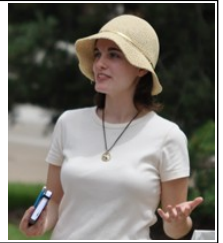




# Hurdles and Healing

Taking Bold Steps to Love the Person in Front of You

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Dear Friends,

Two weeks ago, I was standing in a vigorously air-conditioned conference room in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, surrounded by a ring of nine eager high school and college students. All eyes were on me, and my mind was racing.

I knew these were bright, dedicated kids who were familiar with pro-life arguments, but I also knew that it takes more than arguments to change hearts and minds. Now I had to help them grasp one of the most difficult concepts a pro-life advocate must master, one that goes beyond arguments.

After a brief explanation of what I was about to do, I launched into role-playing a worst-case scenario. I pretended to be someone who was furious and visibly hurting because a friend had been raped; I demanded that they respond to the claim that abortion is justified in this situation.



Working with my mentor group in Louisiana

**My year at Justice For All began with an intensive summer internship alongside five other passionate, young pro-life advocates. The summer included:**

- Learning to contribute to the JFA seminar by speaking and mentoring small groups
- Four days of local outreach at Wichita State University, three of which involved mentoring volunteers
- Speaking at two local seminars
- Speaking and mentoring in a seminar in Mustang, Oklahoma, followed by a community outreach on the 4th of July
- Speaking and mentoring in a seminar at Joshua Leadership Institute, with outreach at Louisiana State University
- Participating in two Socratic dialogues evaluating different philosophical approaches to defending the unborn
- Getting to know the amazing people at JFA with whom I have the privilege of working

My group took on the challenge, and they calmed the situation down through genuine expressions of care and compassion, laying a foundation of trust and respect on which a productive conversation could be built.

We were in the midst of a Justice For All seminar being held as part of the Joshua Leadership Institute, a pro-life camp hosted by Louisiana Right to Life. These students had just learned about the importance of showing compassion when the topic of rape came up in a conversation about abortion.

This was the final mentoring section for the evening. As we finished and my group went off to other activities, I was so excited that they had shown progress in learning to love the person they are engaging, even when the situation is stressful or uncomfortable.

I mentored the group all that day during the seminar and the next day during outreach at Louisiana State University. Although it didn't go perfectly, I handled the responsibility I'd been given, and it seems to have been a blessing to my group. One of the group, Laura, said she thought the mentor group time was one of the most effective parts of the JFA training. (Laura is pictured above, center.)

Looking back, it all seems so natural, but coming into the summer-intensive internship only 6 weeks earlier, I would never have believed that was possible.

Public speaking in the seminar I can handle. It's like performing for an audience, which I've always enjoyed doing. And while talking to individuals during a campus outreach is a little harder, I appreciate the depth of one-on-one engagement. But there's something about small groups that makes me absolutely deer-in-the-headlights terrified, and here I was being asked to *lead* a mentor group. "No way, not this fast," I thought. "Give me another few months to just

watch other people do it, then *maybe* I can try.” But no, I was to be grafted into the community of certified mentors much faster than I’d bargained for.

The first time I was given my own group at a seminar, I was with the team in Yukon, Oklahoma. It was one of the most emotionally draining days of my life. A JFA staff member, Jacob Burow, coached me through leading that group and helped pick me up after each section when I was ready to give up. Even so, by the end of the day my introverted self felt like it needed to be shut up in a closet for a week to recover. During a prayer with the other interns that night, I simply broke down sobbing to release the stress, fear, and sense of defeat that had been accumulating the whole day. It was a healing moment.

Since I didn’t feel like I had done very well in that mentor group, I was also surprised and encouraged to hear that Jacob had been very impressed with the way I handled what he called an unusually difficult mentoring setting—a real trial-by-fire.

That experience must have made me stronger, because at the crowning project of the summer, the seminar and outreach in Louisiana, I was able to take mentoring head-on, all by myself. Praise God for helping me grow in this way!

Reflecting on these experiences, I’m realizing I’ve learned a similar lesson to the one I’ve been teaching my groups: *love the people in front of you, regardless of your difficulty or discomfort.*



**In Oklahoma, I talked with Ben, while a member of my mentor group listened.**



**I defended the unborn as biologically human during my first speaking experience at a local seminar. I loved it!**

Being able to set aside my fears and gently help a group learn the difficult concepts of the seminar might be one of the scariest things I do with JFA, but that is how I’m being called to love and serve the people in front of me. After all, what they’re doing is scary for them too!

Not everyone would find leading a small group to be as big a hurdle as I did, but I’d encourage you to consider today how you might be called to love people in ways that don’t come naturally to you. It’s an area I’d like to continue growing in as I transition from this summer portion into the rest of the year.

Blessings,

*Holly V. Meath*

Holly Meath

**Many thanks to those of you who have partnered with me through financial support! I currently have raised around 60% of my need—enough to cover more than half the remainder of my year here at JFA. Praise God.**

**If you have not had a chance to give yet, please consider investing in my efforts as I continue to work to change minds and hearts!**



Justice For All trains thousands to make abortion unthinkable for millions, one person at a time.

About JFA: [www.jfaweb.org](http://www.jfaweb.org)

Email: [Holly.Meath@jfaweb.org](mailto:Holly.Meath@jfaweb.org)

Office: 316-683-6426