

Reflection on the Justice For All Outreach
Alexis Cogswell

To be honest, I wasn't looking forward to this outreach. I was scared that I wouldn't know what to say, or wouldn't be able to approach anyone. I was worried that I'd be made fun of, or people would just think I was nuts. And besides, I didn't really have a passion for this issue. I knew it was wrong to kill unborn children, but did I believe it and understand it enough to convince anyone else? I didn't think so. But fortunately, God had other ideas, and all He asked me to do was set myself aside and let Him move.

The bus ride to Denver was a scary one, because I was debating within myself about what I was going to do. Part of me knew this was what God wanted me to do, and that He would take care of me. The other part of me was the one with all the doubts and worries. Fortunately, God was gracious, and the right part one out. I was nervous, though, because I didn't think I was prepared to defend the Pro-Life position. It turned out, however, that JFA had prepared me very well! I didn't realize it until I started talking with people, but all the information, arguments, and defenses they taught us came in very handy. They prepared us better than I knew, and I'm grateful for that.

On the first day, I spent the morning listening and observing. I wanted to hear what the JFA people had to say, because I knew they were passionate about it. Plus, I knew they were speaking the truth, and I felt compelled to embrace the same truth and share it with others. For awhile, I didn't have the nerve to approach anyone. But eventually, enough people gathered and started conversations that it wasn't really a big deal. Nearly everyone was willing to talk, and if you asked, "What do you think?" they'd respond with an extensive monologue about their feelings and ideas. It was much easier than I'd expected, and I knew then that all the praying had paid off!

I spent the first day chatting with people near the free speech board and the exhibit. I also visited the Pro-Choice camp briefly, but I didn't make much headway. I did have some thought-provoking conversations, though, and it helped me see where the other side is coming from. This helped me prepare for the second day, when I somehow ended up behind the barricade handing out brochures. My initial reaction was that the JFA people were crazy to let me represent them! I wasn't an expert, and I certainly hadn't put the time and effort into this outreach that they had. But I soon realized that all you really need to stand up for Truth is to know it and believe it with all your heart. It didn't matter that I didn't know all the arguments, or that I felt grossly inadequate. Like the Bible says, it's in our weakness that God is able to reveal His strength. I learned that at the JFA outreach, because I went in extremely weak, but God used me to speak through me to a number of people. My only part in it was being there, and being willing to say what God put in my heart to say. He took care of the rest, giving me the wisdom to counter the lies, the words to say, and the grace to debate with love.

If it were up to me, every Christian would participate in just such an outreach. I feel that way because it was an amazing experience on many levels; I not only had the chance to live out what I believe, but God solidified my own beliefs through speaking to others. On the second day (which was absolutely necessary, because one day is only enough to get your feet wet. We need to jump in and soak ourselves!), I spoke with a Buddhist, an atheist, and a racist for about 4 hours. The conversation started with abortion, but moved to religion, and before I knew it, I was proclaiming and defending the Gospel message. It was an awesome experience, because God brought those people and prepared their hearts beforehand so they were open to what He had to

say through me. As I spoke with them, I realized again how true, vital, and real the Gospel message is. It confirmed within me what I believe, and brought out the passion for Jesus' story that has been buried in me through years of living in a relativistic society that doesn't believe in absolute truth. Not only was my faith rejuvenated, but the eyes of the people I talked to were opened to the reality of God's love for them. I could see God working on them as we talked, and I trust He'll continue to do so. Even if they were the only people affected by the exhibit (and there's no way they were—God's power and His presence were obvious in just about everyone who even walked by), it was worth it to go and be afraid and feel inadequate. It was worth it, because it wasn't up to me or any of the students or staff to change people's lives. It was up to God, and He definitely showed up!

Given the chance, I would participate in another outreach like this one. I'd do some things differently, of course: I'd trust God when He says He'll never leave me. I'd put myself aside and realize He's in control. I'd worry less about what people are going to think of me, or say to me, and worry more about these lost souls that God desperately wants to bring into relationship with Him. I'd think less about winning the argument, or having the perfect defense, and think more about how to show people God's love. And of course, I'd wear lots more sunscreen! The best advice I can give to someone going to one of these outreaches, though, is just to be willing to face whatever God has for you. He knows what you're doing, and you can bet He's going to bless and protect you beyond anything you could hope for. When you're out on the front lines doing God's work, the hard part isn't standing up for the Truth. The hard part comes at the day's end when there are still tons of people standing around, searching for some answers, practically begging for someone to tell them they're loved, and you have to leave. It's then you realize that people not only need God's love, but they know it. They know something's missing, and if you'll just take the first step of faith, God will give you everything you need to feed His sheep.

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Reflection on the Justice For All Outreach

CU-Denver, April 12-13, 2004

Using the following five questions, please right a thoughtful and legible reflection of your experience at the Justice For All pro-life outreach. Since this reflection will be used to improve future outreaches, as well as promote the work of Justice For All, your careful attention to detail and clarity of expression are appreciated. Thank you!

- Was there any experience from the outreach that was particularly noteworthy?
- If you could choose, would you participate in such an outreach again? Why or why not?
- What do you consider to be the most effective aspect of the outreach?
- How valuable for you was the second day?
- What was particularly valuable about the pre-outreach training? How could it be improved?

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There were a couple of conversations at the Justice For All outreach that I am confident were divine appointments.

One in particular was with myself, 2 others from Focus Institute and a young woman named Susan. Susan was very angry about the Justice For All display. She felt that it was an emotional tactic, and was very pro-choice. As I sat and listened to her angry spirit, something inside of me just kept saying, "just listen Becky. Listen to her story." Susan began to shake about her life and how the father of her two children had walked out on them. She broke down in tears and her entire countenance began to change. Myself and the two other Institute students had a chance to just listen and comfort her, it was so
 neat to see Susan's demeanor change. →

All that she needed was someone to listen to her story. I knew the whole conversation had shifted from pro-life / pro-choice, however I was confident that Susan was sorting through some of her own ideas on the topic. I had a chance to pray with Susan and by the time Susan left she was really doubting her pro-choice stance and acknowledging adoption was a stronger, better choice for a mother who was unable to care for her child.

Countless times the Lord tugged on my heart to share and speak the truth.

I would participate in an outreach like this again in a heartbeat. It was challenging, it got me out of my comfort zone and was very energizing.

Having a second day at the outreach was very awesome. It allowed for a chance to reconnect with some students I had talked to the first day, learn from some mistakes I made, and gain confidence in the truth.

The training was very valuable I think it helped to ease a lot of fears. Although something like this is hard to really train for. I believe prayer is the most available vessel for God's

Samira Gast – Focus on the Family Institute: Spring 2004

Upon coming to the Focus on the Family Institute I admittedly did not have a clear view on abortion. I had been grappling with the issue all semester long, praying and asking God to convict me of the truth. I did not want to merely take the "Christian" view and say, "Oh yes, I am pro-life because that is what I am suppose to be". I wanted facts about abortions to suede my beliefs, not emotion. I wanted the conviction of the Holy Spirit, not the church.

My stand on the abortion issue was pro-life, for me, but pro-choice for everyone else. On one of the free speech banners that were brought in for us to look at, a comment caught my eye. "You are either pro-life or pro-abortion," the comment read. That small statement hit me square in the face. I realized at that point that I was pro-abortion, I was pro-choice. A little startled, I accepted it and moved on.

During the training session with JFA, I was given facts. Unlike many other pro-life organizations and demonstrations, JFA did not sway us with jargon and emotion. They educated us on abortion and the arguments that pro-choice people use and how, with common sense, the pro-choicers really have no argument what so ever.

At first it was extremely easy for me to argue the pro-choice side. In fact, I hated arguing the pro-life side because I had nothing to say, nothing to support the stand of the unborn. Soon, the staff of Justice For All taught us everything that we need to know about why abortion is wrong and how to stand up to anyone who contradicts that view.

The training session was wonderful. However, I left the training session not really knowing for sure what exactly it was that I believed. I knew abortion was wrong, I now had the facts, but it was still soaking in. Never the less, I knew that the Lord would use this event in my life to really solidify my own beliefs, views, and stance for the unborn. A few days before the event, the Lord started opening my eyes. I saw the absurdity and inhumanity of abortion.

At the Justice For All event in Denver I was expecting God to do great things in and through my life. Friends and Family were praying for me, and I was looking forward to seeing how the Lord was going to answer not only their prayers but also my own. To say the least, I was not disappointed!

The event was a wonderful opportunity to minister to lost and dieing people. I had some really wonderful conversations that have blessed my life. Some people that I talked to really understood what abortion really is and I could tell their own beliefs had been changed after our conversation. However, there were others that yelled, became angry, and some who flat out told me that they wished that their mothers had had an abortion with them. These were the conversations that broke my heart, opened my eyes just that much wider to the brokenness of our culture, and provided me opportunities to really pray for them.

I never really knew how many people are affected by abortion. Growing up in a Christian home, going to a Christian college, and having mostly Christian friends I am not affected by abortion. Presented with the statistic of "over 4,000 abortions take place every day," I really got a good grasp of the validity of that

stat when dealing with so many people who have been personally affected one way or another by abortions.

One of the best conversations that I had was with a guy named Trevor. Trevor was still dealing with the fact that his girlfriend, over a year ago, got an abortion without asking him. As the Holy Spirit moved, Trevor opened up to me with great transparency and vulnerability. We talked for about an hour and a half not only about abortion, but also God, the church, abuse, abandonment, hate, future, and hunger.

As Trevor and I parted ways so that he could go to class, I got his contact information so that I can stay in touch with him. As I turned to walk away, I reached into my pocket and realized I had a small package of cookies that I was saving for later on. I remembered that Trevor said he cannot afford to eat on a daily basis. I turned around and called out his name, and I gave Trevor the cookies. His face absolutely lit up.

As I walked away, tears came to my eyes. I realized that I was able, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to feed Trevor spiritually, mentally, and physically. How fulfilling that felt to act in obedience. This was a wonderful reminder of how I am to act, how the body of believers are to act. We are not only to fill spiritual hunger, but also mental and physical hunger as well.

Just yesterday I mailed Trevor a copy of Mere Christianity by C.S. Lewis. As I prayed over the copy I was reminded of what a blessing it was to talk with him and get to know him a little over a week ago. I am looking forward to seeing how the Lord will use that conversation at the JFA event, the book, my communication with him, and others that are strategically put into his life, to woo him back into the arms of his Heavenly Father.

In retrospect, the JFA training was wonderful. I appreciated so much the use of facts, and not emotion. The book was also helpful, it reiterated all that we had gone through in the training earlier that week. The second day was more exhausting. However, I felt more prepared and certain of myself the second time around. The JFA staff did a wonderful job of presenting the truth in a tangible way to me, and equipped me to go not only into Denver but anywhere and talk with people about abortion.