

Episode 6-16: Encouragement for Foster Parents

Resources:

Podcasts

[Forgotten Podcast - Foster Initiative](#)

[The Foster Movement](#)

Books

[The Gospel Comes with a House Key - Rosaria Butterfield](#)

Website

[Biblical Counseling Training Conference](#)

Transcript:

Jocelyn: I don't just need to feel better. I need the truth. And ultimately that will make me better.

Janet: I just want to make it as totally simple as possible for ladies to see that the Bible is really applicable to their everyday life.

Jocelyn: When they understand theology, the application flows out of it quickly with joy.

Janet: It is a journey, but even the journey itself is joyful when I'm doing it, holding the hand of my savior and trusting him all along the way. This is the joyful journey podcast, a podcast to inspire and equip women to passionately pursue beautiful biblical truth on their journey as women of God. When you choose truth, you're choosing joy.

Janet: Welcome back. This is Janet here once again with Leah co-hosting with us today. And, today's episode, I've asked Leah to share about a subject that's near and dear to her, as a foster parent herself.

Janet: And, I believe it would be helpful for those who are fostering and for those of us who know someone fostering and those of us who love Jesus and want to be supportive of anyone fostering.

Janet: To kind of think about this a little today. So, Leah, tell us what's on your heart.

Leah: Yeah. So I wanna talk about encouraging foster parents and that's gonna be in several different ways.

Janet: Yeah.



Leah: But I think that. As a foster parent, I've seen the work that God has done in my life through participating in this ministry. So I wanted to share with our listeners some biblical encouragement about this topic of foster care.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: So I'm gonna offer three forms of encouragement today. First, encouraging foster parents in the church who might be listening to this.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: I've been deeply impacted by the love and truth that's been spoken to me by other foster parents. So I wanna do the same

Janet: Nice.

Leah: for anyone in my shoes. And then second, I want to encourage the church on how they can come alongside to love and serve foster families around them.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: We've been so incredibly blessed by our church community and so I wanna share some of those ways that we've been loved on that really encourage us. And then third, I want to encourage and challenge those listening who are not foster parents to consider serving in this way.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: I know God calls each of us to specific ministries in life, but I just wanna encourage those who may think it's too hard or not for them. About how fostering really is possible and something that the church is called to do.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And I've asked several other believing foster parents to share their thoughts with me on these three aspects. So please know that I do not get all the credit for everything I get to share today. I'm just so thankful for the godly women who partnered with me in this, and I'm thankful for God giving me this opportunity to share.



Janet: Excellent.

Leah: So to start, I just wanted to pose the question of why should the church talk about foster care? The Bible never mentions foster care.

Janet: Right.

Leah: But I believe when we look at scripture, we can glean that this is a ministry that is important to God. Janet, could you read a few of the verses that I found that I think help point this out?

Janet: Absolutely. Psalm 146:9. The Lord watches over the sojourners. He upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. Psalm 68:5. Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. Exodus 22:22 to 24. You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them and they cry out to me, I will surely hear their cry and my wrath will burn. I will kill you with the sword and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

Leah: And I picked those verses for us to go through together because they demonstrate how part of God's character is that he watches over, upholds, and defends those without families.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Without homes. He is the perfect father that kids in foster care need to know.

Janet: As I was reading it, I was like, I would love for all of those kids to know there is a heavenly father. This is how he thinks about you.

Leah: Yes, yes, exactly. And throughout scripture, God also commands his people to care for the fatherless and the orphan. And while many kids in foster care do have biological families, for a variety of reasons, they don't get to live with that family.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: So while they are wards of the state, these children do fit into the categories of the fatherless or motherless or orphans.

Janet: Yeah.



Leah: And I don't say that to demean the kids in foster care or their biological families.

Leah: I just say that because I believe viewing foster children in these ways just helps us have a biblical understanding and view of our duty to love, serve, and care for them.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Janet, could you read just two more verses for us, please?

Janet: Absolutely. Isaiah 1:17. Learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression, bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.

Janet: Psalm 82:3, give justice to the weak and the fatherless. Maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

Leah: Throughout history, God has called his people to seek justice for the fatherless. So fostering is one modern way of doing this.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: So it should be an important issue for everyone who claims to be a Christ follower.

Janet: As I was reading those verses, I thought it's interesting, it frequently talks about the fatherless and the widow. And I know we're not here talking about that end, but when I think about what do they have in common, in many ways, a lack of power. And then the next verse says, give justice to the weak. What you're telling us is this is a category of the weak and vulnerable. And people who don't have a lot of power, children in these situations don't have a lot of power. And God recognizes that and he doesn't take advantage of it. He says, it's our job.

