A Lonely Vigil

It’s Thursday and you are meeting Jeremy for your regular weekly lunch. Usually conversation is lighthearted. Jeremy is always full of ideas etc. that both of you have been interested in. However, on this morning, your Christian friend is more dispirited than you have ever seen him in the fifteen years of your friendship.

It has been a blustery, cold day. Jeremy had spent two hours in his pro-life vigil in front of a clinic that regularly performs abortions. A typical day found him slowly walking back and forth holding a “Pray to End Abortion” sign. You know that his emotion typically range from a quiet satisfaction based on his vigil outside of this local clinic to despair as he reflects on most often being the only one there. This is the third year that Jeremy has maintained the vigil. You can see that this activity has been taking a toll on him both physically and psychologically.

Jeremy has a hard time rationalizing that he was doing any good. He became involved in the pro-life movement because he feels it is consistent with Jesus Christ’s call for us to pray, fast and help those in need. Beyond that, the issue of taking a life seems so straight forward to him. However, during the three years of his involvement, the number of those entering the clinic has not gone down. In fact, society appears to becoming tolerant. The public image of demonstrations against abortion has become that of militant groups aggressively confronting those approaching the facility. There has never been a person who has told him that he made a difference in a decision to not have an abortion. While most passersby ignore him, he gets typically negative calls from passing cars like: “Get a job!” “Go home!” or worse.

As he proceeds to unload his disappointment Jeremy tells you that he quietly prays “Why am I here Lord?”

Even his church elected to not participate. He manned a booth at the church for several consecutive Sundays during the church services as well as announcing the pro-life prayer program in the adult ministries’ on Sunday mornings. Given the large size of the church, he is surprised that few even ask about the effort.

Furthermore, in response to his proposal that the church get actively involved, the pastors had informed him that the church will not formally participate. Several reasons were given. A formal participation would place many of the congregation in an uncomfortable position. Some feel that such a stance would mean that they object to all the acceptable services performed by the clinic in addition to abortions. Others are convinced that such vigils are not effective. Finally, there was concern about where to stop. By taking such a stand against abortion, how would the
church leadership respond to those members with concerns about pornography, homosexuality, same-gender marriage?

After pausing for a few moments, Jeremy asks you, “How do I know if this is where God wants me? There doesn’t seem to be any interest from other believers and I have no idea what impact I am having for the Lord. I would really appreciate your Biblical insight. No one in the church has formally asked me to stop my vigil. Despite no such directive, I am wondering whether I should stop for the reasons I have already mentioned. Given the negative image in society of what I am doing, is my asking others to pray to end abortions actually getting in the way of my church’s efforts to spread the Gospel? In all honesty, I have prayed myself out on this and really need some help.”

You respond, “Thanks for putting your trust in me. This is a tough set of questions. I agree with your conviction on this issue. However, you bring up a good point when you worry that your limited endeavor may be hurting the overall church goals of bringing the lost to Christ. Give me a few days. I really need time to examine the Bible to see how such a conflict should be addressed.”
My Scriptural Research:

Group Scriptural Research:

Decisions / Recommendations:

Primary Scriptural References: