

What You Can Do to Show Spirit-Infused Love to Struggling Mothers

As an intern, you do a lot of observing. You have the opportunity to sit back and watch as every piece of the puzzle is laid out. When I stepped into juvenile court for the first time, I was unprepared for what was going to happen. I had read many different stories about court experiences, and each one has made me tear up and my heart ache. The tears, the pain, the broken hearts that come from those court rooms are a lot to take in.

In the beginning of my internship, I was introduced to a young teenage boy in foster care who had a number of other siblings also in care at the time. There was a difference between this one child and his siblings. All of them were in the process of being adopted except him. He had been moved around a lot, seven different placements to be exact. At one point, he was even on the track to be adopted by a set of his foster parents who were also adopting two of his siblings. Their birth mom had directly surrendered her rights to the foster family. Earlier that year, the placement was disrupted for him and through all the confusion, the boy was once again moved to another placement. Because of the disruption, the foster family no longer had parental rights to this child and the rights went back to his birth mom.

My first day in court was the court date to decide whether or not this mom's rights would be terminated. She was given a second chance to put effort into her relationship with her son. I was told that this court date was not going to be like any other. There were conflicting ideas of what everyone thought should happen. Some thought the rights should be terminated to save the boy from having hope only to be let

down in the future. Others thought he was not currently stable enough to have another let down and family member taken away from him. Those against terminating believed the mother could change, they wanted to give her the second chance that had been hanging right in front of her.

I watched as the mother was told the caseworker was against terminating her rights. Tears of joy immediately began falling from her eyes. Someone was on her side; someone believed in her. Don't we all need this? To be reminded that someone is on our side, someone believes in us. Jesus shows this to us daily. I was reminded this morning about Psalm 139:13, "You brought my inner parts into being; You wove me in my mother's womb" (MEV).

The Lord knew exactly who we were going to be even before He began knitting us together. His hands did it all, each and every one of us made differently. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord, plans for peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." Through His creation of us, He knew what His special plans were for each one of us. We are all very different, yet we come together with a commonality of Jesus Christ. In this moment, this birth mama was experiencing a glimpse of God's perfect love for her, and for that I'm thankful.

A lot of times we focus on the children in foster care. Today, I want to focus on this mother, this beautiful woman the Lord created and knit with His very own hands. She needs our love, our prayers and our encouragement just as much as each one of the children in foster care do. I do not want to minimize the children at all. After all, I had been so focused on this boy the whole time during my internship. I cried for him often, crying out to the Lord for him, but His sweet mama needs the same. She is just as lost as he is.

So I challenge you, it is easy to blame the birth parents for the hurt and pain these children go through, but I'm often

reminded to stop seeking blame and just start loving. Hurt and pain have to begin somewhere, and these birth parents have a lot of it as well. Will you join me in lifting up and supporting birth parents today? {eoa}

*Adapted from Jon and Kinsey Thurlow's blog. **Jillian Kellenberger** serves as Advocate Support Director with The Forgotten Initiative. She is an avid coffee drinker and loves to use exclamation points whenever possible! Jillian has a heart for reaching out and loving those who are hurting and is passionate about seeing the church mobilized to serve and step into the lives of those affected by foster care.*