

The Emancipation Crisis: The Problem + The Solution

A SEEMINGLY HOPELESS SITUATION

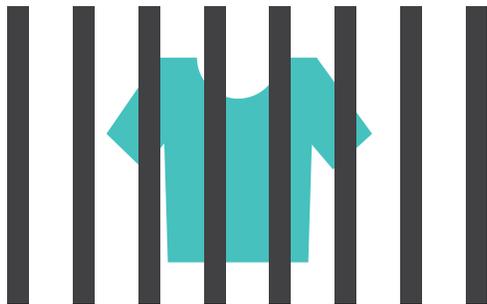
They are some of the most vulnerable members of our society. Most have given up on them. Our culture sees them as misfits and many are forgotten.



Studies found that between 44 - 77 % of emancipating youth have completed high school as compared to 93% of non-foster care youth.



Research shows that only 1% to 5% of foster youth ever graduate from college.



Within 2-4 years of emancipation, 40% of emancipated youth have been on public assistance or incarcerated by that time.



Girls who emancipate from foster care are approximately three times more likely than their peers to have a child by age 19.

Unlikely to be adopted at their age these young adults age out of foster care at 18, abruptly losing a home and support network. They have seldom had solid relationships on which to model adult interactions, and studies indicate that without a traditional family to serve as a social safety net, foster children often have a difficult time adjusting to adult life.

This current state of affairs is a recipe for a host of undesirable outcomes, including the perpetuation of the same negative familial patterns that first led to the teens being placed in the foster system. These teens are in desperate need of the support and guidance necessary to function as healthy adults.

A CHOSEN TRIBE

If you look throughout the Bible, these are exactly the kind of people God often chooses to do remarkable things for his Kingdom. The displaced, forgotten, struggling, and youthful are often the very ones empowered with supernatural gifts and abilities to succeed in the Kingdom Economy.

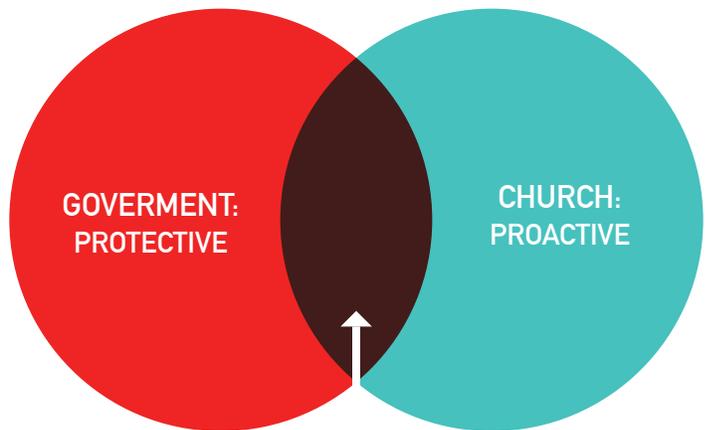
When it came to children specifically, Jesus himself had strong words: “Beware that you don’t look down on any of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels are always in the presence of my heavenly Father.” (Matt 18:10 NLT)

God has always had a special care for both children and societal outcasts, but humanity has not always shared that love. Recently in several states an assembly bill extending social services from 18 to 21 for youth aging out of foster care has been passed. We asked some of the youth we serve if they could pass any piece of legislation what would it be. Some of the answers were:

- Hope for all foster youth
- To grow up surrounded by people who really love them

- For someone to believe in them
- Healing from the lasting sting of abuse

Our government can only do so much. A greater movement must rise up and activate to help heal matters of the heart among a neglected generation.



POSITIVE CHANGE

A CHURCH IN ACTION

We are praying this resource helps mobilize The Church to stand in the gap, fill the holes, and revive the hearts of foster youth in their community. Teen Leadership Foundation has had a mandate for several years to improve the lives of at-risk teens through equipping the Church to reach teenagers in foster care. It is time to stand united and partner together to change the course of lives with some of our nation’s most vulnerable youth experiencing abuse and neglect.

WHEN A PROTECTIVE GOVERNMENT MEETS A PROACTIVE CHURCH

The government defines child protection as keeping children safe from child abuse and neglect. This is the foundation on which Child Protective Services (CPS) was established. CPS response begins with the assessment of reports of child abuse and neglect. If CPS determines the child is

at risk of abuse and neglect or has been abused or neglected, it ensures the child and his/her family receive services and supports from the Public Child Protection Agency. CPS can oftentimes provide a wide range of services to abused and neglected children from birth to age 18.

Services include, but are not limited to:

- Information and referrals
- Residential placement
- Foster care services
- Kinship services
- Intake and evaluation
- Protective SCOH
(Services to Children in Own Homes)
- Emergency services
- Therapist services

While the government keeps foster teens from harm or neglect, it's the power of the Church that has the remarkable opportunity to step in and lead them towards positive change. You have heard and now read about teenagers aging out of foster care and the negative outcomes: homelessness, human trafficking, gang affiliation, drug and alcohol abuse, and incarceration, to name a few. We have seen, now more than ever, that local and state CPS agencies are welcoming the faith community to work alongside them and take a proactive step in helping prevent these results through mentorship programs, community wrap around programs, life skill camps, and more. Your state or local agency may already have a Faith Based Initiative department set up for you to contact. They are developed to eliminate funding barriers and connect the church body with current local needs that can bring hope and change to hurting youth. Your development and maintaining relationships plays a critical role in making the departments initiatives vital and successful.

As the Church, we know what it takes to raise

healthy and protected children in a Christ-centered home. It may seem like we're barely able to manage our own families at times. But caring for the modern-day orphan in our community doesn't mean being perfect; it means being present. It's time to rise up to fulfill a Biblical mandate to expand that knowledge and turn it into action, beyond our own families and into our neighborhood.

Positive change for this growing national crisis can occur when congregations and their communities learn to work skillfully together on a local level, helping youth enter the adult world safe, spiritually healthy, and thriving.

Through collaboration we can effect large-scale changes by motivating and unifying the body of Christ to live out God's mandate. God has made it clear throughout His word that we are to "defend the cause of the poor and the fatherless!" (Psalm 82:3 NET)

NEAR TO THE FATHERLESS. NEAR TO THE FATHER.

By defending and advocating for youth in foster care in our community we will receive the blessing of better understanding God through them. When the Church embraces the cause of the orphan and takes action to address the extremity of the fatherless, the body of believers gains a fresh perspective on what it truly means to be the Church; we are acting as the hands and feet of Christ and doing the work that has been assigned to it by God.

Change can happen. Those abandoned by society can beat the odds and lead nations. Church and State can work together. Communities can be restored.

It all starts with one brave step forward.



Contact Teen Leadership Foundation

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