

Reflections on **SIDEWALK MINISTRY**

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It is a Thursday morning, the time I spend in sidewalk ministry at the abortion clinic in the town I serve. This is not just any abortion clinic. It has existed since 1974. It does full-term abortions. Because it's not associated with Planned Parenthood and is located in Granite City, it "flies under the radar" and attracts clients from many states. Some days it's "very busy."

As I drive toward the clinic, I get the first clue of what the day will be like. I immediately have a sense of the activities and the tension. But no matter what I find, there is always a pall of gloom and darkness and death over the facility. You can feel it.

My first observations also tell me how

many will be there that day — not just the women, but also those in sidewalk ministry. I can also see what kind of conversations are taking place. Each day at the clinic takes on its own personality.

There are many constants at the clinic. Each lady coming there is troubled and frightened. You can see it in their eyes. Each lady is confused and just wants answers and for this to be over. You can see it in their body language.

Sometimes we begin by asking the ladies how they are doing. The answer is usually "OK." But I was once solemnly and reflectively reminded by a fellow sidewalk ministry volunteer, "Pastor, no one who comes here is OK." As we talk with them, we learn that their problems are usually many and significant —

sometimes substance abuse, sometimes spousal abuse, sometimes financial difficulty. And sometimes all of the above. And somehow, they have rationalized in their minds that this abortion clinic will solve all those problems.

We want to offer them help as needed. Those whom I work with have prepared 14 pages of resources that provide help in all areas. An interesting fact is that pregnancy resource centers outnumber abortion clinics four to one, yet abortion clinics get the publicity. I guess that is how it is in a broken, sinful world.

The ladies who will listen during our conversations turn to God. If they will continue to listen, they find the peace, comfort and strength that they need, that only He can provide. An interesting fact for me is that when I am given the opportunity to pray with someone, in every case I have seen a change take place in them.

Continued on next page



Sidewalk ministry at an abortion clinic perhaps is not for everyone. But I will tell you that the ministry there can relate to everything we do. We are all hurting and need help. We need to build relationships. We need to share Christ. And it is the Holy Spirit who saves lives. At an abortion clinic, it is the saving of the precious gift from God in the womb. And that child is so much more than “a mistake.” But it also can be the saving of the mother and the significant other. I have seen it happen.

And I have seen many contribute to this saving work in many ways, just like in the church. God uses each of us in different ways to save lives. At the clinic, it may be the sidewalk advocates. It may be the woman who volunteers her time and converted motorhome to provide free ultrasound tests. And it may be the women from our congregations who provide care kits — that include Scripture — to give to the ladies.

What a beautiful thing it is to see all God’s people work together to proclaim His name and save lives. What a beautiful thing it is to see all those who provide sidewalk ministry be led and strengthened and grow in the Holy Spirit. Prayer and presence is great and it really makes a difference. I can show you the statistics. But I have also seen sidewalk ministry volunteers grow in being able to share Christ and offer hope and life. The Holy Spirit works in all of us.

On the sidewalk, we care for those going in and those coming out of the clinic. We care for the woman and we care for the man. Is that not the way it is in ministry?

I invite you to be involved in sidewalk ministry. It is extremely rewarding, not just at a clinic, but any sidewalk. It’s about relationships, helping others and sharing Christ. There is no greater reward seen than when the Holy Spirit

saves another life through the sacrifice Jesus made for us all. There is nothing more beautiful than when a death is turned to life on the sidewalk. There is no greater reward than when life and light shine through gloom, darkness and death. You can feel it.

Maybe one day you will have the joy and privilege of seeing a child whom you helped save laughing, running and playing. Some of the sidewalk advocates have had that experience, along with the mother thanking them. You may also have an even greater privilege of seeing that child at the baptismal font entering into the kingdom of God, a life saved for all eternity. The rewards of sidewalk ministry are great.



O Lord, lead us, guide us
and use us as You desire
on all our sidewalks.
Amen.

Save the Date



2022 LENTEN PRAYER VIGIL

SATURDAY, MARCH 26 AT 10 AM

Planned Parenthood | Fairview Heights, Illinois

MORE INFORMATION COMING SOON!

QUESTIONS? Email us at sidlcmslife@gmail.com