

AKB FOSTER/ADOPTION

SERMON

RESOURCE GUIDE



AMERICA'S
KIDS BELONG™

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FOSTER/ADOPTION SERMON RESOURCE GUIDE

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Dear Pastor & Teacher,

I encourage you to preach, teach and speak about foster care and adoption with your congregation. Whether that be on a designated special day or part of a series, plan now to share God's heart for vulnerable children and families.

We need to care about this issue because God cares deeply about it.

Scripture is filled with verses where God commands us to take care of the fatherless, the marginalized, and the oppressed. Psalm 68:5-6a strongly introduces God as "A father to the fatherless and the oppressed" and says, "he sets the lonely in families." If God sees this as a fit title for Himself it should motivate us to find out why and see where the answer leads us.

The gospel is both our motivation and demonstration in foster care.

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you." John 14:18. When we step into broken stories and meet kids where they are in their pain and uncertainty we are demonstrating and living out the very thing Jesus did for us. He pursued us before we were cleaned up, he sacrificed before we were grateful, and loved us right where we were. We are uniquely positioned in foster care to mirror this powerful picture of the gospel to the many watching around us as well. As Pastor Tony Merida has said, "Get off the blogs and get on the blocks."

We need to see foster care as spiritual warfare as much as it is child welfare.

This isn't Mary Poppins dropping in to watch someone else's kids. It is waging war behind enemy lines as "the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." 1 Peter 5:8. Foster care is a spiritual battleground. In some cases, stories of family dysfunction and abuse run deep, affecting multiple generations in a family. The statistics of the 26,000 who annually age out of foster care are horrifying and staggering in terms of pregnancy, homelessness, addiction, and incarceration rates. These kids are hurting. Their biological parents are hurting. This battle needs reinforcements. We can step in and help change the trajectory of an entire family's future by helping a child in foster care see that their family patterns of things like indifference, addictions, and abuse can end.

I hope the following resources will be helpful to you in your preparation.

You Belong,



Pastor Brian Mavis

America's Kids Belong President & Co-Founder

SCRIPTURES

GOD CALLS US TO CARE FOR ORPHANS

Throughout scripture God shows He cares for orphans, and He calls and commands us to care for them as well. Additionally, scripture teaches that we orphaned ourselves from God through our sin. But God has, through great cost to Himself, adopted us back to be His children. The following passages are all the occurrences in the Bible where orphans, the fatherless, or the concept of adoption is explicitly stated.

SCRIPTURES MENTIONING THE FATHERLESS AND ORPHAN

Exodus 22:22–24

Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will be aroused, and I will kill you with the sword; your wives will become widows and your children fatherless.

Deuteronomy 10:18

He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing.

Deuteronomy 14:29

So that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.

Deuteronomy 16:11

And rejoice before the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name--you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, the Levites in your towns, and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows living among you.

Deuteronomy 16:14

Be joyful at your Feast--you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites, the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns.

Deuteronomy 24:17

Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge.

Deuteronomy 24:19–21

When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow. When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow.

Deuteronomy 26:12–13

When you have finished setting aside a tenth of all your produce in the third year, the year of the tithe, you shall give it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. Then say to the LORD your God: "I have removed from my house the sacred portion and have given it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow, according to all you commanded. I have not turned aside from your commands nor have I forgotten any of them.

Deuteronomy 27:19

"Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow." Then all the people shall say, Amen!"

Job 6:27

You would even cast lots for the fatherless and barter away your friend.

Job 22:7–11

You gave no water to the weary and you withheld food from the hungry, though you were a powerful man, owning land—an honored man, living on it. And you sent widows away empty-handed and broke the strength of the fatherless. That is why snares are all around you, why sudden peril terrifies you, why it is so dark you cannot see, and why a flood of water covers you.

Job 24:2–4

Men move boundary stones; they pasture flocks they have stolen. They drive away the orphan's donkey and take the widow's ox in pledge. They thrust the needy from the path and force all the poor of the land into hiding.

Job 24:9

The fatherless child is snatched from the breast; the infant of the poor is seized for a debt.

