

FOSTER CARE AWARENESS

MONTH OF PRAYER



30 DAYS OF PRAYING FOR DIFFERENT GROUPS
OF PEOPLE IMPACTED BY FOSTER CARE IN
YOUR COMMUNITY

Help  ne Child

A child is never removed from their biological home due to "being a bad kid". Children are removed because they are experiencing chronic abuse or neglect. As a result of this trauma, kids impacted by foster care are likely to struggle with unhealthy habits and behaviors, attachment disorders, and PTSD. With approximately 400,000 kids in foster care across the US, we ask that you pray for children currently impacted by foster care. Pray that each child finds the ability to trust peers and adults and build healthy relationships so that a strong understanding community can be built up around them to combat isolation.

CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE



Pray that God can work within each child to heal the deep hurts that have been inflicted upon them.

BIOLOGICAL FAMILIES

Reunification is the most common goal for children placed in foster homes. Half of all foster placements reunify with their biological family. Bio parents are given goals, such as sobriety, parenting classes, or obtaining specific tangible items that they must meet in a timely manner to ensure the household meets the standard of care for children. Each story has many perspectives, and we often neglect the biological parent's story. With help and support, it can be a beautiful story of redemption. It's time we stop questioning their love for their children or judging their missteps. Pray for opportunities for love and reconciliation to be built between biological families, their children whom they were not able to care for, and the foster and adoptive families the children were placed with.



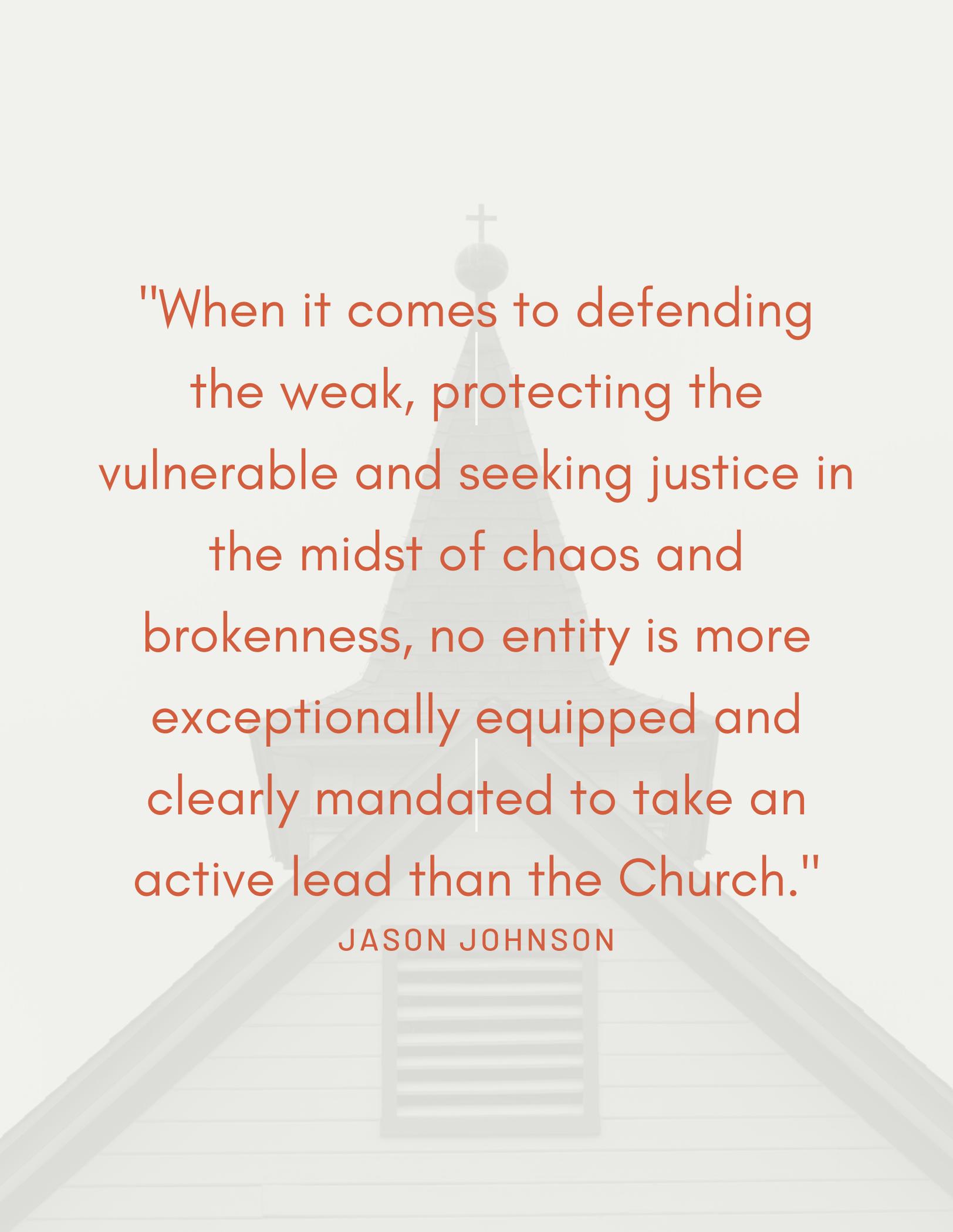
Pray that biological families are able to boldly face the obstacles that lie between them and reunifying with their children with strength.

CHURCHES

As Christians, our own personal adoption into the family of God is the heart of the gospel and our faith. While the numbers can be daunting, with over 400,000 children in foster care and approximately 100,000 children waiting for the adoption, it can be easy to feel helpless and not know where or how to start. Luckily, it is not one single church's responsibility to tackle the crisis alone. With over 300,000 churches in the United States, each taking a small step together will make a huge impact. Whether your congregation is preaching adoption from the pulpit, hosting a respite event, or providing backpacks to new foster placements, the church community is making an impact. Pray for your church to seek clarity and direction when approaching its role within the crisis community.



Pray for churches across the nation to move together to meet the tangible, spiritual, relational, and educational needs of families impacted by foster care.

