife Kelsey have adopted six children, all the while involved in efforts to halt sex trafficking and end abortion. How do you see these issues as interrelated?

Randy Bohlender: Adoption raises the water level of equity we have in prayer. If you've got a sack full of groceries, your prayer for the guy who's hungry means one thing. But if you're actually handing out groceries as you're praying, it means something else.

When you're willing to be part of the solution (and) willing

to embody the answer to your own prayers, God does more with your prayers through these efforts. It gives an element of authority you might not have otherwise.

We are still full-on involved in praying for the ending of abortion—doing it with the knowledge (that) we're going to help as many as possible to do their part, so there is room for children when the day comes that the law is changed.

Bound4LIFE: What role does prayer have in your life and work?

Randy Bohlender: Prayer has become a lifestyle. For us, we go to prayer meetings at the International House of Prayer—where we've been involved for more than 10 years. But really prayer is just a part of everything we do, part of our regular day.

You wouldn't want to open up your home to six adoptions without a prayer life. Prayer has to be a central part, or things go completely haywire; we've had days like that.

Bound4LIFE: Where do you start if you're new to integrating prayer into your daily walk?

Randy Bohlender: You make appointments with God and you keep them. It's easy to tell people, "Go to a house of prayer"—and if they live nearby, it's great to find yourself at IHOP-KC, JHOP DC or another local prayer room to seek God.

Most people don't live within immediate driving distance of an organized prayer meeting. So you make appointments with God, and you keep them. If that means you get up 30 minutes earlier than you have to, you do that. If that means you stay up later, (you do) whatever works for you—just find a place daily in the Word, alone with God.

People tell me, "Well, you don't understand my situation." You know what? I've got 10 kids. I understand busy. There are times when I read my Bible at three in the morning; it's worth it to spend time with God.

The folks at YouVersion have given us all absolutely no excuse not to read the Bible. We carry it around with us constantly on our mobile devices. If that hasn't been part of your faith tradition, I challenge people to download the app and sign up for a daily Bible reading plan.

This app changed my Bible reading habits drastically. I started committing to a really hard-core reading plan: through the Bible in 90 days. I did it four times in a row, and when I was done I had an appetite for scripture that I never had before in my entire life. Suddenly, when you're standing in line at Target, you get your phone out to read the Bible because you want to—not because you feel like you have to.

Nobody wakes up with a prayer life. You end up with a prayer life because you want it and actually exercise the personal discipline to go for it.

Zoe's House, a 501(c)3 nonprofit, keeps costs low for adoptive families thanks to friends who share their vision. For more on faith, family and adoption, visit .

Josh Shepherd serves in communications at Bound4LIFE International, a grassroots movement to pray for the ending of abortion, carry the spirit of adoption and believe for revival worldwide.

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