Leah: Yeah.

Janet: To protect those without power. I love that that's what God is like.

Leah: Right.

Janet: I just love that. And we know that not everybody's called by God to foster. But we should all value what God values. And meeting the needs of those who find themselves needing foster care is the heart of God. So before you share more with us about what that looks like, can you



just start by, tell us some of your own journey, how you became a foster parent for those listening to this?

Leah: Yeah. Well, from the beginning of our marriage in 2016, my husband Jeremiah and I have been very open about letting others stay in our home.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: I mean, we've always tried to share what the Lord has given us, no matter how small it was at times.

Janet: Which I love that that was, you know, just to stop you there. Sorry.

Leah: Yeah.

Janet: I think that's really sweet. 'cause a lot of us can go, I can do that. And to go that was, in that moment with where you were, doing what you could to love others. That's really what you're doing.

Leah: Yeah.

Janet: I love it.

Leah: Tiny apartment doesn't matter. The people who stayed with us, it didn't affect them. Right?

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: God has always faithfully blessed us, so it's really been a sweet gift that me and Jeremiah have had unity in wanting to

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Welcome and host others in our home together. And I'm also thankful for a church that puts such a big emphasis on teaching about stewardship.

Janet: Yeah.



Leah: Which has helped us grow together in understanding our biblical call to hospitality. We've let coworkers stay with us. Family members live with us, and we've had international students and families stay with us for multiple weeks at a time. We studied a book together. The gospel comes with a house key by Rosaria Butterfield, in the years leading up to us fostering specifically for guidance on how to be more hospitable to our physical neighbors.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And I highly recommend that book. But a lot of the author's own testimony actually has to do with fostering and adopting. For us considering fostering took this desire of ours to be hospitable and generous to a whole new level.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Since it obviously adds in the responsibility of parenting.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: The stranger living in your home.

Janet: And God just, I love that about God preparing you step by step for this new calling. First, he cultivated hospitality in general. And through that he drew your heart to a new and bigger way to bring other people into your home.

Leah: Yeah. And it's really a blessing to get to see God's leading, in preparing us for this. And many biblical truths about loving and serving others has also helped us think through that step to fostering.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: I especially love 1 Peter 4:9 through 10 that says, offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. We had been married eight years when we got licensed to foster, and we don't have any biological children. We also didn't have one moment where we strongly felt convicted to start fostering. But God really did work in our hearts over time to pursue this form of family.



Leah: Fostering and adopting had been something that I had thought about several times. But that small desire grew as my husband and I became close friends with a foster family at church. We got to see them foster, hear about their heart for it and the struggles with it.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: And we got to live on the little boy who had been in their care at that time. So my desire to love and serve kids through foster care really started to grow. And I shared that desire with Jeremiah. But I very clearly told him I didn't wanna lead on this or force my desires on him. So we both prayed about it for several months, and especially for unity in our hearts and marriage about what plans

Janet: I love that

Leah: God had in store. Right? Like I wanted what he wanted.

Janet: Right.

Leah: Not just what I thought I wanted.

Janet: And we know that God's gonna work through Jeremiah as well.

Leah: Yeah, exactly.

Janet: So. I'm not gonna push my way. I love that.

Leah: Yeah. And that was a huge testimony of growth in my own life personally, to be at that point where I trusted God to lead my husband in that way. And I'm so thankful for all of that. But by the end of that year, God led my husband to lead us in getting licensed. And we got licensed in 2024. So keep in mind, we made this choice with no experience parenting. We didn't and still don't have family close to help with childcare. But we knew that this was something God was calling us to do. And we trusted that he would provide the way for us to do it.

Leah: At the same time as we were going through the, department of Child Services DCS licensing process, we also did trainings with Safe Families for Children, as we considered that as a possible ministry too.

Janet: Absolutely.



Leah: And if you don't know about Safe Families, they're a Christian organization that partners with local churches to serve families who are not yet in the foster system, but who are on the verge of becoming so.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Now eventually we knew God was calling us to foster long-term, rather than just be short-term placements for those safe families organization. But we're still so thankful for the biblical perspective that those trainings gave on the importance of coming alongside families in need in our community. We were officially licensed by DCS in July, 2024, and by the second week of August, we accepted our first placement.

Janet: Wow.

