

SPEAK UP

Praying Through the Foster Care System



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The system is broken. At least, that's what we all say. It's an easy statement to make when we hear about the flaws that exist within the foster care system. In a way, it gets us off the hook. It's a statement that connotes it's outside of my control. After all, one person cannot fix an entire nationwide government system, right? But, what if every time a flaw was seen an action was taken? If prayer and problem-solving faithfully followed the statement, "the system is broken," wouldn't it have found some healing by now?

Healing the broken system. That's where we, the Church, should be invested. After all, we serve a God big enough to "fix an entire nationwide government system," right? Nothing is outside of His control! We must believe in God to do incredible things on behalf of children who need family and of the people who serve them.

Our role as believers is not meant to be one of passive onlooking but of action. And the first action step is simple. Proverbs 31:8-9 says, "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." There are children who need family, birth parents who need wisdom and strength, foster families who need support, judges who need clarity, and so many others who need you and your church to speak up in prayer.

Foster care is a massive system with many moving parts. It includes more than just state workers and foster families. Church leaders, advocate organizations, medical professionals, and teachers are all part of the system! In this prayer guide, we hope to provide clarity and empower you to pray for every aspect of the foster care system. We see a day where the words, "the system is broken," are replaced with "the system is working; hurting children are finding healing homes."



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eric Porter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Reverend Eric Porter
Founder/CEO
Backyard Orphans

HOW TO UTILIZE THIS GUIDE

Prayer is powerful. Whether it is done in a quiet place of solitude or as a unified congregation, prayer moves the heart of God. It keeps our hearts aligned with the heart of the Father. Interceding for the vulnerable propels us toward His solution for the orphan crises around the world and in our own backyard. As you pray for the foster care system, we encourage you to consider these strategies:

1

Ask various pastors, orphan care leaders, or church leaders to lead a prayer time in the service.

- Open with a short description of the people group and what part they play in the system.
- Communicate the need and emphasize why they need our prayer. (People need to understand the urgency of their situations.)
- Ask the congregation to join in prayer for the specific needs listed in this guide.

2

Pray for specific groups during National Abuse Awareness Month (April), National Foster Care Month (May), or National Adoption Month (November).

- Choose which areas of foster care you want to highlight each year and focus your efforts accordingly. You may consider serving or honoring people in those specific areas of foster care (e.g. government and child welfare workers, missionaries and nonprofit teams, foster families).

3

Pray for one category of people each Sunday leading up to a ministry launch, Stand Sunday, or Orphan Sunday.

- Highlighting each group gives your congregation an opportunity to (1) better understand what foster care is and (2) pray intentional and focused prayers for specific needs in your community.

4

Create a prayer initiative to engage your congregants in foster care prayer throughout the week.

- Utilize social media or email to equip your church to pray for the foster care system in their daily devotional times.
- Highlight one category of people each day.

CHURCH LEADERS

There are 350,000 churches in the United States and billions of believers worldwide. The Church is God's solution to the orphan crisis. It is imperative that church leaders around the globe step up and put the biblical mandate of caring for vulnerable children in front of their people. When they do, the Church can stand in the gap for kids without family and show them the love of Christ!

Pray for God to open their hearts to see the need in their own backyard. The government is mandated to be law and protection, but the Church is mandated to be family.

Pray for ignited passion as they speak up to their churches and communities on behalf of those who feel orphaned.

Pray for fresh vision and strategy to help more children and families find healing and restoration.

Pray for favor with child welfare workers, private agencies, and government officials to develop into strong relationships with a common goal.

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.

A photograph of two young children, a boy and a girl, seen from behind as they look out a large window. The boy is on the right, wearing a blue shirt, and the girl is on the left, wearing an orange shirt and glasses. They are looking out at a vast, hazy mountain landscape. On the windowsill in front of them are three small, brown, cone-shaped objects, possibly candles or decorative items. The window has a dark frame and a small plant is visible in the top left corner.

BIOLOGICAL FAMILIES OF CHILDREN IN CARE

Every child in foster care represents an entire family who is feeling the pain of separation. Parents are away from their children, siblings are separated from one another, grandparents and other extended family members miss out on major life moments. Biological families experience many heartaches and stressors throughout the foster care process that we should not overlook. God's Word is full of redemption stories, therefore our prayers should center around restoration and reunification whenever possible.

Pray for families who are at risk of separation to find the mentors and resources needed to strengthen them in their time of need.

Pray for biological parents to find healing and hope through church and community support. Pray for perseverance as they seek steady jobs, safer homes, financial security, and a support system for their children to return to.

Pray for sibling groups to avoid further disruption by being able to stay together in the same foster home.

Pray for grandparents and extended family members to experience peace in the process.

