



Newsletter Collection

A Living Room Conversation

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A Living Room Conversation

Part 1: Morality and Legality

GRACE FONTENOT'S MONTHLY UPDATE

FEBRUARY 2018



Dear Friends and Family,

“Will you talk to me about abortion? Please just tell me about it!” This was not what I expected to hear upon returning to my host home on a recent JFA trip. My hosts were out on a date, and they had informed me that they would have their new babysitter staying with their kids that evening, and that she’d let me into the house. The kids were already in bed when I knocked on the door, and their babysitter, “Heidi,” answered. She turned out to be a sweet, friendly young woman, and a student at a local university.

Heidi and I hit it off immediately. We began chatting, and pretty soon she asked me why I was visiting the area, so I explained to her the work that I do with Justice For All. I told her that through speaking and mentoring, I help train pro-life advocates to defend their beliefs in a way that balances truth and love in every conversation. She then enthusiastically said, “Will you talk to me? Will you give me one of your talks?” I was happily surprised, and we sat down in the cozy living room where I then asked her if she’d share her thoughts on abortion. Our conversation went something like this:

Heidi: I believe that little life has a soul, and I don’t think it’s my place to “play God” by ending that life through abortion. But I don’t think that I can allow my religious beliefs to limit the choices of others who don’t share them when it comes to making public policies. So I can’t say that I think abortion should be made illegal.

Grace: I understand your concern for the freedom of others, and not wanting to force people to live by religious standards they don’t hold. Can I ask you a question, though? I’ve talked to a lot of people about abortion, and I’ve noticed that people have different reasons for why they hold their views. Why are you pro-life?

Heidi: I think because I’ve always wanted to be a mom. My mom has always said I was born to be a mother. I was raised pro-life, but like I said, I don’t think I can tell others that they can’t get an abortion.



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Grace: Do you believe that there are some things mentioned in the Bible, which we believe as Christians, that also should be laws? For example, one of the Ten Commandments is “Thou shalt not kill.” Do you think we should make murder *legal* because the law against it may be influenced by a Christian belief?

Heidi: No, of course not! You’re right, that law makes sense for everyone even though it’s also a Christian belief.

Grace: This may sound like a weird question to ask, but what is the definition of murder?

Heidi: It’s when you kill an innocent person... and if abortion kills a human being, then it must be murder!

Notice how I first built common ground with Heidi. I tried to identify with her discomfort about forcing others, by law, to comply with a belief system they don’t currently hold. Because of this, Heidi felt heard and understood. After I built common ground, though, I raised an example of a law that coincides with our religious beliefs, but which can clearly be legally applied to all citizens regardless of religion. Heidi quickly recognized that outlawing abortion falls into this category. If abortion kills an innocent human being, it is not only morally wrong, but must be legally outlawed for everyone.

This was just the beginning of my conversation with Heidi. She was excited to keep talking, so she and I went on to discuss the biological case for the humanity of the unborn. We also discussed human equality, and the apparent conflict between women’s rights and the rights of the unborn. In future newsletters I will share the details of the rest of our conversation and give you more specific ideas about how to navigate your own conversations with others. Thank you for your ongoing support which allows me to reach and equip people like Heidi.

For the sake of His sorrowful passion,



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A Living Room Conversation

Part 2: The Unborn - A Living Human Organism

GRACE FONTENOT'S MONTHLY UPDATE

MARCH 2018



Dear Friends and Family,

Last month, I introduced you to Heidi, a college student I met at one of my JFA host homes while she was babysitting there. Heidi was enthusiastic to learn from me about the topic of abortion, and she had plenty of questions of her own. In last month's newsletter I shared the first part of our conversation, in which we discussed reasons why we should not only be opposed to abortion personally, but also why it is reasonable to restrict abortion access altogether. Heidi began to realize that if abortion kills an innocent human being, it must be restricted legally.

This naturally took us into the next part of our conversation, in which we discussed the humanity of the unborn, biologically. It was such a fun conversation because we were both becoming increasingly excited! I was curious about her views on the biology of the unborn, so I decided to clarify whether or not we held the same beliefs on that subject. My hope in asking these questions was to make her more confident in her position against abortion.

Grace: I remember you mentioning earlier the word “life,” and I’m curious, what does the word “life” mean for you? You may have noticed I ask for definitions pretty often, and that’s because, over time, I’ve realized that people can have different intended definitions for the same words.