Job 29:11–12

Whoever heard me spoke well of me, and those who saw me commended me, because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to assist him.

Job 31:16–18

"If I have denied the desires of the poor or let the eyes of the widow grow weary, if I have kept my bread to myself, not sharing it with the fatherless — but from my youth I reared him as would a father, and from my birth I guided the widow.

Job 31:21–22

If I have raised my hand against the fatherless, knowing that I had influence in court, then let my arm fall from the shoulder, let it be broken off at the joint.

Psalm 10:14

But you, O God, do see trouble and grief; you consider it to take it in hand. The victim commits himself to you; you are the helper of the fatherless.

Psalm 10:17–18

You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more.

Psalm 68:5–6a

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families.

Psalm 82:3–4

Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Psalm 94:6

They slay the widow and the alien; they murder the fatherless.

Psalm 146:9

The LORD watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

Proverbs 23:10–11

Do not move an ancient boundary stone or encroach on the fields of the fatherless, for their Defender is strong; he will take up their case against you.

Isaiah 1:17

Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.

Isaiah 1:23

Our rulers are rebels, companions of thieves; they all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless; the widow's case does not come before them.

Isaiah 9:17

Therefore the Lord will take no pleasure in the young men, nor will he pity the fatherless and widows, for everyone is ungodly and wicked, every mouth speaks vileness. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, his hand is still upraised.

Isaiah 10:1–2

Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless.

Jeremiah 5:27–29

Like cages full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; they have become rich and powerful and have grown fat and sleek. Their evil deeds have no limit; they do not plead the case of the fatherless to win it, they do not defend the rights of the poor. Should I not punish them for this?" declares the LORD. "Should I not avenge myself on such a nation as this?"

Jeremiah 7:5–7

If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever.

Jeremiah 22:3

This is what the LORD says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place.

Jeremiah 49:11

Leave your orphans; I will protect their lives. Your widows too can trust in me.

Ezekiel 22:7

In you they have treated father and mother with contempt; in you they have oppressed the alien and mistreated the fatherless and the widow.

Hosea 14:3

Assyria cannot save us; we will not mount war-horses. We will never again say 'Our gods' to what our own hands have made, for in you the fatherless find compassion.

Zechariah 7:10

Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.

Malachi 3:5

So I will come near to you for judgment. I will be quick to testify against sorcerers, adulterers and perjurers, against those who defraud laborers of their wages, who oppress the widows and the fatherless, and deprive aliens of justice, but do not fear me," says the LORD Almighty.

John 14:18

I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

James 1:27

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

SPIRITUAL ADOPTION

SCRIPTURES REGARDING THE DOCTRINE OF SPIRITUAL ADOPTION

Romans 8:15

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"

Romans 8:23

And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

Romans 9:4

... who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises.

Galatians 4:4–7

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Ephesians 1:5

He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will ...

GOD'S CHILDREN

SCRIPTURES ABOUT BEING GOD'S CHILDREN

John 1:12–13

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Romans 8:16–17

The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.

Romans 9:7–8

...nor are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: "THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED." That is, it is not the children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants.

I John 3:1–2

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES OF FOSTER/ADOPTION

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES OF ORPHANS

Lot	Genesis 11:27–28
The Daughters of Zelophehad	Numbers 27:1–5
Jotham	Judges 9:16–21
Mephibosheth.	2 Samuel 9:3
Joash	2 Kings 11:1–12
Esther	Esther 2:7

SCRIPTURAL EXAMPLES OF “ADOPTION”

Moses adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter	Exodus 2:1–10
Job cared for unnamed orphans	Job 31:16–18
Mordecai adopted	Esther Esther 2:7
Jesus adopted by Joseph	Matthew 1:18–24
Every Christian has been adopted by God through Jesus Christ	Ephesians 1:5

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MOSES, THE FIRST EVER RECORDED RELINQUISHED, FOSTERED AND ADOPTED CHILD

When baby Moses was rescued from his watery grave, ironically it was a cry that earlier would have got his birth family executed that softened the heart of Pharaoh's daughter. It was the cry that set the course for her to become his adoptive mum. Quick-thinking, Miriam, the sister who was watching the basket float downstream, had to brush her tears away as she plucked up the courage to offer her own family as a foster family until Moses was weaned.