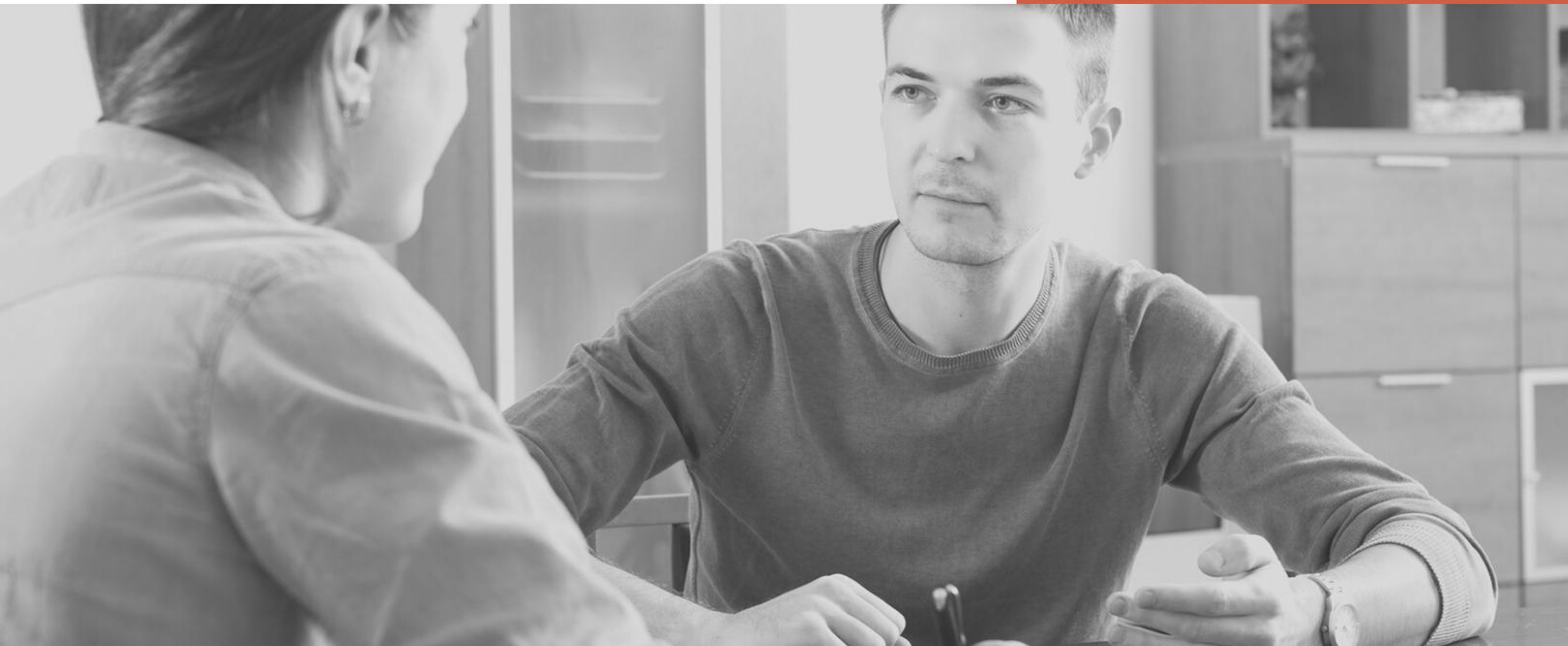


"When it comes to defending
the weak, protecting the
vulnerable and seeking justice in
the midst of chaos and
brokenness, no entity is more
exceptionally equipped and
clearly mandated to take an
active lead than the Church."

JASON JOHNSON

CHILD WELFARE PROFESSIONALS

Child Welfare Professionals truly serve on the front lines fighting to ensure that all children live in safe, permanent, and stable environments that support their well-being. Their job is taxing, demanding, complex, and often extremely isolating. Their workload is both physically and emotionally heavy. Child Welfare workers play a pivotal role in the lives of children who have experienced abuse and neglect. They work to put together a community of support by building bridges between the judicial system, families, therapists, and school resources to provide the best possible home life for each child.



Pray for the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of the social workers as they face very disheartening scenarios on a regular basis.

FOSTER PARENTS

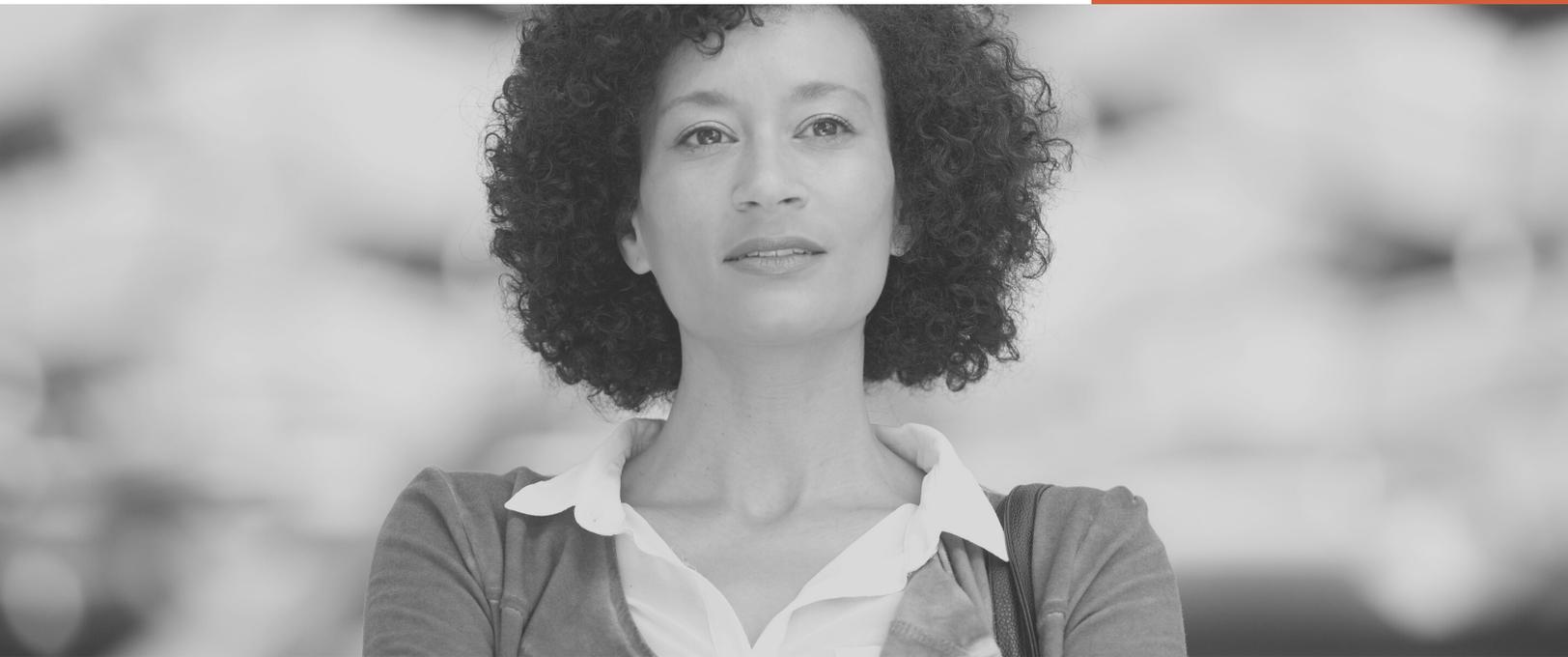
Foster parents play a crucial role in the safety and health of a child who has experienced abuse and neglect throughout their life. They are called to fully open their heart to care for and love a child who is so desperate for love, acceptance, and a place of belonging. But the joy does not come without pain and heartbreak as kiddos relentlessly push the boundaries to test the durability of their safety. Love and affection are often met with anger and violence from children who struggle with a lack of attachments. Although it can be a daily uphill battle, the rewards of seeing a child let their walls down and begin to heal, trusting adults, peers, and their environment is a reward far greater than the pain. Pray for endurance and renewal of compassion as they fight to provide safety and comfort to the children in their homes.



Pray for endurance and renewal of compassion as they fight to provide safety and comfort to the children in their homes.

The instability that robbed adults, like Angie, the opportunity of a stable foundation in their youth causes long-term effects on their adulthood relationships, health and overall well-being. Between a lowered immune system, and triple the lifetime risk of heart disease and lung cancer, the effects of trauma do not suddenly disappear as individuals transfer out of the system. Adults who grew up too fast as children, but often never learned the appropriate life lessons that prepare you for adulthood are struggling to adapt.

