

Good morning!

Scripture this morning is from Psalms 128 versus 3 and 4

**Your wife will be like a healthy vine producing plenty of fruit, a spring of life in your home.**

**Your children will be like young olive shoots;  
you will watch them bud and bloom around your table.**

**Such are the blessings the Eternal lavishes on those who stand in awe of Him!**

Psalms 128: 3-4 (The Voice Bible)



*We Rejoice!*

*Art and Ronda King, along  
with our children*

*Elissa*

*Brenden*

*Bethani*

*Sierra*

*Hannah*

*Taylor*

*Caleb*

*Theron and*

*Willa*

*Joyfully announce the  
birth of **Rylee***

My wife Ronda and I have welcomed twelve children into our family. Three by adoption and nine by birth.

22 years ago, Ronda and I sent out our last birth announcement which you see here. On the back of this announcement, we included something from a book written in 1842 titled "Stepping Heavenward" by Elizabeth Prentiss.

Here are her words, 19<sup>th</sup> century writing style – timeless wisdom:

**“... A friend says I shall now have one mouth the more to fill, and two feet the more to shoe; more disturbed nights, more laborious days, and less leisure for visiting, reading, music, and drawing.**

**Well! this is one side of the story, to be sure, but I look at the other. Here is a sweet, fragrant mouth to kiss; here are two more feet to make music with their pattering about my nursery. Here is a soul to train for God, and the body in which it dwells is worthy all it will cost... Yes, my precious baby, you are welcome to your mother's heart, welcome to her time, her strength, her health, her tenderest cares, to her life-long prayers! Oh, how rich I am, how truly, how wondrously blest!”**

**Elizabeth Prentiss, 1842**

Our children have brought us so much joy — but also some deep heartache. We have lost two of our twelve children: our second daughter died just before her first birthday in 1986, and our 19-year-old son in 2017.

My story today starts with our children and things I've learned in my years of parenting.

First, what I've learned about the joy and the work of parenting

Next, the value of having brothers and sisters.

And then, the value of marriage for a happy life.

Finally, how we can swim against the cultural tide on marriage and children. How we can celebrate children, and cheer for marriage



Ronda and I were married in 1979. That was a time when full-page ads in the New York Times urged people not to have children.

After our first few children were born, we faced intense social pressure, even from church friends and family, to stop.

But we felt called to continue. We kept asking ourselves:

“What thing in this world has God called us to do that is more important than these children?”

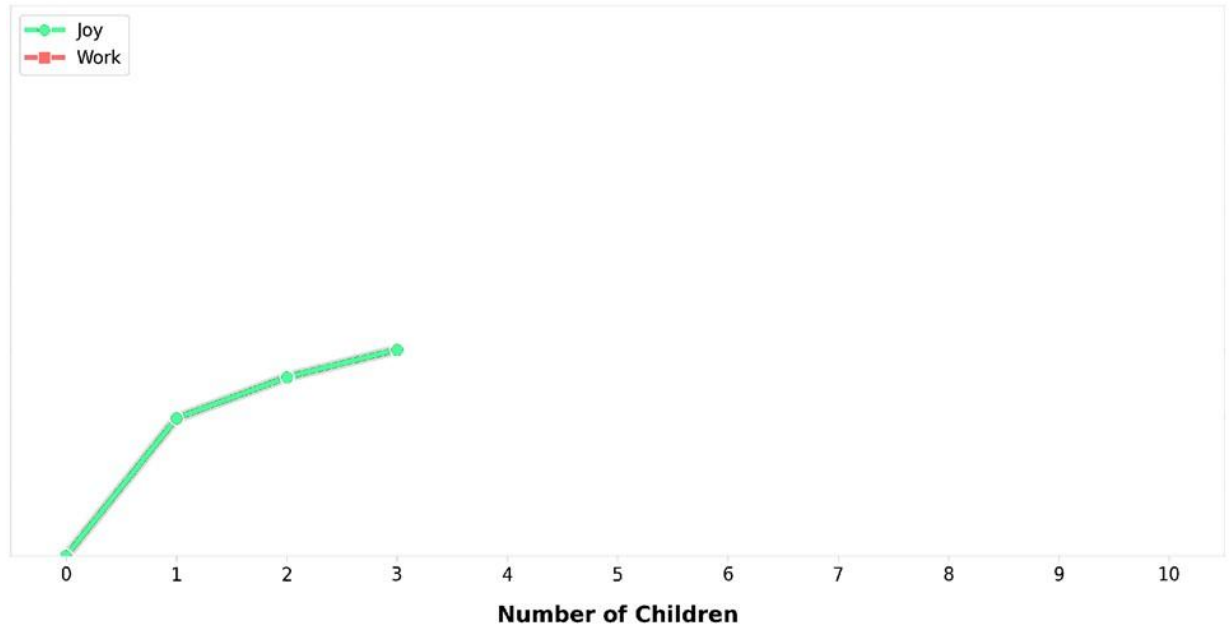
We were discovering that **children are far more fun and less work than expected, and the best gift you can give your child is a sibling.**

