

Bryndan Gets the Picture

A Conversation at Fresno City College



STEPHEN WAGNER'S MONTHLY UPDATE

JUNE 1, 2012



Note: Graphic photos below.

Dear Friend,

“Should Abortion Remain Legal?” Our poll table at Fresno City College in California asked passersby to sign a pad of paper signifying YES or NO. One young man named Bryndan signed “No,” and I asked him a question. Here’s a paraphrase of the conversation that followed.

Steve: Do you think abortion should not be legal in every case?

Bryndan: It should be legal in the case of rape.

Steve: I think rape is a serious evil. We should give the woman who was raped the best care possible.

Bryndan: Yes. I agree.

Steve: What would you say about the woman who has a product of rape that’s two years old? Should she be able to kill him?

Bryndan: No.

Steve: I’m curious why you think that.

Bryndan: It’s killing.

Steve: I’m curious: What does “abortion” mean to you?

Bryndan: Getting rid of the fetus.

Steve: Does it live or die?

Bryndan: It dies, I guess.

Steve: Have you ever seen a picture of abortion?

Bryndan: No.

Steve: I have one here in this brochure. It’s graphic. May I show it to you?

Bryndan: Sure.

Steve: [Pointing to Page 4, see sidebar] This picture shows a fetal surgery meant to help Samuel Armas. [Pointing to Page 5] And this picture shows abortion. Imagine this kid is the product of rape. Should this be legal?

Bryndan: No.

Steve: Are you saying you think abortion should not be legal in the case of rape?

Bryndan: It should not be legal.

Then, pointing to a group of students about 40 yards away, Bryndan asked for a copy of the JFA Brochure,

Behind the Conversation: What I Was Doing and Why

1. **Offering pictures** like the ones in the JFA Brochure, pages 4 (left) and 5 (right), helps people reckon with what their words (sometimes words they’ve said over and over and over) actually mean.



2. **I don’t assume** I know what someone means when he says that abortion should not remain legal. He may not be against certain “hard case” reasons for abortion such as rape. I also can’t assume I know *why* he is against abortion or that his opposition is strong enough to hold when life circumstances make abortion appear to be the choice that’s best for everyone.
3. **I don’t avoid the question of rape** as if it’s simply intractable. On the contrary, the question of rape helped me to clarify the moral logic of the pro-life position in this instance. First, though, I was careful to show sympathy for the rape victim.
4. **Teaching someone else** helps us improve. Since I enjoy abstract discussion, I sometimes forget to share pictures with people. Just two days prior to meeting Bryndan, I taught our volunteers to use the JFA Brochure. This helped me remember to use this simple, mind-changing tool.



JUSTICE FOR ALL TRAINS THOUSANDS TO MAKE ABORTION UNTHINKABLE FOR MILLIONS, ONE PERSON AT A TIME.

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saying, “I’d like to show this to my friends over there who haven’t come over to talk to you yet.” Off he went, brochure in hand, to help his friends think more clearly about abortion.

This conversation was memorable to me for a number of reasons. First, it was fun to see my efforts bear fruit when Bryndan changed his mind right before my eyes. Second, I saw the power of one of our simplest training tools, the abortion pictures. Although complicated philosophical arguments are also important in some conversations, in this case they weren’t. Bryndan needed just one picture and one question helping him to consider how the truth of that picture should affect public policy.

Finally, this conversation illustrated what my colleague David Lee has been saying recently, that most people have never experienced an on-topic conversation regarding abortion. David means that few people have ever considered what the unborn is and what abortion does to her. I think this was true for Bryndan. Even though he said he was against abortion, he really didn’t connect the word abortion with the reality that abortion kills an innocent human being. When he confronted that reality through a picture, he was no longer able to make an exception for abortions in cases of rape.

Even though he said he was against abortion, he didn’t connect the word *abortion* with the reality that abortion kills an innocent human being.

This conversation with Bryndan illustrates one other thing: Some of JFA’s training materials are simple enough that a pro-life advocate can use them to help a person change his mind with just a few minutes of coaching.

Don’t believe me? See www.jfaweb.org/2_Minutes, and then call me at 316-683-6426. I’ll help you learn to share the JFA Brochure with someone like Bryndan, and you’ll see for yourself how easy it can be to talk to a friend about abortion. Your friend might even see the JFA Brochure as simple enough to share with his friends, just like Bryndan did.

In less than two weeks, four interns will arrive in JFA’s Wichita office to participate in a six-week intensive training experience. It will be a first for JFA. Pray for us as we plan the curriculum that will help these interns become mentors and teachers in JFA’s training program. In addition, over the summer, I’m spearheading the creation of new dialogue tools for campus outreach and developing materials to help our most experienced trainers mentor others through the certification process. We now have about 70 people in our Certification program, and 34 of these are certified to serve as mentors at JFA events.

Thank you for partnering with me to help these committed leaders learn to train others to make abortion unthinkable.

Warmly,

Stephen

P.S. The question of rape can be much more complicated philosophically and relationally than it was in the conversation with Bryndan. For training that addresses the question more fully, please contact the JFA office (316-683-6426) and ask for Steve.

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