FORMER FOSTER YOUTH



Pray that former foster youth find healing from their childhood trauma and are connected to a community that provides space to express and voice their feelings.



The biggest challenge I faced in foster care was trying to have a family and be accepted for who I am."

ANGIE, ADULT AND FORMER FOSTER YOUTH

ADOPTIVE PARENTS

However joyous and beautiful being an adoptive parent may be, it is also daunting and overwhelming. Whether navigating the piles of paperwork and flaming hoops while beginning the adoption journey, or navigating identity and trauma struggles, the process can be very isolating. A common misconception is that children adopted from birth won't have any behavioral or mental health issues. False! Trauma and attachment start in utero, exposing children prior to birth. Adoptive parents are prone to a postpartum period further exasperating the feelings of isolation.



Pray that adoptive parents have access to resources and seek support and advice that will reinforce their efforts as they walk with their children through healing.

COUNSELORS AND THERAPISTS

"Carry each other's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Galatians 6:2

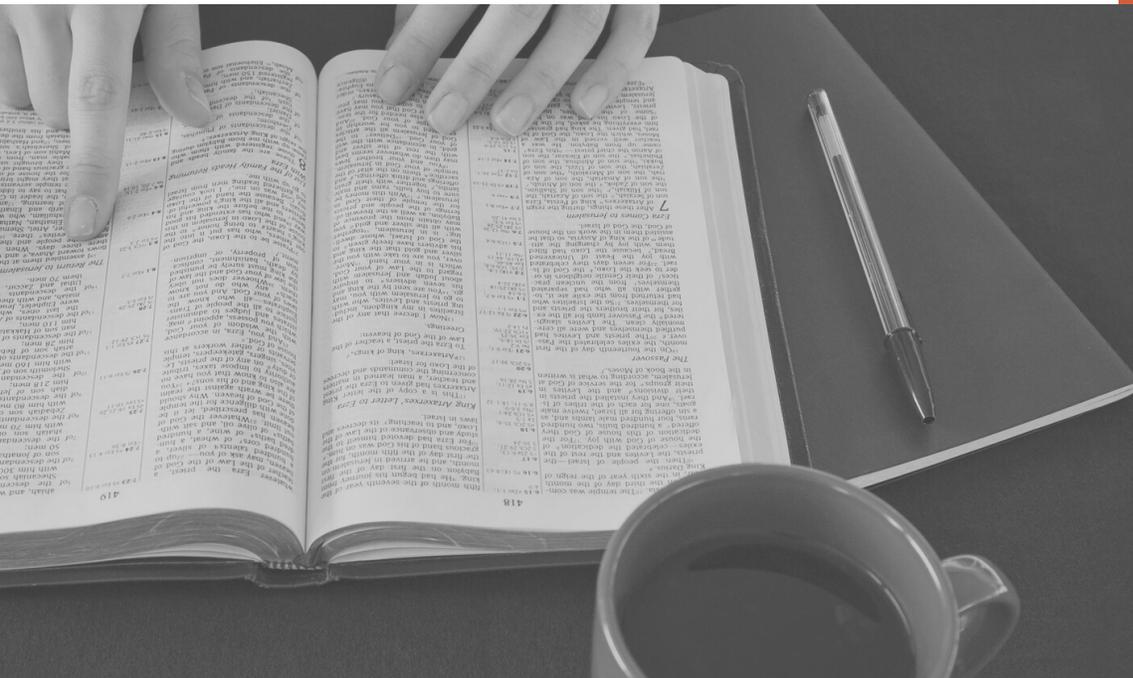
Adoption competent therapists are trained in trauma-based adoption issues to support children and families impacted by the foster care system. Just as Jesus needed time away to pray to God, therapists need to surrender all the stories and heartbreaks they hear up to the Lord. They cannot, as Jesus showed us, keep carrying that burden inside of them. Look at what He endured. But He knew His Father had His back, just as He has theirs.



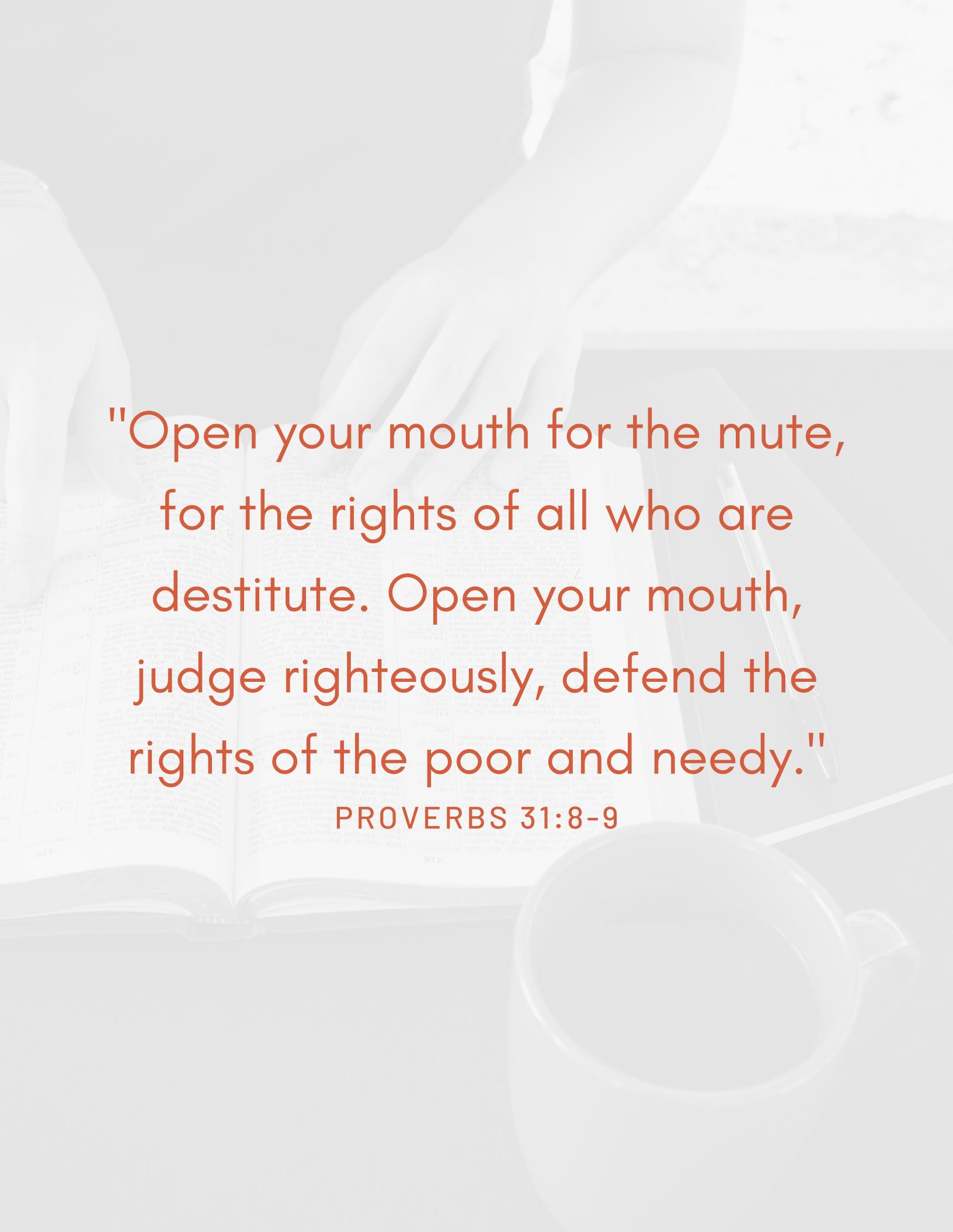
Pray that counselors and therapists can learn and put into practice the idea of knowing that they can't fix every child or individual they work with, but that God can.

