

What's Your Why?



Articulating a **gospel-centered**,
identity-driven message for your church's
foster care and adoption **ministry**.

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In the flurry of all the things that come with leading and implementing ministries, one of the most critically important yet often overlooked component of ministry leadership is establishing clear and consistent messaging. What are we going to say? How are we going to say it? Why are we going to say it that way? How often will it be said? Who needs to be saying it?

These are crucial questions that must be rallied around as a ministry leader or leadership team. If we're not saying the right things in the right ways at the right times, our planning and events and calendars may be well organized, but our people will be far less likely to engage in them.

AMONG OTHER THINGS, THE GOAL OF YOUR MESSAGE IS TO:

- **PROVIDE CLARITY:** A consistent message clearly articulates vision and direction. An inconsistent one is confusing, leaving people wondering what your ministry is doing, why it is doing it and how it is going to get it accomplished.
- **REINFORCE VALUES:** A consistent message repeatedly communicates what is most important to the ministry - in concept (what you believe) and practice (what and how you do it).
- **DECONSTRUCT FALSE PARADIGMS:** A consistent message feeds your audience language and perspective that helps them formulate better understandings of the nuanced and complex issues your ministry is addressing.
- **ARTICULATE "WHY":** People care more about why you do what you do than they do about what you do or how you do it. A clearly articulated "why" establishes trust, builds cohesiveness and motivates people towards the "what" and "how."

In this resource we will explore two foundational pillars of a strong message:

1. A COMPELLING "WHY" The most inspiring messages motivate people with a sense of purpose bigger than themselves. So much time in ministry is spent communicating what we're going to do and how we're going to do it, with little energy poured into explaining why we are doing it.

2. IDENTITY DRIVEN The most impactful messages are those that move people - not simply in what they do, but in who they are. We're not simply trying to motivate our church to do the right kinds of things, but more importantly we're trying to equip them to be the right kind of church.



A COMPELLING
"WHY"

THE MOST INSPIRING MESSAGES MOTIVATE PEOPLE WITH A SENSE OF PURPOSE BIGGER THAN THEMSELVES.

They draw out and answer the question, "Why?" - Why is this important? Why are we doing this? Why should I care? Why should I sacrifice my time, money and energy to be a part of this? A truly compelling "why" casts vision, reinforces values, motivates people and gives them something bigger than themselves to believe in, pursue and sacrifice for.

As church leaders, it's easy to lose sense of our "why". Not because we fail to believe in something bigger than ourselves, but because we end up investing so much time and energy communicating what we're going to do and how we're going to do it that we're left with little time or emotional energy to cast vision for why we are doing it. We have a 5k race, a backpack drive, an informational meeting, a Christmas service project, etc. - here's what we are doing and how you can participate. But, why? What's the driving motivation behind it? What's the bigger purpose? What's the compelling reason for people to sacrifice their time, energy, money and family?

What's the "why"?



WE CARE FOR THE ORPHANED AND VULNERABLE, BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN GREATLY CARED FOR IN JESUS.

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters...let us not love with words or speech, but with actions and in truth.

1 John 3:16,18

The Gospel is Our “Why”

The work of Jesus on our behalf compels us to work on behalf of others. Why would we step into the hard? Why would we lean into the broken? Why would we open our families to the traumatic and difficult? Because that’s what Jesus has done for us. We lay our lives down for others because He first perfectly, sacrificially and sufficiently laid down His life for us.

He saw our brokenness and embraced us in our weakness, adopted us into His family and changed the course of our lives forever.

This beautiful picture of the gospel, and its vivid implications in our care of the orphaned and vulnerable, plays itself out through two primary aspects of theology:

- 1) The Doctrine of our Adoption**
- 2) The Doctrine of His Incarnation**

These two pillar doctrines form the strong and sturdy foundation of our “why.”



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THE DOCTRINE OF OUR ADOPTION

One of the most prominent pieces of imagery running throughout scripture, depicting the character of God and His work on our behalf, is the picture of family. Specifically, the illustration is rooted in the relationship between God as our Father and us as His dearly loved children.

