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Can We Tell Other People What to Do?

April 25, 2016

Dear Friend,

In election seasons, it is very common for people to talk about what the law should be on abortion. When that is the topic, it is also very common to hear some version of the following sentiment:

“I’m pro-life, but I can’t tell other people what to do. Therefore, abortion should be legal.”

JFA trainer Rebecca Haschke did a beautiful job of helping a young man reconsider this sentiment in a conversation she described in a recent letter entitled “#Mindblown” (enclosed). In this man’s case, he felt that because he had religious reasons for his point of view on abortion, he was disqualified from making a case that abortion should not be legal. I think you’ll be encouraged to see how this young man came to see things differently in just minutes. In the process, you’ll witness Rebecca’s manner, and you’ll learn a sequence of questions you can ask when you confront this sort of concern in conversations with friends and neighbors.

Members of JFA’s training team interacted with the topic of Rebecca’s letter recently. You can read some of their reflections and post your own at the JFA blog (www.jfaweb.org/blog/mindblown).

MINISTRY NOTES: TWO NEW EXHIBITS COMPLETED!

The team at Justice For All has used one big exhibit (and various smaller versions with the same or similar content) to conduct outreach for more than 250 days on more than 40 campuses over the past 15 years. To kick off a new era of research and development, we raised not just one new big exhibit, but two, during three days of outreach at Colorado State University last week. We’ll raise both big exhibits again at UCLA on May 23 and 25. I’ll have more to say about our exhibit research and development in a future letter. For now, please pray for our upcoming outreach at UCLA. Keep an eye on our various social media pages (www.jfaweb.org/blog, www.facebook.com/trainthousands) for pictures we’ll post sometime soon.

In Christ,



Steve Wagner
Executive Director





Rebecca's Reflections



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“#MindBlown”

Dear Family and Friends,

“Brian” confidently stated he was pro-life. I had just met Brian at the University of Georgia-Athens and asked him, “Brian, what does that mean for you? Do you think abortion should be illegal?” He responded, “No, we can’t force our beliefs on others. I’m pro-life because I’m a Christian, but legally enforcing my stance on abortion would push my religion on people who don’t believe the same as me.”

I shared the above short story earlier this year in my March newsletter, [Give Thanks In All Circumstances](#). Brian’s response is not an unusual one. I’ve heard it many times. Hearing it as often as I do can be discouraging, which is why I took the time in March to reflect on the need to give thanks in *all* circumstances, not just the circumstances that seem uplifting and enjoyable.

However, this conversation with Brian that I shared in March didn’t end there. It continued and went something like this:

Becca (me): Brian, you mentioned that it is because you are a Christian that you are pro-life. Do your Christian beliefs give you reasons for thinking that abortion is wrong?

Brian: Of course. Human life is sacred. God created those human lives, they are valuable, and we should not kill them.

Becca: I agree with those statements. From what you just said it seems that you may believe the unborn are human beings biologically. Is that true?

Brian: Yeah, absolutely.

Becca: Human beings like you and me?

Brian: Yes.

Becca: When do you believe that the unborn become biological human beings like you and me?

Brian: [He walked up to the [Justice For All Exhibit](#) and pointed at a picture of fertilization.] From the very beginning. Conception.

Becca: Okay. Brian, can you explain to me why you think that you would be pushing your religious beliefs on others if you supported laws that would protect unborn human beings from being killed through abortion?



Brian: Well, women have a lot of difficult choices that they have to make in their lives. Choice is an important thing. If we make a law against abortion, we are taking away their right to that choice. That’s like pushing my views on them. They no longer would have the right to choose.

Becca: That’s true. The choice to kill their children in utero would no longer be granted to women. I’m curious. Do you think that it is ever right for the government to make a law that takes away a “choice”?

Brian: Uh...no?

Becca: Well, do you agree that the laws that make it illegal to walk onto this campus and kill college students are good laws?

Brian: Of course.

Becca: I agree. However, when enforcing that law, the government is taking away particular choices of other people. What about laws prohibiting beating children in the privacy of your own home? Are those good laws?

Brian: Yes, yes. Those are good laws.

Becca: What if it is just your religion that makes you think that it is wrong to beat children? Should you have the right to impose and force your religious beliefs on me?

Brian: Yes, because those laws protect others from being harmed. That's not just a religious belief. It is a law protecting human rights.

Becca: So we can agree that laws which restrict "choice" in order to protect human lives are good, despite the fact that your support of those laws might be based on religious beliefs? It's possible that our religious beliefs may guide us to the same conclusion as those who don't share those beliefs—the conclusion that all human lives should be protected. That wouldn't be forcing our religion on others, but simply protecting human rights. Can we agree on that?

Brian: Yes, we can.

Becca: If it is important for us to protect human life and if the unborn are just as human and valuable as you and me, shouldn't they also be granted that same protection under the law?

Brian: Wow. Yeah, I guess. I just have always thought that would be imposing my beliefs on others.

Becca: [I then pointed to pictures in the JFA Exhibit Brochure depicting various genocides throughout history.] Brian, do you think that people who were not victims of the injustices shown in these pictures had an obligation to stand up for those who were being killed?

Brian: Yes.

Becca: I'm going to make a proposal. Brian, not only is it *right* for you to believe that abortion should be illegal because it takes the life of a human being; but actually—as a person who has the knowledge that 1) the unborn is a human being and 2) over a million are killed each year in the country in which you reside—you *have an obligation* to speak up for those humans who are being killed.

(silent pause)

Brian: #MindBlown [hashtag: Mind Blown].

Brian's final response took me by surprise. From the start of our conversation he seemed so confident in his belief that it is wrong to enforce laws telling others what they can and cannot do. Until that final moment in our conversation, the questions I had asked him did not seem to be creating any change of mind or heart. When he looked at me and said, "#MindBlown," his entire demeanor changed. It was as if he had finally been given permission to defend the lives of innocent human beings that he understood were valuable, permission to voice his opinion without shame. Relief and amazement radiated from his eyes.

The culture in which we live is permeated with the belief and mantra that we cannot tell others what to do. Thank you for your support that not only helps us challenge the beliefs of those who do not think the unborn are valuable human beings, but also helps us encourage the students who recognize the unborn are valuable, but do not feel they have the right to share that belief with others.

Defending life together,



Read More on this Topic: www.ifaweb.org/blog/mindblown