

GRACE KLEIN

Community

As a young boy I remember spending great time at my grandparents country home. I had summers there that were full of cousins playing outside in the pasture, working in the garden, and building forts out of hay bales. I also remember working the kitchen helping Meme make her famous biscuits. In that kitchen hung a crocheted picture of some flowers that read **“Grow Where You’re Planted”**. I’m not sure all that Meme thought that meant, but some 30 years later God is showing me truth through it.

James 1:27 commands that the church care for widows and orphans, it’s a command to all of us saints, saved by Jesus. The command is universal, but the call looks different in homes. In our house we’ve been called to foster children who, for many various reasons cannot live with their biological family. The journey God has taken us on through foster care has been amazing, and I’d like to share some of it with you.

The children we have had in our home have not looked just like my wife, our two biological kids, or me. That has made for different looks when out in public, as well as many conversations with both friends and strangers (side note: walking with Jesus in a way that makes you look different will be noticed by others). We get questions like “Why do you do foster care?” This one is a great opportunity to share Jesus, how he adopted me into his family, how he loves unconditionally, and calls us to do the same. Another popular question is “How do you give them back?” usually followed with, “I just couldn’t do that”, or “How do you not get attached?” That leads me to the greatest lesson I’ve learned as a foster father, and it came the night our first little guy left our house to go to his forever family. I stood teary eyed over an empty crib and thought; there is no amount of foster parent training to prepare me for an empty crib in my home and a hole in my heart. In that moment, God taught me a few big lessons.

The first was one of humility. In Psalms 68 God says he is the Father of the fatherless. In many other places he calls us to take up the defense of the fatherless, but ultimately God is their father. God showed me that in my arrogance I was inserting myself in His role. God is the father to these foster children, and my biological children too. It is my job to show Jesus to them, to teach the kids the ways of God as we share this journey together (Deuteronomy 6). I had put myself in God’s place, and that is a dangerous place to be. That lesson has changed my perspective on my role as a father to both foster and biological children.

The second lesson was a reminder of God’s sovereignty. Jeremiah 29:11 is an often quoted scripture “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” In my state of humility I realized that the sovereign creator of the universe loved that little boy more than I ever could. If He in His supreme power and knowledge had the best for this little baby, then who am I to question His plan?

That leads me back to Meme’s kitchen and the crochet flowers. Grow where you are planted now reminds me to Serve Where I am Called. The reason why foster care works for our family is because it is what God has called us to do. Whether we are changing dirty diapers, midnight feedings or washing bottles we are abiding in the vine (John 15). So maybe you’re one of those people who have said to us “I could never give them back.” Perhaps that is because God didn’t call you to serve as foster parents. My challenge to you is that as you look across scripture at the commands of Christ prayerfully seek your calling. God has uniquely gifted us all as members of His body, the Church. Be humble, trust His sovereignty; pray for His plan for you because in that you will bear fruit.

“And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”-Hebrews 13:16