



Rebecca's Reflections



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June 2017

A Lesson in Love — Part 1

A short distance away from me, three students stood, laughing loudly and verbally mocking our display. They had just walked past our large *Stop and Think* Exhibit, which we had put up to create dialogue at Colorado State University in April. Curious, they had approached our Free Speech Board (see example pictured below) and, after reading a few comments, began to vocally agree with others who had written in opposition to JFA.

Even after years of experience engaging students about abortion, I didn't even have an ounce of desire to strike up a conversation with this group. Before the students walked away, though, from somewhere deep inside I was prompted to take courage and walk over to them. So, I went (albeit begrudgingly) and inquired:

Becca: Hey guys, do you mind if I ask, "What are your thoughts?"

Two of the students walked away as if I didn't exist. The third student, "Sam," quickly turned toward me, laughed again, and sarcastically questioned me:

Sam: You want to know what I think? Yea-a-a-h, I'll share my thoughts.

At that moment thoughts started floating through my mind. *"I really don't want to be in this conversation. I wish I hadn't engaged him. Why am I doing this?"* I attempted to learn more about his view by asking him questions, but I was battling those negative thoughts the whole time. As I tried to find common ground with him (even in the smallest of ways), he shared his belief that abortion should be legal for all nine months and for any

reason. When I asked whether or not he agreed with sex-selection abortion, his response indicated that, yes, indeed he did.

After all my attempts to find common ground, I ended up empty-handed. His mocking demeanor continued and eventually a more complete picture of his view emerged. It was something like this:

Sam (paraphrased): Even if a woman wants to kill a child after it is born it really doesn't matter. Although US law doesn't currently reflect this, in reality nothing has value. Even born humans don't matter. The only value that exists is the value that we as individuals assign to a particular object or being. So if a woman doesn't think a two-year-old is valuable, for her it doesn't really matter if she kills her child.

Because of Sam's demeanor, I felt that attempting to challenge his beliefs would have been done in vain. I mentally prepared to exit the conversation when



Pictured above are comments written this past April on one of the Free Speech Boards at Colorado State University.

another thought overwhelmed my mind: “*Love him, Rebecca. Love the person he is. Find a way to love **him**.*” I’ll “blame” those thoughts on the Holy Spirit.

Once again from somewhere deep inside I found the courage to try to do what I felt I had no capacity to do – *love him*. At this point I didn’t know where to take the conversation about abortion, so I just asked him about *him*. I remember asking,

Becca: Have you always felt this way?

Sam: No. And I probably won’t always hold these views. I grew up Catholic. Things in life happen, and these events help form our views. We are all searching, and our views change as we journey through life.

Becca: So, when did this change take place for you?

As he told his story he shared about the intellectual encounters he had had with others who are atheists, how much those encounters had influenced him, and how old he was when he started questioning God’s existence. My next response may have been the most crucial part of the conversation. Sam’s experience wasn’t so foreign to me, and I told him so.

Becca: Sam, you know what? I can relate to that. Of course, every person’s story is different, but sometimes they have similar elements to them. When I was 21, I studied in Mexico and met a guy from Germany named Marc. We had many discussions about religion and the existence of God. Marc was a very intelligent young man, and he had better answers to why he believed God *didn’t* exist than I had for why I believed God *did* exist. When I returned home from Mexico, I had many doubts in my mind about God’s existence and what I believed. At that point, I started a journey of searching for answers to some of those questions, too. I can understand at some level why you have doubts.

As Sam discovered that we had genuine common ground, his demeanor changed. He seemed to be less defensive, mocking, and condescending. He also seemed to be appreciating the conversation as we each shared more about our personal experiences. Little did I know that Sam was about to share something that would remind me why choosing to love *him* was so important in the first place. **(To be continued in Part 2...)**

Rebecca J. Haschke



Here are more snapshots of the comments written on the Free Speech Boards at the Colorado State University *Stop and Think* outreach.



