



# Just Eat With Your Nose!

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“Sorry for chewing with my mouth open y’all, but I can’t breathe,” I said. My nose was all stopped up from pollen in the air.

“Just eat with your nose, Papa!” said Penelope, my seven-year-old.

“You’ll have to explain that one to me.”

“If you can breathe through your mouth, maybe you could eat with your nose.”

What impeccable logic. Shouldn’t this conclusion be obvious to everyone? Bill Cosby would have been proud to have her on his show, *Kids Say the Darndest Things*.

Having cracked herself up, Penelope left the dinner table to go illustrate her insight. While she did that, I thought to myself that kids are not the only ones who say the darndest things. I had recently had the following experience:

“You are wasting your time! You won’t change my mind, and I won’t change yours.”

Believing he had said enough to satisfy me, the professor of finance at Georgia Tech began to step away.

“But wait a minute,” I said. “What about the innocent lives of the unborn?”

“So, what?” He let the question ring in the air like an unanswerable challenge.

“Do you think we’ll have to answer to God for the choices we make in this life?” I said.

“You mean the God who allows pain and suffering? What kind of God is that? It’s better to abort people than to let them suffer.” He went on to explain that he had witnessed war and death and destruction.

“It sounds like you are saying that we can know the future of specific individuals and that we can decide who dies based on our standards of how much suffering we think is too much to

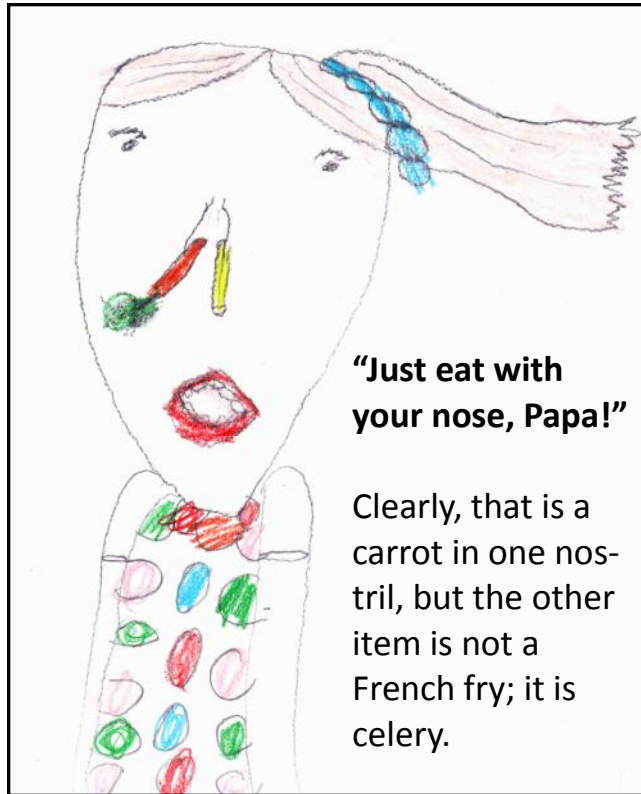
live through. Is that really what you are saying?”

Rather than respond to my question, he called God a few choice names *not* found in the Bible. Then he marched off down the Tech Green sidewalk which stretches the length of two football fields.

This was my first exchange of the morning, and I had an audience. The two teenage girls watching me had been through the first part of our training program, the interactive seminar, and now

they were out on campus with me for part two, the real world application. What does it look like to talk about abortion with random people in the community?

Their assignment was to listen to me for an hour before starting their own conversations. So, what did they see? The very first thing they saw was a haughty professor refusing to continue conversation with me. Discouraging for them? Maybe. Instructive? We will see. Here is how the next ten minutes unfolded.



**“Just eat with your nose, Papa!”**

Clearly, that is a carrot in one nostril, but the other item is not a French fry; it is celery.

A few moments later, Tony and Quinita, a couple holding hands, strolled by in the wake of the professor. I sidled up next to them, and while I did not hold hands with either of them, the three of us *did* walk shoulder to shoulder down the sidewalk, talking as we went. I had two hundred yards to put a pebble in each of their shoes.

“What do you think about abortion, Tony?”

“I’m against abortion. It’s a life,” he said.

“What’s your view, Quinita?” I asked.

“It ain’t that!” She dropped Tony’s hand like a hot potato.

“Uh-oh,” I said, “looks like we might need some couples counseling here.”

I explained that good relationships were built, among other things, on shared values, and that this was a biggie. We soon ran out of sidewalk, but they took the JFA brochure that I had been showing them and began studying it together as they entered class.

I turned just in time to see the finance professor coming out of the campus Starbucks. He was balancing a tower of three stacked coffee cups. He was still marching, and he was marching straight at me!

“Here,” he said, raising the stack like an Oscar award. “Take the middle one. It is for you.” Then he handed me the top one, too.

“This is the cream. I didn’t know if you would want it. I respect what you are doing. I

can’t really believe God is evil. I admit that it is man who causes all the pain.” With his peace offering delivered, he strode off again.

I asked my students when I returned to the other end of the sidewalk, “What is your take on the finance professor we met earlier?”

“The problem of pain has hardened his heart,” they said.

“Guess where I got this?” I said, sipping my coffee. They stared.

“It’s an apology to God for the things he said. I had to accept it on God’s behalf.”

“You know,” I continued, “some people we talk to may not change at all, others might change a little, and some may simply reconsider for a moment. Our job is to give each person the opportunity to consider the truth, to put a pebble in his shoe.

“In this case the way we behaved and our willingness to be out here defending the unborn forced him to reflect on his views, to reconsider his beliefs about abortion and the character of God. He started out angry and arrogant, but through contact with us, he became reflective and, in some sense, repentant. Come on; let’s go start another conversation.”

From calling God names to offering conciliatory coffee, even grownups say the darndest things.

*-John Michener*

## Fall Schedule

Below is a select list of upcoming training dates and locations. Check [www.jfaweb.org/register](http://www.jfaweb.org/register) regularly to see what events have been confirmed in your area.

- October 4-5 Yukon, OK
- October 5-7 Atlanta, GA
- October 19-24 Oklahoma City, OK
- November 9-12 Wichita, KS



**Outreach at Oklahoma State University**

