Dear Friend,

Out of the corner of my eye by Oklahoma State University’s Chi-O Clock, I recognized her. Just moments before, she had walked past me. I had smiled and she had smiled back, but then she kept walking. Now, she was returning in my direction, slowly. I turned and smiled again, “Would you like to sign our poll table?” As if noticing it for the first time, “Rachel” agreed. After she finished writing on the “Yes” side of the “Should Abortion Remain Legal?” poll, she waited around to talk to me about her view.

We introduced ourselves, and she said abortion should be legal because of the many difficulties that people discover along the way in pregnancy. I agreed that there are many possible complications and difficulties involved in pregnancy. Rachel then cautiously voiced her belief that the unborn isn’t human. She asked me what I thought about abortion.

Gently, I said, “Before I tell you what I think, can I ask you more questions?”

She happily agreed.

“You said you don't think the unborn is human. Do you mean that in a biological sense or a philosophical sense [i.e. that the unborn doesn’t share our intrinsic value or basic right to life]?”

She grinned. “I just came from a human development class, and I failed philosophy; so let’s talk about biology!”

Carefully and respectfully, she and I went back and forth for a few minutes while I clarified the specifics of her position. Through the answers to five questions, I discovered that she believes the unborn is just a mass of cells in the first two weeks of pregnancy. According to her professor, “You can technically get in there and find human DNA, but it’s not a human yet.” We discussed this and ended up agreeing that the unborn is biologically human from conception. However, it was her understanding that the unborn was not significant in value until the third week of development when the new heart and brain are in communication, and he or she starts to look more human in appearance.

Explore biological evidence for the humanity of the unborn at www.jfaweb.org/what-is-the-unborn and learn why this particular professor’s statement was misleading.
I felt that we were getting into the territory of philosophy, so I transitioned us. “Rachel, you asked me what I think about abortion. I think we should value human life in all stages of development, even those humans in life stages to which I am not personally attracted. I cannot relate much to the unborn from conception to three weeks of age, but it is still important to treat it like the human that it is and respect life all the way through development, even to old age. That includes the two-week embryo, all these students around us, and you.”

She paused and stared at me for a moment. When she spoke, she said, “Let me just say, that is the most sensible pro-life view I’ve ever heard. Every other time I’ve had this conversation, the pro-life person just screamed at me, ‘D*** you, liberal!’”

I expressed sadness at the way she had been treated in the past, and I thanked her for sharing her experience. She went on to say how nice it was to disagree in a free way with me. She had grown up in a liberal environment, I had a conservative upbringing, and we were looking for truth together.

Thinking back on this exchange, the passage in 1 Corinthians 13 has new context for me. Even if I could speak with the tongues of men and of angels, having the most knowledge and scientific facts at my disposal, but I do not love the person I’m talking to, it’s more than worthless – it is that obnoxious sound that hurts, and you wish would just stop. For Rachel, I was the first person with whom she disagreed who had allowed her to express her opinion without attacking her. I hope I’m not the last.

Thank you so much for your support which enables me to create a different kind of conversation about abortion with students like Rachel on college campuses all around the United States.

In Christ,

Susanna Buckley

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

“Love never ends.”

- 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a