

*"This seminar reminded me that I must remember that I am talking to people..." – Kaitlyn, 2015 seminar participant*

## A Person Is a Wonder

Dear Friend,

My kids and I participated in a live nativity a few weeks ago. We donned the garb of shepherds and angels and walked towards a rustic stable where actors from local churches were waiting with live goats and sheep to take a photo with us.

I was the last to enter the stable, a poor shepherd. As the crew helped my kids find a place where they could be seen by the camera, I looked around. It was fun to be standing next to three wise men in robes and crowns. As the photographer got ready to take the shot, he asked us to look at him. Instead of following directions, I did the only thing that made sense to me at that moment, I looked down at the baby Jesus (in this case a doll) and my mouth hung open, my eyes bright with amazement.

Click. Click. And that was it. We moved towards the door of the stable to give others a chance. My kids stopped to interact with the animals as I waited outside, and then we went together to the dressing room to disrobe. When we retrieved our picture, it looked pretty comical. Everyone except for me was looking directly at the camera. I was the only one looking at the baby Jesus. To me, the photo was merely a distraction from the main event: being in the presence of a *person* – a very special person named Jesus. (I identify with the shepherds in the painting above.)



*The Adoration of the Shepherds* by Matthias Stomer (17<sup>th</sup> Century)  
Photo Credit: [www.palazzomadamatorino.it/en/node/25302](http://www.palazzomadamatorino.it/en/node/25302)

I'd like to suggest that what happened at the live nativity is a good metaphor for the challenge that we face throughout every day: will we allow ourselves to be captivated by the persons in our lives or will we be distracted from them? Will we be captivated even by strangers, by our enemies, our spouses, our parents, our kids, our friends, and by God himself? Each person I come across in a given day is a wonder, worth every ounce of my focus. When I check my smart phone for the time or the weather, the wonders of new email messages, Wikipedia, and YouTube all cry out for attention, but these wonders aren't wonders at all, when compared to a *person*. And what is this letter you're reading, when compared to the person who might be near you right now?

Each member of our team faced this same challenge every time we conducted an outreach event this year. We want to save the lives of tiny unborn human persons, but in order to do so, we

are confronted with another reality, a college student who is also a person with a bundle of conflicting beliefs and desires. At our University of Oklahoma outreach in November, I talked for a second time to a woman I'll call Diana. Diana wasn't any more enjoyable to talk to the second time than when I met her in March of this year. She displayed the same haughtiness, the same self-importance, the same close-mindedness and tendency to lecture rather than listen. I became confident I wouldn't be able to change Diana's mind on any point, and while I looked for an opportunity to gently bring a close to our conversation, I had to work to focus my attention on this person. As I did, though, I was experiencing a different sort of love, the sort that gives without hope of return. This is what a person calls forth from us: giving our attention just for the sake of appreciating the wonder of the person and the God who created her.

May I humbly suggest that you and I dedicate ourselves this Christmas to being captivated by the wonder of the persons around us – the strangers, our spouses, our kids, and even those, like Diana, who annoy us? And let us not neglect to depend on God in the midst of every interaction, that we might also be captivated by him – the one who created every person. Merry Christmas!



Veteran JFA staff members, Paul Kulas (above, with hat) and Tammy Cook (below, left) focus their attention on students from the Univ. of Oklahoma.



Yours in Christ,



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Smw'.

Steve Wagner  
Executive Director

P.S. You can still give an end-of-year gift using the enclosed giving form, our website ([www.ifaweb.org/donate](http://www.ifaweb.org/donate)), or by calling 316-683-6426. Thank you for standing with us!

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### ***Ministry Notes: Recent and Upcoming Events***

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JFA staff members will be at the Students for Life Conferences and March for Life events in Washington, D.C. and San Francisco in January. Pray that God would orchestrate for us the connections we need to make with student pro-life clubs and the other pro-life advocates we would like to train to make abortion unthinkable in the coming year.

For recent events, see [www.ifaweb.org/calendar](http://www.ifaweb.org/calendar) and [www.ifaweb.org/photos](http://www.ifaweb.org/photos).