

Ten Seconds Can Change Minds



Dear Friend,

It was 1:40 AM. A carload of young women pulled up alongside my 1993 Honda at a stoplight and asked me to roll down my window. With expletives flying, one blonde asked me to explain my pro-life bumper sticker. I had only about ten seconds. I fumbled around for a response, and the light turned green. They turned left, shouting ridicule out the window. I felt ashamed. I hadn't been ready.

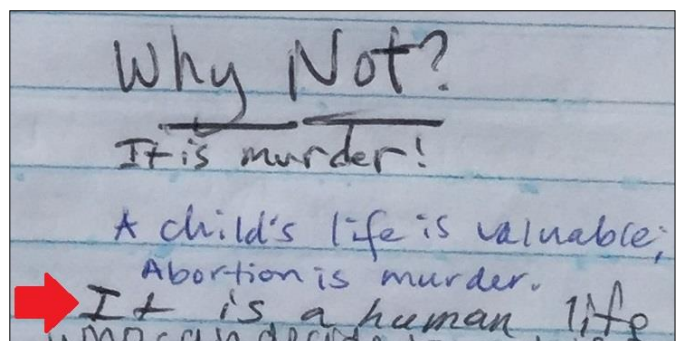
I didn't let it get me down (at least not for long). Instead, I decided I would never let a ten-second opportunity like that pass me by again. A late-night brainstorming session certainly produced a number of responses which don't look very good to me now, but one response I wrote that night has endured as particularly useful. We call it the "10-Second Pro-Life Apologist":

*If the unborn is growing, it must be alive.
If it has human parents, it must be human.
And living humans, or human beings like you and me, are valuable, aren't they?*

The incident at the stoplight happened 13 years ago, and we've been teaching this sound bite regularly since about that time. Recently, three members of the JFA outreach community have shared fascinating stories of the impact of this tool.

Jeremy Gorr, JFA trainer based in Austin, Texas, interacted with a student named Lance at JFA's "Should Abortion Remain Legal?" poll table at the University of Oklahoma in March. After deftly helping Lance clarify for himself that "What is the unborn?" was the central issue he needed to resolve, Jeremy proceeded to discuss biology with dramatic results:

I helped Lance reflect on the fact that, if the unborn is growing, it must be alive. I also pointed out that, if it has human parents, it must be human. Through our discussion, he realized that abortion indeed kills a unique human, so he picked up the "No" pad and signed his name! For his reason he wrote, "It is a human life."



I'm a relentless advocate of storytelling, and I strongly encourage every JFA trainer to spice up the short JFA seminar lectures with stories from the trainer's own wealth of experience. It was a lot of fun, then, to sit at a seminar in Oklahoma in March and



watch as JFA trainer **CK Wisner** shared a story that perfectly complemented her teaching of the biological evidence for the humanity of the unborn:

The first outreach event in which I participated with Justice For All (JFA) was at the University of Kansas (KU). I felt prepared to have conversations with pro-choice advocates about abortion because I had been taught many good tools through JFA's *Abortion: From Debate to Dialogue* seminar. However, there was one topic that I was very nervous about defending – the biological humanity of the unborn child. I had always been weak in science, and I am not scientifically minded.

Much to my horror, one of the first KU students with whom I talked started the conversation by saying, “Well, I’m a biology major, and I don’t think we can know when life begins.” There was one thing I knew to say, something I had learned in the JFA seminar: [the “10-Second Pro-Life Apologist”]. Immediately, the young biology major looked at me and said, “You’re right. The unborn is a human being.”

Note also the quick turnaround reported by a St. Mary’s Catholic High School student named **Kathryn** after she and her friend Erica interacted with a young man at Arizona State University in February:

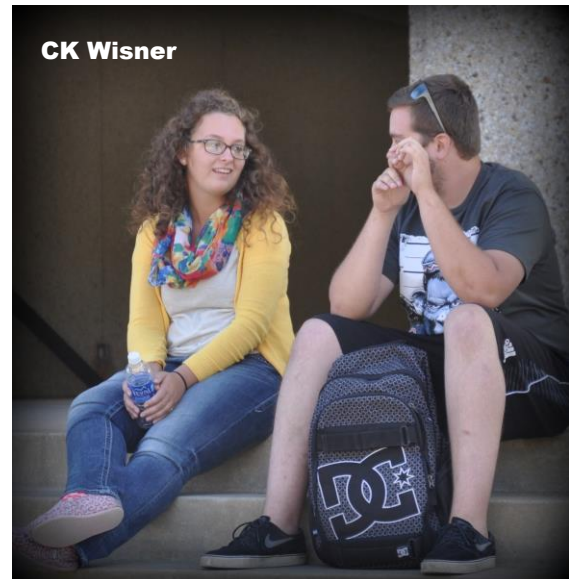
I came across another man named Curtis. Curtis is married and is pro-life. However, Curtis believed that life began at the fourth week. Erica told Curtis that if it has human parents, it must be human. She said this while pointing at the first stage. It was obvious that Curtis understood what we were saying. He then believed that it started at the moment of conception.

For some, reflecting with us for ten seconds produces an immediate change of mind about abortion. For others, the first two sentences of the “10-Second Pro-Life Apologist” help us lay a foundation of common ground about biology so that we can proceed to the topic of value, the focus of the third sentence.

Our typical new volunteer feels a bit shaky about defending the unborn even to herself, let alone to a pro-choice advocate. She needs handholds for starting conversations and for making them productive. Having the essentials in simple, easy-to-remember sound bites gives her confidence.

I myself experienced this same boost in confidence during the year that followed my late-night brainstorming session. I remember discussing abortion with two American women in Cusco, Peru. I also remember volunteering at a JFA Exhibit event at UCLA where an International Socialist Party activist challenged me to give him “one good reason to be against abortion.” In both conversations, I didn’t hesitate. I shared the “10-Second Pro-Life Apologist” as a foundation for further dialogue.

We’re excited to activate pro-life advocates with helpful dialogue tools like the “10-Second Pro-Life Apologist.” Let’s pray that many more will use tools like these to create *conversations* that last much longer than ten seconds and *changes of heart* that last a lifetime.



Making abortion unthinkable,

Steve Wagner
Executive Director, JFA