

# Facing Our Fears

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but one of power, love, and self-discipline.”  
2 Timothy 1:7

JOANNA WAGNER'S MONTHLY UPDATE



August 1, 2012

“So, how are you feeling about the upcoming outreach at Louisiana State University?” I asked some of my students.

They were silent. Finally, a sweet, 18-year-old girl named Olivia spoke up.

“I'm not gonna lie... I'm terrified,” she said.

She was completely honest, which made it comfortable for others at the table to express their fears as well. These students were passionate about defending life; and yet, they were scared to talk with

people who actually disagreed with them.



Olivia (right) and others I mentored in Louisiana

**“I'm not gonna lie...  
I'm terrified.”**

I recognized those same fears in my own heart. Even after hours and hours of experience, I'm still scared before every outreach, so I shared my feelings with the group, too.



At a recent seminar, I taught on being an ambassador for Christ.

I explained that I care deeply about others' opinions of me and that I desire to be perceived as intelligent, genuine, and loving. But even as I seek to be humble in conversation, I know that some people will still think poorly of me, simply because we disagree on the topic.

I continued to share with the group: “And what if I mess up? What if I ask or say the wrong thing?” It's difficult enough to talk about abortion without having the fear of failure added on top of it. The students strongly identified with this fear. So, that night at the table I had the opportunity to share with them what I so often forget.

God neither expects, nor needs, us to perform perfectly. He takes joy in our faithful efforts, and He is powerful enough to use what little we offer. Does this mean

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we shouldn't prepare to the best of our ability? Of course not! We seek to prepare as well as we can; but ultimately, we need the Spirit's power in every conversation. The same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead is working in us, and that knowledge gives me confidence and peace!

After working through the fear of talking about abortion and then the fear of ruining a conversation, Olivia expressed another fear: “But I'm just a little kid. Will these college students even respect what I have to offer?” She was afraid that people would not even listen



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

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to her, that she was too young and incapable of having influence.

I sat for a second and remembered similar thoughts that had run through my head in the past. Then I shared 1 Timothy 4:12, which empowers me: "Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity."

I knew that Olivia was well prepared to humbly listen and ask intelligent questions. I knew that regardless of her age, God would use her preparation and genuine desire to serve. And use her He did.

Olivia was an amazing ambassador for Christ on campus, having conversations with multiple students who were far beyond her age, but not far beyond her reach. I even had the privilege of being a part of one of those conversations in which she was a shining example of charity and compassion.

**"I learned that most people are not hostile. They just need compassion and the truth."**

After the LSU outreach, Olivia said, "I feel more comfortable...and I am not afraid of rejection. I learned that most people are not hostile. They just need compassion and the truth."

If you fear discussing controversial subjects, you are not alone. I do it as part of my full-time job, and I still get scared every time.

My challenge to you is this: Take just one step that is difficult for you. You may be amazed at how fruitful it can be. Each time we take the difficult step of entering into dialogue with someone who disagrees—whether it be about abortion, the Gospel, or any topic worth discussing—we are allowing God to form us more closely into the image of His Son.

Peace and joy,



Joanna Wagner



A volunteer I mentored, Andrew (middle), and I talked with a student at the Bethany Freedom Festival in OK.

#### Support Raising Update

As of July 24, I have reached **48%** of my support goal for my 14-month internship. To those who have supported me financially, thank you very much! If you have not yet joined my support team, please consider supporting my work!



This LSU student (right) said he hadn't thought about abortion and thanked me for helping him consider it.



At a recent Wichita training seminar, we demonstrated how to use the poll table signs, which help us start dialogue during outreach.