

# Foster Care in the Church: Need to Know

*As families foster and adopt, it is salient for the church, whether a pastor, church member, or volunteer, to rally alongside those respective families and seek to understand their story, victories, and hardships as we hope for restoration. Though not exhaustive, this resource was created with the help of our children's ministers Becca Harris and Shannon Schulze.*

## For the Pastor



- Create a church culture that encourages humility and vulnerability, in which families who are fostering and/or who have adopted don't feel obligated to put up a perfect facade, but can come to the church as a place of refuge. Instead, view the family's brokenness as no greater than you would any member of the church body and offer to step into their brokenness.
- Remind the general body about grace and fighting against any preconceived notions or judgments.
  - Seek to understand and not to judge. (i.e. with challenging behaviors, or lower capacity for parents to engage)
  - Ask self and church to question: How do I care about this person/family/child in a way that seeks to understand without imposing my own preconceived notions?
- Seek to gain exposure in order to educate yourself and your church body about foster care and adoption
- **Teach the body to be cautious with their words, but never be shy to speak the truths of the gospel as a form of encouragement, regardless of any previous knowledge about foster care.**
- Take initiative to be an advocate for foster and adoptive families when they are unable, discouraged, or exhausted.
  - **Remind the church of the heart of Jesus--entering into brokenness, encouraging in the midst of that brokenness, and being a part of restoration.**

## For the Church Body



- Respond to church leadership as they seek to create a church culture that is encouraging to families, gain exposure to foster care, and take initiative.
- Continue to be the church to families that are fostering or have adopted outside of Sundays alone by providing physical, social, emotional, and spiritual support, i.e. bringing meals to the family, sending an encourage text weekly, listening to how their family is struggling, and creating a team of prayer warriors for the family.
- Know your church body and those that are fostering and adopting and what their individual needs are.

# For the Volunteer



- **Understand the nuances of how childcare must look different when caring for children who have potentially experienced trauma.**
  - Educate self about trauma and trauma informed care.
  - Provide consistency, structure, and appropriate care for children based on their needs
    - Redirecting instead of panicking, shaming self for behavioral outbreaks, or simply turning to the head volunteer when the circumstance gets difficult
  - Remember the Gospel
    - Humble yourself by meeting these children wherever they are just as Jesus did with you in your brokenness.
  - Focus not on convenience, but on healing, restoration, and care of the soul of the child you are working with
    - Disciple each child individually.
    - Work to make the gospel accessible to all children.
  - Speak with grace and thought to children and parents.
    - Speak in age appropriate language while being sensitive to the trauma they might have experienced, including any trigger words or phrases.
    - Take advantage of teachable moments with other children if helpful or necessary and teach them how to speak with mercy and not with judgment.
    - Be slow to speak and ask for second opinions before giving information to parents about a child's behavior.
    - When communicating with parents, do so with a teachable spirit that asks what you can do to better help that child succeed. Communicate honestly with grace and kindness.
  - Remain humble and teachable, remembering your identity is not in mistakes or "failures" and acknowledging that mistakes are part of the process of growth.