

Caring for the Vulnerable

James 1:27

Emphasis: Caring for the vulnerable is a good way to tell the story of Jesus.

Teaching: In recent years, survey results released by "Pew Research" indicated Mississippi is one of the most religious state in the country. When measured against four factors of religious practice – the importance of religion in people's lives, frequency of attendance at worship service, frequency of prayer, and absolute certainty of belief in God – Mississippians responded well above the national average. However, other research statistics released by the Intercultural Institute for Contextual Ministry reveal that almost 70% of the resident of the "Magnolia State" are not connected to an evangelical congregation. While many people in the state may consider themselves religious, the truth is that their faith does not seem to impact their behavior.

The Bible teaches a close connection between caring for the vulnerable and living out faith. In the Letter of James, the Holy Spirit inspired the writer to clarify what God expects from true believers. James wrote, "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world (James 1:27, NKJV)." Godly men will care for unfortunate children and troubled widows. While many churches are sensitive to widows connected to their congregations, how is your church caring for hurting children?

According to the website MissionFinder.org, there are about 143 million orphaned children, and tens of millions more abandoned, in the world today. Over a half-million American kids are in foster care.

During the month of May, many churches in Mississippi collect a special offering on Mother's Day to help the ministry of The Baptist Children's Village (BCV). Since 1897, BCV has provided compassionate care to over 33,000 children. BCV continues efforts to expand the ministry in a way that allows more accessibility to private families who seek assistance and to Department of Human Service Social Workers who need to access services for children in their care. BCV is privately funded. Consequently, BCV receives no funding from the government. The Lord continues to use His people to accomplish much through the BCV ministry.

While BCV and other Christian organizations care for troubled children, many Baptist leaders are encouraging Christians to adopt children. Russell Moore in his book, *Adopted for Life*, declared, "The gospel of Jesus Christ means our families and churches ought to be at the forefront of the adoption of orphans close to home and around the world. As we become more attuned to the gospel, we'll have more of a burden for orphans. As we become more adoption-friendly, we'll be better able to understand the gospel."

Notes

Consequently, Christians have many opportunities to care for children in the name of Jesus. "Pure and undefiled religion" can be practiced by supporting the BCV, Crisis Pregnancy Centers, and assisting couples seeking to adopt. If we are busy putting love into action, we are more likely to remain "unspotted from the world."

Mission Application:

- Determine if your church is planning to collect an offering for the Baptist Children's Village on Mother's Day. If not, prayerfully consider asking the church to do so.
- Evaluate the manner in which your church ministers to widows and single mothers. Discuss ways you can improve this ministry.
- Plan ways to help the boys of your community who do not have a father's Christian influence. Consider an event in which the men of the church can spend time with the boys of all ages. Examples:
 - Plan a fishing trip for all ages.
 - Schedule a trip to Central Hills Baptist Retreat for a Lad/Dad weekend.
 - Consult the Men's Ministry department for upcoming activities in which men and boys can participate.
 - Collect funds to pay for the fees for children to attend summer mission camps at Central Hills Baptist Retreat and Camp Garaywa.