So here is the first abandoned baby, the first child in foster care and the first adopted child. This could have been the happy ending to the story. But the Bible is always realistic about the complications and difficulties of family life and so we are given the whole roller-coaster story of what happens next. Moses was rescued, and he was loved no doubt. But he also had issues. Identity issues. Confidence issues. Trust issues. These issues got him in trouble. Eventually they led to a murder, a cover-up and time on the run....

Through the ancient story of Moses, the first ever recorded relinquished, fostered and adopted child, God gives us a worked example of what it means to care for vulnerable children with our ears and our eyes open.

Our ears must be open to the cry of those in distress. Even a pagan princess could not ignore a helpless cry. Moses' ethnicity did not deter her. Her father's hatred of the Israelites did not deter her. The fact she had to wait for him to be weaned did not deter her. If even the daughter of the enemy can show this kind of commitment and compassion, then no less is expected of God's people.

Our eyes must be open to the possibilities and potential in each child made in God's image, however damaged they seem to be. Nobody could have guessed that rescued baby Moses would have been the one who would rescue God's people from slavery, see God with his own eyes, and lead God's people through the wilderness. God has a habit of choosing the most unlikely people to do the most amazing things and bring the greatest blessing.

Our eyes must also be open to the difficulties that may lie ahead. Moses achieved great things in his life, but it was not without long periods of turmoil. The euphoria of adding to a family through adoption will quickly be replaced by the daily challenges and rewards of parenting a child with additional struggles as a result of their displacement.

Our ears must also be open to what God is saying to us. It was through Moses that God dictated the following challenging words to be read to his rescued people throughout history as part of the blueprint of life under God's rule:

Never take advantage of any widow or orphan. If you do and they cry out to me, you can be sure that I will hear their cry. (Exodus 22: 22– 23, God's Word Translation)

Kandiah, Krish (2013-03-14). Home for Good: Making a Difference for Vulnerable Children (Kindle Locations 374-411). Hodder & Stoughton.

MEPHIBOSHETH

David, who wrote Psalm 68, knew what it was like to be lonely. He had come from a large family with six older brothers and two sisters. But when he was about sixteen years old, he had to leave them behind to begin his new job singing and fighting for King Saul. During his time living in the palace he became close to Saul's son Jonathan, but this relationship was to be wrenched away from him too. Intensely jealous of David, King Saul banished him. David then spent around fifteen years in exile, and many of the psalms are heartfelt cries of loneliness and distress from this period of his life. Eventually David became king, had his own family and, indeed, a dynasty.

But King David never forgot the truth that God sets the lonely in families. He had experienced it for himself; now he felt it was his turn to pass on the blessing.

Remembering his valued friendship with Jonathan, David asked around about what happened to his family after he had been killed in battle, and when he found out that there was one dependent son left, he effectively adopted him. Mephibosheth had been orphaned and crippled at the age of five, but his emotional scars and permanent physical disabilities were no obstacle to David's love. He provided for him not only financially, but treated him like a son, ensuring he always joined him at mealtimes.

A mighty king using his power and influence to set the lonely in families — this was what David knew about God, what David loved about God, and what David aspired to emulate. The Bible commends David as a man after God's own heart, 4 and as a man to aspire to emulate ourselves. Through his psalms and through his home life, David inspires us to know his God, father to the fatherless, and challenges us to be like his God, who sets the lonely in families.

Kandiah, Krish (2013-03-14). Home for Good: Making a Difference for Vulnerable Children (Kindle Locations 696–710). Hodder & Stoughton.

What To Say And Not To Say

The Words We Use Matter

What we call someone or something can change what we think and feel about that person or thing. We want to use accurate and honoring language when we discuss fostering and adoption. By speaking the truth in a loving way, we can dispel negative connotations and dismiss myths. As we represent such a sensitive issue and reality, let's represent it in the most honoring and accurate way.

