

“The town finally built a playground.”

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“Pro-Children”

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Years ago as a rookie pastor, I received a phone call from some concerned church members. It was 8 in the morning. They wanted me to know that two children, aged 7 and 5, were riding their big wheels back and forth across the main road. Several times cars just missed them. Earlier that week I had been told about young children who had ridden around town unsupervised, so my members figured that I knew who these little children were. I did. I could have asked my members why didn't they do something about these kids instead of passing the buck to me. No coffee, eight o'clock in the morning -- I was ready to call Child Welfare and report neglect and abuse.

Full of indignation, I found the children, herded them off the road, escorted them home. Fully finger-wagging indignant, I was ready to chastise and correct the mother. .

The mother rushed out and hugged them. Inside the house, an infant was crying. Mom was embarrassed, flustered, at her wit's end. It was all out of control and she just couldn't cope. She tried to keep them in the yard but they just won't stay. She cried real tears, tired tears, no crocodile tears. Where do the children play? The town finally built a playground.

God bless those who are authentically pro-life. They say they're dedicated about birth. Okay. Are they equally pro-life once baby arrives? Are they pro-life enough to seek to eradicate childhood poverty and the toxic stress such an environment can produce? Are they equally pro-life when it comes to gun violence and insuring gun safety? Are they equally pro-life about loving kids enough to mitigate ruining the environment they will inherit? Are they pro-life enough to ferociously defend girls raped by strangers or family members and commit to holding their hands through the forced months of this confusing and unwanted pregnancy? Are they pro-life enough to model to our children what it means to be a responsible grown-up? Are they pro-life enough to urge condescending men to stop being such sanctimonious, cruel, and anti-constitutional Pharisees who use women for their authoritarian ambitions (the ancient Greek play “Lysistrata” might recommend a persuasive strategy to get men's attentions about what the majority of women feel and think). Are they passionate enough about being pro-life to advocate for life-saving vaccines as well as to support their cause by increasing Family Planning funding for accessible health care, breast exams, Pap smears, STD testing, and birth control (such as what Planned Parenthood does effectively and economically)? Just wondering. Or does pro-life stop at the ballot box? Does pro-life stop at regulating wombs?

A wise nurse once described how so many women came to her family health clinic and shared with her how they wrestle with the hurts, the mistakes, the choices they have made. Some do find comfort when she tries to remind them that it's likely they did what they thought best at the time. It often is a matter of forgiving ourselves and trying to make better choices. It isn't as if we choose to do wrong or harm. But we do -- confused, desperate, sad, lonely, hurt as we ourselves are. So many of her patients simply try to do their best given a lot of lousy options.

A chaplain and a middle school teacher both recently mentioned how worried and frustrated they are about the children for whom they care. Because of mandatory mask use, the teacher's school district

has been able to resume classroom instruction. The seventh grade students, however, are struggling, which means the teachers are struggling. Screen time to real time. The teachers talk about how can they recover those lost years of both educational content and maturity. Several weeks into the school year and they've spent most of their classroom time coaching social skills, teaching how to treat others with respect, dealing with the kids' anxieties, helping students learn patience, how to sit still, how to listen, how to not demand attention, how to redirect their acting out impulses. The teacher suggested her students simply are barometers of how we adults behave.

The chaplain grieved over how lonely, depressed, despairing, desperate, and isolated his sick children feel. They are more fearful than he's ever experienced.

I like being pro-life. I just wish we were.

It's curious how many churches complain about children not coming to church these days. They seem to have forgotten to ask: Are we going to them?