Heidi: Oh, okay. Well, actually, I was just studying this! [Heidi excitedly took out her course notes to reference them.] When I say “life,” I think I mean development. I’m in a developmental motor skills class, and I was just reading about how, from the moment that fertilization is completed, development is happening!

Grace: So if the unborn is developing from the point of fertilization, would you agree that it must be *alive*?

Heidi: Yes.

Grace: Would you further agree with me that, because living things reproduce after their own kind, the unborn must also be *human*?

Heidi: Yes.

Grace: And do you agree that the unborn is a whole *organism*?

Heidi: I... think so...

She said this slowly. I could tell she wasn’t sure what I meant, so I asked a follow-up question to clarify terms and to make sure that Heidi and I were on the same page.



Conversing with Marjorie in front of the *Art of Life* exhibit during JFA’s outreach at the University of Kansas this past month



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Grace: What do you mean when you use the word “organism”?

Heidi: Hmmm. I don’t know exactly. What is the definition of the word “organism”?

Grace: I can’t give you the exact definition off of the top of my head, but an organism is an individual life form. For example, the leaf of the plant on the table next to you is a *part* of the whole organism, which is the plant. In the same way, your thumb is a part of your body; but you, Heidi, are the whole organism. So in the same way, sperm and egg are *functional parts* of a man and a woman. However, when they combine, they cease being parts of another person’s body, and a new whole organism comes into existence, on its own self-directed path of development.* Does that make sense?

Heidi: Yes! So the unborn is the same kind of thing that we are; it’s just at a different stage of development!

We were then interrupted by one of the kids coming downstairs complaining of a sore throat. After administering medicine and sending him back up to bed, Heidi and I continued our conversation. (I will share about the final part of our conversation in a future newsletter.)

Evidence that the unborn is a living, human organism:

1. The unborn is **living**.

- Growth through cellular reproduction
- Reacting to stimuli
- Metabolizing food for energy

2. The unborn is **human**.

- Has human parents (living things reproduce after their own kind)
- Has a DNA fingerprint unique to the human species

3. The unborn is a whole **organism**.

- Integrating its body parts for the good of the whole
- Actively developing itself through the stages of human development
- If adults are organisms, and all that was added to them from fertilization was a proper environment and adequate nutrition, then the unborn at fertilization must have been an organism as well.

Notice that instead of simply telling Heidi that she had a misunderstanding about the biology of the unborn, I asked her questions so that I could think through it *alongside her*. In Justice For All’s *Abortion: from Debate to Dialogue* seminar, I help to train participants to dialogue about the biological humanity of the unborn. One way that we do this is through a tool developed by Steve Wagner. This tool can be said in 10 seconds (below) or broken down more slowly in a conversation, as exemplified in my dialogue with Heidi.

Steve calls this the *10-Second Pro-life Apologist*. Here’s how it goes:

- If the unborn is growing, isn’t it alive?
- And if it has human parents, isn’t it human?
- And living humans, or human beings like you and me, are valuable, aren’t they?

I want to encourage you to have your own conversations about abortion, and remember that it doesn’t take years of study and experience to ask thought-provoking questions, to listen, and to point out areas of agreement. It *is* helpful, however, to have a

little bit of knowledge of the biological development of the unborn, so that you can refer to it as I did in my conversation with Heidi. To help you further defend the biological humanity of the unborn, I’ve listed bullet points from the interactive guide participants use in our seminar in the box above.

In a future newsletter, I will share the end of my conversation with Heidi, during which we discussed feminism and the struggle of wanting to have a pro-life viewpoint while also not wanting to be labeled “anti-woman.” Thank you for your support that makes conversations like this one possible.

For the sake of His sorrowful passion,



*Note: See www.jfaweb.org/extending-your-learning#biology to read Maureen Condic's excellent article on this topic, “Life: Defining the Beginning by the End.”

A Living Room Conversation

Part 3: Human Equality and Women's Rights

GRACE FONTENOT'S MONTHLY UPDATE



APRIL 2018



Dear Friends and Family,

In my last two newsletters, Parts 1 and 2 of “A Living Room Conversation” (www.jfaweb.org/living-room-conversation), I shared portions of my conversation with “Heidi,” the babysitter at one of my JFA host homes. At the beginning of our conversation, Heidi personally believed that abortion was wrong, but she felt that she couldn’t tell others what to do. For example, she felt uncomfortable with making abortion illegal. After discussing that topic (Part 1), we also talked through

the biology of the unborn and the reasons why the unborn is a living, human organism, like you and me, just at a different stage of development (Part 2).

