



One Conversation Reaches an Entire Campus

He didn't have to be fair, so I was pleasantly surprised when I opened the newspaper on October 28.

The day before, Temitope (Tope, pronounced *to-pay*) Akande approached me at the Justice For All exhibit in frustration but left inspired.



Tope (facing camera) had an hour long conversation with me and then wrote a great article about it.

I enjoyed my time with Tope. He was willing to talk at length and was vulnerable with his opinions, even when he was unsure. He listened well and admitted when he was wrong. Our civil dialogue caused him to rethink his views, and he shared his thought process in a newspaper article, encouraging his entire community to take the abortion issue more seriously. **What a success!**

As a popular Oklahoma State University (OSU) columnist, he could have mocked our display or the parts of my view he still opposed. He could have labored to pick apart my views or distort them. Instead, in his article Tope gave a very fair representation of our time together. He revealed flaws in his views that he had previously overlooked and was now reconsidering. He even stated three of the better points I had made during the conversation nearly word for word.

Take a few minutes to dive into Tope's article for yourself (**enclosed**) and then return to my letter to read my thoughts about it.

Often times when I'm starting a dialogue about abortion, I'll admit that there are many tough issues surrounding abortion including poverty, choice, rape, and women's liberty. Tope appreciated that I was willing to acknowledge a number of these factors that make the abortion issue complex.

While all of these things are important to consider, none of them justify taking innocent human life outside the womb. I asked Tope why the same tough circumstances should justify taking life inside the womb. This tactic helped Tope and I to get to the central question, *What is the unborn?*



I showed a young pro-life couple at OSU how they can graciously challenge their peers.

Since Tope and I agreed that the unborn are at least human in the biological sense, most of our discussion revolved around the reasons many people give for saying the unborn are not humans that deserve basic rights like the right to life.

Essentially, our dialogue about abortion came down to the

question of whether or not some humans should have more value than others who are smaller, less capable, in the womb, or more vulnerable?" (see "S.L.E.D." at right).

I told Tope that in most other cases where someone is very small, vulnerable, or dependent, we actually protect them more rather than less. I was curious how pregnancy would change that standard.

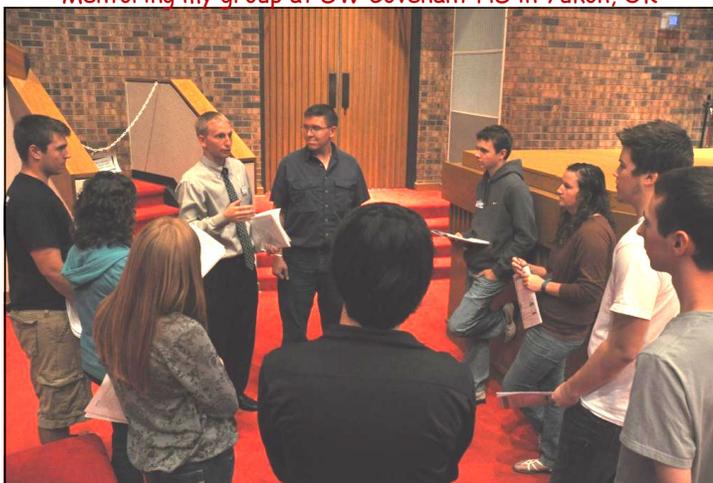
Our conversation took many twists and turns but Tope was very respectful throughout it. He was willing to engage my questions and concerns, and I did my best to return the favor. Even though Tope didn't have a complete change of heart, the conversation was worth it. **He was reflecting on his views and rethinking his position honestly.**

Tope and I discussed the question, "Should abortion be legal because it will happen anyway?" We both agreed that an action shouldn't stay legal for that reason. We discussed whether abortion should be legal to protect privacy, deal with poverty, or promote choice. We agreed that those factors don't justify abortion if the act kills an innocent human being.

When we continued to discuss which differences between unborn humans and born humans actually matter (if any), Tope was admittedly confused and told me he'd have to think more about these questions. My time with Tope reminded me to be ready for every opportunity. He is a very influential student at OSU and makes his voice heard. **We never know who we may impact when we graciously challenge one person at a time.**

Please pray for Tope, and have a merry Christmas!

Mentoring my group at SW Covenant HS in Yukon, OK



I was excited to get this photo with my niece, Nora Jane, after a recent seminar.

To those who supported me in 2011: THANK YOU. At every turn, I feel blessed by family, friends, and supporters. I praise God for providing encouragement through each of you.

Defending human value together,

Jonathan Wagner

S.L.E.D.

SLED is an acronym developed by Stephen Schwarz in his book, "The Moral Question of Abortion." Each letter in the acronym represents one of the four differences between the unborn and any born human being, like a toddler or a five-year-old.

The differences are Size, Level of development, Environment (location), and Degree of dependency.

Everyone, pro-life and pro-choice, must admit these differences exist. Our job is to help others see that these criteria shouldn't change the value of human beings.

We must challenge people like Tope by saying that, "Yes, the unborn is smaller and less developed but why should size or development determine value?"

It's also true that the baby is in a different environment, the mother's womb, and thus is very dependent. But we must ask, "Why should the unborn be faulted for being in the location where they are supposed to be? Should being in a state of extreme dependency determine their value?"

We then must point out that humans outside the womb also lack these functional abilities or characteristics, yet they still have the right to life.