DON'T SAY	DO SAY
Foster kids	Kids in foster care
Orphan	Kids who are legally free
Real parent, natural parent	Birthparent/ biological parent
Own child, real child, natural child	Birth child
Adopted child, own child	My child
Adoptee	Person / Individual who was adopted
Illegitimate	Born to unmarried parents
Give away, adopt out, give up, put up	Make an adoption plan, choose adoption
To keep the baby	To parent the baby/child
Adoptable child/unwanted child	Child in need of a family
Handicapped child, hard to place	Child who has special needs
Giving away your child	Choosing an adoption plan
Putting your child up for adoption	Finding a family to parent your child
Closed adoption	Confidential adoption
Unwanted/problem pregnancy	Unintended pregnancy

"QUOTES"

QUOTES ABOUT FOSTER/ADOPTION

CLOSING ORPHANAGES

The vision of their church is not to open orphanages, but to close them down.

Rick and Kay Warren

NOBODY ELSE IS COMING

The Church must answer the call to care for kids in foster care. Nobody else is coming.

Karen Waddell

ADOPTION IS ABOUT BEING WANTED

Adoption is about being wanted. It is about belonging. These are deeply emotive themes, which resonate with the cares and concerns of many in our increasingly fractured society. To be adopted is to be invited into a loving and caring environment. It is about being welcomed, wanted and invited. Adoption celebrates the privilege of invitation, in which the outsider is welcomed into the fold of faith and love.

Alister McGrath, Knowing Christ, pp. 144–145.

IT'S A SOLUTION FOR...

Adoption from foster care is not a solution for childless couples. It is a solution for parentless children.

Drew Hale

MESSY, BUT NOT LONELY

Foster care can be messy, but it doesn't have to be lonely.

Laura Doherty

MORE THAN A SERVANT

I'm beyond forgiven. I'm more than a servant. I'm adopted by a father whose love is perfect, whose acceptance is unconditional, whose affection is never ending, and whose generosity is boundless. A father who is for me...forever!

Lee Strobel

A DAILY PRAYER OF NOT JUSTIFICATION, BUT RELATION

This daily prayer for forgiveness of sins is not a prayer that God would give us justification again and again throughout our lives, for justification is a one-time event that occurs immediately after we trust in Christ with saving faith. Rather, the prayer of forgiveness of sins each day is a prayer that God's fatherly relationship with us, which has been disrupted by sin that displeased him, be restored, and that he relate to us once again as a father who delights in his children whom he loves.

Wayne Grudem

ADOPTION – THE HIGHEST GIFT OF GRACE

Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption.... Of all the gifts of grace, adoption is the highest.

J.I. Packer. Knowing God

YOU HAVE TO BURDEN YOURSELF TO BEAR ANOTHER BURDEN

When people say, "I can't afford to give," what they're really saying is, "I can't afford to give without burdening myself." Galatians 6:2 says 'Bear one another's burdens.' How do you bear someone else's burdens without burdening yourself? You have to burden yourself to bear another burden. Look at the needs of the world, look at the needs of the Church. You need to give until some of the burden other people are experiencing is falling on you, then there'll be peace and justice in the world.

Jonathan Edwards

MOTIVATION AND MANDATE

God has given us a clear motivation: he has adopted us. God has given us a clear mandate: look after orphans and widows in their distress. Whatever we do to care for needy people, whether it is fighting for their rights as a lawyer, standing up for them as a politician, opening opportunities for them as a business woman, talking with them on the streets as a neighbour, opening our homes to them as a carer, or advocating for adoption..., we offer worship to God. Not just any old worship but 'pure and faultless' worship to God our Father.

Kandiah, Krish (2013-03-14). Home for Good: Making a Difference for Vulnerable Children (Kindle Locations 293–297). Hodder & Stoughton.

THE GREAT GOAL OF ORPHAN CARE

The great goal of orphan care and orphan care communities is to bring fatherless children into relationship with their true Father, GOD, and into the beautiful gift of redeemed family!