Leah: In May of 2025, we opened up for second placement and those two girls are still with us as of this recording in spring of 2026. It's honestly hard to even say that. Just knowing that by the time that this episode airs, that might not be the case.

Janet: Which is one of the painful parts of this ministry. Becoming a parent is life changing in so many ways. Becoming a foster parent includes a variety of other challenges, but one of the biggest might be the recognition that you invest in these souls, and you may also have to say goodbye to them. But that level of sacrificial love is just so like our Heavenly Father.

Leah: And it's definitely a sanctifying process and a privilege really, to get to reflect even a little of that kind of love. And I hope me sharing parts of our journey and God's leading in our lives helps add context again to why I'm passionate about encouraging others in this ministry too.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And as I stated at the beginning, my heart has been blessed by the kind, honest, and careful words that have been spoken to me by other foster parents. And it can sometimes seem like a lonely calling.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Since our family looks and functions very differently than most other families.

Janet: Yep.



Leah: But getting to speak with other foster moms and dads who are Jesus followers has been such a gift to my soul and to my husband's too. So I wanna spend some time sharing some biblical encouragement to other foster parents out there.

Leah: First, what you're going through is hard.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: What you're doing is hard. But it's not necessarily harder than what others are going through.

Janet: I think that's so important. Yeah.

Leah: Yeah. Fostering is hard, but it's just a different kind of hard. If you are the only foster parent you know, it can be easy to feel alone or isolated, overwhelmed, or like no one understands you.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: But that's not true. That's a lie from the enemy. And when that lie or discouragement starts to creep in. You can choose to remember that all of God's people are called to suffer for his namesake, to pick up our crosses and follow him. 1 Peter 2:21 instructs us saying, for God called you to do good, even if it means suffering, just as Christ suffered for you.

Leah: He is your example, and you must follow in his steps. So the foster cases that you're living through may be extremely difficult. And heartbreaking.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: They might be full of suffering for the children in your care and for your own families. But that doesn't make you a special kind of martyr. We are all called to suffer together in this world like our savior did. So don't let Satan make you think that your hard makes you any less able to share your burdens with the rest of the body of Christ.

Janet: I'm so thankful that you share that as you were sharing it, I was thinking back to our forgiveness episodes and that, one of the beautiful things, and this isn't about forgiveness, but this truth, that Jesus didn't just bear my sin, he bore my sorrow. So there is a degree that every single individual, no one 100% understands what they're going through.



Janet: But there is one. Jesus knows exactly the pain you're going through because he's felt all of yours. But to also say everybody's is a little different from each other. And that doesn't keep us from being able to be an encouragement to each other.

Janet: You know, for those of us who are not fostering, it can seem like we have no right to speak into your situation. And to tell you what to do. Okay. That would probably not be helpful. But it's so true that in so many ways, each of us fostering or not, we know what it means to feel isolated. We know what it means to be alone, and it's never true.

Janet: Jesus completely understands and we can each understand the pain of suffering. Even if the context is different.

Leah: Yeah, exactly. And that is really hopeful. You know, I quoted 1 Peter 2:21 just a moment ago, but the whole book of 1 Peter is great to study when you feel alone in your trials and suffering. I use this book a lot when I'm counseling, but it's also been a huge encouragement to me as a foster parent.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: It reminds me that because my identity is in Christ, I'm never alone in my suffering. So, Janet, could you read 1 Peter 5:7 through 11 for us?

Janet: Give all your worries and cares to God for he cares for you. Stay alert. Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him and be strong in your faith. Remember that your family of believers all over the world is going through the same kind of suffering you are. In his kindness, God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you've suffered a little while, he will restore support and strengthen you, and he will place you on a firm foundation all power to him forever. Amen.

Leah: And there are so many great truths in those verses. You know, we need to first take our cares to God.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And then we also need to remember that our family of believers is suffering for Christ's sake too, no matter how different it looks than our own.



Leah: So I wanna encourage any foster parent listening to really guard against isolating themselves or being afraid of letting others in to help.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Just because someone hasn't gone through the same experiences as you, it doesn't mean they aren't able to help carry your burdens and minister to your foster family.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: We also have to remember that it's God's kindness that he allows us to share in the glory of Christ, and part of that means suffering as our savior did. So we have the hope that no matter how hard our circumstances, God is going to restore, support and strengthen us. And one way he does that is through other believers. He's our firm foundation, and every other believer is built on that hope as well.

Janet: Oh, it's so vital to keep looking up and not just looking around and comparing ourselves. When we look up first, we can look around and humbly ask for help and also offer it where we can.

