

My Experience with Justice For All

Lori Navrodtzke

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My involvement with Justice For All has truly been a journey of personal growth and healing. My first exposure to JFA was back in 2006 when you did a *Debate to Dialogue* training at the South Side Women's Pregnancy Center (Crisis Pregnancy Centers of Tucson, or CPC). Prior to that I had never heard of your organization and had also never been exposed to graphic images of abortion violence. I was volunteering with CPC and this was about 1½ years after



I began to deal with my abortion, so my own pain was still rather raw. I was about 10 weeks pregnant back in February 1984 when I had a suction abortion. I was awake during the procedure, so I saw, heard, and felt more than I care to remember. Years later I heard a verbal description of what actually happens during a suction abortion, which caused me to think for the first time about what happened to my child. Seeing the images on your exhibit for the first time caused a real gut-level, emotional reaction in me.

I wasn't sure what to expect when I came to that training. When the time came to walk around the exhibit I can remember leaning against the wall not wanting to move towards it. A friend came and took my arm and we walked around it together. After getting to the end I went outside and cried. For the first time I came face to face with what happened to BJ. Abortion really was no longer just a word. Even though I already knew and had accepted God's forgiveness, repentance came again that day from a whole different level. It was no longer possible to deny, in any way, shape, or form, what I had been involved in. I was complicit in the violent murder of my own child. There is just no way to sugarcoat that. This was a two-day training, and it was a struggle to come back that second day, but I did. And at the end I purchased the Making Abortion Unthinkable curriculum. As I wrote out my check, I remember saying, "I wish this information had been available in 1984, because I might have made a different decision."

When you brought your exhibit to the University of Arizona in 2007 and 2009 I was on campus with the CPC information table. Even though I understood why the exhibit was the way it was, with all the graphic images, I struggled with my own emotions related to that. I did not disagree with what you were doing, but I did not feel I could be a part of it. I felt very strongly that I needed to be on campus as a resource for those students who may be traumatized by the exhibit because of having had an abortion, but I did not believe I could do that and be an [official] part of the exhibit (so to speak) by being a JFA volunteer. When I found out you were coming again in 2011 I was in the exact same mind set. I [decided



I] would be on campus with CPC, but I would not be participating as a JFA volunteer.

During the past two years or so I have been sharing my testimony publicly in a variety of settings—Tucson March for Life, 40 Days for Life events, and at many local churches. I believe very strongly that the consequences of this choice need to be known by the general public. People need to understand this side of the issue. As I have been involved in speaking like this, I

have seen God do amazing things. This is why it really was a no-brainer to start talking with David about sharing my story at the [JFA] trainings in Tucson. I was truly excited about the opportunity to share with kids who most likely had not experienced abortion yet or the truth of what the aftermath is like. It was an honor and privilege to be a part of the assemblies at Desert Christian and Pusch Ridge.

I was not planning to come to the training at Christ Community on Saturday because I was not planning to dialogue with students at the outreach. But, on Friday something began to change. I was feeling a very definite tug to be involved with the outreach this time. I really wrestled with this, and my coming to the training on Saturday was very much a last minute decision. Throughout the day I became more firmly committed to being on campus all day both days with JFA, and as a result I took the training much more seriously. I am one of those people who really does not like role playing, but I must admit, this is a very valuable part of the training. It was a great day, and I felt prepared to be out on campus.

I had many people praying for the outreach, and I made a decision Tuesday evening that I was just going to jump in and not let fear keep me from talking with students. I was afraid I would not be able to discuss this issue with those who are pro-choice without getting upset with them, but I knew I needed to trust God with my emotions. I was afraid I would get tripped up by things they might say or ask and I would sound like an idiot, but I knew I needed to trust God to direct my words. Even if I did get tripped up, He could still use what was said in the hearts of the students. I expected students to be much more hostile and in-your-face than they were. I came to the campus with my own bias and stereotypes of pro choice students on a liberal college campus and was pleasantly surprised at the civil conversations taking place.



I am so glad I followed God's leading to be a part of JFA's work here in Tucson. Talking with the students was a very positive experience, and I certainly saw God at work in me, because no matter who I was talking with, there was never a time when I felt nervous or flustered. I had the opportunity to speak with four students who have been personally impacted by abortion: one guy whose girlfriend had an abortion two years ago; a girl who had had an abortion a year ago; and two students whose mothers aborted their first pregnancies. One of them was willing to take information on CPC's abortion recovery ministry. Even those students who remained adamantly pro-choice seemed to be thinking differently about the issue. It was obvious in their eyes they were bothered by the truth of what they were seeing. The conversation that stands out the most was the last one on Thursday with Darrin.* I was brought into this discussion in the middle because he was upset about how the images would affect someone who has had an abortion. He had a lot of questions, and I answered them all very honestly. I found out later that he spoke with someone else and told them his girlfriend had an abortion scheduled. I have been praying for Darrin and his girlfriend ever since.

*name changed

When I got home Thursday evening I felt like I was in a fog. The previous two days seemed kind of surreal, and I was tired. As I sat on the couch and relaxed I began to cry. Soon it turned into sobs, and I really was not sure where it was coming from, but I knew it was an emotional release that needed to happen. I know that being around the exhibit for such an extended period of time was difficult. I could not completely avoid the pictures, and like I said when I shared my story—healing does not mean forgetting. It means learning to live with it. A lot of my own stuff got stirred up again, and that translated into a couple of nights of bad dreams. I was also angry. Angry that I did not have the benefit of this information when I was pregnant. The phrase that kept running through my mind was, "It's just not fair." But, I am grateful. Grateful for God's grace and healing. I know full well it is only through Him that I

can be involved in the things I am involved in, and I am so grateful I can honor BJ's memory by talking freely about him and publicly acknowledging his existence. I also know BJ is now safe and whole in the arms of Christ, and I will see him again someday.

I have learned that I do not need to put ministering to those who have been involved with abortion on the opposite side of the fence from presenting the truth about abortion. Both of these things can be done at the same time. The whole JFA team is wonderful, and I feel like I have a whole new group of friends. There is no doubt in my mind that I will continue to be involved with JFA, and I look forward to how God will partner me with you in the future. Don't be surprised if I plan to do a mission trip with you. God bless all of you as you continue this important work.

One of the things I did when I went through the abortion recovery group at CPC back in 2005 was to make a quilt piece in memory of BJ. I have attached a picture of that quilt piece which I now have framed, and it is hanging in my bedroom along with other family pictures. The other thing I would like to offer you is the letter I wrote to BJ and read at the memorial service I participated in. The text of that letter is below. If this is something you can use in your training, feel free to do so. Like I said the other day, I don't want BJ's death to be in vain, and it truly is my passion to let God use my story however he can to prevent others from making this mistake and to help others heal.



Lori

Dear BJ,

So many years ago I did something that made it look like I didn't want you and didn't love you. But the truth is I did want you, and I did love you. I was just too scared to stand up for you, and I have regretted my choice ever since that awful day.

If I could turn back the clock, I would. If I could go back and make a different decision, I would. But I can't. And now I have to find a way to live with the reality of what I did. When I think about the pain and the fear you experienced, it tears me up inside. You were safe and content in a place where you should have been protected. But I allowed someone to invade and violate that place and take your life. That's a memory that will be with me for the rest of my life.

Losing you changed the course of my life forever. A hole was ripped in my heart that day at the clinic. A part of me is missing. There is an indescribable ache and longing for you, BJ. The baby I never got to carry. The child I never got to hold. The person I never got to know.

I miss you so much, and I think of you every day. You are my only child, and I will always hold you close in my heart.

I love you,

Mom