So we kept welcoming children. Each one has been a great joy to us and to their brothers and sisters.

Sometimes new friends would ask me, "...and what does your wife do?" and I would answer, "No, you don't understand. I go to an office and fiddle around with computers all day. **My Wife Works.**"

So what about the work? Just how much work was involved in raising these children? I'm an engineer, so I'll talk about this with a graph.

## The Joy and Work of Children

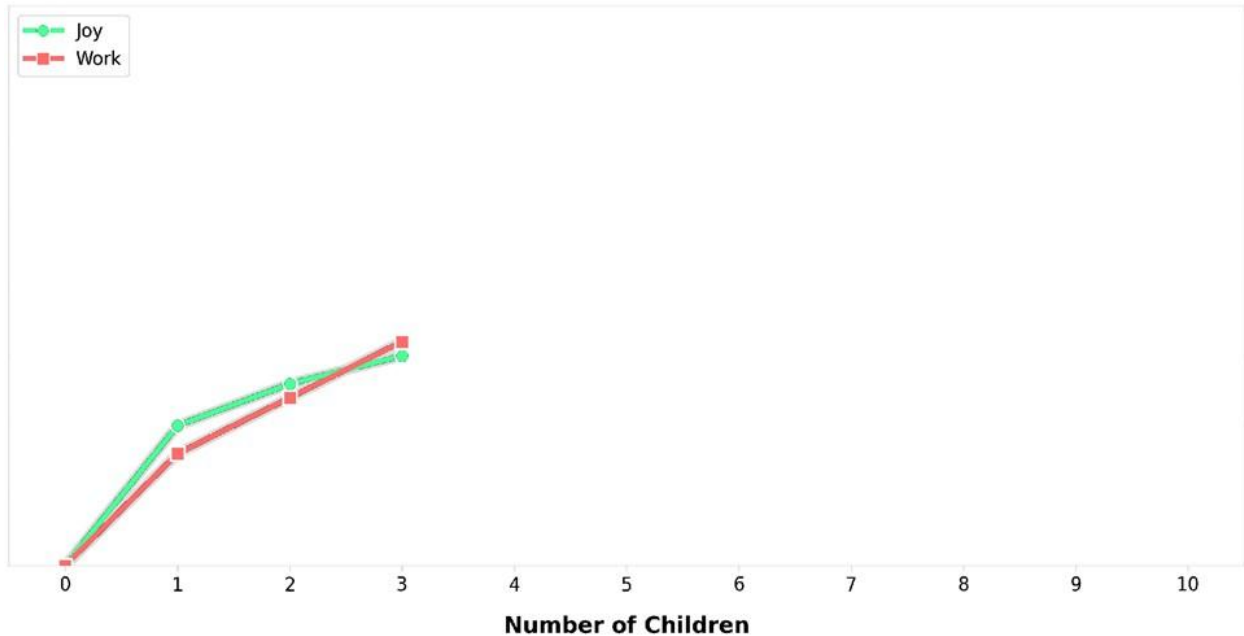


My nerdy graph titled “The Joy and the Work of Children.”