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

John 1:12-13

The hinge upon which this entire new relationship with God has been formed is beautifully illustrated in scripture through the continuous use of the word “adoption”. Passages such as:

Ephesians 1:5 *He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ.*

Romans 8:15 *You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!”*

We were once outside the family of God but now, through the work of Christ on our behalf, have been adopted as dearly loved sons and daughters. We experience the rights and privileges of being known and loved as His! A new identity born out of a new way of how we relate to God - as our Father - and how He relates to us - as His children.

If our adoption into God’s family is at the core of the gospel, then the gospel is certainly at the core of our calling to care for kids who need loving, safe and permanent families to call their own.

The theology of our adoption helps form the basis of our “why.” Why would we care for orphaned and vulnerable children by bringing them into our families? Because that’s what Christ has done for us.



But it doesn't end there.

Many leaders struggle to translate the doctrine of our adoption into the cultural fabric of their churches. The truth is we're not all called to adopt - or bring children into our homes through other avenues like foster care. So how does the doctrine of our adoption into the family of God practically translate into a message to our church that might not include adoption as an application?

Many church leaders stumble over the idea that, "We've been adopted into the family of God, but we're not all called to adopt". That's a hard message to communicate and an even more difficult and confusing one for people in our churches to hear. There has to be more, something broader and more holistic that has a variety of different applications for our people. A theological blanket, if you will, that can be laid out over the entirety of our church under which implications and applications for everyone can be identified.

This is where a distinct, yet intricately intertwined understanding of the doctrine of “incarnation” can be incredibly helpful to press into your messaging.



THE DOCTRINE OF HIS INCARNATION

The word “incarnation” literally means *to assume human form*. The doctrine of Christ’s incarnation speaks to God stepping into humanity, wrapping Himself in flesh and living completely and fully as both God and man. It’s most notably recognized at Christmas with the birth of Jesus, yet its implications are far more pervasive than just on December 25th of every year.

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

Matthew 1:22-23

The incarnation reveals much about who God is and what God does. It tells us He is the kind of God who sees broken and hard things and does not step away from them, but steps into them. He is “with us”. He wrapped Himself up in our brokenness, carried our brokenness to the Cross, and was broken by our brokenness so that we don’t have to be broken anymore. God saw us in our plight and moved towards us, not away. That’s the gospel.

The Apostle Paul reiterates the incarnation of Christ and beautifully ties it into God’s redemptive pursuit of humanity to make us His children, when he writes...

When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

Galatians 4:4-5

Jesus was “born of a woman” (incarnation) in order “that we might receive adoption” (adoption) into His family.

If the incarnation of Jesus is at the core of the gospel, then our stepping towards the hard and broken is certainly at the core of our calling to care for vulnerable kids.

The theology of Christ’s incarnation helps form the basis of our “why.” Why would we immerse - or incarnate - ourselves into hard and broken places? Because that’s what Christ has done for us.



The implications of the doctrine of incarnation are broad. The opportunities for each unique individual in your church to “incarnate” themselves into hard and broken places are endless and full of creativity.

This moves the conversation beyond just foster care, adoption or orphan care in some capacity - although these are clear and vivid outlets for your people to respond (perhaps that’s why James 1:27 describes leaning into the lives of the vulnerable as one of the purest and most undeniable reflections of the gospel). Incarnation, however, speaks to a renewed posture and perspective towards the world around us in all matters of justice, mercy and sacrifice.

The world says we should avoid hard and broken things, insulate ourselves from them and isolate our families from them. The gospel, however, suggests an entirely different posture and perspective. It compels us to “incarnate” - to step towards and wrap ourselves up in them.

This could include a person in your church engaging their neighbor, opening their home to foster care, investing in renewal initiatives overseas, partnering with human trafficking rescue efforts in your city, feeding the homeless and the list could go on.

The opportunities to incarnate ourselves into hard and broken places are endless and full of diversity. **The application of incarnation in foster care and adoption efforts is clear and undeniable.** Why would we immerse - or incarnate - ourselves into hard and broken places? Because that’s what Christ has done for us.

Consider how the doctrine of incarnation as a compelling grid and guide for all aspects of your church’s mission, outreach, care, benevolence and evangelism?



Thank You

for reading through this preview of
“What’s Your Why?”.

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

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

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