

When the Moral Outcry Over Terri Schiavo Became a Rallying Cry for Prayer

From its founding in the fall of 2004, Bound4LIFE was a stand for all life—from conception until natural death. While the vision was primarily focused on praying for the ending of abortion, we quickly realized that to be pro-life is to contend for life in all stages.

In the spring of 2005, the eyes of the nation were drawn to a hospice center in Pinellas Park, Florida, as a precious woman fought for life. America met Terri Schiavo, and all were pulled into her story.

Terri Schiavo was a 41-year-old Florida woman who had suffered a stroke and was not communicative, yet was maintaining vital functions on her own. Government got involved with Schiavo's care when her husband disagreed about the value of her life.

Intervention was made to have her taken off her feeding tube, which would end her life, while others fought to save her through court appeals. Like many pro-life advocates nationwide, we were deeply moved by Schiavo's situation.

Our family had recently moved from Kansas City to Washington, D.C., to help establish the Justice House of Prayer, where teams contended constantly in prayer at the U.S. Supreme Court, believing for the ending of abortion. When Terri Schiavo's story was catapulted to national headlines, we sensed the urgency to go to Florida and stand in prayer.

As intercessors, we would raise our voices to heaven—appealing for the life of this woman who essentially had no voice. We were determined to stand for however long it took. Half of our group traveled from Washington, D.C., to Florida, where we

took our stand as public witnesses for Schiavo's life.

First, we stood and prayed at the court in Tallahassee where the case was being heard. Then we moved to the rehabilitation facility in Tampa where Terri was residing, praying there in what we called a "silent siege."

We wore red tape on our mouths with the word "LIFE" scrawled in black Sharpie. The now-iconic Life Tape is a symbol of silent solidarity with those who have no voice—and it was beginning to gain media attention, as they all wanted to know what it meant.

As we stood outside in prayer, Terri's life hung in the balance. For many days we pleaded with the Lord to spare her life and to reverse the court decrees that demanded her feeding tube removal. Finally, when we heard that the case had been referred to the federal courts, Bound4LIFE founder Lou Engle made the decision that we should return to Washington. We loaded our team and began the drive back to the nation's capital, stopping for the night just south of Atlanta.

The next morning, as we pulled out of the hotel, it was announced that the case had been sent to the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta. We were only miles away. The group agreed that we had to continue our stand. Our team parked a few blocks away, and while we had never done this before, we put the Life Tape on before we got to the courthouse.

Our small army of red Life Tape warriors marched down the street and suddenly reporters appeared all around us. Photographers were excitedly snapping pictures as we walked toward the court.

One photographer pulled out his phone as he walked backward in front of us. He continued to take photos as he spoke rapidly into the phone, "Yeah, the Life Tape people are here. I don't know how they heard about this, but they're here!"

That morning, we stood and prayed in the cold rain as the case was heard inside. Microphones were shoved toward us as we stood silently, reporters demanding to know what we were doing and how long we would stand. When the case had been heard inside the District Court, we were confident our case had been heard in the court of heaven and we continued our journey home.

Arriving in D.C. sometime around midnight, we passed a large *Washington Post* news ticker mounted on the side of a building. It scrolled: Schiavo case to be heard at supreme court tomorrow morning. We swallowed hard and determined that this would be a sleepless night. We agreed: We are going to the steps of the Supreme Court to give it all we've got.

Weeks before, Lou Engle had relayed a conversation someone had with U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia (who passed away earlier this year) discussing the issues of abortion and euthanasia. Scalia was decidedly pro-life, but he asked pointedly: "Where is the moral outcry for life?" His words became our prayer. We resolved that if it were up to us, the judges would hear the moral outcry.

Washington, D.C., weather in March is unpredictable, and can be bitter cold, particularly if one is spending the night outside. Our tired team stood at the Supreme Court all night, some of us bundled up in sleeping bags.

I distinctly remember the 2 a.m. hour. We were exhausted, we had driven all day, we were frozen to our core—and we started to hear the birds chirping. What in the world is going on? Why are these birds chirping in the middle of the night in this freezing cold? For some reason, the words of Jesus in Luke 19:40 came to mind: "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

I tore the Life Tape off my mouth. We are not here to hold our peace. As those birds kept chirping, I yelled: "Justice

Scalia, here's your moral outcry!" Those standing with me did the same. The Life Tape came off our mouths and we started praying at the top of our lungs. As a general practice, we had always prayed silently before the court, but this situation called for something more. This cry was inside all of us, and it was coming out.

In the morning, many hundreds of reporters showed up. That day in court, Terri Schiavo's family lost their appeal. The Hippocratic Oath taken by medical care providers is one of the oldest, most sacred binding oaths and has never condoned the taking of innocent life through lack of care.

However, in the end, the courts ordered removal of a feeding tube and Schiavo's life tragically was ended. Since Terri's death, her family has assisted more than 1,500 medically vulnerable people through the Terri Schiavo Life & Hope Network.

Interestingly, something else happened. Nobody was really paying attention to Life Tape in the months prior, but somehow this weekslong stand made it a symbol that spread across the nation. In its Year in Review issue, *TIME* magazine featured a picture of us praying with Life Tape. That is when the media began to recognize: These people aren't going away. Now, almost 12 years later, Bound4LIFE is still there praying at the Court, contending for life.

My husband, Randy, and I now take our stand in Kansas City, raising our family of 10 children and leading an adoption agency. The stand for life at the Supreme Court remains vitally important. Standing on those steps, a dream was born in our heart—an adoption movement as a prophetic statement of being pro-life.

We continue to pray for the ending of abortion, and watch with concern when states like California legalize assisted suicide while another dozen states are currently considering such

laws. When it seems darkness is closing in on our nation, we are not giving up hope. Now, more than ever, it's time to take a stand for life.

Proverbs 31:8 says, "Open your mouth for the speechless, in the cause of all who are appointed to die." This mandate is what fuels the flame in our spirit to continue to stand and fight; sometimes being a voice looks like silently praying. We know the truth, we know that God is with us—and when we've done all we can do, we stand.

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