Here is the Joy line for our first three children.

It leaps up at the thrilling birth of our first child, and it keeps growing

## The Joy and Work of Children



Now we add the Work line for the first three children.

At this point things are not looking so good.

The work line climbs with the joy line, and somewhere around three or four children the work feels like it is exceeding the joy.

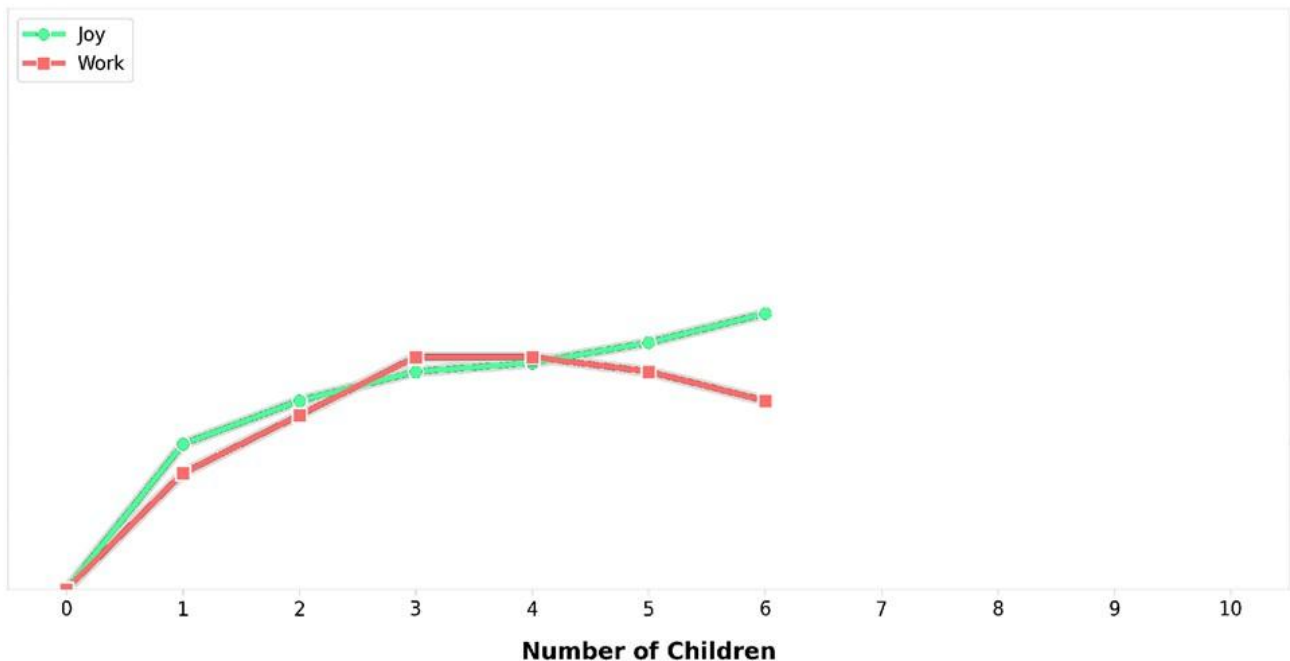
This is where many parents call it quits.

As a parent it seems obvious - that red line will keep going UP... into IMPOSSIBLE territory.

And at three children, the work seems CLOSE to impossible.