Pray for reunification of families. God is in the business of restoring lives; therefore, we should pray boldly to the One who can bring families back together.

Backyard Orphans Blog

Every Sunday is Orphan Sunday

“Know this—to preach the Gospel is to preach the restoration of the family; to preach the Gospel is to preach orphan care.”



3

CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

There are over 400,000 kids in U.S. foster care, all of whom need permanency through reunification or adoption. The emotional turmoil they experience during their time in care is incredible. Many have experienced trauma far beyond what we can imagine. But, we trust God can heal even the scars that are unseen.

Pray for children to experience the peace of God as they navigate the unique and difficult challenges of foster care.

Pray for children to experience the love of God that has the power to heal even the deepest of wounds.

Pray for children to find healing homes and loving communities who will wrap around them.

Pray for children's potential to be seen by the teachers, pastors, and foster parents they encounter. Pray for adults to believe in them and advocate for them to thrive in school, work, social settings, extracurriculars, and more.

Pray for the future of each child in the system as they are the future leaders of the Church and our nation. Pray for God to send the right people and opportunities into their lives so they may develop all of the skills needed to accomplish great things!

Psalm 34:17-18

The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.



4

FOSTER PARENTS

Fostering is hard. It's 24/7 living room discipleship. Foster parents are temporary caregivers to kids from the hardest places. They need strength to keep up with appointments and court dates, wisdom in unique parenting, patience to respond well in traumatic moments, and communities of people to surround them in support. This frontline ministry is filled with families who are experiencing great challenges while working towards incredible rewards!

Pray for wisdom in parenting children from hard places and in leading their home well.

Pray for peace in times of stress and in the chaos of the day-to-day routine, or lack thereof.

Pray for favor with child welfare, judges, and biological families. Pray for the love of God to shine through foster parents and for doors of opportunity to open as they are needed.

Pray against burnout that can so easily come with the territory of foster care and for a spiritual refreshing to fill their tank as they continuously pour out.

Pray for a community of people from their church, work, or family to step up and surround them with support and encouragement.

Pray for friendships to develop with people who understand their unique circumstances, are willing to lend an ear, and are ready to cheer them on.

Eric Porter

As God calls families into foster care, He is not calling them to comfort, but to combat—to fight the spiritual battles on behalf of kids.



5

ADOPTIVE PARENTS

Adoption dwells at the intersections of pain and beauty, sorrow and joy, loss and love, trauma and healing. There is always a need for more adoptive families, but it's no small commitment. The journey is in fact long and difficult, and it doesn't end with the swing of a gavel. The long-term trauma of a child in care can last a lifetime. We celebrate "Gotcha Day," with cake and balloons, but adoption doesn't solely celebrate the beginning of a new chapter, it memorializes the ending of another. There are over 100,000 children ready for adoption in the U.S. and the families God is calling to say yes need our prayers.

Pray for more healthy adults to accept the call to adopt.

Pray for adults who are pursuing adoption to have peace and strength. The application, interview, and matching process can breed discouragement in families who hope to grow, but God can use the waiting to further prepare parents for the children He has in their future.

Pray for wisdom. As hardships arise and adoptees have difficult questions, parents need a continued understanding of how to best lead their children to become resilient, healthy adults.

Pray for perseverance for the lifetime commitment that is adoption.

Galatians 6:9

**So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just
the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if
we don't give up.**



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CHURCH SUPPORT TEAMS

Church support teams are the lifeblood for foster and adoptive families. Small blessings such as meals, childcare, resources, and support groups bring great relief to families who are serving kids from hard places. These teams become brothers and sisters in-arms to fight against an enemy seeking to kill, steal, and destroy families. No one is called to fight alone! Orphan care is not about some of us doing it all, it is about all of us doing something.

Pray for more people to speak up. How will anyone know there is a need if there are no voices speaking on behalf of children? Pray for people with platforms to feel the call to spread awareness of the needs in their community.

Pray for more people to provide resources such as meals, beds, clothes, etc. Pray for believers to find ways to utilize the gifts God has given them for families on the front lines of foster care and adoption.

Pray for tenacity among support teams. Pray that those who enter the inner circles of foster and adoptive families will be unafraid of the brokenness they may see and that they will love well.

Pray for more babysitters and respite care providers. All families need time off and couples need time to replenish their tanks as they serve kids. Pray for child care teams to develop processes that benefit both children and families.

Acts 2:44-45

And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need.

BIOLOGICAL CHILDREN OF FOSTER/ADOPTION FAMILIES

Choosing to become a foster or adoptive family is a decision that affects everyone in a household. Becoming a sibling to a foster or adoptive child is a challenging transition. It's a change that can cause tension in a family if parents are not able to guide children toward a healthy understanding of their new world.