Darke, Philip; McFarland, Keith (2014-04-10). In Pursuit of Orphan Excellence (p. 52).

1ST AND 2ND GOALS

The end goal of foster care is for reunification, or reuniting, with biological parents or other family members. Sadly, this reunification is not always possible, and many children in foster care become eligible for adoption each year.

DeGarmo, Dr. John (2016-04-04). Faith & Foster Care: How We Impact God's Kingdom (p. 26). New Hope Publishers.

MORE THAN JUST ANOTHER CHRISTIAN CAUSE

Adoption is, on one hand, gospel. Our identity and inheritance are grounded in our adoption in Christ. Adoption is also mission. In this, our adoption spurs us to join Christ in advocating for the poor, the marginalized, the abandoned and the fatherless. Without the theological aspect, the growing Christian emphasis on orphan care too often seems like one more cause-wristband for compassionate conservative evangelicals to wear until the trend dies down.

Moore, Russell D. (2012-08-14). A Guide to Adoption and Orphan Care (Kindle Locations 64–68). SBTS Press.

THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN IS SPIRITUAL WARFARE

The protection of children isn't charity. It isn't part of a political program fitting somewhere between tax cuts and gun rights or between carbon emission caps and a national service corps. It's spiritual warfare.

Russell D. Moore. Adoption: What Joseph of Nazareth Can Teach Us about This Countercultural Choice (Kindle Locations 192–193). Crossway.

JOSEPH IS JESUS'S REAL FATHER

Joseph is not Jesus's biological father, but he is his real father. In his adoption of Jesus, Joseph is rightly identified by the Spirit speaking through the Scriptures as Jesus's father (Luke 2: 41, 48).

Russell D. Moore. Adoption: What Joseph of Nazareth Can Teach Us about This Countercultural Choice (Kindle Locations 214–215). Crossway.

BEAUTY AND SORROW INTERTWINED

Every decision to love an orphan brings beauty and sorrow intertwined.... Opening ourselves to the orphan exposes our hearts to the world at its most deeply broken parts . . . and both joy and heartache are sure to follow.

Barna Group; Jedd Medefind (2014-01-07). Becoming Home: Adoption, Foster Care, and Mentoring—Living Out God's Heart for Orphans (Frames) (p. 30). Zondervan.

WE WILL TASTE SOME OF THAT HURT TOO

Whenever we open our lives to a child who has known great hurt, we will taste some of that hurt too. Encouraging people to get involved without offering the full picture guarantees disillusionment. If we are to love others as God first loved us, we must embrace both its beauty and its costliness.

Barna Group; Jedd Medefind (2014-01-07). Becoming Home: Adoption, Foster Care, and Mentoring—Living Out God's Heart for Orphans (Frames) (p. 64). Zondervan.

THE CHURCH CANNOT OUTSOURCE JAMES 1: 27

James 1:27 says, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” This is a high charge. And it is something governments cannot do. That’s why the church cannot outsource James 1:27 to government or NGOs. As Christians, as people God has expressly called to love the orphan, we have an irreplaceable role to fill.

Barna Group; Jedd Medefind (2014-01-07). Becoming Home: Adoption, Foster Care, and Mentoring-- Living Out God’s Heart for Orphans (Frames) (p. 35). Zondervan.

SOMETHING WE CAN ONLY DO TOGETHER

Not every Christian is called to foster or adopt. But every Christian community is called to embody the pure religion that includes caring for orphans and widows in their distress. No other institution in the world is capable of embracing orphans and supporting their families like the local church. This is something we can only do together — becoming home for those who most need it.

Barna Group; Jedd Medefind (2014-01-07). Becoming Home: Adoption, Foster Care, and Mentoring—Living Out God’s Heart for Orphans (Frames) (p. 36). Zondervan.

IN MOST EYES, ORPHANED CHILDREN ARE NOT SEEN AS GOD SEES THEM

In most eyes, orphaned children certainly are not seen as God sees them or as we see our own kids— as unique children with special skills and talents to be nurtured and developed in furtherance of their unique purposes on Earth. This tragic reality results in one of the major barriers we have in our quest for bringing excellence and best practices to orphan care in general and orphanages in particular. The prevailing view is that orphans are not our children— they aren’t “our own”— so why should they get anything more than leftovers?

