

The Person in Front of You

The Importance of Delighting in Those Who Disagree with You

JOANNA WAGNER'S MONTHLY UPDATE



AUGUST 2013

Dear Friend,

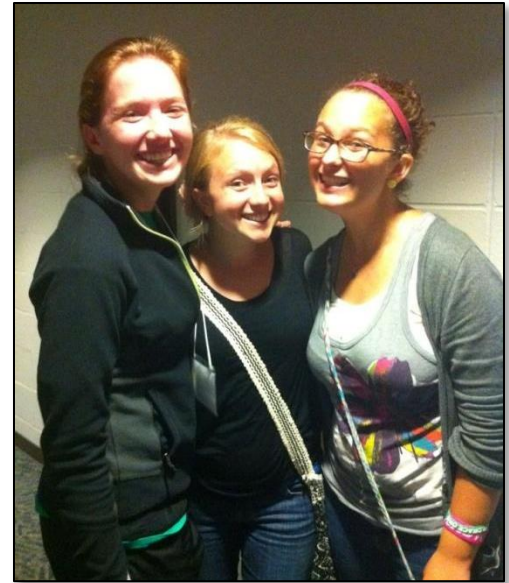
Katie and Brad looked at me, wide-eyed, motioning for me to come join them in their conversation.

I was at Louisiana State University (LSU) in Baton Rouge, guiding students from Joshua Leadership Institute (JLI) through a survey outreach. I had mentored Katie and Brad in our seminar for JLI the previous day. They were talking with "James," a student whom they had met about twenty minutes before, just as a huge rainstorm hit the campus. We all ducked under the stairs of the student center at the same time, and that's when I overheard their conversation.

I could tell right away that James was hurting. Katie and Brad talked with him about abortion for a long time, and they were able to build a lot of common ground with him. He thought that abortion needed to remain legal specifically because of rape. Katie and Brad showed sincere empathy for those victimized by rape, as they had practiced in my mentor group the day before, and because of their sincerity, James became more open.

When Katie and Brad asked me to step in, I quickly took the conversation in a spiritual direction, because I sensed that James was lonely. James had suffered a great deal; he attributed much of this to his family and to the church. We talked about some of his barriers to embracing Christianity, and we were able to express that we thought it tragic that he'd been treated with hate in the name of Christ. Brad, Katie, and I attempted to share hope with James each in our own unique way, but we spent most of that hour simply listening to this young man who seemed to have no one to talk to. We all agreed later that it had been well worth our time. Katie wrote to me yesterday about her memory of the interaction with James:

Everything we didn't want to come up in the conversation (especially one of our first conversations) came up, such as rape, family issues, etc. Even though we were there to talk about



Katie (above, left) is pictured with me and intern CK Wisner. Brad is pictured below with a group of students I helped to train in Baton Rouge (far left, with beard). Katie and Brad's conversation with "James" is the subject of this month's newsletter.



JUSTICE FOR ALL TRAINS THOUSANDS TO MAKE ABORTION UNTHINKABLE FOR MILLIONS, ONE PERSON AT A TIME.

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abortion ... we ended up being there to listen to him and love on him. We were his friend for that time. If we hadn't had that conversation then (and the JFA training and you right there) it would have ended much sooner and wouldn't have really helped him.

In one of their first-ever conversations about abortion, Katie and Brad grasped what it takes many pro-lifers years to learn: The person standing in front of us is just as valuable as the unborn humans we seek to protect. We must delight in those with whom we disagree. It is in this way that we reveal the profound love of God for all human beings. It is that profound love that motivated Christ to delight in those who disagreed with him ... even to the point of dying for those who hated him.

Joanna

This was the first time I had serious and pretty successful conversation with people I didn't know on the topic of abortion. This was one of the most helpful things ever. I really liked how while we were having the conversations my mentor, Joanna, was nearby listening in on the conversations we were having. She was able to help us in our times of confusion and then was able to evaluate our conversation ^{with} ~~about~~ us.

Katie's response to her Feet Work experience (above) reveals the importance of mentoring for creating good dialogue about abortion.



Our Summer Internship staff and participants are pictured above. I helped to plan and lead their summer schedule full of seminars, dialogue outreach days, and speaking/mentoring workshops.



This conversation took place in June when I joined the interns for outreach at Wichita State University.



Sarah Dufresne (left), a close friend of mine, returned for her 2nd JFA internship this summer.



These volunteers from Yukon, Oklahoma made up just one of the groups that our interns helped to train and mentor this summer. They completed the Feet Work portion of their training at an Independence Day festival.