

The Gospel Behind Your "Good Deeds"

We believe that some of the major roles in engaging with the child welfare system can be categorized as preventing, supporting, fostering, sustaining, and remaining. We asked five people, each in one of these roles, the following questions:

1. By what circumstances did you become aware of this role in Foster Care?
2. How would you explain to the city (the outside world) why you serve in this capacity and that this service is also a confession of your faith?

Prevent

Lauren Witt

Kinship Care Placement



1. A few days after Christmas, a close friend called me. She had an 18-year-old cousin who had just given birth to a baby girl and CPS was going to take custody if they could not identify a relative or family friend to take the baby because the mom had tested positive for drugs prior to delivery. The mom could either enroll for a rehab treatment where both her and her baby would go together for 90 days, or choose not to go to rehab and lose custody of her baby. While the mom was trying to decide what she wanted to do, my friend was calling every family member and close friend she had to see if they'd consider taking the little girl in the interim...need[ing] to find a short-term home for a sweet little, brown-eyed girl so that she could potentially avoid being placed into the foster care system only days after being brought into this world.

2. I am a single woman with a full-time job and live in a house with three other women, who also work full time. We weren't exactly set up to bring a newborn home from the hospital on a day's notice. However, these women are also a group of God-fearing believers: women who have a track record of saying "yes" to the hard stuff, not because they're more equipped, but because they believe that God calls us there and that – through Jesus alone – we have all that we need to go there. I sat down with my roommates, and we had a lot of questions – many of which had no answers. But the single most important one we kept coming back to was "Was it worth it?". Regardless of the amount of time, the outcome of the placement, or any of the numerous uncontrollable "What ifs", we decided it was worth it to give this newborn baby a home with us where she could be safe, be taken care of, be held and prayed over, and be shown the love of Jesus – even if only for a day, even if she never remembered, even if she ended up having to be put into the foster system.

Support

Hannah Yeo

Foster Care Babysitter



1. Right before the Thanksgiving holiday during my freshman year of college, my church gathered all small groups through the college department together as a family to celebrate what God had done in and was going to do through our communities. Toward the end of the meal, the college team ushered forward Doug Phillips, the director of Restore Strategies through the For the City Network, to share about God's heart for the marginalized, justice and restoration, His message of reconciliation, and His command for us, as believers, to be for our city. Doug spoke of the growing heartbeat of the Downtown campus: foster care and adoption. He read us statistics about the vast number of children waiting for temporary or forever families to help to rewrite the narrative of abuse, neglect, and trauma they had come to understand as normalcy. Though we were in a stage of life that did not permit fostering, Doug invited us as small groups into considering becoming certified as babysitters to help support and sustain families who were obeying the call to foster. Because of how deeply my heart hurt for these kiddos and because my personal testimony was one of the Lord tangibly helping me understand His fatherhood, there was no question about making the small sacrifice to complete the certification process in order to enter into these families' and children's brokenness and restoration just as Jesus had done for me.

2. To become a certified babysitter through a Child Placement Agency one must go through a rather extensive certification process. It did not make sense to most that I would spend free Saturdays receiving training and spending my own money for fingerprints and TB tests for a few short hours with families I had never met. This is where I got to not only expose so many to the foster care system, a realm many had never considered, the staggering statistics of children in foster care, and the necessity of trauma informed care for this population in particular, but also where I got to explain that God chose sacrifice, intercession, and adoption as the process by which he would redeem and restore me, one of His daughters. And that if His heart is for the fatherless and He calls us to imitate the posture and desires of His heart, it only makes sense that I would also enter into sacrificing my time, energy, and money--small sacrifices compared to His not sparing His own beloved son--to build a relationship with a family and child that has come from a background of sin, shame, and wounds, and fight on their behalf as an advocate for them and their family just as Jesus was for me.

Foster

Hayley Sorenson

Foster/Adoptive Parent



1. We had discussed our family goals before we got married and adoption was always a part of our plan, we just did not know at what point we would pursue it. We have attended the Austin Stone for nearly 10 years and 8-9 years ago, before one of our campuses opened, Matt Carter, the Pastor of Preaching and Vision, was explaining the hoped heart behind the new campus and the non-profit agencies they were going to partner with through office space at the campus. A foster/adoption agency was going to be one of the non-profits. With that, he explained that, at the time, there were 200+ orphans in Austin who were looking for a temporary or forever home, and that our goal as a church was to bring that number to 0. This message spoke to my heart. At the time we were renting a condo with a spare bedroom that stayed empty and I thought, "why couldn't we provide a need to a child who needed a loving home for a short-term or forever placement?" So after some prayer, trainings, a lot of paperwork and stepping out in faith, foster care and adoption became our Plan A for growing our family.

2. When you hear the statistics of children in foster care and what their future could look like without a placement in a safe and loving home, it is staggering. I often hear from so many people that foster care is something they really admire but they could never do, or they say, "I could just never give the child back". I usually have to bite my tongue because I know they do not mean it in a harmful way, but from my perspective, my fragility is nothing compared to the fragility of a child that's been abused, neglected or left vulnerable due to circumstances outside their control. I rely on the Lord to be my strength and to give me my daily bread and it has expounded my faith because I am constantly faced with situations that are overwhelming and feel like more than I can bear, but Jesus gets me through. It has also been a way to share the gospel with others when sharing why we chose to adopt first. People often assume we had fertility struggles and it has been a great way to share that we chose to grow our family this way instead because we have been loved and chosen by the God of this universe so we can boldly love and serve. He adopted us in to His heavenly family, and our earthly adoption of our son is an extension of the love that God has shown us.

Sustain

Ben Law

Foster Parents' Night Out Volunteer



1. My friends and I became aware of the need for respite care while we were going through a sermon series on adoption. It was a very convicting series, but at the time, we were all single, recent graduates who were not in a position to adopt or foster. We started speaking with our church about some sort of date night/parents' night out and ways we could create something for our fostering/adoptive families. As we went further down that road we saw more clearly this need for respite care.

2. I love serving in this capacity because it is a chance to be the Church and to support parents who have taken on this weighty responsibility -- weighty because you are caring for a child but even more weighty because, for the Christian, it is a reflection of what God did for us. We did not know Him or belong to Him, but God still came after us and called us into His family. It is wonderful to see a glimpse of that when you see families taking in these kids, even in the small window of time we have with them during our Foster Parents' Night Out event.

Remain

Alexander Scaro

Mentor to a Youth Who Has Aged Out of Care



1. I saw an opportunity posted on Facebook looking for volunteers to help set kids, coming out of the foster care system, up for success. It was an open invitation to an info session, but I felt deeply that this was something that I needed to get involved with.

2. As I got older and noticed more of the world's brokenness, I started to believe that much of it started in the home. Having come from a home filled with the love of two parents that were very involved with my life, I started to see the advantages that I had. But even still, it was not enough to have great parents or a great home life, I needed to know Jesus and experience His love. This is my sole hope for the youth I have begun to work with--that he will come to know God's love through me; that he will know he has a Father who loves him and that His love is better than anything in this world. One day, the boy I mentor asked me why I even bothered to show up, saying he was hopeless and his life would never get better. My response to him was that God placed me in his life for a reason, even if he did not believe it. At that point in our relationship this youth was somewhat abrasive towards me and he usually did not do anything that I asked him to do. This is where I can say that it is not my own doing but God working through me that I continued to show up, that I continued to pray/plead with Jesus that this child would see a glimmer of our Father's love. And I am grateful to say that on this day, this kiddo did see a glimmer of God's love, even if he didn't recognize it.