CHURCH MINISTRY LEADERS

Ministry leaders and mission pastors minister church attendees and connect them to social justice ministries and outreach projects. Many movements within the church come from leaders who have a heart song for a cause. Every ministry leader has a desire to see their church's congregation actively serving the community, but with so many causes, ministries, and areas to serve, leaders can easily become overwhelmed by the amount of heartbreak in the world.



Pray that church ministry leaders seek wisdom on guiding their congregation through a holistic approach to foster care.

A person is shown from the chest up, wearing a white t-shirt, sitting at a desk and reading an open book. Their hands are resting on the pages. In the foreground, a white ceramic coffee cup is partially visible. The background is a blurred indoor setting with a window showing a view of trees. The overall scene is brightly lit and has a clean, minimalist aesthetic.

"Open your mouth for the mute,
for the rights of all who are
destitute. Open your mouth,
judge righteously, defend the
rights of the poor and needy."

PROVERBS 31:8-9

Researchers and policy analysts identify methods for improving the design, implementation, and administration of child welfare policies. These individuals have the unique task of creating a strong cohesive voice in the federal system on behalf of children and families impacted by foster care. Their influence will affect families across the spectrum of care. Unfortunately, every family is unique and every case is different. Researchers and policy analysts find a connection between the data and the outcome of policies that will impact the foster care system as a whole, and individual families. Pray that these individuals will see the whole scope of the impact their position has on the foster care system.

RESEARCHERS AND POLICY- MAKERS



Pray for clarity among the researchers and policymakers and that their work would bring healthy change and stability to the foster care system.

FOSTER CARE ADVOCATES

The foster care community is not only comprised of adults who were able to welcome children into their home, but also of teachers, respite providers, pastors, resource networks, community-based non-profit organizations, former foster youth, grandparents, your neighbors, the mailman, and anyone and everyone who raises their voice and speaks out on behalf of the foster care community. They are advocates for trauma-informed education, awareness, and community understanding. An advocate may be someone helping a new foster family or a biological family navigate the court system, offering support and guidance, or someone leading a donation drive for supplies at your church. Each individual uses their voice to support children and families impacted by foster care.



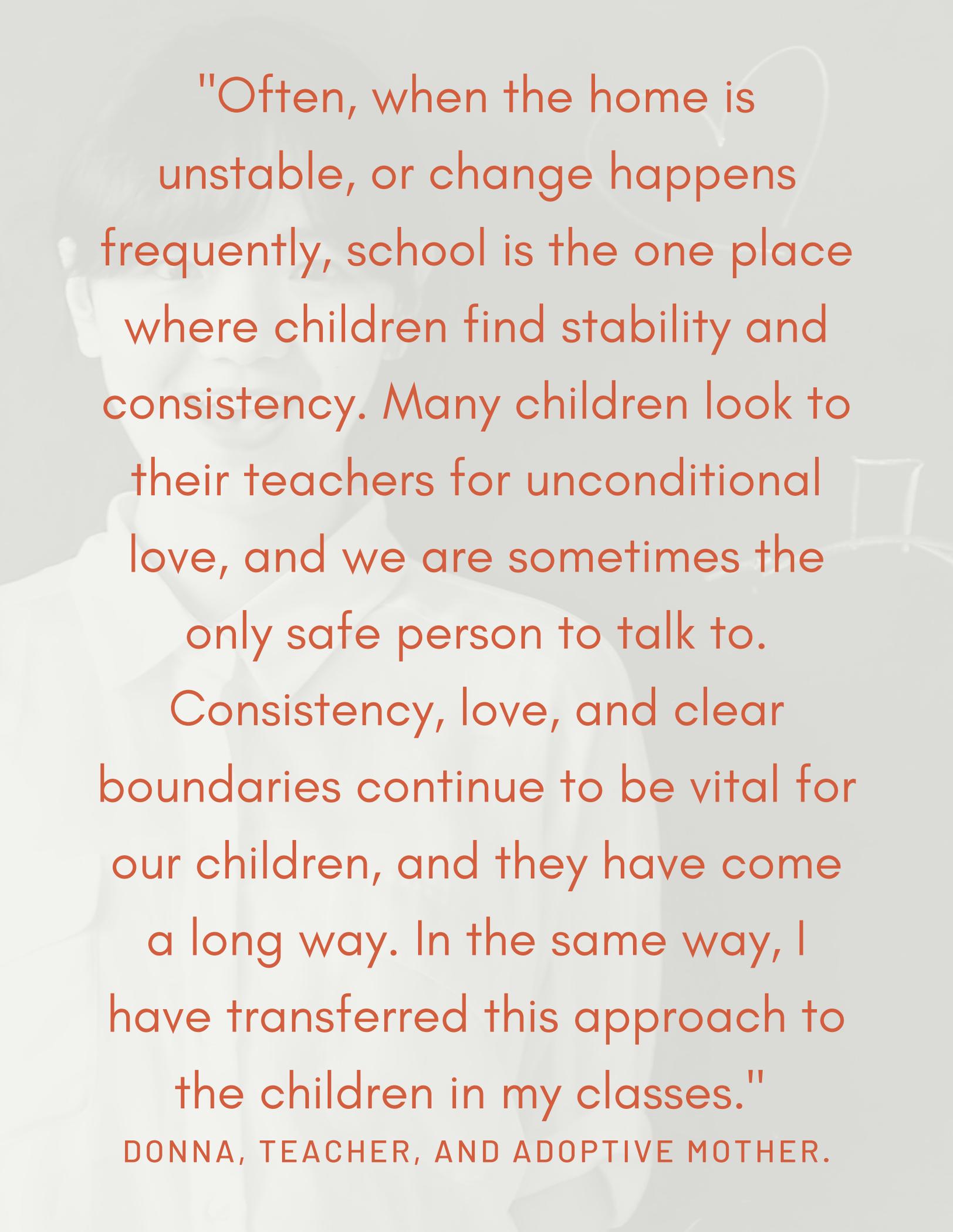
Pray that a team of advocates would rise up within your church to spread educated awareness and stand up on behalf of the foster care community.

TEACHERS

Children living in fear due to abuse or neglect, experiencing extreme hunger, or have moved multiple times, more often than not, fall behind in school and are unable to focus during the school day. It often takes a child up to 2 years to catch up with their social and emotional growth after each unplanned move, which can severely affect their education. Teachers serve as an advocate for their students. For children impacted by foster care, this could be a lifeline of understanding and acceptance. Pray that teachers would be able to take time to support children impacted by foster care in their struggles with ongoing loss and trauma.



Pray that teachers would have the patience and understanding to see past any behaviors and reflect the love and grace of Christ to these dear children.



"Often, when the home is unstable, or change happens frequently, school is the one place where children find stability and consistency. Many children look to their teachers for unconditional love, and we are sometimes the only safe person to talk to.

Consistency, love, and clear boundaries continue to be vital for our children, and they have come a long way. In the same way, I have transferred this approach to the children in my classes."