Darke, Philip; McFarland, Keith (2014-04-10). In Pursuit of Orphan Excellence (p. 2).

JUSTICE IS THE GRAND SYMPTOM OF A REAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

As Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, said, “A deep social conscience, and a life poured out in service to others, especially the poor [including the orphan], is the inevitable sign of real faith, and justice is the grand symptom of a real relationship with God.”

Darke, Philip; McFarland, Keith (2014-04-10). In Pursuit of Orphan Excellence (p. 11).

A RETELLING OF THE GOSPEL

God adopted us at profound cost to himself....So adopting an orphan, even when very difficult, is just a small retelling of the gospel. That story too includes suffering.

Barna Group; Jedd Medefind (2014-01-07). Becoming Home: Adoption, Foster Care, and Mentoring—Living Out God’s Heart for Orphans (Frames). Zondervan. (p. 38).

A DEEPER SOURCE

So if we are to go the distance, we must drink from a deeper source than guilt, duty, or idealism alone. We must draw from the wellspring of God’s fathomless love.

Barna Group; Jedd Medefind (2014-01-07). Becoming Home: Adoption, Foster Care, and Mentoring—Living Out God’s Heart for Orphans (Frames). Zondervan. (p. 40).

GENTILE AND JEW RECEIVED ADOPTION

None of us are natural-born children of God, entitled to all this grace, all this glory. It's not just the Gentiles —with their uncircumcised penises and pig-flesh-eating mouths – who were adopted into this family. The Jewish Christians, too, received adoption (Rom 9:4).

Moore, Russell D. (2012-08-14). A Guide to Adoption and Orphan Care (Kindle Locations 87–89). SBTS Press.

THEOLOGY, NOT BIOLOGY

The primary motivation for us adopting kids was theology. Not biology. Because our lives are directly related to what we believe, our theology should lead way to our biography.

From a message delivered at The Austin Stone Community Church.

GOD IS AN ADOPTIVE FATHER

I learned from the Scriptures that God is an adoptive father. There are no natural born children into the Kingdom of God. All of us, who are in the family, are here by virtue of adoption.

From a message delivered at The Austin Stone Community Church.

THE HIGHEST MOTIVATION

Rather, the highest and best motivation for adopting is the gospel of Jesus Christ. The spiritual impulse to adopt runs far deeper than cute international babies, cross-cultural experiences and family growth.

Moore, Russell D. (2012-08-14). A Guide to Adoption and Orphan Care (Kindle Locations 312–314). SBTS Press.

I LOVE THE WORD ADOPTION

I love the word adoption. It describes perfectly what our relationship to God really means. Adoption isn't simply a concept or a big theological word; it's a family word, a loving parent-child word. It promises belonging, closeness, and a brand-new and highly favored identity. And it says much about the heart of a loving, determined, all-powerful Father who goes looking for children who will forever bear his name.

Tullian Tchividjian, Do I Know God?, p. 25.

ENTER INTO THE PLACE OF THE HEART OF AN ORPHAN

On the surface, the most pressing issues facing orphans seem to be those related to immediate needs: food, clothing, shelter, and education. We often model orphan care around meeting these needs. But these are not the greatest need. While these needs are crucial and must be addressed with excellence, meeting external needs alone is insufficient to bring about genuine change in the heart of a wounded child. It is this place of the wounded heart that is often the most overlooked and misunderstood. If any child is to truly benefit from our efforts of care (even when done with excellence) we must first understand and enter into the place of the heart of an orphan. Even when placed into family, an orphan is quite able to remain an orphan at heart.

Darke, Philip; McFarland, Keith (2014-04-10). In Pursuit of Orphan Excellence (p. 33).

ADOPTION: A WAY OF VIEWING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Adoption is an overarching way of viewing the Christian faith. Adoption pertains to the beginning of salvation, the Christian life, and the resurrection of the dead.

