



“It’s My Life, My Choice”

Using JFA’s Three Essential Skills



Tammy Cook’s Monthly Update

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If you asked a college student, “Should abortion remain legal?” and she said, “It’s my life, my choice,” how would you respond? Many pro-lifers would be outraged and respond by saying, “But the baby doesn’t get a choice!! Don’t you get it? You’re killing a human being!” Sadly, this type of response only creates animosity and shuts down the conversation before it even gets started. Here’s an example of a different approach using Justice For All’s *Three Essential Skills*.

I spoke to “Allie” and “Catie” at Colorado State University in April and asked them whether or not they think abortion should remain legal. Allie’s response was, “It’s my life, my choice.” To get the conversation started and help it to remain productive, I employed JFA’s *Three Essential Skills*: 1) Listening; 2) Asking questions; and 3) Finding common ground. If you master these skills, they can transform your conversations on any topic.

I said to Allie, “I’m interested in hearing more about your view so I can understand it ... Can you tell me more?” [asking questions] By asking a question instead of making a statement, I showed Allie that I was genuinely interested in her view. In response, she said that a woman has to weigh the pros and cons and decide what’s best for *her* life. I asked more questions with an open heart. I asked why that is important to her. Then I listened to understand, not to refute her response.

I tried to better understand Allie’s view instead of immediately challenging her view. This allowed her voice to be heard, and at the same time, it allowed me to build a rapport. I showed her that I was a reasonable person with whom she could discuss a tough topic.

Then I asked if abortion should be legal throughout all nine months of pregnancy. I listened intently to Allie’s answer [listening]. She said that she wasn’t in favor of third-trimester abortion. I reflected back to her what I heard her say and said that I am also opposed to third-trimester abortion [common ground]. I asked *why*, and she said that a woman has plenty of time to make a decision by that time, and it’s probably a baby by then. I asked more questions. I asked when, in their minds, it becomes a baby. Allie said at four weeks after conception, and Catie said the second trimester. I asked if I could give them some facts about biology relating to the unborn baby, and they said yes. They listened intently to the information and then said, “Well, if you aren’t ready for a child, you shouldn’t be having sex!” I said, “I agree!” [common ground]

I could tell after just ten minutes that Allie and Catie were enjoying the conversation, and that we had developed a rapport. Then Allie said that when her mom (“Mary”) was a teenager, she had gone with her friends



Left to right: Tammy, Allie, Catie
Colorado State University, April 2018

to a clinic when they got their abortions. Mary then got pregnant at 16, but chose not to have an abortion. I showed genuine concern for what Mary and her friends had been through—I acknowledged the tough situations they had each experienced. I said, “If your mom is still in contact with those friends, you should ask her if she thinks they would be open to you visiting with each of them to hear their stories. If so, ask them how they’re doing. Ask if they would do it all over again. Perhaps they will share that they regret their decisions. There are many, many women who regret their abortions.” Allie and Catie nodded their heads in agreement.

Then I said, “I want to leave you with one last thought. Imagine with me for a moment that abortion does not exist—that no one has created procedures for it. So, if a woman finds herself in an unwanted pregnancy, she would have to figure out how to solve a tough problem and how to handle the situation



Left to right: Catie, Allie, Tammy

without abortion being an option. The only two options would be parenting the child or relinquishing the child to a couple who is waiting to adopt. Will it be tough? Absolutely, one hundred percent! But a woman will gain life experiences that can only be learned through hardship. It’s not a matter of ‘if’ we will endure hardship in our lives, but ‘when.’ I experienced this myself, and it was a really tough road. But if I could have a ‘redo,’ I would not choose a different path, and here’s why. Going through those tough times made me who I am and helped me develop an inner strength that prepared me for the challenging things that I’ve faced in my life, like life-threatening illnesses and losing loved ones. I’ve learned to be thankful for those earlier difficult experiences due to the invaluable lessons that I could not have learned if I had chosen an easier path (I’m not saying abortion is easy). I believe women are stronger than they realize, and we need to shower them with love, encouragement, and support to save not only their children’s lives, but their own.” Allie and Catie once again nodded in agreement.

As we ended the conversation, Allie and Catie both shook my hand. Then Allie said, “Thank you. You have changed my perspective.” By using the *Three Essential Skills* of asking questions, listening, and finding common ground, I was able to connect with Allie and Catie in a way that made them willing to stay engaged in the conversation and eventually helped them be open to rethinking their views on abortion.

Thank you for your support that makes conversations like this possible. May God bless you.

How You Can Help:

Will you consider giving an extra financial gift this summer? This would allow me to devote more time to leading small workshops (see sidebar). And if you’re not currently a member of my support team, will you prayerfully consider joining? If **18** families or individuals sign up for **\$20/month**, I will be fully funded through November. Please see the enclosed pledge form for sign-up options. Thank you!

Exciting News!!

Would you like to learn to have conversations like this one, but it seems a bit scary?

I am excited to announce that I am now offering small group workshops in the Wichita area (groups of 2-6). You will learn how to respond to someone who disagrees with you, and how to make a personal connection that provides a positive outcome. This training can be used not only for discussing abortion, but for any difficult topic. After the workshop, you will have an opportunity to join me on the WSU campus to help you practice your new skills.

Please email me if you want to make sure you’re notified of the class schedule either by email at tammy@jfaweb.org, or by phone: (316) 683-6426.

If you would like to have your own private workshop with 2-6 people, please contact me to schedule. A big thank you goes out to my support team that makes this training possible!

In Christ,

Tammy Cook