

***True Religion - James 1:26-27***  
**Notes, Family Worship, Bible Reading**

**Notes from the Sermon**

We are emphasizing the beauty and importance of foster care and adoption in our service this week. If you missed the service we want to encourage you to go view the livestream or listen to the podcast this week, as we are sharing quite a bit about our desire for Genesis to form a culture of care for vulnerable children as we build a network of support and love for families who are involved in foster care, adoption, and care for exceptional children. There are estimated 153 million orphans around the world, with as many as 1.2 million children trafficked into some kind of slavery each year. Locally there are approximately 13,000 children in the foster care system in the state of Missouri. But these are way more than numbers. Each of these children are God's image bearers, people loved by our Creator and for whom Christ died.

Genesis has always had (and currently has) families who have been involved in the care of vulnerable children. We are thankful for how they have embodied the beauty of the Gospel before us. Yet, as a church, we probably need to be honest that our care for these families has been lacking. Personally, as an elder of Genesis, I must confess that I have failed to lead our church to create a culture of support for these families and children. It is our desire to see that change, and as a church we are launching a new ministry designed to lead our church in doing just this. The ministry will be called Encompass, and we already have a fabulous team leading the way, working to build structure which will soon mean they will be asking every person in our church to consider ways they can care for children and these families. We hope, for some, this will mean that they consider stepping in to foster care and adoption. The truth is that there are virtually as many churches in our state as there are foster kids, which means if every church had one family that would foster every kid could have a home. For others, you will be asked to find ways to serve these families and care for kids.

It's not really difficult for us to see why this should be an emphasis at Genesis and really in every church. Jesus' little brother James keeps things real and simple. As a Jewish guy from a pretty religious culture, he knows that there are all kinds of people in his world that go to great lengths to demonstrate their religious devotion. At the very least people would wear wristbands and head bands with little scrolls to show the world that God's word was on their head and hand. But the more religious the more it showed up in the clothes and hats people wore. Why is it that religions came to believe that the bigger the hat the more holy the person? Today we buy T-shirts, art for our walls, and even put stickers on our cars to show our devotion. There isn't really anything wrong with any of this, but James cuts to the chase, telling us that this kind of display of religious devotion is worthless if it isn't accompanied by personal holiness and love for the broken people in the world. He says, "Let me show you authentic, real, Gospel rich religion. Step deeply into the messy lives of orphans and widows, caring for their needs and loving them."

James is echoing words from the Torah (first 5 books of the Bible) and prophets from the Old Testament. Over and over these inspired authors point God's people to the care for the big four of justice, the orphan, widow, sojourner (person who immigrated from a different country), and poor. But the motivation for justice, care, and generosity for these people is always the Gospel. Throughout the Scripture God's people are reminded that they were poor slaves in Egypt, but God rescued them, so they should love and be generous to the poor. They were sojourners in the desert and God met them there and led them to the Promised Land. So they must care for the immigrant. We were enemies and rebels, yet God chose us to adoption as sons and daughters and included us in His inheritance, so we

should love and care for the orphan and unwanted children. Our motivation for orphan care and issues of justice are not just an attempt to make a difference in the world. It is one of the clearest ways we demonstrate and declare that we understand what God has done for us in the Gospel. Therefore, as a church, we are doing this, getting involved. It might get a bit messy in places, but that is a fabulous thing. If God works as we hope He will, for some of us, it will mean that a bedroom that is empty might have a new resident. It could mean that Genesis Kids has many more vulnerable children in the mix each week. And it means that all of us can play a part in creating this culture.

**Bible Reading for the Week**

Daily Bible Readings

Sun	Mon	Tues	Weds	Thurs	Fri	Sat
Ezekiel 6	Ezekiel 7	Ezekiel 8	Ezekiel 9	Ezekiel 10	Ezekiel 11	Ezekiel 12

Reading from this past week: James 1:26-27  
 Reading in preparation for this coming Sunday: Micah 1

**Family Worship**

Song - *Jesus Does*

<https://youtu.be/qiT8vUM1dpl?si=JaJkeaZRWsjA87WF>

Gospel Project

Unit: The Warnings of Jesus  
 Story: Jesus Warned about Not Loving  
 Big Picture Question: How is Jesus the Prophet?  
 Answer: Jesus perfectly reveals God the Father and fulfills what the prophets spoke.  
 Scripture: Matthew 23

New City Catechism

Question #38: What is prayer?  
 Answer: Prayer is pouring out our hearts to God.  
 Verse: Psalm 62:8

Scripture

James 1:26-27

- Do you know any families who have been involved in foster care or adoption? What do you know of their experience?
- What does James write about the nature of true religion? Are these the things you normally think of when you picture religious people?
- How does love for orphans and widows actually reveal that we understand and believe the Gospel?
- What are 2 or 3 ways your family/Community Group could get involved in caring for vulnerable children and families?

Prayer

Pray for the millions of orphans around the world and the 13,000 children in Missouri in the foster care system.

\*Pray for our new Encompass team who will lead us to develop a culture of care for vulnerable children and for families involved in foster care and adoption.