



University of Nebraska at Lincoln

Update from Jacob Burow - April 2012



I just returned from a great trip to Nebraska. I got to share my faith several times, I saw people transformed, and I learned that Nebraska is a beautiful place!

We trained twenty high school students on a Friday, then another fifteen people at our community seminar on Sunday. Nearly all of those trained came to outreach with us at the University of Nebraska (UNL). Everybody from my training groups was eager to put their training to use by engaging people in dialogue.

RETHINKING ACTIVISM

We had a few veteran pro-life activists in our training seminar on Sunday. One lady said that after thirty years of pro-life activism, she is realizing that she has not been talking to people in the most productive way. She intimated to me that she was having to re-train herself how to think about the issue and how to talk to people. It was humbling for me to realize that I was training those who have been doing pro-life work for longer than I've been alive. It was encouraging that she was willing to learn from me about being a good ambassador.



One of our volunteers brought her long-time friend who is pro-choice over to have a discussion about abortion. We also talked about her Unitarian beliefs. I challenged her to consider if Jesus is actually who he claimed to be: the only way to God. She admitted that I gave her a lot to consider.

This speaks volumes about the training program that Justice For All has developed. I can't take credit for it, but I am glad to be a part of it. The emphasis throughout is engaging at the relational level as well as an intellectual level. Two memorable conversations at UNL demonstrated this approach.

WHAT ABOUT RAPE?

I spoke at great length to a young man named Devin who seemed to be a nominal Christian at best. He said he liked the idea that God was there when he needed him. I don't think Devin really understood how much he needs God, so I spent some time explaining the gospel to him.

Later, we began talking about abortion, and I learned that he was pro-choice. He really appreciated the way our staff and volunteers take time to listen to people. He had talked to Rebecca, one of my co-workers, as she took some of our volunteers to do surveys. After talking to Rebecca, he came over to a knot of people gathered around one of our signs and listened to discussions there before I struck up a conversation with him.

We explored why Devin was pro-choice, and it came down to the question of rape. When I asked if any of his friends had experience with rape, he said that it was actually his mother who was raped -not just once, but three times. I was deeply saddened to hear this. With each rape she also became pregnant, and each time she chose to have an abortion. Devin is her only living child.

When I asked how his mother is doing now, Devin answered with a story. He explained that his mom was raped the first time in a public restroom. The man had locked the door, and to this day she cannot bring herself to close the door of the bathroom all the way.

In our seminar we talk about how important it is to make sure the people we talk to know that

we care about them and about women like Devin's mom. My conversation with Devin challenged me to practice what we teach, and I was glad to have been adequately prepared by JFA training and practice. I think that because I listened without judgement to his personal story and asked questions about how his mom is doing, Devin knew that I genuinely cared about the welfare of his mother and about his feelings.

Eventually our conversation came back to the question, "What about abortion in the case of rape?" I told Devin that I do care deeply for women who have been raped, but I also have to answer the question, "Does abortion kill a living human being like us?"

I was glad when Devin said he did not think I was being harsh, that I was being honest. That told me that I had succeeded at relating to him personally. He knew that I was truly pro-life in every sense of the term. He knew that I cared about his mother, about him, and about unborn children in the womb. He also admitted that yes, abortion kills living humans like us, and that the rape situation, though difficult, could not change that fact.

CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION

Not every person we talk to on campus has that sort of story. Some of our high school students started a conversation with Oliver, a philosophy major at UNL. At one point they looked to me for help, so I joined the conversation and helped steer it in a productive direction. I sensed that Oliver cared deeply about people, and we found a lot of common ground on wanting to help women in difficult situations.

We talked for ten minutes before Oliver had to leave. Later, Oliver came back for a second

helping of discussion. The second time we talked, our conversation lasted forty minutes and centered on personhood. Oliver enjoyed the intellectual challenge, and he thanked me for taking the time to talk. He agreed that how we define a person directly affects whether or not we should legalize abortion. Eventually Oliver ran out of arguments to support abortion and admitted that I had asked good questions and made great points. I gave him my email and invited him to continue the discussion.



Oliver and I talked at great length about what it is that makes us human, and if there are significant differences between born and unborn humans with regard to personhood.

What we should say to each person might vary based on their personalities, their emotional needs, and their intellectual needs, but what should not vary is our commitment to caring about them as much as we care for the unborn.

As I like to say to my students in training, "Fetuses are not more valuable than pro-choice people!" I get to demonstrate this truth to the students I mentor and to pro-choice advocates, one conversation at a time.

Thank you all so much for your support! Your generosity and prayers are what make this possible! Please pray for our safety and success as we travel to Colorado next week for more training and outreach.

Blessings,