

Needs of Adopted/Foster Children

Article One of Three: God's Care for the Fatherless

James 1:27, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Throughout the Bible, God is clear that He loves and cares for the orphaned, oppressed, and needy. As members of the body of Christ, we are called to be God's "hands and feet" in this world by doing His work. In this cruel world, He calls us to oppose evil and be a force for good. In Isaiah 1:17, God calls us to "Learn to do well; seek judgment [justice], relieve the oppressed, judge [defend] the fatherless, plead for the widow." There are many opportunities in the Church and the community to carry out the calling of Isaiah 1:17. Some may feel led by God to open their homes to foster children (often temporary placements) and others may feel led to adopt a child. Our desire in this series of articles is to highlight some of the needs of foster and adopted children. This first article is intended to understand God's heart for the fatherless. It is also intended to encourage the body of Christ to consider how God would call them to serve the fatherless.

Children were designed to thrive under the care of Godly parents who provide an environment of love, safety, security, and truth. Consider the description Psalm 68:5-6 gives us of God, "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, is God in his holy habitation. God setteth the solitary in families: he bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwell in a dry land." It is clear that God's heart is toward those in need and in particular the fatherless. Who better to step in and serve the fatherless than those who are to be "conformed to the image of his Son." While many may never be called to become foster or adoptive parents, it is important to acknowledge God's heart toward children in need. It is also important to consider what the body of Christ's role is in serving foster children and children awaiting adoption. To help put this need into perspective, 424,000 children were in the United States foster care system in 2009 and 115,000 of those children were waiting for adoptive families. Worldwide there are estimated to be 16 million orphaned (not having a mother or a father) children.

The need for Godly men and women to stand in the gap for the fatherless is evident. It is very important that every believer prayerfully consider what the Lord desires of them. Becoming a foster or adoptive parent is not what God has called all of us to be and those who have been called to such a task should prayerfully entreat the Lord for direction. Luke 14:28 says, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have [sufficient] to finish [it]?" The principle in this verse can be applied to considering foster care or adoption. Those who are called into this ministry will experience challenges and in many cases these challenges will be beyond what were expected. To deny such a fact is not helpful or beneficial for parents or children alike. This reality is also why it is essential to consider the truth expressed in Psalm 127:1, "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh [but] in vain." God blesses those who do the work God calls them to. This does not mean it will be easy or that it will result in the outcome envisioned by parents. Instead, it means that God is faithful and good regardless of outcomes. He desires

obedience from His people rather than an “I will do this for you God if it goes well or turns out like I want” attitude.

So what is the “Body’s” role in serving foster and adoptive children? We can clearly see that God loves the fatherless and desires to provide for their needs. It should likewise be the heart of all Christians to love and care for the fatherless (Exodus 22:22-23; “Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry;”). Likewise every believer ought to be taking an active role in serving those in need. The Word of God clearly expressed God’s desire for His people to serve and provide for the needs of others. I Corinthians 12 tells us that God has given different gifts within the body and that every gift in the body is important. Your God-given gifts will shape how you should serve foster children and adoptive children. This does not elevate or diminish the role God desires to have you step into. Instead it shows the importance of knowing your gifts and using them in a way that is pleasing to God. May God move your heart to become more in-line with His heart toward the fatherless. This may mean that you will pray, open your home, express kindness, extend a smile, become involved in a ministry that serves children, or step into another role the Lord would have for you in serving the fatherless.

As the Church becomes more actively involved in foster care and adoption, may God’s heart be pleased as He sees His children serve the fatherless. Being a parent is a wonderful blessing and gift from the Lord. Yet, being a parent is not the ultimate goal. Ultimately, the goal of all parenting, with biological, foster, or adopted children, is to help them to know Jesus Christ. Through Christ we are able to experience the ultimate adoption into the family of God (Romans 8:14-15, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”).

Next month, the second article in this series of 3 articles will focus on the specific needs of foster children.