

BUILDING A *discipleship* PIPELINE

FIVE ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF MOVEMENT FOR
YOUR FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION MINISTRY

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DISCIPLESHIP

is not an event, it's a process. It's the long, sometimes slow and sometimes tumultuous journey of movement - from where we are to where we need or want or hope to be. Discipleship toward a goal or vision doesn't just happen - it requires intentionality, purpose and planning.

Often times when we think of the ministry of Jesus we're quick to recall some of the more obvious things He did - He preached, He healed, He performed miracles - and we tend to overlook one of the most fundamental, yet subtle things - He disciplined.

He journeyed along with 12 men for years, teaching them, loving them, equipping them and even watching them take one step forward and two steps back at times.

At the core of Jesus' ministry was discipleship - the process of moving fishermen to become "fishers of men". (Matthew 4:19)

The goal of your ministry is not simply to recruit more people to meet a need; it's to disciple more people to obey a command.

But how do we do that in our ministries? What elements of movement are crucial to establishing an effective and sustainable process for moving our people towards caring for the vulnerable and orphaned or supporting those who do?

In this resource we will discuss five essential elements of ministry movement for your church. We will construct a general framework of principles for you to uniquely apply to your ministry as well as help you form an action plan of practical "next steps" moving forward.

FIVE ELEMENTS OF SUSTAINABLE MOVEMENT

- 1 **USE THE EXISTING**
The answers to what you need are often found in the things you already have.
- 2 **SET MICRO GOALS**
Set goals small enough to reach yet still meaningful enough to strive for.
- 3 **INSPECT WHAT YOU EXPECT**
Establish accountability measures for goals and action items.
- 4 **CONDUCT SMALL EXPERIMENTS**
Sometimes the greater goal of something isn't success, but learning.
- 5 **CELEBRATE SUCCESSES**
Create a culture that recognizes, reinforces and rewards the "wins."



USE THE EXISTING

Main Idea: *USE WHAT YOU HAVE*

Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable.

Matthew 13:34

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

The brilliance of Jesus' teaching style was found not just in the message He delivered but also in the way He delivered the message. He used what He had, often using parables - simple stories that conveyed profound messages - to illustrate things He knew His audience would be able to relate to. Pictures like a woman baking bread (Luke 13:20), a mustard seed (Matthew 13:31-32), references to sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-41), and so on. Jesus used "the existing" around Him as the pipeline through which He would change people's lives.

He did this in other ways as well - spitting in the dirt to create mud that would restore the sight of a blind man (John 9:1-12), breaking a loaf of bread to illustrate His impending sacrifice on the Cross (Matthew 26:26), instructing fishermen to cast their nets to put His power on display (John 21:6). These were things already existing and available for Him to use in His ministry.

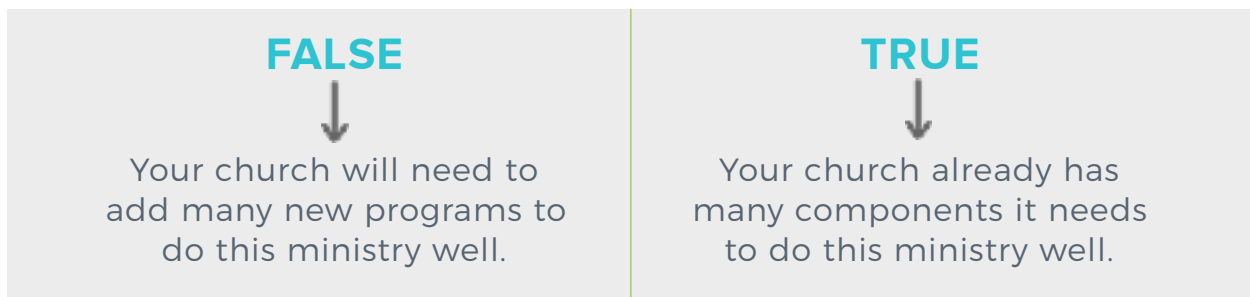
What resources, ministry structures, programs and tools does your church already have that can be utilized in this ministry? Instead of creating something new, in what ways can you "use the existing?"

RIGHTING FAULTY ASSUMPTIONS

It's often assumed that in order to launch new ministries in a church, new programs need to be started, new leaders need to be trained and new resources need to be gathered. In order to make the ministry "big" we need to do "big" things. Yet to an already busy ministry calendar and spread thin leadership team, the idea of starting a lot of "new" can sound overwhelming and simply impossible.

