

# When Do We Learn It?

*Students I've Mentored Share Their Answer*

JOANNA WAGNER'S MONTHLY UPDATE

JANUARY 4, 2013



**“The things we have to learn before we can do them [e.g. arts, crafts, virtues], we learn by doing them.”**

**– Aristotle**

*(Nicomachean Ethics, Book II)*

Restlessly I sat, week after week, staring at the clock. For a few minutes, I would listen intently, but I was easily distracted by the lunch I would soon consume. “When will this sermon be over?” I thought.

As I hopped into the car to head to lunch, my father would ask me what I learned that day. I generally drew a blank, ashamed that I couldn't remember much at all. By the time the next Sunday rolled around, there was little chance I remembered anything from the previous week.

Now, don't get me wrong. I loved the church I grew up in and looked forward to attending each week. In fact, I miss it very much now. It wasn't a lack of good teaching that caused my mind to wander. In fact, the sermons were exceptional. I was quick to forget what I was hearing because I wasn't actively seeking ways to live out my faith during the week.

Isn't this the way most of us are? It's terribly easy to feel like we are becoming religiously accomplished with all of the Sunday services we've racked up, but in reality we're inactive. Have all those Sunday mornings changed the way we live our lives day-to-day?

This was the first time I got to defend my faith with someone who truly was against what I believed. I think I honestly planted a seed, and it was so cool for me. Thank you for giving me the opportunity & tools to defend what I believe.

Ali, a senior at a Christian high school, participated in outreach at the University of Oklahoma. There, for the very first time, she was able to use what she had learned in her philosophy class about moral truth and the existence of God. I had the privilege of being a part of that conversation and encouraging her afterward.



Nate, a confident high school senior, confided in me at the University of Oklahoma outreach that discussing abortion was very uncomfortable for him. I was able to encourage him to stand up for truth, even when it's not the popular thing to do.

Jesus told his followers to be “fishers of men.” David Lee, the executive director at Justice For All, once reminded me, “Each week when we attend church, we are going to a fishing seminar of sorts, but we aren't actually fishermen until we go out and fish.” I can hear someone talk about his boat, what a fishing pole feels like, and what it's like to get out on the water; but, if I heard about all of this and never did any of it, would I truly be a fisherman? No!

With skills like fishing, we cannot truly say we've *learned* it until we've *done* it. Because of this, if we want teach others to be skillful pro-life ambassadors in their daily lives, we cannot simply present a lecture to them. Having good conversations about abortion takes practice – a great deal of practice.



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

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One of my favorite aspects of campus outreach is interacting with students like these at Oklahoma State University who say they are “personally pro-life” but who don’t care to talk about the issue with others. I love helping them see the importance of living out their convictions in truth and love.

That’s why Justice for All’s standard training program includes *Feet Work*. First we teach people how to create dialogue on abortion through our interactive *Abortion: From Debate to Dialogue* seminar (*Seat Work*). Then, we take those people onto a college campus for an outreach to actually have conversations (*Feet Work*).

For most of the people I’ve mentored, this Feet Work portion of training is very intimidating. Without a JFA-guided outreach and a mentor on site to prompt them, though, most wouldn’t actually live out what they thought they’d learned in the seminar. The Feet Work experience gives them both an accurate sense of what they know and courage to use it to change hearts. These Feet Work conversations then inspire conversations in their daily lives (*Repeat Work*).

This past year Justice For All took 584 new participants through both the Seat Work and Feet Work steps of our training program. These participants represent thousands of conversations challenging people to rethink their views.

I’ve included a few reflection statements from students I helped to mentor so that you can catch a glimpse of what it’s like to “go out and fish.” I hope their words motivate you to follow in their footsteps.

Joanna

it really left me with a lot to think about & pray over. I was nervous to go out & talk to people but now I can't wait to do it again next time 😊 Thank you to all of the staff for putting this outreach event on so that young people like me can talk about huge issues like abortion with complete strangers ???

views. The seminar prepared me for this outreach very well. The ~~experience~~ experience helped me to have an open mind in hearing others opinions and to come to love them in a Christ like way, despite our differences. This has been one of the best experiences I've ever had!

Tori and Kinsey (reflections above) both participated in the pro-life camp JFA held at Camp Copass in November, including outreach to the University of North Texas. After the full experience, both young ladies were ready to have intelligent and loving conversations about abortion in their daily lives.



The people we train often have questions after they finish their outreach conversations. Here, two young volunteers and I discuss their questions.