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July 2017

A Lesson in Love — Part 2

Last month in my newsletter, *A Lesson in Love — Part 1*, I described my encounter with “Sam,” a young man whose mocking demeanor almost caused me to exit a conversation. If you haven’t already, I suggest reading *Part 1* before continuing (www.jfaweb.org/sam). Just before ending the conversation, I was overcome by the thought that I needed to find a way to love him, despite my desire to walk away. As I begrudgingly tried to figure out how to do just that, Sam and I discovered a past experience we had in common. This common ground softened Sam’s demeanor, and he became less defensive. What he shared next touched me in such a way that he unintentionally gave me a *lesson in love*...

Tired of standing, we found a nearby place to sit down. This is where Sam shared with me that sometime in the past year he and his girlfriend had had an abortion. My heart sank. It now made sense why he had been so defensive. At that point, I asked:

Becca: Please know you don’t have to answer this if you don’t want to, but how is your girlfriend doing?

Although he attempted to hide it, I saw a deeply pained look take over his face and posture. More of *their* story poured out from his heart. So then I asked:

Becca: Sam, how are *you* doing?

He shared *his* story of pain, sadness, struggles with suicidal thoughts after the abortion, and much more. My heart sank again. The fact that he held the radical ideas and thoughts he had shared earlier in the conversation now made more sense to me. He may have been using these ideas as coping mechanisms as he tried to sort through the pain he was experiencing.

As I allowed him to tell more of his story, I also shared with him the stories of other men (some of whom I’ve met and others about whom I’ve read) who have lost a child to

abortion. He was shocked to discover that other post-abortive men have struggled with some of the same things he had been experiencing. Tears never slid down his cheeks, but several times I was sure I saw them forming in the brims of his eyes.

Sam shared that on the day he and his girlfriend had walked into the clinic for the abortion, someone from among the pro-life crowd at the clinic threw something at the two of them. It was apparent to me that that action hurt Sam not physically, but emotionally. My heart sank yet again. The anger toward pro-life advocates that I sensed in him was now more understandable.

After over an hour had passed, he had to leave for class. As he stood up to depart, he asked if it would be alright if he gave me a hug. After the hug he pointed toward the *Stop and Think* Exhibit and said:

Sam: I talked with another lady at the display yesterday, too. We may not agree on everything about abortion, but the approach to what you guys are doing out here — I completely support this.

Sam then slid his sunglasses down over his eyes and walked away. I was humbled.

(continued on the reverse)



Pictured above, I am in a conversation with another student at Colorado State University in Fort Collins.

While reflecting on this conversation later that day, I noted that in the midst of being mocked, I had rediscovered the key to disarming hate, anger, and condescension. It's *love* — not a mushy, sappy, or happy emotional feeling that many people call love, but an action that is self-sacrificial and often hurts. I've been taught this repeatedly throughout my life but continually seem to need reminders. My encounter with Sam was a real-life example of what love is and what it does. If I hadn't listened to the promptings to *love him*, Sam would have likely continued to exhibit the hardness of heart that I had witnessed from him earlier in the conversation. Choosing to love him, even when it wasn't enjoyable, opened a door for him to be vulnerable in a way that was unexpected — likely unexpected for both me and for Sam. Because this reminder occurred through a real-life experience — a conversation — I hope it is *a lesson in love* that I won't so quickly forget.

The thoughts and feelings I experienced during this conversation made me think I should spend some time reading how St. Paul describes love in his first letter to the Corinthians so that the next time I meet a student like Sam, I may joyfully respond to him instead of begrudgingly engaging him. After reading through 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, I chose to include the excerpts below in this newsletter because each phrase reminded me specifically of my encounter with Sam.

If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal ... Love is patient, love is kind ... it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.

1 Corinthians 13 (excerpts)

Until Sam knew I cared about him as a person, it did not matter how eloquently I defended the right to life of the unborn because he would have likely only heard me as a *gong or a clashing cymbal*. Somehow, I recognized that continuing to speak about abortion would have been in vain. Sadly, my initial thought in response to this was to abandon the conversation, which was not a reaction of *patience*. I'm grateful for the overwhelming thoughts that prompted me to find a way to *love* Sam and, in turn, prompted me to practice *patience*.

