



“If I were pregnant now, I’d definitely get an abortion!”

Recently, I had a conversation that reminded me how high the stakes are in this work. Almost every conversation we have could mean the life or death of a child somewhere down the line. I met Briana at our February outreach to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) where she told me she would definitely get an abortion if she became pregnant. She explained, “I would feel terrible, but [after the abortion] I wouldn't have to think about it again.”

In our conversation, I wanted to change her mind about abortion. I also tried to remember that even if she didn't change her mind immediately, there was a lot I could do in this conversation to help save the life of her future children. The first step would be for her to simply start thinking about abortion in ways she hadn't before.

I first wanted to make sure she understood that when we were in the womb, we were living and human. When I pointed to a seven-week-old child on our exhibit and asked if it was a living human at that point in development, she answered:

Brianna: Yeah, it is human in the first trimester. But there’s no attachment early on. I don’t think I’d be emotionally attached to a baby that early on.

Jeremy: Do you feel that the level of attachment our parents feel towards us is what gives us our value?

Brianna: Probably something else, but I’m not sure what.

I then walked her through the Equal Rights Argument* and asked her why she believes that *she and I* should both have equal rights despite *our* differences:

Brianna: The answer is that we’re both human. We’re both living and we both deserve the same things. Just because you’re male and I’m female doesn’t make a difference. Because you’re older and I’m younger, we



My conversation with Brianna at UNLV

both should still get the same rights.

Jeremy: If science tells us the unborn are human as well, why would we deprive them of equal rights?

Brianna: I see what you mean, but I feel differently when I think about it on a personal level. If I were pregnant now, I would get an abortion because I would want to care for my child myself if I bring him into the world. I don't feel able to do that right now. I know I could put the child up for adoption, but then I'd feel weird knowing I have a child in this world who isn't receiving my care. I'd feel like a failure.

I then used the technique of trotting out the toddler so that she would ask herself why she would never justify killing a toddler for the same reason (to avoid "feeling like a failure"). I wanted to help her see that "feeling like a failure" is not a good reason to kill a toddler because the toddler is a human

* For more on this dialogue skill, visit www.jfaweb.org/equal-rights



Our original Justice For All Exhibit was the catalyst for many conversations at UNLV.

being. In the same way, we shouldn't use this reasoning to kill the unborn because they also have the same human nature. She responded:

Brianna: If you put it that way I totally agree. But I'm pro-choice. If someone wants to have an abortion, that's on them. If they don't, that's on them and I'm happy for them. But personally, I would be able to get an abortion early on, but not later. I would feel terrible even doing it early. Looking at the pictures on this exhibit makes me really sad. But after an abortion, I could be free of my responsibility and not have to think about it anymore.

Jeremy: So you're totally on board with the fact that the unborn are equally human, that they deserve equal rights, and that abortion is horrific?

But in your mind, some of the practical concerns of giving birth to a child outweigh that. Is that right?

Brianna: Yes, absolutely.

Jeremy: I think situations like this require that we don't think only of ourselves. Yes, something might inconvenience me a great deal, but I need to draw the line at doing harm to others to eliminate that inconvenience. I must ask myself, "What would I sacrifice to save an innocent child from being killed?" I would hope both of us would sacrifice quite a bit.

Brianna: I would hope so.

Jeremy: And with pregnancy, it very well may end up being a rough nine months for you. But with a supportive community around you, perhaps those sacrifices would end up being less painful than you imagine. And no matter how bad it would get, I don't think in your heart you would want to end your child's life because of your difficulties.

Brianna: I understand. Thanks. I really enjoyed this.

You'll notice that Brianna did not end our conversation by giving me a commitment that she would never get an abortion. And I didn't need her to. As we say in our seminar (quoting Greg Koukl of Stand to Reason), my goal was to "put a pebble in her shoe." I wanted to give her some thoughts that would make her a little uncomfortable until she resolved them. What's important is that those thoughts stay somewhere in her head until she, or one of her friends, has to make a life-or-death decision about the fate of a child.

I felt blessed that I was able to help Brianna start to think about the consequences of abortion in her life. That may have been the only time she will hear someone give reasons that abortion would be a wrong response to her future pregnancies. Perhaps she will realize that she does not want a child to die in order to spare herself inconvenience. But right now, only one thing is certain: God is unquestionably able to use the "pebbles" I offered Brianna to help her make the right decision to protect her child in the future.