

It's Time for the Church to Embrace the Oft-Ignored James 1:27 Spirit

Embraced – Official Trailer from Eyes of the Heart Films on Vimeo.

America doesn't have orphanages; it has foster homes. And there is something that broke open in me when we became foster parents. When I would pray about the things I wanted to do for Jesus, this verse has meant so much to me: "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (James 1:27).

But somehow, I didn't really know its depth until we stepped out in faith to become an open home to children in distress. For the most part, children in the foster care system have some existing family. Some are not orphans and we work very hard to help reunify them with their families who are going through crisis and who need loving support while they get back on their feet.

But within those "for the most part" children, they are so many that are emotionally left as orphans. Feeling rejected by their own or not valued *enough* by their own is as damaging and heartbreaking as not having living relatives at all. And then there are currently more than 100,000 children awaiting adoption within the United States foster care system who have been waiting to be adopted for years, with no one to permanently give them a family.

The magnitude of this great need in our nation's own backyard has gripped our hearts. What would it look like if everyone in the church adopted or supported the orphans in their own neighborhoods? My husband, Matthew, and I asked ourselves this

same question before we were married.

We knew we wanted to live out what God the Father had done for us. God chose us, loved us and adopted us into His family through the gift of Jesus. He redeemed our past and showed us that we were created for His great purposes on this earth.

These children, in most cases, are lost and have no hope. They don't have an invested parent to show them their identity and they don't know what their place is in this world. Before Christ, we were all these children. And while we were lost in that place, God chose us—not because we were good or because He needed us. But He chose us because He loved us.

In the same way, we choose these children not because they are good or because we need another child. We choose them because we are called to love them and adopt them while they are in their struggle. Because Christ did the same for us.

We believe the body of Christ was meant to live out the gospel in this way for the orphan. It's this simple: we get the honor of doing what we have seen God the Father already do for us. Adoption is the fullness of the gospel.

Having adopted three kids so far after fostering, my husband and I carry this enormous, sacred dream to bring the entire church along with us in caring for the orphan. In January of this year, we were approached by our dear friends, Cara and Matt Hunter of Eyes of the Heart Films, about making a film on the spirit of adoption. We said yes.

Our prayer is that the church will see the children Jesus has blessed us with and be moved by God to realize that they can foster, support or adopt, too. If we can do it, then you can do it. We are ordinary people who want to live out the gospel—nothing more.

Eyes of the Heart Films describes its newest release by saying, "*Embraced* is a documentary film that declares God's

heart for the orphan and His desire for the church to live out the gospel through the gift of adoption."

They say further: "Through this powerful story of a child longing for a family and a mother aching for a child, it declares the beauty of the gospel message through adoption and foster care and presents the question: 'What would it look like for the church to embrace adoption?'"

For both the filmmakers and our family, our desire is that this film will awaken the church to embrace the spirit of adoption as a biblical way to live out the gospel message.

Later this year, the entire *Embraced* film will be released free online. Please watch the new trailer and pray about answering the cry of the orphan in your own city. {eoa}

Since 2008, **Natalie Brumfield** has served as Birmingham chapter leader for Bound4LIFE, a grassroots movement to pray for the ending of abortion and for revival worldwide. She often volunteers at a local pregnancy care center and is actively involved at Church of the Highlands. Natalie and her husband, Matthew, live in Birmingham, Alabama; they love being adoptive and foster parents.