

## Got Ten Seconds?

*That's plenty of time to defend your pro-life views.*

Stephen Wagner

One morning at 1:40 AM, a car carrying five young women pulled alongside mine at a stoplight on Pacific Coast Highway. They were in a rather rowdy mood, and were yelling out the open window to a man on the corner, "Get us a pizza!" Then one blond in the back seat turned her attention to me, making a motion with her arm for me to roll down my window. This might be interesting, I thought, as I obliged. Following is the conversation that ensued:

"What does your bumper sticker mean?"

"Which one?"

"We can do better than abortion? What does that &%\$# mean?"

I fumbled for a response. "Um..."

"Have you ever been pregnant?" one of the others asked.

"You don't even know what your bumper sticker means?" the first woman chided.

"Well, I think it's pretty self-explanatory."

Then as they turned the corner, one fired her final volley: "What would Jesus do?"



My car at the time of this incident. On the left: "Some choices are wrong." On the right: "We can do better than abortion."

Now, these may not have been the most formidable opponents to the pro-life cause. But as I drove home, I was a bit embarrassed because I did not have the quick answer ready for the situation. When I closed the garage door, I went upstairs and a short brainstorming session produced a number of possible responses. One of those responses is especially useful in other situations as well. It can help you to express your pro-life views, defend them with evidence, and ask your audience to come to the appropriate moral conclusion; all within ten seconds. I call it the *10-Second Pro-Life Apologist*:

*If the unborn is growing, it must be alive.*

*If it has human parents, it must be human.*

*And living humans like you and I are valuable aren't they?<sup>9</sup>*

Notice we are not only saying "I'm pro-life!" We're giving the substance of that moniker: the unborn are human beings<sup>10</sup> who are valuable. But in these three sentences we are doing something else that is just as important: we are giving reasons for others to take us seriously. We are seeking to persuade with evidence. And we're giving that evidence in sound bite form – this keeps the listener engaged and the conversation moving forward. It puts the ball back into their court in a gracious but incisive way.

Certainly the 10-Second Pro-Life Apologist is not the only tool you should have in your toolbox. You should be ready to make a sophisticated case for your pro-life views by reducing the issue to only one question, showing there is no significant difference between the newborn and the unborn, and responding to attacks on your character and appeals to relativism. You should also be able to make a more substantive case that the unborn is a living whole human organism distinct from the mother along with reasons to think a functional view of human value is inadequate. In any case, the 10-Second Pro-Life Apologist will give you a rock-solid starting point anytime you are asked to make sense of your view on abortion.

Sometimes opportunities come with a strict time limit. The person you are talking to interrupts, or changes the subject, or leaves to catch the bus. You don't want to be caught by surprise when you are presented with a chance to stir up thought on the issue of abortion. But as we've seen today, you can easily get them thinking. All you need is ten seconds!

<sup>9</sup> An alternate formulation turns each statement into a question (good to engage your listener): "If the unborn is growing, isn't it alive? And if it has human parents, how can it not be human? And aren't living humans like you and I valuable?"

<sup>10</sup> I don't know what else to call a "living human" than a "human being." This is simply our common-sense term.