

Students for Life at the University of Michigan at their outreach event



Early Feedback on the Equipped for Life Course

By Josh Brahm

The Equipped for Life course has only been out for about two months, but we're already getting a sense for how it's helping the people who've taken it. It's you, our supporters, that made this course possible, and I want you to know how you're positively affecting pro-life advocates all over the country!

My favorite bit of feedback we've received is from Rachel Crawford, the president of the University of Michigan Students for Life group. (Full disclosure, Rachel is also coming on staff next year, so she's not unbiased, but her students are.)

One of the main concerns Tim and I had while creating this course was that people would take it, but wouldn't then do the next step of talking to pro-choice people in their lives or during campus outreaches. What has happened with Rachel's club gives me some hope that that's not going to be a common problem.

This is how Rachel recently described the impact of the course on her club during an interview for the Equipped for Life podcast:

This was my students' first exposure to Equal Rights Institute. They're unanimously coming back to me and enthusiastically requesting we have more outreaches.

We went out and did outreach all day on a Saturday recently. Even the shy and quiet students, after watching some of the course or completing the entire course, were coming up to me saying, **"I'm really quiet and I didn't know if I was gonna be able to have a conversation today. But I totally stepped out of my comfort zone, and I totally gave it a try, and oh my gosh, I'm so happy I did! Can we do this next week?"**

All of these students were super-excited. And we had the fortunate ability to have this outreach in the fall semester. We've had about 30 new students joining our club this year. The new students are telling me that "the dialogue tactics are helping me understand the proper mood and tone of the conversation. They're making me feel more confident about opening a dialogue because I've learned about body language or learned about asking more clarification questions."

Then the more experienced students are like, "I've been reading apologetics books all through high school and I'm super-excited." Those students are really refreshed by the materials and the actual content of the more advanced parts of the course.



After people finish our course we invite them to take a post-course survey to help us measure the effectiveness of the course. Here are a few things we saw from Matthew Nelson, the very first person who took the survey:

On a scale of 1-10, he rated his ability to clearly communicate persuasive pro-life arguments before taking the course at a 3, but now that he's taken the course, he rates himself at an 8!

When asked a similar question about his ability to foster a productive, positive atmosphere in his conversations, before taking the course he rated himself as a 4 but became an 8 after the course. He attributes most of his growth to the work of Equal Rights Institute.

He said the module on responding to the question of rape with truth and compassion was the most helpful to him, "because the subject is

so difficult and having clarity on how to respond is crucial.”

He’s already planning on going through the material again. Making it possible for someone to go through the course multiple times is one of the benefits of putting our course online. Matthew has already recommended the Equipped for Life course to his friends.

Mitchell Clouse (pictured on the right), a student from the University of Texas of Austin, had this to say about the course:

The Equipped for Life course is what I have been looking for these past few years as a student wanting to become better versed in pro-life apologetics. While there was a good number of videos and articles regarding apologetics on the internet when I first became passionate about the pro-life movement, there was something missing: **a systematic course that was affordable, easily accessible, and in-depth.** The Equipped for Life course checks these boxes, and more. The philosophy and

reasoning behind the arguments are stellar, and Tim and Josh do an excellent job in articulating and teaching them. Counter-arguments are examined honestly and combated effectively.

However, some of the most useful modules deal with practical tips for how to have more productive dialogues with pro-choice people. There is a need right now in the pro-life movement for pro-lifers to defend their case in a compassionate and loving manner, and **this aspect of the course will have a profound impact on the way you think about discussing abortion.**

The Equipped for Life course helped me not only to articulate my arguments more effectively, but also to have empathetic dialogue with my pro-choice peers. About a week after completing the course, our Students for Life club went tabling on our campus. One of the conversations I had was with a girl who believed abortion should be legal through all nine months of pregnancy. Through asking clarification questions, honestly listening to the



points she made, and using the Equal Rights Argument, I was able to have an extremely productive dialogue with her, and **by the end of our conversation she had become pro-life.**

I am convinced that I would not have been equipped to effectively dialogue with this girl had I not taken ERI’s Equipped for Life course.

Every person serious about defending their pro-life stance should take this course, and every pro-life club in the country should offer it to its members.

Personal Note from Josh

Having the course out has made some big changes to the way I work. Obviously it’s awesome to be able to train more people around the world than we could before, but it’s also affected the way we do speaking trips.

Students for Life of America asked me and Tim to give 90-minute apologetics talks at just about all of their Leadership Summits for the next two semesters, 14 in total! These summits are an opportunity for all of the club leaders within a 100-mile radius to come to one campus for a day of training. The difference is we’re no longer flying home right after the summit. We’re staying for an extra 2-5 days to speak at more universities and meet with club leaders and donors. A significant part of my last month has been working with Jacob Nels and Kim Bagato on an efficient, replicable system for planning the logistics for these trips.

So as an example, here’s what my Colorado trip looked like a few weeks ago:

Friday: I flew to Denver and drove a rental car to my host home.

Saturday: I spoke at the Leadership Summit and had dinner with Students for Life staff.

Sunday: I spent some time at a park to pray, and then met with my friend Steven Ertelt, who runs the LifeNews website.

Monday: I got some work done in the morning, and then had lunch with a Students for Life staff member to answer questions about pro-life arguments, then had dinner with the club leaders from CSU Fort Collins before giving a public lecture at their university.

Tuesday: I spoke to an SFL high school club and then had dinner with the club leaders from CU Boulder before giving a public lecture at their university.

As you can see, we’re making the most of the fact that we’re already in the area to connect with as many students as possible. Please pray for our safety on these trips, and an extra measure of grace for Hannah now that I’m often gone for more days than before.

~ Josh



Speaking at the Students for Life Leadership Summit in Denver (top) and giving a lecture on understanding and responding to pro-choice bodily autonomy arguments at University of Colorado Boulder (bottom).