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Serving Families in Broken Situations

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Serving Families in Broken Situations

Abstract

"We are entrusted to walk alongside people during some of the most difficult and vulnerable times in their lives. It's work that God could do without us but God still allows us to be a part of it. Social workers show up when abuse is occurring, when violence is erupting, and when homes are dirty. We are asked to meet families during times of loss, adoption, school problems, divorce, addictions, trauma, and relationship problems. We get to hear stories, play with kids, sit in team meetings, solve problems, and see people heal and get well."

Posting about how to help hurting families from *In All Things* - an online hub committed to the claim that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ has implications for the entire world.

<http://inallthings.org/serving-families-in-broken-situations/>

Keywords

In All Things, families, God, social work

Disciplines

Christianity | Social Work

Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service](#) at Dordt College.

Serving Families in Broken Situations

 [all in allthings.org/serving-families-in-broken-situations/](https://allinallthings.org/serving-families-in-broken-situations/)

Tara Boer

Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends.—Luke 2:41-44

God cares about families and so do I. God's character is revealed to us through themes, relationships, and events in the Bible. In scripture, God is described as a mother, father, and husband. Jesus is described as a bridegroom. Marriage represents Jesus' great and sacrificial love for the church. The very way that Jesus entered the world sent a message about adoption.

One of the many things I love and appreciate about social work is that we are entrusted to walk alongside families during the most difficult and vulnerable times in their lives. It's work that God could do without us but God still allows us to be a part of it. Social workers show up when abuse is occurring, when violence is erupting, and when homes are dirty. We are asked to meet with families during times of loss, adoption, school problems, divorce, addictions, trauma, and relationship problems. We get to hear stories, play with kids, sit in team meetings, solve problems, and see people heal and get well.

This isn't about social work though.

This is about God's work. God calls *all of us* to walk alongside families.

Do you know that Jesus' parents were unsure of where he was for an entire day? There were no [AMBER Alerts](#) or Facebook shares begging for his return. During his absence, Jesus was learning, growing, and thriving outside of his family of origin. He was taken care of by his community and his church.

Here are a few things that you can do to take care of children and families in your community:

Make it a business mission: I've seen a landscape business, a hog farm, and a bakery do "social work." I've heard stories and testimonies of people getting saved because their co-workers and bosses were simply willing to do life with them. Pray about giving your employee his/her job back after he/she fails a drug tests and needs to attend treatment. Provide flexibility for families that suffer from mental illness or sickness. Grab an extra shift for someone who is still grieving or needs more time at home with a newborn. Get your HR department involved and passionate about identifying physical, emotional, and social needs of families within your business or agency.

Know your neighbor: Do you know your neighbors to the east, west, north and south? Do you know their names and what school the children attend? Do you know if they attend church or where they work? Some children and families that come to my office brush shoulders with God fearing people on a regular basis. I'm fairly certain that believers often don't realize that they are in a position to build relationships with people that are truly struggling when the doors are closed. Invite neighbors and their children in for supper. Help them with home and outdoor projects. Play with and babysit their children. Borrow eggs and bring

cookies. God has given you gifts and talents to share with your neighbors. Don't let Satan tell you that it's not worth it.

If you can't right now, support someone who can: There are seasons in our life that allow us to be committed to different things. Sometimes we're in a season that doesn't allow us to take in children or quit our job to bring in a family. It's a reality though that we need to do more for families that are fostering, adopting, and fully investing in families. We smile at them in church as they run in and out with their energy filled children. We think about how grateful we are for them but what are we *really* doing for them? Get together with your friends and bring them freezer meals. Give them gift cards or cash for food, gas, and clothing. Pay for their education, their membership fees, or their school lunches. Pay attention to the biological children in the home whom are also making social, physical, and emotional sacrifices. Not too many things are more fulfilling in this profession than seeing the body of Christ come together and fill in the missing pieces. It makes our job easier and it makes our God smile.

Prepare to struggle: Some families are carrying layers and layers of trauma, dysfunction, and the consequences of generational sins. Don't expect that they'll get it right the first time. Serving families in broken situations comes down to realizing how big our God is and how small we are. An influential man in my life once told me "You're never as good as you think you are and you're never as bad as you think you are." When the families we work with go down the wrong path, we say that we did our best and they made their choices. When families are successful, we know that God gave us the grace to help them in the right direction.

I pray that we all would be intentional about stepping out of the comfort of our own lives so that we can see what's really going on around us. I ask that God would give us the eyes to see and the ears to hear what needs to be brought to light in our communities. I pray that we will ask those hard questions and be bold enough to invest in personal relationships with others.

Thank you to those of you whom have answered the call to walk alongside broken families. Thank you also for supporting social workers as we attempt to make families a better place for children to grow, people to heal, and hopefully a place where individuals meet the Lord. I challenge you that even if you're not in a place to receive formal training in this profession, that you would find a way to live out God's call to serve our most vulnerable families and their precious children.

Dig Deeper

March is Social Work Awareness Month. Learn more about social work in these articles:

["In the era of mean tweets...and much, much worse,"](#) Abby Foreman opens a discussion on what it means "to engage civilly in a world that has accepted incivility as par for the course."

Tara Boer shares insights and encouragement for [Those Who Know a Hurting Child](#).

Come back to iAt throughout this week to learn more about social work.