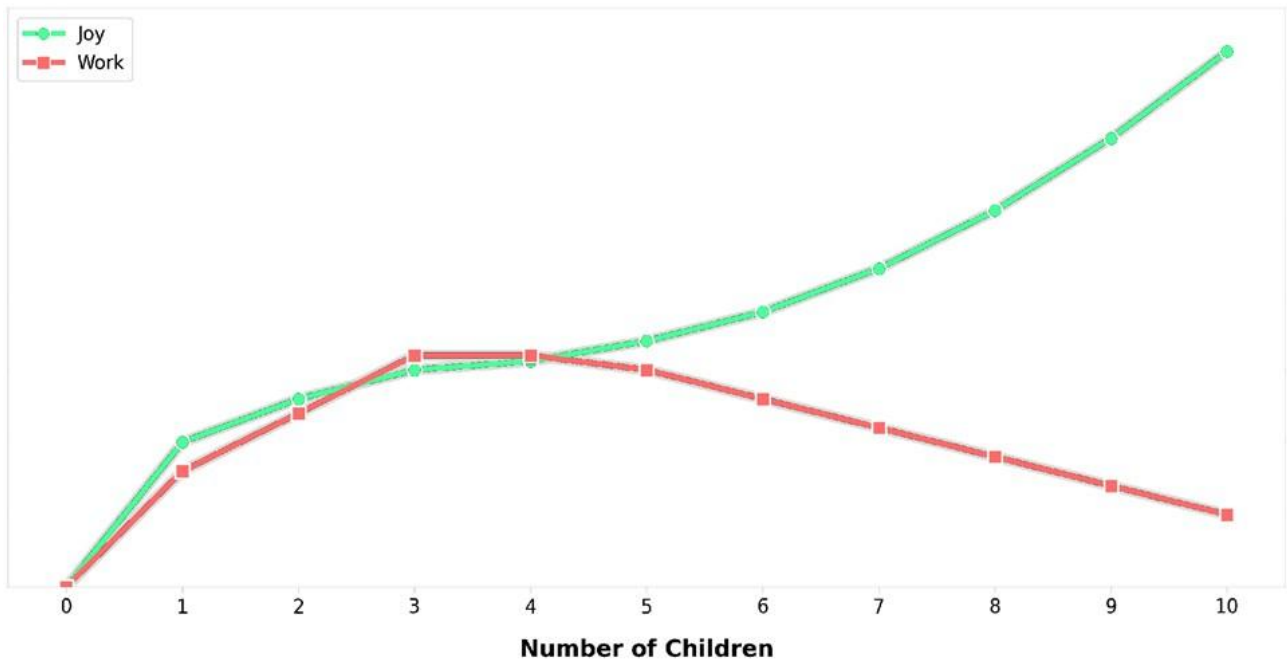
Any of you with three children know what I'm talking about.

## The Joy and Work of Children



But somewhere around three or four children, **a miracle happens.** We discovered that every new baby adds more joy, but the workload flattens and actually starts to fall.

## The Joy and Work of Children



And the miracle gets better!

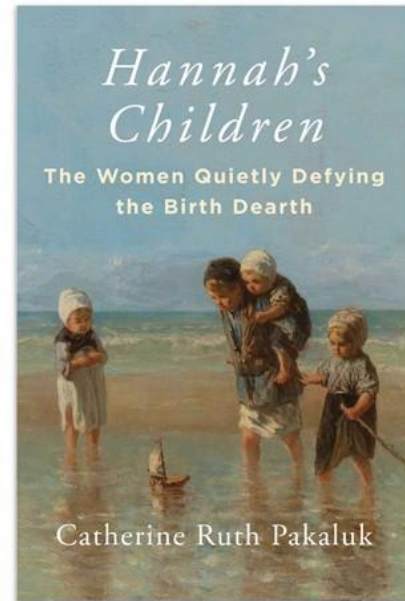
Each additional child brings more joy and the total workload trends down.

And the Joy line - More confidence - less anxiety - more enjoyment of the boatloads of simple fun every child brings.

But if the work line is going down, doesn't that mean that the children out on the right side of this chart are being neglected? Are the poor waifs lost in the crowd?

And also - This chart is very parent-centric. It's looking at things from the parent's perspective. But what about looking from the child's perspective? What is the value of additional children for the children already born? We should think about their well-being from their angle, not just our own.

I want to show you that having another child is absolutely the BEST GIFT you can give your child.