Even though I was begrudging the idea of continuing a conversation in which I felt mocked, disliked, and uncomfortable, the prompt to *love* Sam helped me to treat Sam with *kindness*. This prompting also gave me the strength to battle the temptations to:

- be *quick-tempered* and abruptly tell him how false his ideas were,
- *seek my own interests* by departing from this uncomfortable conversation, or
- return the *rudeness* that I was encountering with further rudeness.

Love bears all things. I realize now that because I was given strength to *bear* the mockery and condescension at the beginning of the conversation with Sam, the doors opened for him to be vulnerable enough to share his story. It's possible that prior to my conversation with him he had never felt free to be open with someone who is pro-life.

Tears fill the brims of my eyes, too, as I think of Sam and read that love *believes all things, hopes all things ... Love never fails*. There are so many more thoughts and resources I want to share with Sam — but I cannot because I don't know how to contact him. I want him to experience healing. I desire for him to help the mother of his child heal. I desire for Sam to hear the arguments against abortion, but I want him to hear them from someone who will be gentle with him. I want to *believe* and have *hope* that these things are possible — that even while my attempt to love Sam was imperfect, God's love for Sam will not fail.

Please join me in praying for Sam and in studying these words of St. Paul's in order that each of us can joyfully respond, with love, to every Sam we encounter in our lives.

Rebecca J. Flasche

Please see JFA's most recent Resource Bulletin (www.jfaweb.org/rb-06-2017), which includes resources you can use to help someone like Sam who has an abortion in his or her past. In addition, the Resource Bulletin links to a letter a young man wrote to his daughter after he found out she had been aborted. He named her Rileigh. You can use that letter to help someone begin to process a past abortion experience.



Making Abortion Unthinkable with JFA

May 2017



Recent and Upcoming Events (Partial List): Please pray with us that God will cause hearts and minds to change as a result of conversations created by our staff, volunteers, and audience members:

**PRAY FOR
CONVERSATIONS**

CO – 4/21-26 – Fort Collins – Seminars and Large Exhibit Outreach (3 Days) at CSU
CA – 4/22 – Irvine – Presentation at SFLA California Leadership Summit – Steve Wagner
KS – 5/1 – Wichita – Presentations at Bishop Carroll Catholic High School
CA – 5/21-23 – Los Angeles – Seminar and Kiosk Outreach at UCLA
VA – 7/7 – Fredericksburg – Workshop at SFLA Wilberforce Program Kickoff – Steve Wagner
MD – 7/20 – Baltimore – Workshop for SFLA Regional Coordinators – Steve Wagner
MN – 9/30 – Chanhassan – Workshop – Steve Wagner

List of All Recent and Upcoming Events: www.jfaweb.org/calendar

Photos from Recent Events: www.jfaweb.org/photos

**PREPARE FOR
CONVERSATIONS**

Featured Resource for Equipping Yourself: “Sam” was so rude at the start of his conversation with JFA trainer Rebecca Haschke that she nearly gave up talking to him altogether. Despite her inner frustration, she repeatedly made a choice to love him and was surprised by the conversation that followed. Rebecca shared the story in her letter, “A Lesson in Love – Part 1” (enclosed, or see www.jfaweb.org/may-2017). As you read, notice how Rebecca sought to understand Sam, find common ground with him, and humbly share aspects of her own experience. As pro-life advocates seeking to create good conversations, we should work to master these skills. (Want to read the rest of the story? We’ll feature Part 2 of the letter as next month’s free resource.)

