

Voices: You can do more for foster care than you may think

January 30, 2023

It was 11 p.m. on a Saturday night. A scared but vivacious 3-year-old showed up on the front porch two hours earlier with her lovey, a coloring book and the clothes on her back. What she lacked in the way of possessions was made up for with garbled words and extra sass.

The Child Protective Services investigator and a case worker walked through the placement paperwork, looked around the house, promised to check-in the next day and left.

There was bath time, a snack, a cup of water and probably five different reassurances before K-Bear finally fell asleep that night. Then the questions came.

“What if she wakes up afraid? What if she has nightmares? What if she tries to walk out the front door?”

Then the questions became more personal.

“What if I’m not good at this? What if I can’t provide what she needs? Will I ever sleep soundly again? Did I hear you right, God?”

The foster care journey

My journey with foster care started as a youth 15 years ago. Involvement ranged from providing child care at trainings, to loving foster families and eventually to becoming a certified respite provider.

I took the jump January 2022. After coffee with a fellow foster mama, I

called a home developer and started the process to license my home. Just two months later, I was licensed. A few days later, I was a mom to three.

Really, my journey started much earlier than this. My journey began in my home, growing up, as we included “the least of these” in family gatherings.

Sometimes it was recovering addicts or alcoholics at the dinner table. Sometimes it was people spending the weekend with us who didn’t have family or who had burned the bridge of every family member they did have.

Sometimes it was people far from home, beginning a new life, participating in our holidays. It was always someone from somewhere who had experienced something life-altering.

Answering the “why” questions

“Why is a single person willingly giving up her freedom for those kids? What is she thinking? Is she crazy? How is the ‘three kids thing’ working or going to work? What about all the laundry?”

I’m sure you can imagine the questions. And some of the questions you wouldn’t dare to imagine.

Why? Because it is stepping out in faith and living in obedience to a calling. Because there is no excuse for running from a call to the ministry of people. Because lessons from the Old and New Testaments suggest God will win, and avoiding his plan only causes delay.

Why? Because it all boils down to two questions: Does this align with the heart and character of God? Is this offering my life as a living sacrifice before the Lord?

Why? Because James 1:27 says, “Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and

refusing to let the world corrupt you.”

Why? Maybe the question should really be: Why not?

We all are called to do something

You might be sitting there thinking: “I am *not* called to *that*.”

Maybe you aren’t. You answer to God alone in terms of your calling.

But if you feel a nudging, if you feel like you have an opinion, you probably are called to do something. If you can’t foster, you can pray; you can support a foster parent; you can take the steps to provide respite care; you can love a foster family; you can advocate; you can become a surrogate grandparent, aunt or uncle. You can do something.

Why foster care matters

In June, I sat with my son at kids’ camp as he asked questions about following Jesus. In August, we baptized him. In October, on the couch in my living room, my son helped my middle daughter find Galatians 2:20.

We talked about what it means to be crucified with Christ, and my daughter said, “I want to follow Jesus.”

We baptized her the next week, because much like the lesson of Philip and the Ethiopian in Acts 8, she couldn’t wait a minute longer.

“But do you want to know why foster care is worth it? Because it’s gospel work. And living for Jesus is always, always worth it” (Jaimie Finn, *Foster the Family*).

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chasing kids, investing in her church and the surrounding community, and drinking good coffee. The views expressed are those of the author.