Robert Peterson, Adopted by God: From Wayward Sinners to Cherished Children, p. 7.

TRAUMA TOO

Be compassionate to the foster child's parents; most of them had a lot of trauma in their childhood too.

Brian Mavis, America's Kids Belong

DOING GALATIANS 6:2

The Bible says to "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" Wrapping around a foster family is bearing their burdens.

Brian Mavis, America's Kids Belong

MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

Fostering a child who reunites with her family is a beautiful expression of the ministry of reconciliation.

Brian Mavis, America's Kids Belong

NOT TAKE, BUT TAKE CARE

[Said to parent who had child removed]: I'm not here to take your child, but to take care of your child until you can.

Julie Mavis, America's Kids Belong

IF YOU NEVER HEAL

If you never heal from what hurt you, you'll bleed on people who didn't cut you.

Anonymous

DO NOT DISMISS THE LOSS

Loss is at the core of every foster care or adoption story. Do not dismiss the loss by only seeing the gains. Both are significant.

Lindy Johnson, America's Kids Belong

HAVE AN OPEN NEST

Why limit the journey of parenting to a full or empty nest? Imagine the impact of having an open nest—where another child is welcome to spread their wings and take flight from your loving and safe home base.

Krista Petty, America's Kids Belong

GRAPPLE WITH OUR OWN HISTORY

If we are really serious about trauma informed care, above all, we must be willing to grapple with our own history and our own pain until we are able to take responsibility in how it plays out with our kids.

Kristy DeAnda, America's Kids Belong

TWO-YEAR-OLD'S PRAYER

Worried about how foster care will affect "your" children? After two short weekends of respite care our two-year-old son's bedtime prayers changed to "Dear God, Thank you for anyone who comes to my house."

Lisel Atherton, America's Kids Belong

IS NOT ROCKET SCIENCE, BUT IT IS ROCKET FUEL

Loving a kid in foster care is not rocket science, but it is rocket fuel and can change the future trajectory of a life forever.

Travis Vangsnes, America's Kids Belong

GOD OFTEN SPEAKS THROUGH HER SENSITIVITY

Men, listen to your wife's heart if she's feeling called to foster care. God often speaks through her sensitivity to reach us in our passivity.

Travis Vangsnes, America's Kids Belong

THE CHURCH HAS THE SUSTAINING MOTIVATION AND MECHANISMS

God's command to care for the marginalized and the fatherless is a resounding and clarion call through-out scripture. The church has the sustaining motivation of the gospel and the sustaining mechanisms of small groups to create lasting change around foster care.

Travis Vangsnes, America's Kids Belong

MOVE YOUR EMPATHY TO ACTION

Figure out what you can do to move your EMPATHY to ACTION. There are plenty of ways to get involved in foster care that don't involve becoming a foster parent.

Kristin Allender, America's Kids Belong

BE ASSURED

Any parent, regardless of their present or past, should be assured there is a family providing a safe, loving and healing place for their children; whether it be temporary or permanent.

Jaalah Neerhof, America's Kids Belong

SOLVE THIS TOGETHER

Solving the foster care crisis as an individual seems overwhelming and impossible. But really the solution itself is simple. If we each bring our strength and resources we will be able to solve this together.

Laurie Zauche, America's Kids Belong

WRAP AROUND RESPONSIBLE

It is irresponsible to recruit new foster families without simultaneously recruiting wrap around support for those families.

Kristin Allender, America's Kids Belong

THE KIDS WHO NEED THE MOST LOVE

The kids who need the most love ask for it in the most unloving ways.

Anonymous

BROKEN SYSTEMS NEED TO BE FIXED, NOT AVOIDED.

Many people shy away from foster care because “the system is so broken.” Broken systems that impact children, families & society need to be fixed, not avoided.

John Moore

WHAT THEY NEED IS WHAT ANY CHILD NEEDS

If the government or those who are in power want to make the foster care system better, what they should do is just ask a foster kid. Talk to one of them. They can tell you exactly what they need. What they need is what most children and even teens need...Someone who cares about them, someone who will listen to them and hold them when they are scared. What they need is what any child needs...a family who loves them.