DONNA, TEACHER, AND ADOPTIVE MOTHER.

CLASSMATES

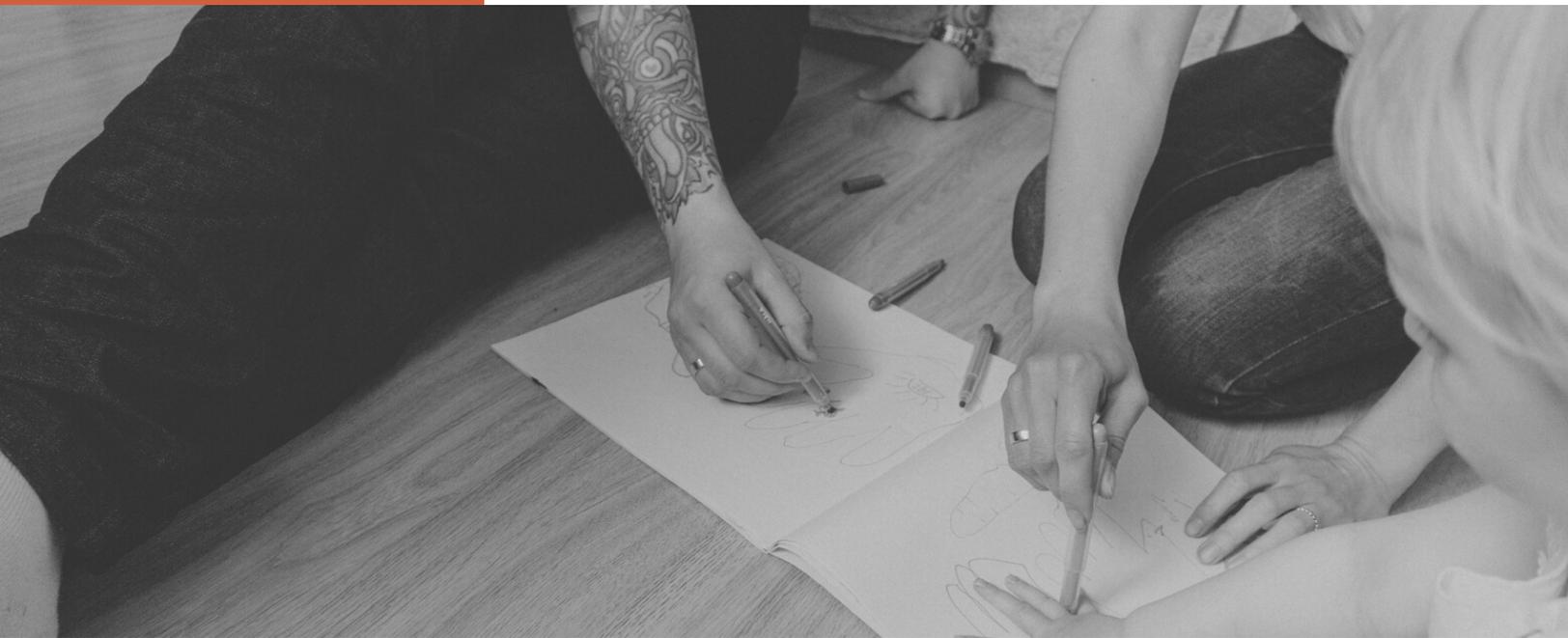
For many of us, our strongest adolescent friendships were built inside a classroom. It is not uncommon for children and youth in foster care to move schools or districts when they are placed into a new foster home. For children who have experienced multiple placements, this could mean a very short time at multiple schools. Due to heightened social anxieties and underdeveloped social skills, foster youth may find it especially difficult to connect with other people, especially their peers. There may be a foster youth in your child's classroom. Let's teach awareness from a young age and prepare them to be good classmates. Teach your children to be kind and to be inclusive, as they build a great friendship with a child who longs for connection.



Pray that schools are filled with classmates who seek out friendship and address differences with compassion.

RESPIRE CARE PROVIDERS

Respite care is crucial to those caring for foster youth or relatives. Caregivers may need to get away for some much-needed restorative personal time, especially if the child is consistently displaying difficult behaviors. Being able to offer respite service reassures caregivers that they are not alone and a community of support is available to reach out to on an ongoing basis, if necessary. Even just a few hours of respite allows time for caregivers to relax, reset, and renew their compassion in order to best love these children and keep them safe.



Pray that relaxation, rest, and renewal of compassion is experienced by respite care providers, just as they are providing the same relief for full-time caregivers.

CASA's serve to monitor youth in the foster care system and help improve case outcomes as well as foster care processes. Their recommendations are a valued part of the court report and ultimately have an influence and impact on judicial decision making. Often CASA's stay with one child even as they move between different foster homes, which provides another stable consistent adult in the child or youth's life. Pray that these crucial volunteers will continue to have a positive impact on the youth they serve, enabling them to thrive into healthy adults.

COURT APPOINTED SPECIAL ADVOCATES



Pray that these crucial volunteers will continue to have a positive impact on the youth they serve, enabling them to thrive into healthy adults.



"In addition to having an impact on the wellbeing and safety of foster children, in the midst of being their legal advocate, I also get to be a friend, a mentor, and a safe support system to my youth. Being a CASA has been a life-changing experience!"

MELANIE, SANTA CLARA CASA

After the courts intervene, they may be deemed unfit to parent, resulting in the removal of their children. It may also be difficult to extend compassion to these individuals, but they are no less deserving or less capable of redemption than the rest of us. 30-40% of individuals who were victims of abuse as children will become adults who abuse their own children, referred to as the Cycle of Abuse. Some parents who experience abuse as a child, may not turn to abuse as adults, but rather turn inward in anger and frustration resulting in an alarming inability to attach to their own children, leading to neglect. Pray that adults who have neglected or abandoned children seek counseling for their own trauma and trauma they have caused. Pray that with the help of a trauma-informed community, the cycle of abuse can be eliminated.

ADULTS WHO HAVE ABUSED OR NEGLECTED CHILDREN



Pray that adults who have neglected or abandoned children seek counseling for their own trauma and trauma they have caused.

ELECTED OFFICIALS

An Elected Official is a person in charge of some public work or duty who represents a body of people they serve. Elected officials utilize legislative efforts to address child welfare policy reform efforts to improve the well-being of foster youth. The involvement of the Federal Government in the child welfare system is unlikely to become less, but by electing former foster youth or foster care advocates, we can ensure the impact that the Federal Government has will strengthen the system and children and families in care.



Pray that elected officials will use their voice to protect children and families impacted by foster care while leveraging the resources and church relations to strengthen their community.

LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

Law enforcement may be involved in certain types of child abuse and neglect investigations such as sexual abuse, severe physical abuse or neglect, or child deaths. One of the most emotionally difficult tasks for police officers is to interview a child and probe for answers pertaining to allegations of abuse. It requires strong teamwork with social services personnel, medical personnel, and teachers. Those not trained to interview children, even with the best intentions, can easily distort the investigation. Pray that God will guide law enforcement through difficult interviews while protecting from further emotional harm to the child as a result.



Pray also that the officers are able to make every effort not to internalize this information, but rather give it up to God.

