

CALLED TO THE LEAST OF THESE

Scripture is full of verses compelling the church to care for the least among us. Whether in command or through modeling, we see God's heart for the vulnerable.

- Proverbs 31:8 - *Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.*
- Deuteronomy 10:18 - *He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing*
- James 1:27- *Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world*
- Isaiah 1:17 - *Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow*
- Micah 6:8 - *He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God*

A Biblical Basis to Care. Scripture clearly teaches that we are called to care for children in need.

Christian care for vulnerable children is rooted in biblical mandate.

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world (James 1:27).

It is a revealing of God's nature.

"He defends the cause of the fatherless..." (Deuteronomy 10:17).

To care for the most vulnerable is ultimately a reflection of God's character.

"A Father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. He sets the lonely in families." (Psalm 68:5–6)

We do for others, what God has done for us.

"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18).

A Practice to Care. Protection and care for vulnerable children has been a defining mark of Christianity since its first days.

Early Christians were known for their love for one another. It was a hallmark of the early church.

When Christians welcome and serve vulnerable children, we are simply giving a small, humble reflection of the way he first loved us.

God has called us to be His ambassadors in reconciliation, reconciling people to God and to each other.

We are called to put in to action the heart of God toward vulnerable children.

The Act of Restoration in caring for the last among us.

The work of foster care and all works of compassion are a work of restoration

I Corinthians gently reminds us: "Love hopes all things." We pray for the restoration, not only for the child, but for the whole family.

No matter how far a person has fallen, the gospel insists they are never beyond the reach of God's redemptive love.

This grounds Christians in a hope deeper than wishful thinking and calls us to work for the restoration of struggling parents whenever possible.

The Gift of Koinonia in caring for the least among us.

The challenges of caring for the least among us are more than anyone can bear alone.

Thankfully, God gave us the local church.

The true fellowship — *koinonia* — that God intends for his people is far more than Sunday services.

It bears burdens (Galatians 6:2), shares hospitality and resources (Romans 12:13), and rejoices and mourns together (Romans 12:15).

The Sharing in Suffering by caring for the least among us.

Children and families involved in the foster care system have tasted the world at its most broken.

When we welcome them into our homes and our hearts, we share in that hurt with them. This makes no sense if life's purpose is to maximize pleasure and minimize pain.

As Paul described, “I want to know Christ, the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings” (Philippians 3:10).

It’s not that we want to suffer. But we trust that amidst the trials we can experience an unparalleled fellowship with Christ. In God, even the very hardest things can be the source of great good — both in our own lives (Romans 5:3–5) and for others (i.e., Genesis 50:20).

CLOSING

How is God calling us to care for the least among us?

NOTES:

While the initial purpose of this message is to encourage foster care, there are many works of compassion that God calls his church to. This message is meant to be adapted to use for the larger call to care for the least among us.

I leave the illustrations up to the speaker so that they can apply the message to the context and culture of their congregation

Verses to possibly use in this message:

- Proverbs 31:8 - *Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.*
 - Deuteronomy 10:18 - *He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing*
 - James 1:27- *Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world*
 - Romans 8:15-17 - **15** *The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."* **16** *The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.* **17** *Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory*
 - Isaiah 1:17 - *Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow*
 - Micah 6:8 - *He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God*
 - Psalm 68:5-6 - *Father to the fatherless, defender of widows— this is God, whose dwelling is holy. God places the lonely in families; He sets the prisoners free and gives them joy*
 - Exodus 2:10 - *When the child grew older, she took him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. She named him Moses,[a] saying, "I drew him out of the water."*
- Psalm 68:5-6 God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.*