Luis, a youth in foster care

IT'S ABOUT MY ENTIRE LIFE

It's about my entire life, it's not just about my childhood. I want to know that I'm going to have someone to walk me down the aisle. That I'm going to have grandparents for my children.

Mary, a youth in foster care

WE CAN FEEL LIKE WE BELONG

It is hard to be moved around all the time. Permanency is important because then we can feel like we belong and settle, rather than get moved around and feel worthless because we feel that no one wants us.

Kaylee, a youth in foster care

BRIAN MAVIS



ABOUT BRIAN MAVIS

If you would like to invite Pastor Brian Mavis or one of our AKB staff members to teach at your church or conference, contact Krista Petty, AKB Faith Sphere Manager at: kpetty@amkidsbelong.org

Pastor Brian Mavis is the Co-Founder and President of America's Kids Belong, uniting government, business, nonprofits, faith based, and creative communities to improve the outcomes and experiences of kids in foster care nationwide. Prior to launching America's Kids Belong, he helped launch Adopt Kids Colorado and served as Community Transformation Pastor at LifeBridge Christian Church in Longmont, CO.

Additionally, Brian helped create and lead SermonCentral.com, the world's largest sermon resource site. He is a well-known advocate for children and curriculum developer, including writing the following:

- **Bono's One Sabbath Campaign curriculum**
- **Official Passion of the Christ booklets with 5 million in sales and sermon series used by 40,000 churches**
- **World Vision's Faith in Action curriculum.**
- **The Hole in Our Gospel church curriculum used by 21,000 churches**
- **Columnist for the Christian Standard Magazine**

Brian and his wife, Julie, reside and work in Colorado and are parents of two daughters who both serve as Foster Care/Adoption advocates as well. They got their start as foster parents caring for infants born addicted to substances and transitioned to foster parenting teens aging out of foster care. These days, they are thrilled to serve as foster grandparents.

In 2005, Pastor Brian Mavis and his wife, Julie, were in Colorado beginning their journey into foster care. At the same time, Janet and Ryan Kelly were deep into politics working on a statewide campaign in Virginia. Neither couple realized then that they were laying the foundation for a first-of-its-kind solution to address a major issue and largely invisible population in the U.S.

Over the next few years, the Mavis family partnered with the state to make foster children the stars of their own stories using high quality photos and videos. Brian and Julie introduced these photos and videos into the faith community with a challenge to respond. Their challenge was answered, and with the collective effort of many organizations on the ground, **within only a few years the number of children available for adoption in Colorado had dropped from over 800 to 280 – a number the state has maintained.**

Meanwhile in Virginia, the Kellys' political path and personal adoption story led them to launch a campaign with the Governor called "Virginia Adopts." This pioneering effort used the power of the Governor's office, social media, and a collaborative approach to **match over 1,000 children with permanent families in just one year as well as recruit additional support into the Virginia foster care system.**

Enter businessman, Joe Ritchie, and his Fox River team in Chicago, who specialize in public-private partnerships and bringing a business approach to the not-for-profit world. Laura Doherty, Joe's lead on Fox River's new Orphan Care & Adoption Initiative, was on the hunt for best practice and solutions to this very same national issue.

All three stories collided together for the first time in May of 2015. After meeting and vetting the work in Colorado and Virginia, Joe and the Fox River team knew they had found something special in not only these two models, but in the hearts of their leaders. They saw a solvable problem and, confident they had the right people on the bus, felt ready to move forward.

Together they launched America's Kids Belong in 2015 and consider themselves honored to join the fight for permanency and belonging for every child.

Since Launching in 2015, AKB has filmed thousands of children across twelve states, increasing their chance of adoption by over 50%. AKB has also engaged Governors in focused foster care campaigns with hundreds of churches and businesses involved, improving retention of foster parents and recruitment of more foster and adoptive families nationwide.

Learn more and meet the kids at americaskidsbelong.org

For More Faith Resources, visit faith.americaskidsbelong.org