Pray for divine love and compassion for the kids who will come through their home, whether it is permanent or temporary. Pray for biological children to see their foster or adoptive siblings through Christ's eyes.

Pray for protection as kids are exposed to a world they may never have seen before.

Pray for families to flourish by maintaining open and honest communication between children and their parents.

John 15:16

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.

ADOPTTEES



Changing a child's last name does not eliminate his or her trauma. In fact, it can sometimes bring it to the surface. Embracing the reality of a new family is to accept the loss of a first family. Adoptees need a lifetime of support in processing their history and finding healing.

Pray for peace and felt security through the adoption process and that children will begin to feel at home long before adoption day arrives.

Pray for good counselors and school advocates to support them in finding normalcy quickly.

Pray for adoptees to find healing along the way, to overcome triggers that could otherwise last a lifetime.

Pray for adoptees to bond with their new families in a way that helps them understand what family connection truly looks and feels like. This connection will be the basis for their ability to connect with their future spouse and children.

Psalm 68:5-6a

**A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,
is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely
in families.**

YOUTH AGING OUT OF CARE

Every year over 20,000 kids age out of foster care without a permanent place to call home. Many end up homeless, drug-addicted, trafficked, in prison, or worse. These youth need guidance, opportunity, and stability.

Pray for those who have already stumbled into homelessness, engaged in criminal activities, become trafficked, or become further victimized in some way. Pray for supportive organizations to grow in order to meet the needs of kids who have aged out and found difficult life paths.

Pray for the ability to break the cycle and find success in life. Pray for safe and secure housing, good-paying jobs, open doors, and favor in college.

Pray for more mentors (business leaders, community leaders, church leaders) to speak life and wisdom to this vulnerable population of young adults.

Pray for more resources to support young people in establishing their new lives so that they are not only able to survive but to thrive.

Luke 2:52

Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor
with God and all the people.

A photograph of three women in a professional setting. One woman on the left is looking at a laptop, another in the center is looking at a document, and a third on the right is smiling. They are in a room with large windows and indoor plants.

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CHILD WELFARE

The job of serving in the child welfare system can be exhausting, heartbreaking, and thankless. Not only is it difficult to find staff, but many child welfare workers quit every year due to burnout. Their lowlights are magnified in local media, but their highlights go unseen. We need to remember that they are doing their best to protect hurting children from harm's way. They need the Church to bring hope and kindness to them.

Pray for physical and emotional stamina to carry them through even the hardest of days.

Pray for a new generation of passionate social workers to rise up in colleges around the nation.

Pray for child welfare workers to feel supported and encouraged by their local community of churches and businesses.

Backyard Orphans Blog

5 Things You Didn't Know About Foster Care

The church and the state need to find common ground and work together to help children find hope and healing.

CHILD PLACING AGENCIES

Child Placing Agencies exist to recruit and train families to care for children from hard places through foster care and adoption. They also provide post-placement support through ongoing training, finances, and licensure. Finding the *right* healthy homes for the *right* hurting kids is a weighty responsibility. Case workers in this field need our prayer and support.

Pray for new agencies to have favor with the government as they work hand-in-hand within an overwhelmed system.

Pray for innovative ideas that will help them recruit more efficiently, train more effectively, and support more thoroughly.

Pray for financial blessing among agencies that will trickle into the homes of those who are caring for kids from hard places.

Psalm 122:6-9

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May those who love you be secure. May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels.” For the sake of my family and friends, I will say, “Peace be within you.” For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your prosperity.

ADVOCATING ORGANIZATIONS

Nonprofit foster care and adoption organizations exist to fill gaps in the system. They provide supports such as resources, funding, counseling, recruitment, and a platform to spread awareness. Many of these organizations rely on fundraising to operate and need our prayers to continue the good work they are called to do.

Pray for financial partnerships to flourish as these organizations seek to help an already underfunded child welfare system.

Pray for more missionaries to be called until the need no longer exists. Pray for young people, pastors, community leaders, former foster youth, and others to join the mission field of orphan care.

Pray for creativity and innovation as these organizations communicate the need and speak to the hearts of people who can help.

Matthew 9:38

So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields.

COUNSELORS AND THERAPISTS

Counselors and therapists are key players in the system. Their calling is to help kids and families adjust to their current situation and find healing from what they've experienced. They have the opportunity to be a sounding board, confidant, and friend to kids who need a safe place to process. They are the Holy Spirit's extension exercising the action of the Great Counselor.

Pray for God to raise up more counselors and therapists who will advocate for the mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of children.

Pray for training to become more readily available for counselors and therapists to better understand the nuances of children who come from foster care.