While in some circumstances it might be necessary to introduce many "new" things into a church's system in order to launch a ministry, in other cases churches might find that a new ministry focus can be introduced through "existing" mechanisms that are already in place.

Think of it this way...



BREAKING DOWN SILOS

Churches tend to default into a "silo" of ministries – "That's the missions ministry over there," "That's the homeless ministry over there," "That's the orphan care ministry over there," etc. In reality, however, many of these justice, mercy and hospitality-oriented ministries are not mutually exclusive. They are on some level interconnected - all part of the same child and family welfare continuum intersecting at different points along the way.

For example, a church could be deeply involved in rescuing and bringing restoration to victims of the growing human trafficking industry. This is a critical place for the Church to engage, however many do so without the knowledge that a significant percentage of those trafficked are actually alumni of the United States foster care system. With that added piece of knowledge, now, a church could more holistically engage the fullness of the problem - to not only bring restoration to those victimized through various programs, but also to prevent more from becoming victims by providing loving homes for children in the foster care system in their city.

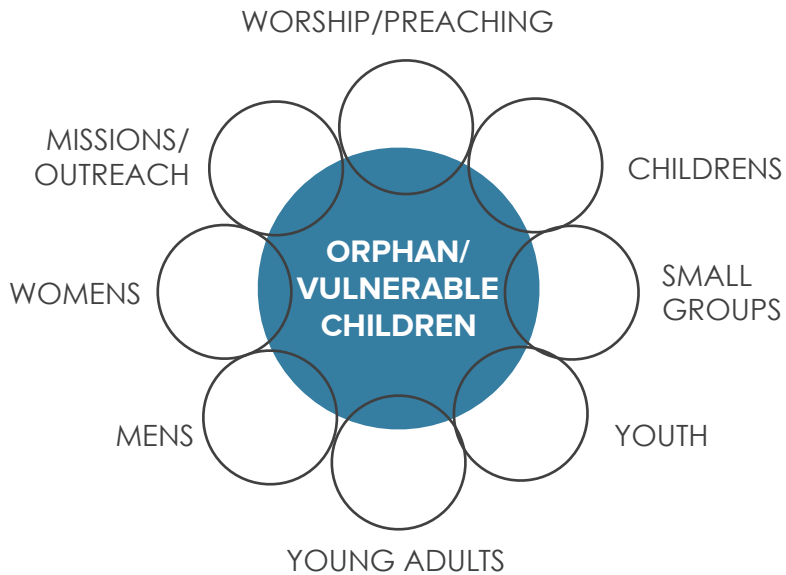
Now, it's no longer the foster care ministry "over here" and the human trafficking ministry "over there." The silos begin to break down and a more holistic approach begins to emerge - one which addresses the problem in a fuller way by both restoring those victimized by it and preventing others from becoming a part of it.

Similarly, a church could be deeply involved in issues of homelessness, racial reconciliation, mentorship, prison ministry, global child sponsorship programs, and so on - all of which, and others, fall along the same continuum of caring for vulnerable and orphaned children.

As well, some internal ministries within the church - things like children's ministry, singles ministry, youth ministry, young adult ministry, benevolence ministries, counseling ministries, etc. - can all be storehouses for a foster care, adoption and orphan care ministry. It no longer has to be the student ministry "over here" and the foster care ministry "over there," but instead can be a more intertwined and dynamic network of ministries.

DEVELOPING INTEGRATED CULTURE

The following two charts are examples of what breaking down the silos "inside" your church and "outside" your church might look like. The examples given are certainly not exhaustive, but merely descriptive of the types that might already exist in your church. Use these chart as launching pads for creativity.