HEALTH CARE WORKERS

"As a healthcare professional, I see my role as multidimensional. First, as an encourager to the parents offering validation, cheerleading, and clear health guidelines for a child they often don't know very well. Second, as a confidant and coach with an aim to build trust with the child which requires an extra sensitivity to phrasing questions, navigating the interpersonal dynamics between the child and parent. Third, a small role as a counselor with an awareness of possible trauma in the past creates a hypersensitivity and lower threshold for stress. Unfortunately, since some foster children did not go to routine appointments while young, or did not learn positive associations with the doctor's office, we have to simultaneously teach youth how to engage with the provider and help them feel comfortable returning when needed."

Candice, Nurse Practitioner Specialist



Pray that health care professionals will be efficiently trauma-informed and holistically address the unique healthcare needs of children in care.

JOURNALISTS

Journalists have the opportunity to share stories of truth, impact, and encouragement from the foster, adoptive, and at-risk community. If they are not careful, the stories they choose to share and the description of the individuals in the stories can reinforce negative stereotypes about foster children or foster care. While trying to accurately portray stories from the foster care system, journalists must also be mindful of confidentiality and caution not to exploit vulnerable children and families.



Pray that journalists will be able to bring truth and education to their audience while maintaining the integrity of the individuals they are representing.

YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

It is a common misconception that "foster care" ends at 18, but in some states, including California, there are services for youth up until the age of 21. These programs address the specific needs of teens and young adults as they are transitioning out of foster care. Transitional Aged Youth (TAY) are foster youth between the ages of 18 and 21 and address the necessities required for a young adult to start their independent life. TAY programs help youth obtain jobs, registration support for college, enrollment in vocational training, housing support, budgeting and life skills workshops, and encouragement on making healthy decisions and choices that will impact their future.



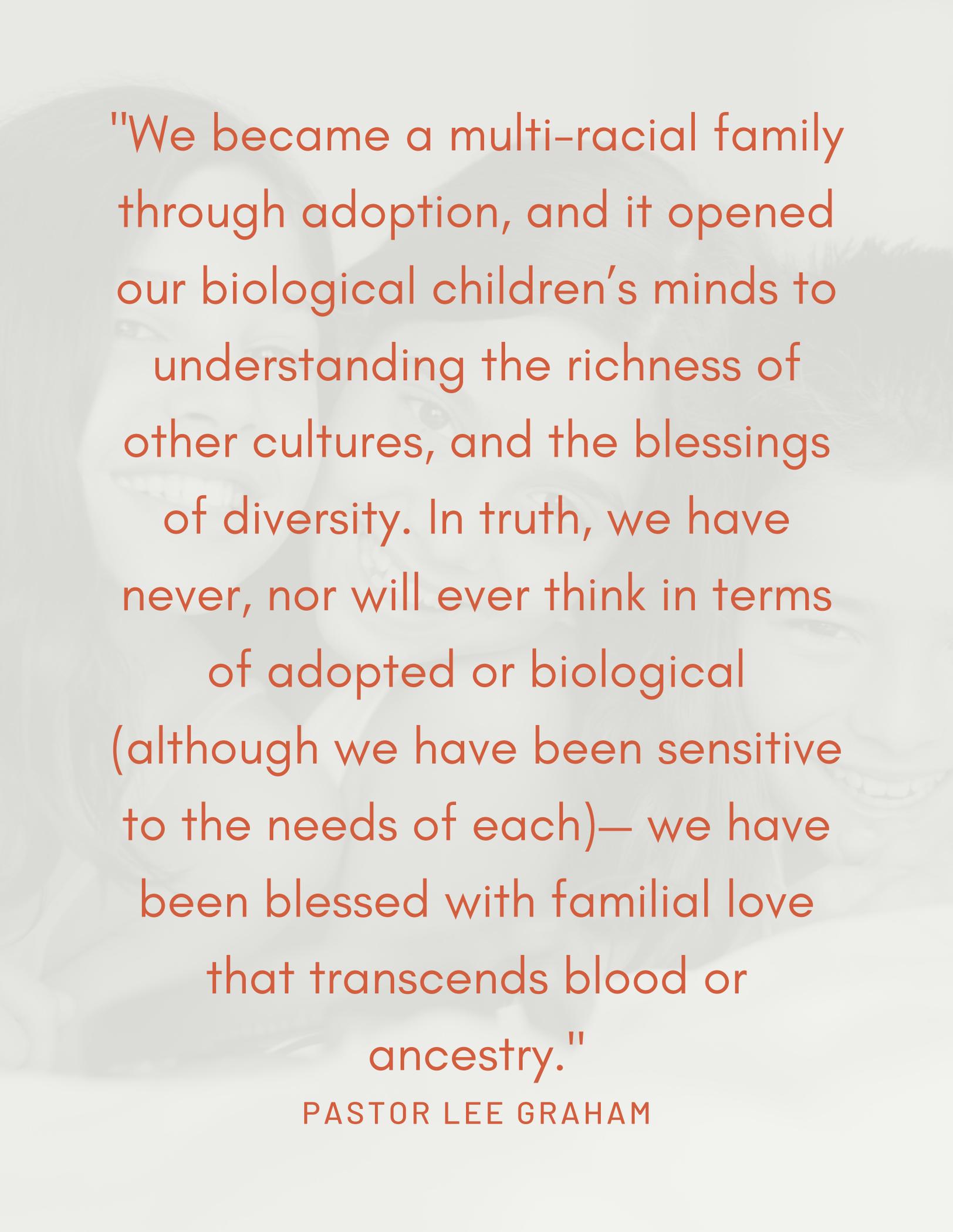
Pray that youth aging out of the foster care system will be well equipped with the support, resources, and knowledge to succeed independently.

SIBLINGS

About 2/3 of the children impacted by foster care have a sibling in care. 65% of siblings removed from their homes are placed in a foster home together, but 36% are separated and placed into different foster homes. Some sibling sets are broken up because foster homes are not equipped to take in multiple children, or for the safety of the sibling dynamic. But regardless of reason, removing a child from their home, and then from their siblings, removes the only people who understand and share the experiences of their biological home. Often, when siblings are placed together, it is easier to adjust to their new environment and family. It is not uncommon for children in care to be placed in a foster home that has biological children, growing their definition of a "sibling."



Pray that foster homes are equipped and prepared to accept sibling sets to grow and heal together in a safe and encouraging environment.