Catherine Pa-KA-look wrote an essay that was published just a few weeks ago the New York Times titled “Life is Better With Siblings.” She is also the author of the 2024 book “Hannah’s Children.

She describes her book this way: “I traveled across America to interview college educated mothers of five or more children to learn what they have learned.”

Her New York Times essay summarizes what she learned about the value of siblings.

The consensus belief of the women she interviewed is that raising children of good character is easier with more children.

Siblings create a “society” where virtues form naturally from everyday life—sharing space, resolving conflicts, and taking responsibility for one another. These are things parents can never create on their own no matter how much work or how much money spent.

What are the Benefits of siblings to each other? Here are three:

**1 Emotional ballast:**

Younger siblings provide simple affection and a reason to stay grounded when teenage peer life goes turbulent.

Mothers described older children whose depression or anxiety fell away once there was a new baby to care for and love.

**2 Gender Understanding:**

Boys with sisters learn to treat girls with respect, as they consider how they would like their own sisters to be treated.

Girls with brothers learn how boys are wired and how the two genders make life so much more interesting and fun.

**3 (Most Important) Enduring deep friendship:**

Your brothers and sisters usually become some of your closest life-long friends. Long after Mom and Dad are gone, your brothers and sisters have your back.

Catherine Pa-KA-look concludes: **“... if I could suggest one thing, it would be for parents to reconsider being done. Wait a year before doing anything permanent. Wait two. The hardest years of parenting, when your children are very small, are the worst time to decide what size family you want. The rewards reveal themselves later.”**

Now I'd like to switch from children to what comes before them, and that's marriage.

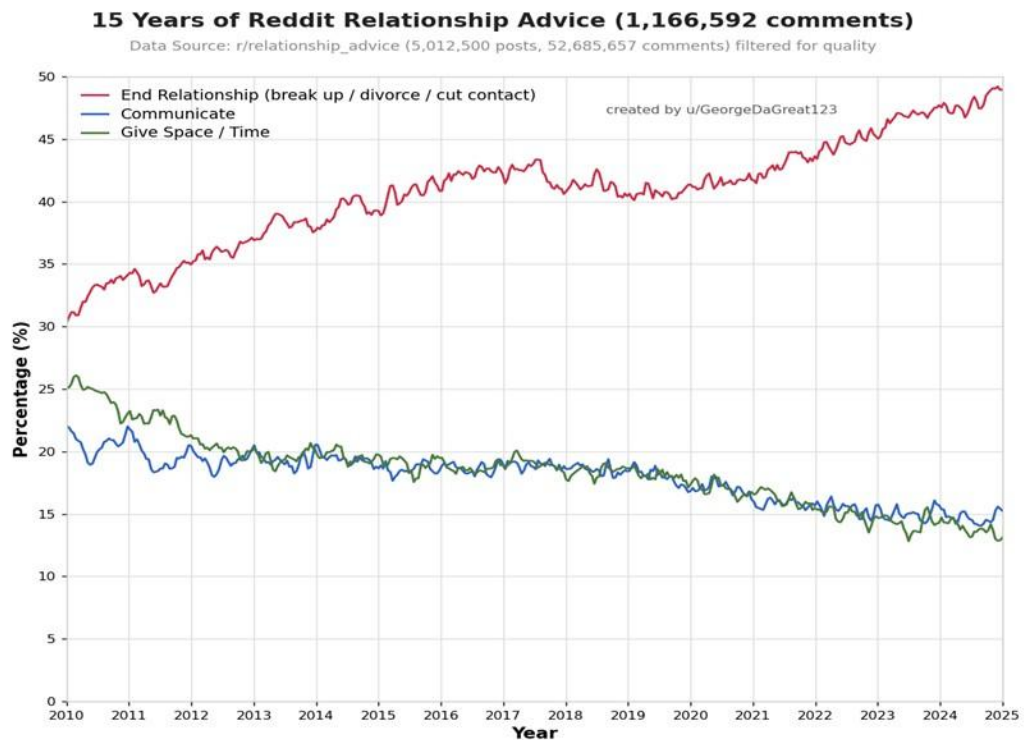
Robert Waldinger was the Director a famous Harvard study that ran over a full lifetime. He said this:

**“The people who were the most satisfied in their relationships at age 50 were the healthiest at age 80.”**

Marital satisfaction in midlife is the strongest long-term predictor of both happiness and physical health in old age—stronger than anything else including obesity, cholesterol, smoking, social class, IQ, or genes.

