

SUNDAY ARTICLE

ST DAVID'S PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ♦ 24 MARCH 2019



Wrapping Around Foster and Adoptive Families

Jason Johnson

The goal of your church is not simply to start a peripheral ministry a few are involved in; it's to establish a foundation culture of caring for orphaned and vulnerable children everyone has a role to play in.

An environment where it's understood that while we're not all called to do the same thing, we're all certainly capable of doing something. That's the goal. Everyone. Doing. Something.

A Buffet of Opportunities

If we're not careful, we may unintentionally define caring for orphans and the vulnerable too narrowly – to simply mean foster care, adoption or some other form of bringing a child into your home long term. While these are of course crucial and essential places for the Church to engage, they represent only a few of the items on the buffet of limitless opportunities available for people to get involved.

The truth is that not everyone is called to foster or adopt. As a matter of fact, most people in the Church won't ever bring a child into their home for any extended period of time. But this does not mean they, and the Church as a whole, don't have an essential and necessary role to play in caring for these kids by supporting the families who do.

If people in your church are only hearing it's about adoption, then the many that are not considering adoption but still have a heart to be involved won't engage. If people are only hearing it's about foster care, then those who aren't able to foster but are still passionate about being involved will feel like there's no place for them to really make an impact.

Our message must be clear, broad and helpful – from the single college student to the young family to the empty nester to the retiree – that we all don't have to do the same thing, but we can all certainly do something. If it's too narrow we effectively communicate that the majority of our people have no essential role to play in this, if any at all, which is certainly not the case.

BBQ and Foster Care

I recently met a man in Nebraska. Mid-60's, retired. He spends most of his time at a local equestrian centre re-shoeing and caring for the horses there because many of them are used in equine therapy for kids who have experienced trauma, abuse, and neglect. He told me that while he may not be able to bring a child into his home, he can certainly take care of these horses if it means it helps those kids who need them. I couldn't agree more.

I recently met a couple in Kansas City. Empty-nesters. He told me he makes the best BBQ in the state (a bold claim!) and LOVES to cater any orphan care ministry related event at their church including respite nights for couples, info meetings for those considering getting involved and even taking meals over to families homes who have had a new child placed with them. Here's a couple that has said, "We know what we can't do, and we know what we can do, so we're going to do what

we can do well.” They told me that while they may not be in a position to bring a child into their home right now, they can certainly do their best to bless those who are. I couldn't agree more.

I recently spent time with a pastor in Oklahoma. Large, historic, traditional church. They've established a significant fund for people to invest in that, in part, is used to (and I quote the pastor here) “Ensure that under no circumstances should it cost anyone in our church one penny to foster or adopt a child.” Wow! He told me he recognizes that with a large demographic of senior-aged adults in his body they have to be diligent about presenting unique opportunities to get involved that don't simply consist of bringing children into their home. He's convinced they have thousands of dollars in an account right now waiting to be used by families because of it. Here's a church that has said, “We know what we can't do, and we know what we can do, so we're going to do what we can do well.” I couldn't agree more.

I know of lawyers that will donate legal services for adoptions pro bono. Mechanics who one Saturday a month offer free oil changes to single moms and foster parents. Counsellors who offer their services for free to foster and adoptive families. The list could go on. Everyone... *every one* can do something.

Find Your Something

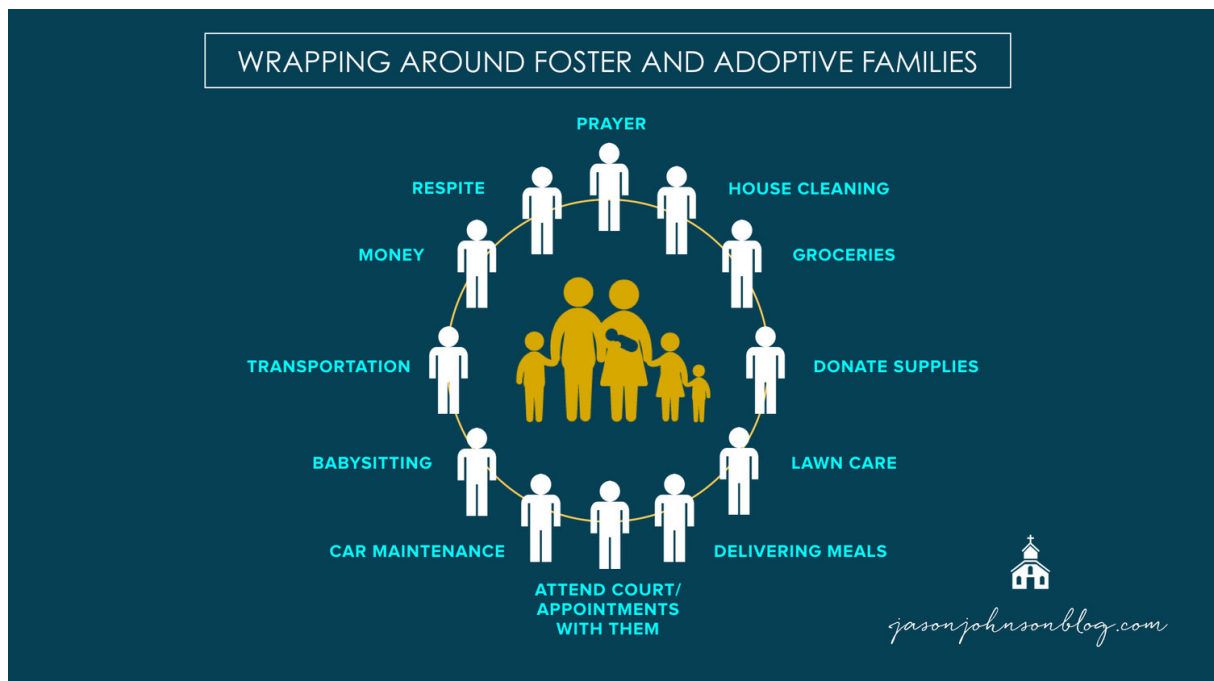
The opportunities to get involved are as unique and diverse as each individual person in your church. Everyone has something to offer – whether it's BBQ, babysitting, a gift card or even a new forever family. While we are not all called to do the same thing, we are all certainly capable of doing something. Perhaps it could be said this way: You're either called to bring children into your home or you're capable of serving and supporting those who do – so find your “something”! Maybe the consistent “script” at your church can simply be this:

“At _____ Church, some of us are going to bring children into our homes, and the rest of us are going to find ways to serve and support them.”

Here's a visual (below) to help us see some simple, unique and diverse ways that a community of people can wrap around and tangibly serve foster and adoptive families – and in so doing participate in their calling and responsibility to care for kids by serving and supporting the families who have brought them into their homes.



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Source: <http://jasonjohnsonblog.com/blog/wrapping-around-foster-and-adoptive-families>

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