



Cory

- Listening with Love -



Tammy Cook's Monthly Update

July 2017

I met “Cory” at a university this past spring where we had a long conversation about abortion and life. The conversation was pretty bumpy at first because he was quite defensive. I think, however, that you’ll be surprised by the outcome. Here is his story.

Cory stopped at our poll table and signed “Yes” to our question, “Should Abortion Remain Legal?” We talked for over an hour, but it wasn’t always smooth sailing. I tried finding common ground with him, hoping it would breathe life into a tough conversation. Common ground can often be the necessary fuel that keeps a conversation going. Here’s a helpful analogy. My friends Joanna and Puyin just traveled from Kansas to California in June. They couldn’t have made that long trip on just one tank of fuel. They had to refuel throughout the trip to make it to California. Similarly, finding agreement throughout a conversation helps you both refuel which keeps the conversation going. If there’s no common agreement between the two parties, the conversation can often run out of fuel and go nowhere.

When I sought common ground with Cory, I discovered that he was against third trimester abortions. And when I said, “I agree with you,” he appeared a bit shocked to hear those words. It’s quite possible that those four words helped me gain Cory’s respect and may have been the turning point in our conversation.



Cory believed that life begins sometime between 12 and 18 weeks after conception, so he thought that abortion should stay legal through at least 18 weeks. His primary concern was for people who aren’t ready for a child and want to continue to pursue their educational goals.

At this point, I was in the driver’s seat of the conversation, meaning that I was asking most of the questions to guide the conversation. I could have continued to ask questions, but Cory and I were quickly building rapport and I sensed that I needed to focus on listening. I wanted to find out more about why he believed abortion was necessary, but I stayed silent and just listened.

He soon shared the story of his brother, “Caden,” who had a daughter at 17. I could tell that he had empathy for Caden. He said Caden works really hard, sometimes working 80 hours a week to support his family. Cory said that he loves his niece, but he also believes that his brother would have a better life if he had been able to get a college degree.

In the midst of our discussion about what it means to have a “better” life, Cory said that he had grown up in the Church of Christ. But then he said that he doesn’t believe in God anymore. I was so tempted to ask him, “Why?” but my intuition said “No” — it wasn’t a good time. Asking “Why?” might seem like the logical next step, but I was also concerned that he might become defensive again. So, I just listened and empathized with him. I didn’t expect what was about to happen next.

It was about 45 minutes into the conversation when I realized that it had become very comfortable and enjoyable. We talked about the value of human beings and agreed that many people view other human beings as disposable. It was then that Cory revealed that he had been molested from the age of four through the age of fourteen. Wow. I tried to hide my tears as I imagined the torment that this valuable human standing in front of me had endured as a child. I was speechless for a moment. I expressed deep sorrow for what he had been through and I offered to listen if he was willing to share how he's doing now. He's never had counseling — he just tries to deal with it on his own. He drank alcohol for a while, but now he uses recreational drugs occasionally when he is struggling with the emotional pain.

I thought to myself, "Okay Tammy, now would be a good time to share the Good News with Cory and tell him how much God loves him!" I had a strong urge to share this verse. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement, who encourages us in our every affliction, so that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God.* (2 Cor. 1: 3-4). And even though the urge was stronger than ever, something held me back. Every time I wanted to press forward with discussing more about abortion or the hope of Christ, God seemed to be prompting me to show my love to Cory by listening instead. I would soon learn why.



This is what Cory then said to me. "You are the first pro-life person that I have ever talked to that didn't bring God into the conversation — and I **really** appreciate that." Ah, now I understood. When I explained our goal of training pro-lifers to have conversations like ours, he wholeheartedly agreed with our objective. He said he appreciated the intellectually stimulating and caring conversation, and I could tell he sincerely meant it. He said that I had given him a lot to think about.

Before Cory left, he asked if he could give me a hug. I was elated. After we hugged, I asked if we could exchange phone numbers and he cheerfully agreed. He hugged me again before walking away.

If I had made any mention of God in the conversation, I believe that Cory would have walked away at that moment and I would not have the ability to stay in touch with him. Instead of looking at it as a missed opportunity to share the Gospel, I see a wide open door for future opportunities to share the Good News with Cory. I believe that the best way that I could display God's love to Cory was by listening to him throughout the conversation instead of focusing only on the topics I had in mind. I think this made him more receptive to me and helped me gain the prospect of sharing more about his value in God's eyes. And it's my hope that with such an opportunity someday, that his heartache can be replaced with God's infinite love. Please pray for Cory.

Thank you for your ongoing support that allows me to train pro-lifers to have conversations like the one that I had with Cory. I believe that we CAN change the world, one person at a time. May God bless you.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tammy".