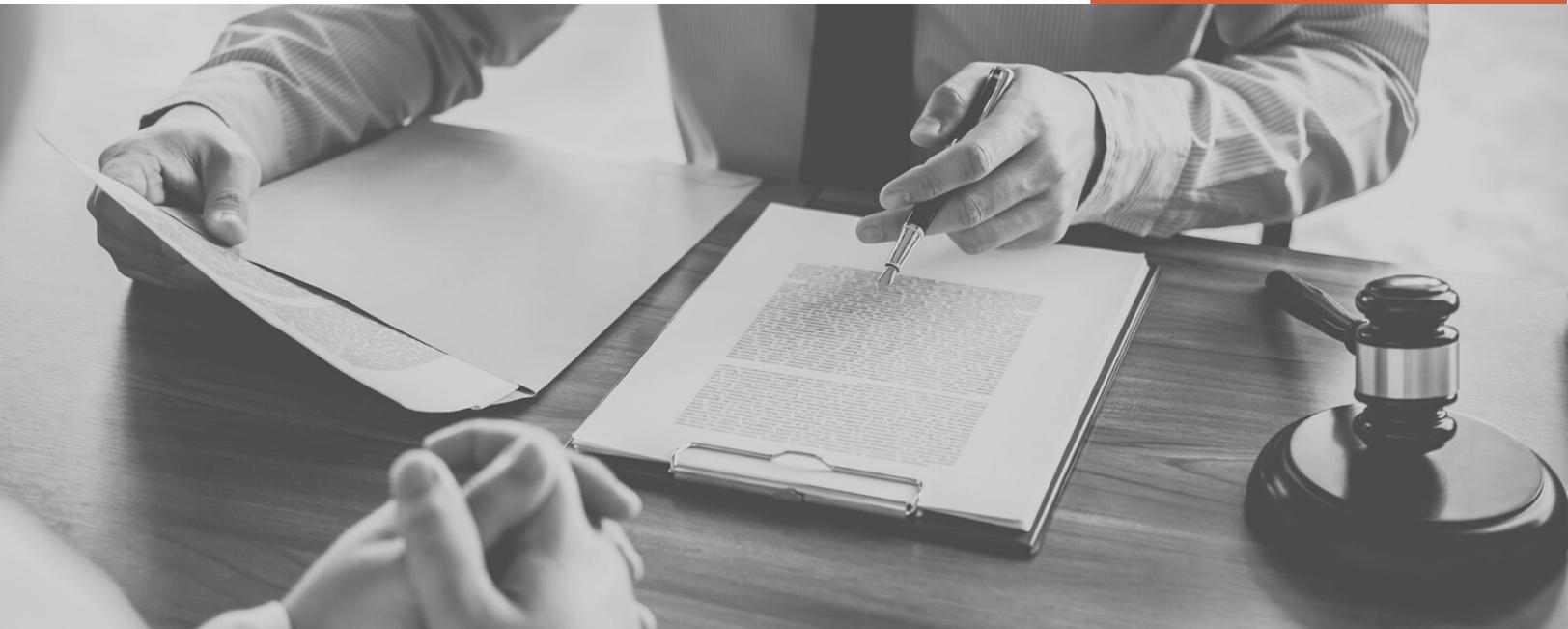


"We became a multi-racial family through adoption, and it opened our biological children's minds to understanding the richness of other cultures, and the blessings of diversity. In truth, we have never, nor will ever think in terms of adopted or biological (although we have been sensitive to the needs of each)— we have been blessed with familial love that transcends blood or ancestry."

PASTOR LEE GRAHAM

"The court system plays an essential role in the foster care world. Judges have to make final decisions about what will happen in the life of children and families, and ultimately, what will be in the best interests of the child. Children, each parent, and the county are all represented by lawyers; it is our job to make sure that everyone's voice is heard in the decision-making process. Lawyers also serve as advocates, to smooth the road for children and families as they do the hard work of healing and restoration. These cases can be very complex, and are often heartbreaking."
Katie, Parents' Attorney in Santa Clara County.

LAWYERES AND JUDGES



Please pray for judges and lawyers to have wisdom and discernment, and a persistent spirit of grace and love.

MENTORS AND MENTEES

Whether organically, or through a formal program strong mentorship can improve academic outcomes, increased relationship skills, enhance self-esteem and self-confidence, and improve behavior and interpersonal skills. Mentors gain a better understanding of the complex emotions and experience foster youth and families navigate while providing stability and a safe relationship for them to express those emotions and experiences. Every healthy, consistent, encouraging relationship is a reinforcement of healthy adult connection in the youth's life. Mentorship can also be beneficial to adults navigating the foster care system as new foster parents. Or, a parent mentorship for reunified families provides encouragement and guidance and increases the chance of a biological family establishing healthy habits and long-term stability.



Pray that each child, youth, and adult navigating the foster care system is provided a mentor that is gifted with wisdom and patience to assist their mentee.

KINSHIP CAREGIVERS

When a child is removed from their biological home, the courts first look to any extended family members or close family friends who are able to open their home, their resources, and their love to this child. Kinship can be an auntie, older sibling, or teacher, but more commonly, it is the grandparents who step up to raise their grandchildren. When a child is placed in a home of someone they already know, they are more likely to already have formed an attachment and maintained family connection and culture, which eases the transition period. Split loyalties, and balancing the relationship between the child and biological parents is often a difficult role for the kinship parent to play and requires healthy boundaries and redefining the roles they play in each party's life.



Pray that kinship caregivers gain access to the resources such as tangible needs, financial needs, and the emotional and spiritual strength to take in and care for children who come into their home.

A person is shown from the chest up, wearing a plaid shirt, reading an open Bible. The Bible is open to a page with dense text. The person's hands are visible, holding the pages. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color. Overlaid on the image is a quote in a reddish-brown color.

"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."

JAMES 1:27

Last year, with the help of 10,000 volunteer hours, we served 3,908 children through tangible needs, hosted 90 hours of educational trainings, and partnered with 65 churches, which barely scratching the surface of what is needed. We know that the families and individuals that welcome kiddos into their homes and lives need training, a community full of people with shared life experience, and unique resources. Join us in praying for, and dreaming of, the day when the foster care community is filled with a multitude of people who may not have been called to being a foster parent, but compassionately love this vulnerable population in tangible ways. Foster Care is a community-wide issue, requiring a community-wide solution.

HELP ONE CHILD



Pray that God would enable the staff and board of Help One Child to multiply the impact.

CALIFORNIA

There are 60,000 families and children impacted by foster care throughout California. We lift up believers all over the state who are consumed with compassion for the children impacted by foster care. We lift up everyone who is new to the foster care community, trying to find out how to use their voice. We pray for strength over California's social workers to do their jobs to the best of their abilities, and that policymakers would fight for the necessary funds for the system to operate effectively. Collectively, we can make a difference in the lives of the 60,000 moms, dads, foster parents, kinship parents, children, and young adults impacted by the foster care system.