Marriage is proven to be a key to lifetime happiness. Now let's look at some indicators for how marriage is doing in our culture.

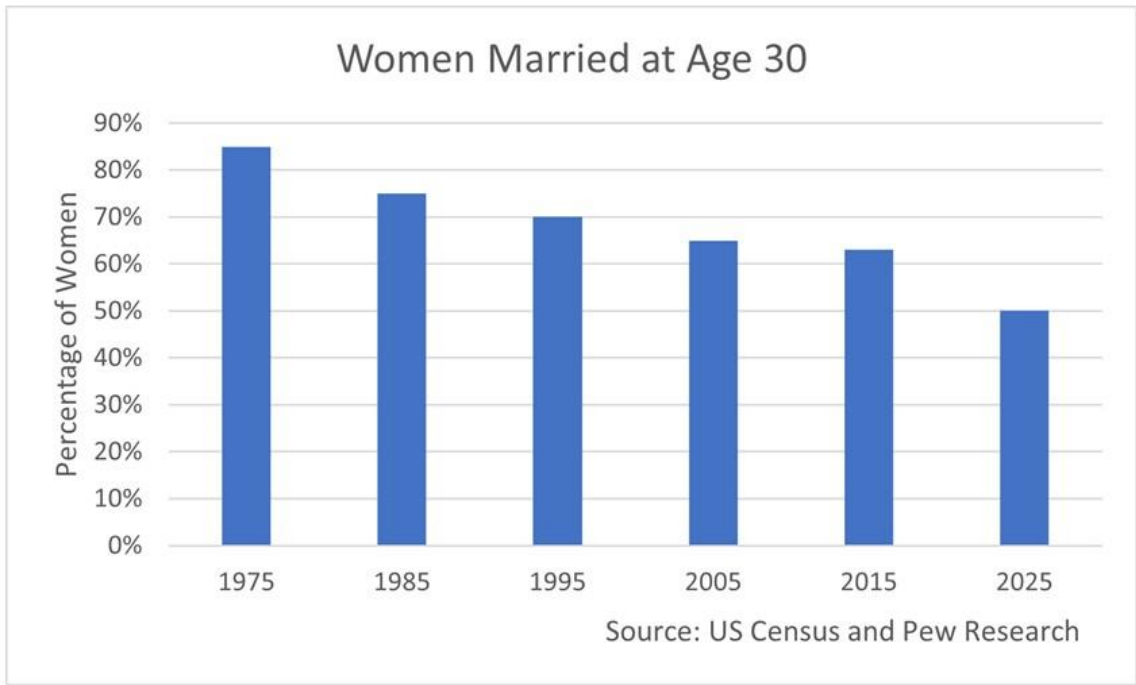
I've got three charts to show you.



Reddit is a popular online discussion site. This chart shows Relationship Advice from 2010 to 2025, distilled from over a million comments.

