



Dear Friend of JFA,

When I read my friend Stephanie Gray's blog post, **"The Greatest Love"** (Nov. 18, 2019), I was struck by her behind-the-scenes look at preparing to participate in the *La Ciudad de las Ideas* debate which took place in Mexico in early November. I wanted to share the story with you.

Before reading her blog post (enclosed, or see this link: [www.jfaweb.org/jan-2020](http://www.jfaweb.org/jan-2020)), I suggest watching the final two minutes of the debate (see the same link above). As you watch the debate segment and read Stephanie's post, I encourage you to set aside for a moment the question, "How should we argue against legal abortion?" Although Stephanie is talking about a woman's body and speaking in the context of a debate about legality, she's not directly addressing the topic of bodily rights, *per se*, and her comments go deeper than legality. (For help with arguments about bodily rights and legality, see [www.jfaweb.org/her-body](http://www.jfaweb.org/her-body).)

Note instead how Stephanie's comment appears when juxtaposed against the comments of the pro-choice panelist who speaks just prior. Stephanie cuts through the rhetoric of choice to focus the audience on the question, "What does a virtuous mother do when confronting an unintended pregnancy?" Sadly, that question is often lost or ignored. Stephanie helps recalibrate us, and her perspective might even transform the conversation. It's worth sharing.

Steve Wagner  
Executive Director

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*Quotable*

**"I really appreciated the concise ways  
that you teach the steps to conversation  
with others. Compassion is the key..."**

- Michigan Workshop Participant  
October 2019



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# The Greatest Love

## Stephanie Gray, Love Unleashes Life



*Originally Posted at [www.loveunleasheslife.com](http://www.loveunleasheslife.com) on Nov. 18, 2019. Reprinted with the kind permission of Miss Gray.*

What would you do if, while waiting for a subway train to arrive, you noticed a seizing man fall onto the tracks? To Wesley Autrey the answer was clear: Jump onto the tracks and help him.

And on January 2, 2007, that's what he did. Except Autrey wasn't just helping a man in need. He was putting himself in danger. Because as the fallen man convulsed on the tracks, the lights of an oncoming train flashed before them.

Autrey couldn't get the man off the tracks in time. But rather than abandon him, Autrey laid on top of him, protecting the young man's flailing body with his lanky frame. And then train cars came. Not just one, not just two, but five—*five*—train cars would roll over the men before coming to a stop.

Miraculously the men survived. Miraculously they were unharmed. Miraculously the center space between the tracks that they were squished into, with the thickness of both men's frames, and the bottom of the train hovering over, was just enough clearing (21-24 inches) for them to be untouched. Unless you count Autrey's blue cap. It did get some grease marks on it.

Much has been said to describe Autrey's heroic actions. But I think the most fitting phrase is this:

*"This is my body given for you."*

In his video "Opposites," Michael Spielman at the group [abort73](http://abort73.org) begins by pointing out that the opposite of love is hate. He then uses that as a springboard to ask what the opposite of the greatest love is. He makes the point that if the greatest love is a willingness to lay down your life for another, then the opposite of that is to lay down another's life for yourself.

Wesley Autrey didn't just demonstrate love. He demonstrated the *greatest* love.

Fast forward to Puebla, Mexico, November 10, 2019. I was participating in a history-making event. I was one of 8 women debating abortion in front of thousands at La Ciudad de las Ideas (CDI, a festival similar to TED Talks). The talk would be live-streamed to tens of thousands as well as televised throughout Mexico.

In the days prior, I had prayerfully reflected about what I should impart during my segments of the debate. I nestled into a small chapel in Vancouver to ask God what He wanted me to say.

"Speak, Lord, your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:10).

Of all the ideas that came to mind, two in particular would stand out. The first was I recalled the message from the "Opposites" video I mentioned above, and how it relates to abortion. In some way I knew I had to use that. The second was to associate every hearer's physical body with my message so they would be constantly reminded of the truth proclaimed: For all of the differences between us humans, a "tie that binds" is our bellybuttons, and each time people noticed theirs, I wanted them to be reminded that we all once were in the womb.

With those ideas percolating I prepared my 60-second conclusion. It was a profoundly tight window to



make my point but I had it rehearsed down to the second. Except two things happened:

- 1) The day before the debate, I was inspired by another presenter, Tal Ben Shahar, a professor who teaches the most popular course at Harvard on positive psychology, which is all about happiness. He talked about a psych experiment that was done where people were given money and told to buy themselves something and then their mood/happiness was measured afterwards. Similarly, people were given money and told to donate it to someone/some cause and that group showed longer-lasting happiness. He then used that point to reference something from his first language, which is Hebrew. He said that his favorite name is “Natan” which is a palindrome that means “to give” and his message was that when you give you receive. When I heard that I just knew I should reference him (and his well-received talk with the audience) in my closing arguments the following day and use his popular perspective to show how it aligns with a pro-life worldview. Somehow I needed to add *more* to my already tight conclusion.
- 2) When the time for the debate came, and as it was nearing its end, with no warning the moderator shortened our conclusion from 60 seconds to a mere 30.

How do you take such a weighty topic and distill your position down to 30 seconds of expression? The old adage “say one thing and say it well” was more relevant than ever. But somehow, in half the time, along with an additional point to make, I was about to say three things. How was that possible? All I can think is that I had asked my prayer team to pray “For a supernatural multiplication of the minutes and seconds in the short time-frames we have to speak” and that that prayer was answered.

As I watched my precious seconds disappear on the counter, I proclaimed,

“Every single one of us, on our bodies, has a bellybutton. Which is a reminder that every single one of us was once a child in the womb. We were once weak and vulnerable and our powerful mothers could have decided to dominate and destroy us by saying, ‘This is your body given for me.’ But instead, in an act of love, our mothers said, ‘This is my body given for you.’ It’s what Tal said—‘Natan’—to give is to receive.”

Before that conclusion, my opponents had lived true to form by espousing their movement’s mantra of “My body, my choice.” Rather than entirely reject their sentiment, I opted to define it. When it comes to abortion it *is* about choice—a choice between two worlds. A choice between a world where

- 1) People use and abuse each other by selfishly demanding, “This is your body given for me” or where
- 2) People reverence and honor each other by selflessly offering, “This is my body given for you.”

Of course, these worlds are not new. Throughout human history there is a dark pattern of sin where people hurt each other. But over 2,000 years ago, a person who was to grow up to become a Jewish rabbi entered our broken world as a pre-born child. He, too, would bear on His body a bellybutton. He would be Son, but He would also be God. And as God, He would continue to do what the Father had always done for His chosen people: He would continue a pursuit of the creation that was “very good” in order to win their hearts to the home of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But the gates to that home needed to be opened because sin had closed them. The punishment of man’s sin was death, but, instead, this rabbi, Jesus, would take their place. He, an innocent, would take on the consequence for the guilty. He would offer, “This is my body given for you.”

And in that offering would be an invitation—a proposal: To choose the greatest love over its opposite.

So choose. But, like Wesley Autrey once did, choose well.

- Stephanie Gray, [www.loveunleasheslife.com](http://www.loveunleasheslife.com)