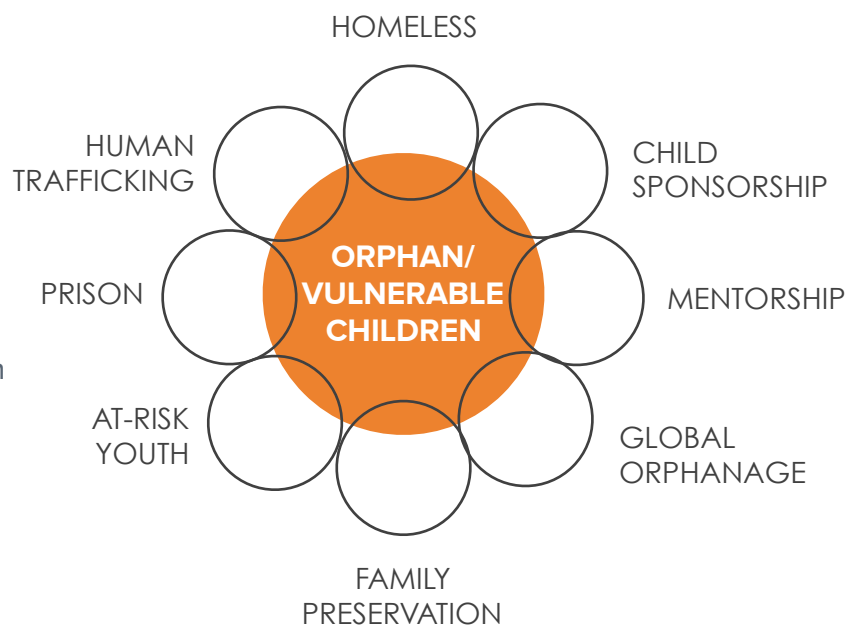


BREAKING DOWN SILOS INSIDE YOUR CHURCH

This diagram suggests some examples of ministry activity **INSIDE** your church that can occur in partnership with your orphaned and vulnerable ministry. They are a snapshot of the types of opportunities your church has to more strategically and intentionally establish an integrated approach to child and family welfare using other existing church ministry programs and resources.

BREAKING DOWN SILOS OUTSIDE YOUR CHURCH

This diagram suggests some examples of ministry activity **OUTSIDE** your church that can occur in partnership with your orphaned and vulnerable ministry. They are a snapshot of the types of outreach and mission ministries your church is likely already involved with that have a direct correlation back to the issues of foster care, adoption and orphan care.

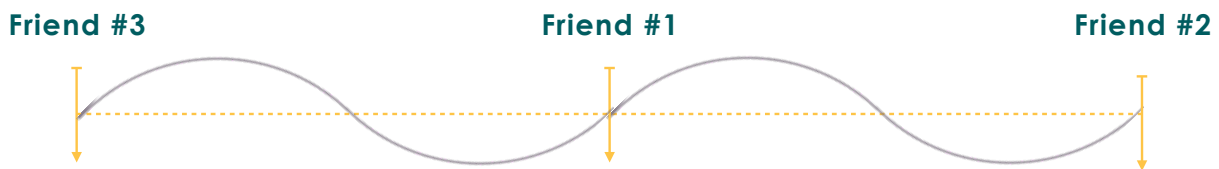


What specific existing programs or structures inside and outside your church can you utilize to more effectively build an integrated OVC ministry?

DEVELOPING A HOLISTIC MINISTRY CULTURE

THE RIVER

Imagine three friends come upon a raging river. They see children in the water rushing down the rapids towards a waterfall. One friend immediately jumps into the river and begins pulling as many children out as he can. Knowing there's a waterfall downstream, the second friend runs down river and tries to catch as many children as he can before they fall over the cliff. The third friend, however, wonders why these children are in the river in the first place. He runs upstream to find out how he can put a stop to it. All three friends are running in three different directions, each addressing different yet equally important points of the problem - there are kids in the water and we need to get them out.



THE CHURCH

The responses of these three friends is a powerful image with parallels to orphan and vulnerable children ministry that are helpful as we consider and seek to establish a holistic, comprehensive and strategic ministry approach in our churches.

MID-STREAM INTERVENTION

Generally speaking, orphan care in the Church has been deduced to foster care and adoption - to jumping into the raging child welfare river mid-stream and pulling as many kids out as fast as we can. This is a right and necessary place for the Church to be. There are literally thousands of kids in our country and millions worldwide needing someone to intervene on their behalf. If not us, then who? But that's not the totality of what the Church can or should be doing. This perspective is too narrow and siloed. It fails to consider how these kids found themselves in this position in the first place (up-stream), and what the trajectory of their lives statistically looks like (down-stream) if no one intervenes on their behalf now.