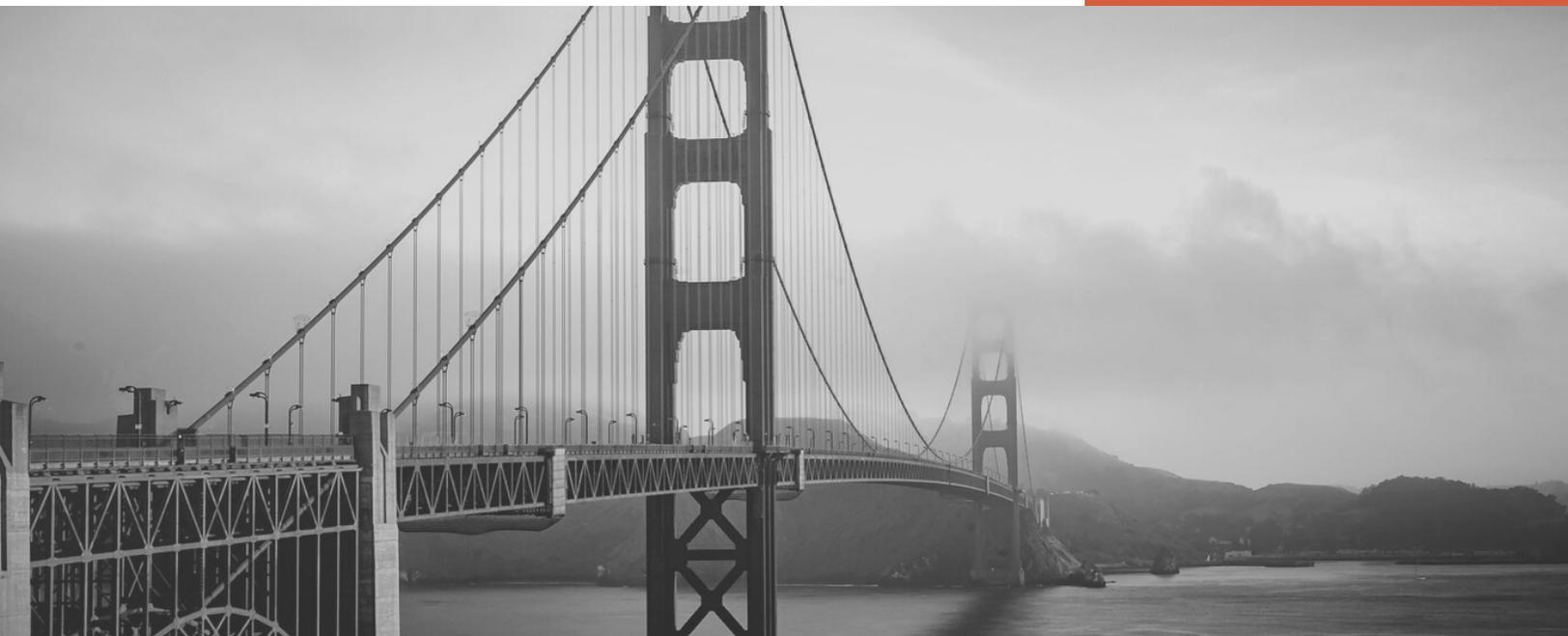


CALIFORNIA REPUBLIC

Pray that families throughout California would find the resources and support needed to be safe, loving environments for the children in their home.

7,000 square miles, 7.1 million inhabitants, and 7,000 children impacted by foster care call California's Bay Area "home." The Bay Area is uniquely pieced together by some of the wealthiest companies and individuals in America, and right down the street, there are families struggling to make ends meet. Often, we are so focused on the work-driven lifestyle, we forget to check in with our neighbors and love our community. How could we utilize our workforce and understanding of early childhood trauma to affect at-risk families, foster care policies, or the homeless population? By collectively engaging in a grassroots movement to serve families impacted by the foster care system, from prevention to reunification or adoption, we can be a leading example to the rest of the nation.

THE BAY AREA

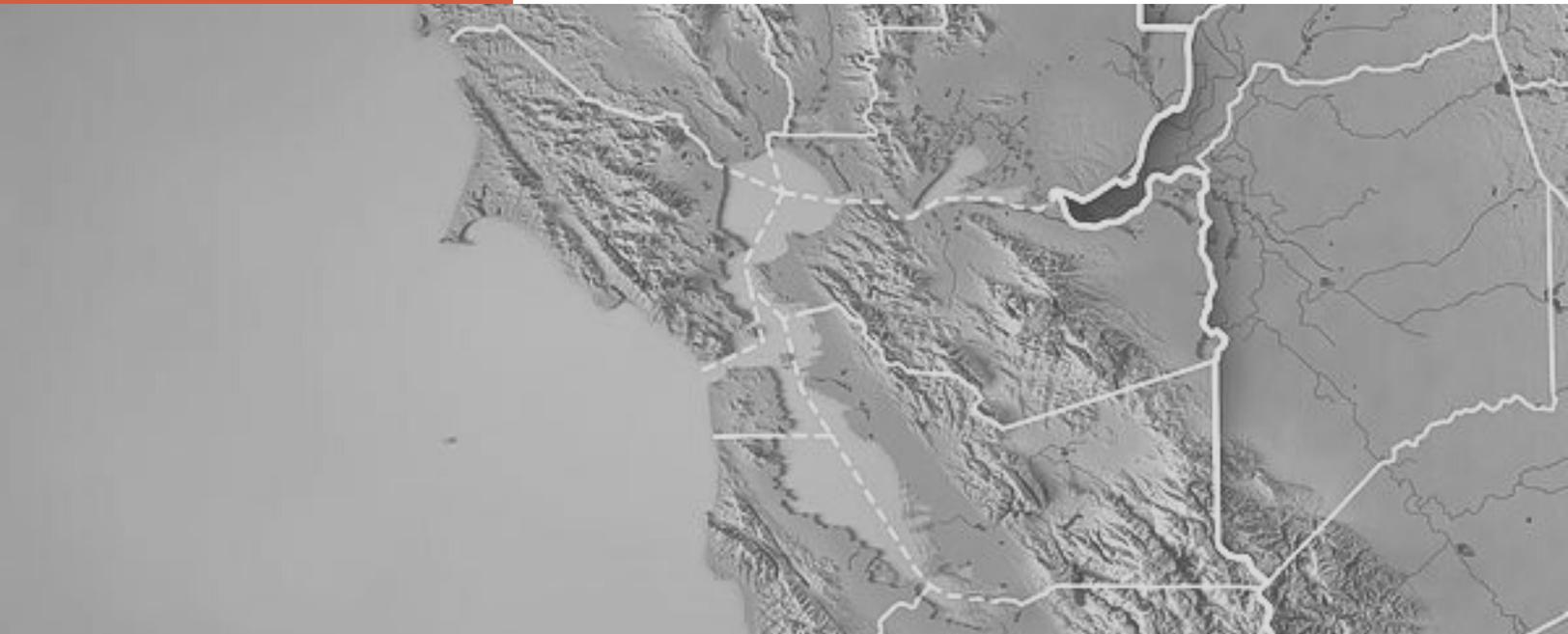


Pray that the body of Christ will lead the Bay Area into a compassionate movement of love, awareness, and education regarding the needs of children and families impacted by foster care.

YOUR COUNTY

Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco,
San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano, Sonoma

Your county is comprised of community-based organizations, agencies, children and families in need, and churches who champion your foster care community. How well do you know the foster care community in your county? What unique opportunities does your church offer to love on and support these families? The number of children and families impacted by foster care might seem daunting. Narrow down the scope and focus on your county and your own neighborhood.



Pray for wisdom and guidance over the mayor, county council members, pastors, and local school administrators of your county as they collectively address the foster care crisis in your county.

"We live in a world in which we need to share responsibility. It's easy to say "It's not my child, not my community, not my world, not my problem." Then there are those who see the need and respond. I consider those people my heroes."

-Fred Rogers

As we close out Foster Care Awareness Month, we want to highlight the most important contribution to the foster care community. YOU. You are a foster care advocate, you are a member of your community, your church, your county, and you can use your voice to make a difference. The foster care community is filled with individuals from every walk of life doing what they can to make an impact. No matter who you are, where you live or what you do, you can make a difference in the foster care community by raising your hand and stepping up in some way for the least of these.

YOU



Pray that God will make it clear to you how you can lend your hand and heart to helping the most vulnerable in your community.

“The Foster Care Crisis is a community-wide problem requiring a community-wide response.”

Every day during the month of May, Foster Care Awareness Month, we pray over different groups of people who either impact or are impacted by the foster care system. From children, biological families, foster and adoptive parents, to child welfare workers, teachers, and elected officials. Each one plays a part in this community. Set aside a moment each day to pray for the highlighted groups working together.

#fostercareawarenessmonth

Help ne Child

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HELPONECHILD.ORG
(650) 917-1210