Read Part 1 or Download a Printable Version: www.jfaweb.org/may-2017

See More Dialogue Examples: www.jfaweb.org/dialogue-examples

**START
CONVERSATIONS**

Featured Conversation Starter: You can start a conversation with a friend in a natural way by sharing Steve Wagner’s recent post, “Identifying with Her Uncertain Future.” The post features a beautiful painting by Mexican artist Saturnino Herrán (from JFA’s *Art of Life* Exhibit). The post and painting can help us start a conversation with important points of common ground: Many women who find themselves pregnant are in very difficult situations, they feel that their future is very uncertain, and we need to take this into account by discussing abortion with sympathy and compassion for the women experiencing these things. To view the painting and share it on social media, use the links below. If you use this conversation starter, please let us know how it goes!

Share the Post: [www.twitter.com/7conversations](https://twitter.com/7conversations) ; www.jfaweb.org/start-the-conversation

What can I
do to make
abortion
unthinkable?

About the *Making Abortion Unthinkable with JFA* Resource Bulletin

For friends of JFA who ask, “What can I do to make abortion unthinkable?” this resource bulletin offers some answers. Beyond supporting JFA financially, which enables JFA’s trainers and volunteers to create conversations that make abortion unthinkable at JFA’s events, you can **PRAY** for the conversations the JFA community is creating (including your own), **PREPARE** for conversations, and **START** conversations.

Pray for
conversations.
Prepare for
conversations.
Start
conversations.



Making Abortion Unthinkable with JFA

June 2017



Recent and Upcoming Events (Partial List): Please pray with us that God will cause hearts and minds to change as a result of conversations created by our staff, volunteers, and audience members:

PRAY FOR
CONVERSATIONS

CA – 5/21-23 – Los Angeles – Seminar and Kiosk Outreach at UCLA
KS – 6/21, 27, 28 – Poll Table Outreach at Wichita State University
Listen Online – 6/22 – Tammy Cook Interview – Culture of Life Radio – www.thehub.nm
VA – 7/7 – Fredericksburg – Workshop at SFLA Wilberforce Program Kickoff – Steve Wagner
MD – 7/20 – Baltimore – Workshop for SFLA Regional Coordinators – Steve Wagner
MN – 9/30 – Chanhassen – Workshop – Steve Wagner

IN, MN, TX, OK – Fall 2017 – Large Exhibit or Ten-Foot Kiosk Outreach Events (Details TBA)

List of All Recent and Upcoming Events: www.jfaweb.org/calendar

Photos from Recent Events: www.jfaweb.org/photos

PREPARE FOR
CONVERSATIONS

Featured Resource for Equipping Yourself: Last month we shared Rebecca Haschke's letter, "A Lesson in Love – Part 1," in which a young man named "Sam" was so rude at the start of the conversation that Rebecca nearly gave up talking to Sam altogether. Despite her inner frustration, Rebecca repeatedly made a choice to love him and was surprised by the conversation that followed. This month, we are sharing the rest of the story, "A Lesson in Love – Part 2" (enclosed, or read it at www.jfaweb.org/sam). Because of Rebecca's humility and her willingness to find common ground, Sam opened up about his past. As you read, notice how choosing to love, even when it was difficult, provided an unexpected opportunity for healing to begin.

Read the Full Story or Download a Printable Version: www.jfaweb.org/sam

Resources for Friends with Abortion in Their Past: www.jfaweb.org/healing-after-abortion

START
CONVERSATIONS

Featured Conversation Starter: You can start a conversation with a friend in a natural way by sharing Joanna Bai's recent post, "I'll never know you. I never got a chance." The post features a letter a father wrote to his child and left on a JFA poll table in 2004. This letter, featured on JFA's *Stop and Think* Exhibit, can help both pro-choice and pro-life advocates think more deeply about abortion's effects and develop greater empathy for women *and men* dealing with past abortion. The post, including reflection questions, is intended to be a tool you can use to create a conversation naturally with people of any perspective. To view the post and share it on social media, use the links below. If you use this conversation starter, please let us know how it goes!

Share the Post: [www.twitter.com/7conversations](https://twitter.com/7conversations) ; www.jfaweb.org/start-the-conversation

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