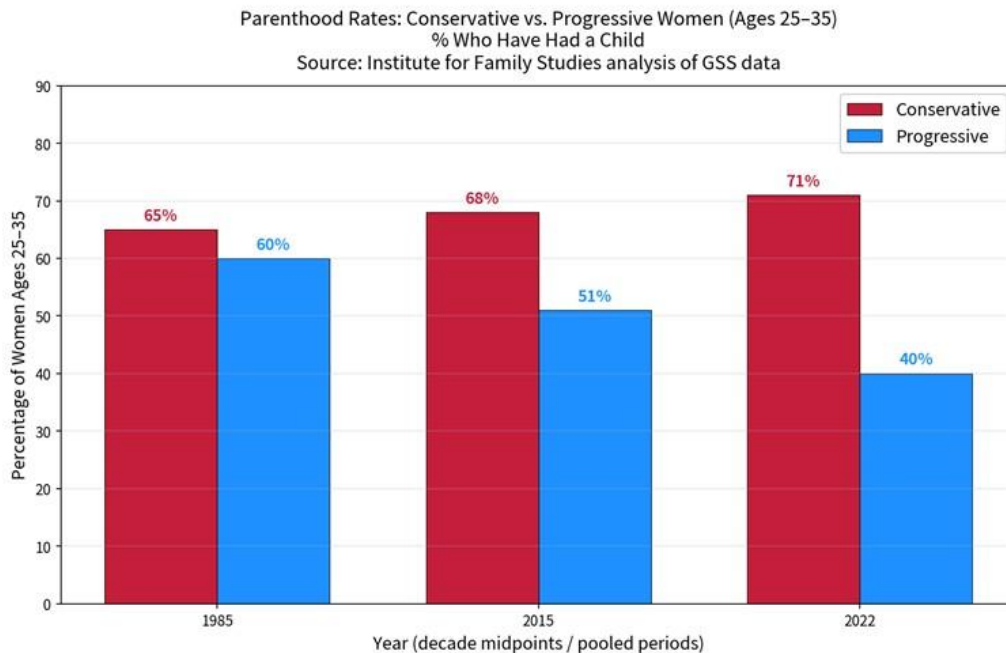
The red line is advice to “break up / divorce / cut contact.” The blue line is advice to work on communication. The green line is advice to give space or give time.

Over the last fifteen years, relationship advice has shifted from constructive and redemptive to destructive and vengeful.



My second chart shows the percentage of women married at age 30 over the last fifty years. It has fallen from 85% to 50%.

Buried in these numbers are countless sad stories of people who very much want a life partner and children, but life just seems to conspire against them. My message to you, if you are that person is not pity, not condemnation, but compassion and encouragement.

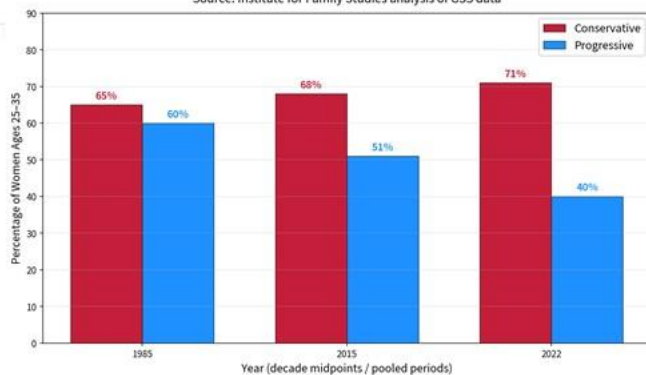
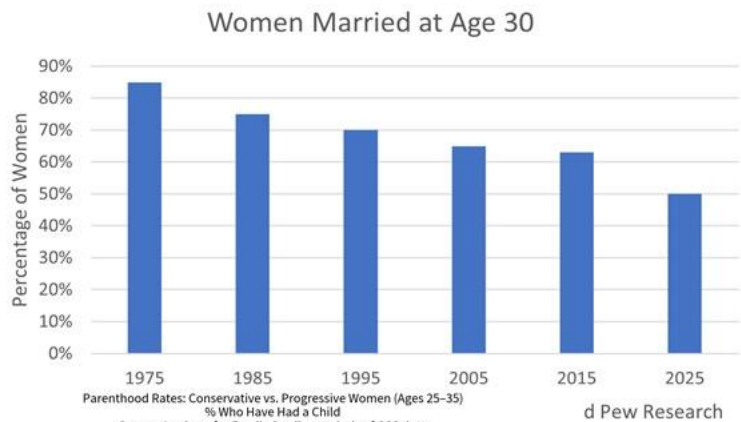
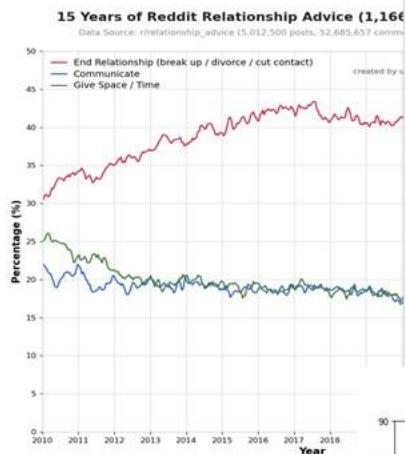


