C.A.L.V.A.R.Y.
A Life-Affirming Approach

Sometimes it's easy to be a Gospel-motivated voice For Life. You simply wait for God to open a door, and then you walk right through. But sometimes God opens doors to paths we'd rather not travel, paths with life issues we weren't expecting, life issues we're sure we're really not ready for. . . .

Like hearing a close friend has terminal cancer. Or discovering a child has been diagnosed with a life-altering disability. Or sitting next to a woman on a plane who looks you straight in the eye and says, "I used to have a niece, but now I have a nephew. And my other nephew started saying he was a girl when he was three, so he transitioned early."

It's tempting to jump off the path, to just shut your eyes and hide from the issues. Weighed down by sin and death and brokenness in a fallen world, life issues can be heavy, and responding to them with a Gospel-motivated voice often means saying things that are both counter-cultural and unpopular. Yet ...

"God gave us a spirit not of fear, but of power and love and self-control" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Yes, God's Word is pretty clear: We're called to speak the truth in love so that we might win our neighbor, and in so doing, bring him to Jesus.

As you seek to be a Gospel-motivated voice, here's an acronym that might come in handy as you engage in conversations about life. It's based on the word **CALVARY**. Each letter stands for a step you can take to uphold life.

Connect – Life issues are easiest to address when we connect to the person experiencing the life issue. Perhaps this connection is new—like sitting next to someone for a two-hour flight—or perhaps a lifelong friendship exists. Either way, connections are best built on kindness, graciousness, humility, and respect.

Ask – It's okay—good even—to ask about a person's views on an issue, how he or she is responding to or experiencing this life issue, or how this issue has affected his or her life. It's important to understand a person's experiences as well as the reason behind his or her views.

Listen – After asking a question, listen to the answer. Really listen. What is motivating his or her response? What has shaped his or her view? Is the individual motivated by feelings or logic?

Verify – Make sure those listening skills are sharp! Rephrase what you heard and say it back to the person you're speaking to. Be sure your perception of his or her reasoning is correct.

Affirm – Agree where you can. Admit that it would be difficult for a woman to raise a child on her own. Affirm that experiencing a terminal diagnosis will mean you need others to care for you. Express empathy for the individual struggling with gender confusion and brokenness.

Respond – Here's where all of your work to become educated on life issues comes into play. Use this opportunity to provide a life-affirming alternative to address the life issue at hand. This is where your Gospel-motivated voice shines for life!

Yoke – Like two oxen helping to bear the other's burden, your conversation and response should help ease the burden of the individual you're engaging in conversation. How can you help shoulder his or her burden? How can you help affirm his or her life into the future?

Through our vocations, both permanent and temporary, Christians are gifted opportunities to share the Gospel-motivated message that every life is valuable, and in so doing, carry the light of Christ into dark places filled with sin and death....

It's true, this work won't always be easy; there may be times when we wonder about the path God has placed us on. But we can be confident that we aren't traveling alone. Christ goes with us, and His grace is sufficient. Always.

"Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love" (Ephesians 4:15-16).

There are lots of other ways to have for-life conversations; check out the Y4Life brochure *Charitable Conversations: 8 Tips for Redirecting a Hostile Discussion* to discover other great approaches. (Find it at y4life.org/resources/education-resources).

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for calling me to share Your love for life through easy and challenging conversations.
Please make my speech kind and Gospel-focused to those I encounter. Lead me to compassionate and respectful conversations where my words reflect Your grace and mercy-filled love and forgiveness.
Please provide me with the strength and joy necessary to be a Gospel-motivated voice for life.
Amen.