Pray for emotional strength. Carrying the stories of children who come from abuse and neglect can cause secondary traumatic stress and/or compassion fatigue. Pray for the emotional endurance needed to feel empathy and compassion without burning out.

John 14:26

But when the Father sends the Advocate as my representative—that is, the Holy Spirit—he will teach you everything and will remind you of everything I have told you.

MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS

Medical professionals are tasked with caring for the hurting every day. Among the many people they are called to serve are kids who have experienced physical abuse and neglect. This opportunity forces medical professionals to be reporters when they discover it. Being exposed to such heartbreaking stories can be exhausting and demoralizing.

Pray for peace throughout the reporting process as medical staff watch kids be passed from abusive care to hospital care to child welfare.

Pray for strength to carry the burden in a healthy way without falling prey to burnout.

Pray for medical professionals to serve families with integrity no matter the circumstances.

Pray that God would equip medical professionals to meet the needs of children in foster care as they arise.

Pray for more medical professionals who are passionate about caring for vulnerable children and bringing healing to their brokenness.

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We aren't all called to do the same thing, but we
are all called to do something.

A photograph of a teacher with curly hair, wearing a light blue cardigan, sitting on a large yellow beanbag chair. She is holding an open book and looking towards a group of children. Three children are visible: a girl with blonde hair in the foreground, a boy with dark hair in the middle ground, and a girl with long red hair in the background. They are all looking towards the teacher. The background shows a classroom setting with a whiteboard and a poster of the alphabet with cartoon characters.

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TEACHERS

Children spend more than 30 hours per week in school. Teachers have the great opportunity and responsibility of spending large amounts of time with children from all backgrounds. Most of the time, children in foster care have unique needs, require more attention, and are behind academically because of the amount of schools they've encountered from move to move. Teachers often struggle to meet these specific needs within a classroom full of children who are also vying for their attention.

Pray for schools to find trauma informed training opportunities so that teachers may better serve kids from hard places.

Pray for compassion to fill the hearts of teachers as they find ways not only to care for the educational needs of their students, but the emotional, relational and physical needs as well.

Pray for teachers to see kids in foster care for the potential that exists inside of them beyond their current circumstances.

Pray for innovative teaching methods to arise that could help kids who are years behind and who are struggling to retain an education in the midst of instability.

1 Corinthians 1:3-4

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.

LEGAL SYSTEM

The legal system has an effect on a child's entire journey through foster care. Police respond to emergency calls and investigate reports of abuse and neglect, lawyers fight for the rights of parents and children, and judges make life-altering decisions for children and families every day.

Pray for police departments to have Godly discernment as they investigate allegations of abuse and neglect and connect struggling families to support.

Pray for lawyers to speak up with passion for their clients and for what is truly best for the children involved in their cases.

Pray for judges to have wisdom as they determine the finality of families. As children seek permanency, judges are tasked with the responsibility to decide if biological families will be reunified, if removal is necessary for safety, and if potential adoptive families are adequately able to meet the needs of children waiting on forever families.

Pray for all roles in the legal system to be motivated by compassion and empathy as they navigate the complexities that come with foster care.

Zechariah 7:9-10

Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the foreigner or the poor. Do not plot evil against each other.

LEGISLATION

The standards of foster care are determined on legislative floors all over the country. These decisions can greatly impact the wellbeing of children and their families. Regulations can be protective and helpful or nuisances that cause more frustration than desired.

Pray for elected officials to make decisions that truly benefit the people they will impact.

Pray for researchers and writers to approach legislators with regulations that will improve upon the current foster care system.

Pray for former foster and adoptive youth to seek the opportunity to run for office and influence the system for the better.

Backyard Orphans Blog

5 Things You Didn't Know About Foster Care

The Church cannot take a backseat to foster care anymore. We have to lead the way in helping hurting children find healing homes.

NEXT STEPS

READ

Prayer is an incredible place to start helping kids who need family! Your kids and youth ministries can also begin doing incredible things! Check out resources. backyardorphans.org to see our free resources, Top 10 Ways Your Kids Can Do Orphan Care, Top 10 Ways Your Youth Can Do Orphan Care, and many more.

WATCH

Understanding the foster care system can be difficult if you have not experienced much of the “system”. If you would like to know more about what foster care is like through the eyes of a child, watch the short film, ReMoved at removedfilm.com.

DO

Ready to get involved in serving children in your backyard? Learn more about how we can help you reach child welfare, kids in care, and families in your community at backyardorphans.org.

CONNECT

If you are ready to chat about how you can start a foster care, adoption and support ministry in your church, schedule a meeting with one of our team members at nextsteps.backyardorphans.org.



BECAUSE CHILDREN
NEED FAMILIES

Be a lifelong learner.
Discover more resources at
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