When I last wrote, I paused the story when one of the kids whom Heidi was babysitting complained of a sore throat. After helping him and sending him back to bed, Heidi and I continued our conversation:

Heidi: One of my main concerns is that I live in a city that is very liberal, and being pro-life is not popular. I don’t want to be considered...

Grace: Anti-woman?

Heidi: Yeah!



Above, I am shown discussing equal rights with a pro-choice student next to the art table at JFA’s outreach to the University of Kansas last month.

Her eyes widened. It seemed to be a comfort that I understood why she felt torn. I then asked her if she would like for me to explain to her the reasons I can call myself a feminist *and* a pro-life advocate. “I would love it if you would,” she replied with a big smile stretching across her face.

I then shared with Heidi the Equal Rights Argument, a series of questions that can help someone to understand that equal rights can only be based on something that we all share equally, and the thing we share equally that best explains our equal rights is our common humanity.

Grace: Let’s take a step away from the topic of abortion for a moment. Do you agree that all born human beings deserve equal treatment? If you agree that we deserve to be treated equally, then there must be something equal or the same about us, right? So what is the same about us that demands our equal treatment?

Heidi: It’s that we’re human! I think I know where you’re going with this!



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Grace: Yes, you're right! See, the reason that racism and sexism are wrong is because we all deserve to be treated equally based on our common humanity; so, if the unborn are also human like we are, they have to be included in the group of beings that have equal rights.

Now let's turn to feminism. If I claim that I deserve equal rights as a woman because I am equally human to men, but then I turn around and say that I also deserve the right to end the life of someone else who is equally human to *me* through abortion, then I would be betraying the foundation of my feminist beliefs. *So it actually makes more sense to be a pro-life feminist than it does to be a pro-choice one!*

Heidi: That's so helpful! Feminism is such a big deal right now, and I'm a woman! I don't want to be accused of being anti-woman, but I also don't want to have to sacrifice my pro-life beliefs. Thank you so much for discussing this with me.

Before heading upstairs to my room for the evening, I decided to ask Heidi if the conversation had impacted her views on abortion in any way. In the same fashion as she had handled the entire conversation, Heidi took time to think carefully before replying. She paused and then shared an incredibly encouraging answer:

Equal Rights Argument*

- Do you agree that we all deserve equal treatment, at least regarding the basic right to life?
- If we deserve to be treated equally, doesn't that mean there has to be something the same about us?
- What is the same about us?

* For more examples of the Equal Rights Argument in action, see www.jfaweb.org/equal-rights.

Heidi: I grew up in a very conservative town. I remember ignoring any conversation about politics because my dad and my friends' dads would talk about politics constantly. But now, I feel as though I need to be more informed about politics so that I can start voting and form my own opinions on different political subjects. I feel so excited because, since talking to you, I feel like I know the reasons why I believe what I believe about abortion. I feel confident now that I can share them, and I can participate in conversations about the topic because the reasons backing up my position are sound.

Heidi and I had a fantastic conversation, covering almost every topic in JFA's *Abortion: From Debate to Dialogue* seminars. I'm so thankful that we were able to talk that evening because now Heidi feels equipped to share her views with those within her sphere of influence. She told me at the end of our conversation that she leads a Bible study on her campus for freshman girls, and that she hopes to have a conversation with them about unplanned pregnancy and abortion in the future.

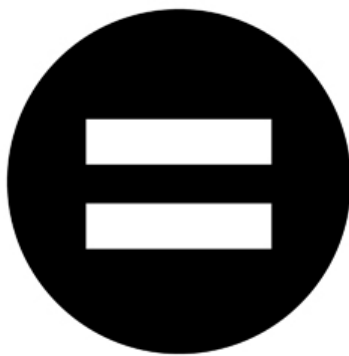
You never know how far one conversation can go, and you never know how many people it can impact. This is a perfect example of starting conversations about abortion in everyday life. For multiple conversation starter ideas, see the JFA blog (www.jfaweb.org/start-the-conversation). Here's one example: You could start a conversation with a friend by sharing JFA's social media post titled, "Can She Embrace Both?" (www.jfaweb.org/embrace-both). The idea of starting a conversation may seem intimidating, but if we are truly serious about protecting mothers, fathers, and babies from abortion, then a little bit of awkwardness is a small sacrifice to pay.

For the sake of His sorrowful passion,



See More JFA Conversation Stories:

www.jfaweb.org/dialogue-examples



Justice For All enables a different kind of advocate
to create a different kind of conversation
resulting in a different kind of world.

To help:

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