

Abortion at the Gas Pump



JFA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MONTHLY LETTER

SEPTEMBER 2014

Dear Friend,

Sometimes the hardest part of a conversation about abortion is getting it started. This is the story of how one simple sentence in an everyday conversation with a stranger at a gas station led to a meaningful exchange about how to stop abortion.

I had my son J. in my arms as my van was filling up with gas. A young man drove up on a red Kawasaki motorcycle. On the way into the convenience store, he smiled and remarked about how cute my kid was.

He came out and was getting his gas across the island from us, and by then my son P. had joined me to gaze at the red bike. We made some comments about the motorcycle loud enough that the young man could hear us. At almost three years old, P. is fascinated by anything that runs on gas.

"I love kids," the man said, beaming, as he walked towards us. "We are definitely going to have kids, but we're going to wait until I'm out of medical school."

Moments later, as he finished pumping his gas, he invited P. to come and sit on the bike. P. was now the one beaming.

As P. was sitting there mesmerized, I engaged the young man in small talk about medical school.

Steve: What field of medicine are you pursuing?

Alex: Pediatric cardiovascular surgery.

Steve: Why are you interested in that specialty?

Alex: I want to save lives.

Then I took a big step beyond our small talk.

Steve: You must be against abortion then.

Alex: Yes. Definitely.

The hardest part of the conversation, the beginning, was behind me. Even if Alex's response had been the opposite, that "abortion is a woman's choice," I would have already landed myself squarely in the middle of the abortion conversation. Navigating from that point is relatively easy compared to introducing the uncomfortable topic of abortion. That

WHAT I DID TO MAKE THE CONVERSATION HAPPEN

I asked **clarifying questions** to learn more about Alex: "What kind of medicine are you planning to pursue?"

I **showed interest in his passions**. My wide-eyed son and I were interested in Alex's motorcycle, and I latched onto his passion for his medical studies.

I **assumed the best**. In this case, I assumed Alex would be consistent. Since he expressed a desire to save lives (through pediatric cardiovascular surgery), I [off-handedly] suggested he "must be" opposed to abortion.

I was **assertive and unashamed** about opposition to abortion – it's a very normal implication of "wanting to save lives." I wasn't abrasive or condemning in my tone, which is important especially if Alex would have turned out to have a different view.



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

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takes the most courage. One simple sentence was the key for me: *You must be against abortion then.* It assumed that Alex's view on abortion would be consistent with his stated passion for saving the lives of children.

To create similar transitional sentences in other situations, do what I did here: *Think of the unborn as a real human child, and interact on any topic accordingly.* For example, if I am talking to someone who wants to save kids from the horrors of war, I will explore this passion a bit for its own sake, focusing on points of common ground. I too want to save kids from war. Why? Isn't it because they are human? Once the time is right, I might then ask, "Does your concern for saving kids because they are human extend to humans in the womb?" Note that I'm not treating the other person's passion as valuable only to help me start a conversation about abortion. The passion is also valuable for its own sake.

Alex and I talked for a few minutes about why he is pro-life, about JFA's strategy for stopping abortion, and about the work he and his church are doing to save girls from sex trafficking. I gave him some JFA training material, and we exchanged contact information so that he can participate in JFA's events in the Dallas area next month, hopefully with friends from his church community.

The conversation with Alex was a two-way street. Both he and I showed an interest in each other. If Alex had not been so interested in me and my kids, I might not have gotten the conversation about abortion started. Here's the lesson: If we do our part to develop a habit of showing an interest in the people God brings across our path (and in their passions), we signal to others that a conversation bigger than small talk is possible.

JFA's passion is to train thousands of pro-life advocates to start thousands of conversations about abortion, in part by showing an interest in the passions of the other person. Thanks for showing an interest in *our* passion through your financial gifts and prayers.

Are you on the lookout for the conversation opportunities God is placing in your path? Join me this month in starting at least one conversation in order to make abortion unthinkable.

"BUT WHAT IF I DON'T FEEL READY TO START THAT CONVERSATION?"

Perhaps you're like me, and you feel ready for the conversation about abortion, so you're already thinking of ways to use the tips in this letter to start things off.

Perhaps you don't feel ready, though, and as you reflect on the conversation I started with Alex, you are terrified. What if Alex had said, "Abortion is a woman's choice"? You don't have any idea what to say next, and especially not at a volatile place like a gas pump.

We can help. If you call our office, one of our trainers will give you a personal 10-minute mentoring session that includes training materials you can use to gain confidence in a safe practice conversation with your friend, spouse, or teenager.

Then, plan to join JFA for an upcoming Seat Work and Feet Work training project where you'll gain the confidence to hold your own in a conversation about abortion. You'll then be that much closer to making the conversation happen on your own. Bring some others with you. Make it a mission trip.

Warmly,



Steve Wagner
Executive Director, JFA

Update on Recent and Upcoming Events: www.jfaweb.org/Fall-2014-Events

More Stories of Starting Conversations in Everyday Life: www.jfaweb.org/Sept-2014-Extras

For Your 10-Minute Mentoring Session: Call JFA's office at 316-683-6426; ask for a JFA trainer.