Dear Pro-Life Partners, August 15, 2025

Context Clues ("Can I Kill This?")

Imagine you're sitting in your kitchen on a sunny day and your 10-year-old is playing outside. You hear him yell, "Hey mom, can I kill this?" No mom in her right mind would answer that question without asking a few of her own!

Context can be a powerful thing. When used correctly, it can inform, clarify, even persuade. When something is taken out of context, it can mislead and deceive. Sometimes the same statement can be applied to different situations with entirely different results. Take the following for example:

- "I just can't afford another child."
- "I'm not mentally stable enough to raise this child."

If the mom is referring to her two-year-old child, we would be appalled and she would be prosecuted if she hurt her son or daughter. If she is referring to her unborn baby, however, she would have the green light to dispose of her offspring, a practice that has become horrifyingly acceptable in our country.

One phrase that has gained traction over the past several years is the notion of "speaking my truth," as if reality is obligated to shift according to our perception of it. This mindset is anathema to the very essence of what truth is. Rather than changing our behavior to meet a standard, our culture celebrates altering the standard to match whatever we think is "right for us." This is simply anarchy in the making.

When we address the reality of a uniquely human child in the womb we can certainly approach the parents in a way that compassionately considers their situation. We can communicate several alternatives moving forward. However, the status of the child does not change. One would think that anyone who insists on complete autonomy, and demands that we respect her decisions about her own body, would object to the lack of respect and autonomy thrust upon the separate body in the womb. Alas, it doesn't work that way. Context, in this case, is not just tricky, it's deadly.

This brings us to the good news and the bad news. The bad news is that most of what we say, as charming and compelling as we think it is, may fall on deaf ears, a closed mind, or a hardened heart. The good news is that we have so much in our tool bag to draw from. If we are willing to take the time, we can find something that resonates and leads to deeper discussion.

1. Building Rapport. Finding common ground, about anything, only takes a matter of seconds, and puts you and your new friend on equal ground. It is then an easy transition to ask where they stand on the (generically-phrased) pro-life/pro-choice issue. Keep in mind, we are not there to show how knowledgeable we are, but to dialogue toward an understanding of what they probably already know deep down.
    a. It is wrong to take the life of an unborn baby.
    b. Viewing abortion as good, right, or empowering is just self-rationalization.

2. Listening vs. Talking. Often someone becomes convinced of their own flawed reasoning simply by hearing themselves talk through it. We accomplish this best by asking questions.
    a. Ask them to clarify. “Can you explain?” “How so?” “Do you have an example?” “Tell me more.”
    b. Probe deeper into an inconsistency or general statements that include “always” or “never.”
    c. We will tend to say less if we stay focused on one core value and always circle back to it rather than being caught up in a myriad of peripheral arguments. (And it keeps things in proper context. ☺)
3. Appealing to Different Perspectives. Facts sway some; a call for justice sway others. Many just need a tug on the heartstrings and to know someone cares.
    a. *The Mind*. The science of embryology irrefutably demonstrates that a preborn child is alive (growing), human (DNA), and a complete, developing organism (not an organ that’s part of someone else). Our humanity is what gives us inherent value and dignity.
    b. *The Conscience*. All human beings have human rights. We look different as we develop and age, and we experience different levels of dependence throughout our lives. These changes do not determine our worth or alter our humanity. The unborn are no exception.
    c. *The Heart*. Both mom and baby, regardless of the circumstances, deserve love, compassion, and support, before, during, and after pregnancy, whether it be education, support, or healing. Thousands of pregnancy centers and homes across the country can’t be wrong!

Partnering with You for Life!

Linda Verhulst, MRL-WR