

Jacob Nels dialogues with a student at Portland Community College on April 20th, 2015.



Responding to Post-Abortive Women with Love

By Jacob Nels

The ERI staff recently received this message from a friend:

“How do you guys respond to questions like ‘do you think I’m a murderer?’ From post-abortive people? How do you communicate well with post-abortive people in general?”

Whether you are aware of it or not, we all know at least one person who has participated in an abortion. Condemnation, shame, and fear are insidious weapons of God’s enemy used to keep people from accepting the freedom of Christ’s forgiveness. We all need to be ready to share the hope we have in Christ with someone who believes they are beyond the reach of God’s loving kindness. I thought my email response to our friend may be helpful to some of you.

Hey Friend,

This would normally be too complex for me to answer through this format, but I’m going to try. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this by phone or Skype, though. It’s a great question, and I am glad you’re asking it.

When responding to questions like this, I clarify and take my time. I wait until we

have reached a level of genuine understanding and respect in a conversation before venturing an answer. Intent is everything, both the intent of the woman seeking abortion, and the intent of the person asking the question. I often find people aren’t asking to understand my views, but they are asking to trap me or shut down my views.

Let’s say the person asking is a post-abortive woman who is genuinely asking this question. I spoke with a post-abortive woman who said something that will forever stay with me. She said, “A woman wants an abortion like an animal wants to gnaw off its own leg to escape a trap.” This was not original to her [Frederica Mathewes-Green said this in an article in Sisterlife], but her tears and shaking voice were original. My heart is broken for post-abortive women, and I don’t shy away from showing that when I am asked, “Am I a murderer?” Murder is a strong word that involves malice, and I just don’t believe most women seek abortion with malicious intent. (I think it is just as wrong to kill a human embryo as it is to kill a human toddler, because they’re equally human. I’m not saying that a woman who has an early abortion is sinning as greatly as a woman that strangles her toddler.

Don’t get me wrong, it’s a really bad sin, and it’s terribly destructive, but I think you have to have a different level of malice to strangle a toddler. Similarly, it would be easier to push a button that you know will kill someone halfway around the world than it would be to strangle someone with your own hands. It doesn’t mean the two potential victims aren’t equally valuable, equally deserving of protection.) Maybe foolishness, lies, accident, or tragedy has brought them to this desperate place. But malicious intent? I don’t think so.

Abortion goes against the very fabric of our human nature/souls. Guilt, shame, hurt, remorse, emptiness, anger, and betrayal are common feelings I see in people who have been through abortion. It is important to be emotionally intelligent here, and respond appropriately to the emotions the person is conveying [Romans 12:15: ‘Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.’]. I try to read their emotions and respond to what their heart is saying more than the words they speak. I try to assure them I am not sitting in judgment of them. I am seeking to comfort a hurting soul, whether or not they are acting very emotional, I believe hurt is likely within. My goal is always to care for the person the best I

can. Sometimes that means talking about how to think clearly about abortion, but sometimes that means dropping the abortions discussion for as long as they need and just connecting with the person at a relational level. I often offer them a water, offer to go get a coffee from the coffee shop, or a burger from a restaurant. Feeding their body can help their heart. The basic principle may be: treat that person the way you would treat your best friend if they were sharing the same things with you.

Again, I'd love to talk about this. This answer feels so inadequate for such a complex question.

Blessings,
Jacob

As I stated in the email, that was an incredibly brief answer. Volumes could be filled with all that we should share with people hurting from abortion, but I hope the brevity of my answer encourages you to engage the hurting people around you. However brief or inadequate we feel our answer may be, we must be faithful

missionaries of the good news of Jesus, obedient in all circumstances. What seems insignificant to you can be greatly used by God to display the glory of His power and mercy.

Be ready, friends. Those affected by abortion and in need of the hope of Christ are all around us. They are called "murderers" by the Enemy, but God calls them "forgiven" if they are in Christ. As Christ's ambassadors, we should be speaking the words of repentance and forgiveness, not condemnation.

We're Changing our Newsletter Schedule. Here's Why...

After talking with some of our donors and receiving advice from some of our closest mentors, we have decided to change our newsletter from monthly to quarterly.

There's a part of us that's a little sad about that. We've honestly enjoyed putting these newsletters together, with the hope that it would not only tell you what we're learning in our work, but that it would give you some practical dialogue tips to try in the conversations you have with people in your sphere of influence.

Unfortunately, mailing a full-color newsletter every month is not only expensive, but it's also very time-consuming. We want to be as efficient as possible, not only with our time, but with the resources YOU have given us to accomplish our mission.

It's become clear to us that to achieve our goals this year, we need to cut back in a few areas. We also don't believe that sending a monthly newsletter has a high enough return on investment to justify it.

Our main concern about changing schedules is because we've seen sending newsletters to you as a part of our ministry. We want to invest in YOU, in response to you investing in us and the students we train to change hearts and minds about abortion.

If you felt like you were getting real value from the content we were sending you, we have good news. We're still going to be writing that content, but we will be publishing it in a medium that is both faster to produce and far cheaper: our blog. We intend to publish a weekly article relating to practical dialogue tips at blog.EqualRightsInstitute.com. If you're

on our email list, you'll receive these in your inbox as well, generally on Monday mornings.

This way, we're still writing original content that will help pro-life people to think clearly, reason honestly, and argue persuasively, but we're doing it in a way that saves our ministry a significant amount of staff time and money. We will refocus the saved resources toward our most important projects to accomplish our mission of training pro-life advocates to become known as people who are both intelligent and loving.

In next month's newsletter (the last one before the move to quarterly letters), I'm excited to announce our main project, the one that is driving most of our work this year.

- Josh Brahm, President

Personal Note from Josh

We just returned from our seminar and outreach at Portland Community College (pictured on right). That was a great trip because we got to put some of our latest dialogue ideas into practice with pro-choice people. I had an amazing conversation with a pro-choice girl who confirmed some of the thoughts we've been toying around with in the office on what kinds of questions we should avoid asking in a dialogue. I can't wait to fill you in on that later this year.

Now that we're back in the office, I'm focused on working with a graphic designer on an official logo, creating an advisory board, and working on a new sponsors page of our website. Having these three things in place will hopefully help us to fundraise effectively this summer while we begin work on our big project.

Thank you so much for your prayers and financial support that made all of this possible.