And my last chart shows the percentage of women between the ages of 25 and 35 who have had at least one child. Red bars are conservatives and blue bars are progressives. In 1985 having children wasn't influenced by political views but now the influence is huge.

I don't understand why this happened, and why it happened so quickly and so hurtfully to the people involved, but I do have a plea:

If you are a progressive — be in the group who are still choosing marriage and children. The blue bars represent millions of progressives who still celebrate children. Be one of **them**.

If you are a conservative — stop trying to make children some kind of right-coded virtue signal. Celebrating children is about universal human flourishing. It belongs to people in all political tribes.



These three charts show our surrounding culture sending you these messages:

Eliminate toxic people from your life.

Find a reason to say no to marriage.

Only have children after you've completed a long list of other goals — if ever.

Writer Anthony **Knobbe** says:

**“I had my first child at 35. I wish it was 25, then I would have 10 more years with my kids before I die.”**

If you intend to have children, but you don't intend to have them just yet, you are not banking extra years of success, you are subtracting years from the time you will share the world with your children and grandchildren.

Who is this guy bringing you these bad-news charts and gloomy talk? He's old. I just turned 70, and it is very easy to fall into the classic old-person vibe: "Kids these days!" As I get older, I transition from active participant to passive spectator, and that can bring on pessimism. It is much easier to see problems and not imagine solutions.

So I want to make a mindful effort to look for hope — to look for the possibility that the next generation will build a bright future. I don't have answers to fix those charts, but I believe many young people are working out solutions right now. I want to look for those solutions and cheer on those people.

I'm almost to the end of my story.

Ronda has walked all the seasons of life with me. We have fallen more and more, deeper and deeper in love. Wow is all I can say.

My marriage gives me someone with whom to build a life.

My story of family is not a story without cost. Ronda and I have known hard work. We've felt deep pain when losing two children. But at seventy I can say that children are not a burden that steals life from me. They are one of God's great ways of blessing me.

Children bring more joy than work and the best gift you can give a child is another sibling.

Yet our culture often teaches the opposite: cut people off, delay or avoid marriage, and treat children as optional or even burdensome.

Those charts are real. The trends are real. But trends are not destiny.

The blessings of Psalm 128 are still offered. A healthy vine. Young olive shoots around the table. Those blessings belong to anyone willing to receive them with open hands and an open heart.



Here's a photo of our 11 grandchildren, taken last month.

And here's my lovely wife Ronda with our 12th grandchild, born last week.

Her name is June.

The prophet Zechariah paints a picture of Jerusalem restored and blessed by God. This is what it looks like:

**“Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each of them with cane in hand because of their age. The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing.”**

Zecharia 8:4-5 (NIV)

This verse reminds me of what happened last Sabbath afternoon at our church campout. After the baptism all us old folks pulled up our lawn chairs along the edge of the river. We watched the children splashing and playing. We watched for hours in the sunshine. Like the blessed people of Jerusalem, we never got tired of watching the children have fun.

That is what a successful church looks like — the adults celebrating and welcoming the coming generation. That’s the church I want to be part of and help build, let’s do it together.

Celebrate children. Cheer for marriage.

Find ways to put your shoe leather into helping young families.

Thank you



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# Benediction:

Thank you, Lord God for the blessings of Love and Children.

I'd like to make a special request to you.

Please - give us the problem – of so many children in this church that we will be forced to expand the children's wing.

We are looking forward your blessings.

Thank you, Lord.

Amen