DOWN-STREAM RESTORATION

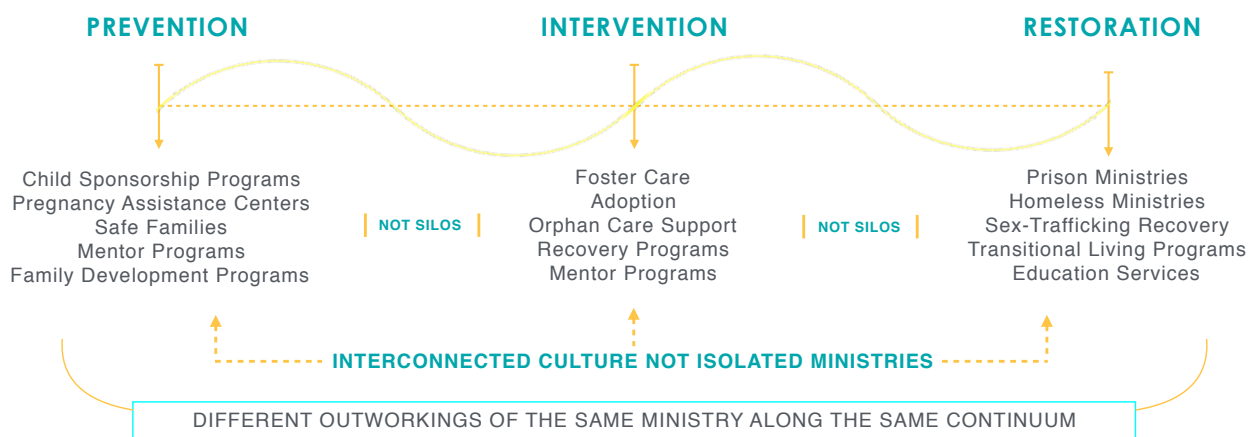
It's typical for churches to be involved in various types of down-stream justice and mercy efforts - whether feeding the homeless, ministering to the incarcerated or engaging in ministries committed to rescuing victims of sex trafficking, etc. However, they're often doing so without a clear understanding of how interconnected the plight of those cross sections of people are to the larger continuum of child welfare. A significant percentage of incarcerated males, the homeless community and girls who are trafficked into the sex industry (down-stream) have at one point in their lives spent time in the foster care system (mid-stream). When viewed through a more holistic and comprehensive lens, we'll find that if we really want to effectively engage some of these "down-stream" ministries we must also look back up-stream and consider how those in need of restoration found themselves in these positions to begin with.

UP-STREAM PREVENTION

As well, when we consider how these kids end up in the river in the first place, we realize that before we have a foster care crisis in our country we have a families-in-crisis crisis in our country, and before we have an orphan care crisis in our world we have a families-in-crisis crisis in our world. Orphan care is not just about caring for orphans, it's also about caring for families in crisis up-stream in order to prevent their children from ever finding themselves in the river mid-stream. The questions should both haunt us and drive us – Where are these kids coming from, and how can we prevent them from ending up in these awful places? Consider how your church can run upstream to do whatever is necessary to prevent kids from ending up in the river. This is a right and necessary – and albeit messy and difficult – place for the Church to be.

Not only is it essential for your church to establish an "everyone can do something" holistic message, it's equally important to begin taking steps towards developing a holistic approach to how you are engaging in the child and family welfare continuum – from **Prevention** to **Intervention** to **Restoration** – in a balanced and sustainable way.

The chart below suggests some examples of ministry activity that can occur at each stage along the continuum. By no means are these lists exhaustive, nor do they address the fact that some ministries can span the entirety of the spectrum in and of themselves. However, they are a snapshot of the types of opportunities your church has to more strategically and intentionally establish a holistic approach to child and family welfare at every point along the same continuum.



The objective now is to lay all your ministry activities out on the table and identify where, if and how they fall along the "river" of child and family welfare. If you're not able to easily identify where something fits then perhaps it's time to make the hard yet worthwhile call to get rid of it. Find where you're strong, be honest about where you're weak, and be brave enough to make the necessary decisions in order to more effectively and strategically engage child and family welfare in a broader, more holistic way - from prevention to intervention to restoration.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- How does developing a holistic and integrated approach to your orphaned and vulnerable children ministry open up more opportunities for the various types of people in your church to engage in a variety of ways?
- How does it reinforce your "everyone can do something" message?
- How does it aid in the discipleship process of your people?

Thank You

for reading through this preview of
“Building a Discipleship Pipeline.”

The full chapter can be found in the new book,
“Everyone Can Do Something: A Field Guide for Strategically Rallying Your Church Around the Orphaned and Vulnerable.”



DISCOVER HOW TO:

- Clarify your message
- Make the problem relatable
- Build communities of support
- Develop a strategic plan
- Establish discipleship tracks
- Outline clear "next steps"
- Plan and promote events
- And much more...

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BUILDING A
discipleship
PIPELINE

This guide is a sample section of the more extended book,
“Everyone Can Do Something”, released in May 2018.

To access more resources like this for your church, simply visit

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