Leah: Yeah. And you know, the other encouragement I want to offer foster parents is this, what you're doing is not in vain.

Leah: It can seem exhausting, defeating, and even pointless at times as you try to love and serve kids who are not your own. It is especially hard if you think a case is going one way and then it goes completely a different way.

Janet: Oh, what a rollercoaster.

Leah: But that's pretty much what seems to happen in every case, is what we're finding out. So it's very easy to get your hopes up and then get disappointed.

Janet: Yeah.

Janet: But

Leah: all of that hard is worth it. Colossians 3: 23 to 24 commands us. Whatever you do, work, heartily as for the Lord and not for men. Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the



inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Every time you choose to love like Christ did,

Janet: yeah.

Leah: Sacrificially and without repayment, to the point of hurt, it is worth it because you are serving the Lord. Every time you forgive and show grace, it's worth it. Every time you have to come up with a unique way to discipline, it's worth it. And every time you have to humbly admit where you're weak and struggling, or how you messed up to your spouse and children, it's worth it.

Leah: Every child who is in foster care, who ends up in your Christian home is one more kid who gets to hear the gospel and see the love of God lived out.

Janet: Wow.

Leah: Gospel gives us context to our struggles. We struggle in this way because we choose to believe in Christ's saving work and the freedom and hope he gives. Any form of child rearing is planting seeds for future generations.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Including, fostering. And you never know the impact that your love, care, and witness to these kids may have on them or their biological families. And you can trust that your obedience to love and serve kids in foster care will not go unnoticed. Your heavenly father sees it.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And another passage I wanted us to read are Words from Jesus in Luke 14: 12 through 14. Janet, could you read those for us?

Janet: When you put on a luncheon or a banquet, he said, don't invite your friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbors for they will invite you back, and that will be your only reward. Instead, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. Then at the resurrection of the righteous God will reward you for inviting those who could not repay you.

Leah: I love this example because Jesus is instructing his disciples to love, serve, and bless others without any expectation of repayment. Instead, he promised his blessing and eternal



reward for those who obey him. As a foster parent who believes in Jesus, you have that guaranteed hope that what you're doing is never going to be in vain.

Leah: Sharing the love of Jesus by caring for foster kids and joining them in their suffering has eternal value and brings glory to our loving heavenly Father. And we need to remind each other as foster parents of that truth again and again. It's always worth it.

Janet: Well, those are great biblical truths all of us need to remember no matter what hardship or suffering we're going through, it's really important to remember that why we don't all live the same lives.

Janet: We're united in the hope of Christ. In suffering for him in this world, obedience to him will always be worth it. **Now at this point**, what would you share with our listeners who are not foster parents? How can they speak similar truths or how do they serve the foster families around them even though they're not in their shoes?

Leah: Yeah, so I mean, if you're a member of a church, and I pray that you are, then I would challenge you to seek out foster parents in your local church, who you can come alongside and serve. Just get to know, invite into your life. And if there aren't any at your church, try to connect with your county's local DCS office, just to see if there are churches in your community that are already involved with recruiting foster parents. We probably would've never taken the step of faith to become foster parents if we didn't have such a strong church community around us. I mean, we had developed close friendships with many families of young children, who welcomed us in basically as aunts and uncles to their kids. Though we had no experience parenting, those families let us love on and help care for their children. Once we became foster parents, those families did the same for us. They didn't hold us at a distance at first to just check out and see if those kids were safe or easy.

Janet: Or how long you'd have them. I don't want to get attached.

Leah: Exactly.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: No. Instead, they immediately treated our foster daughters as part of their families. And the even bigger blessing was that since we had relationships with the children in those families, their kids immediately accepted, played with, and helped love on our girls too.



Janet: Oh, I just love that. Living life in biblical community helps train our hearts to be hospitable and welcoming. But that's not all. Now the kids around us, biological and foster are being impacted. Your friends' children are watching those around them value loving others, and then they're doing it too. And your foster kiddos are experiencing that just as much.

Leah: Yeah, exactly. And I think a beautiful testament to this in my life is the fact that our foster daughters often have asked us if other kids in different families are also foster kids.

Janet: Well, 'cause they don't see the difference.

Leah: They don't see the difference.

Janet: I love that.

Leah: Isn't that beautiful? And I just think that impact of choosing to live in community with other believers truly goes farther than we could ever know.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: So now I wanna share a list of some very practical things that you could do to serve the foster families around you.

Leah: Be willing to help and support without knowing everything about the child. Offer prayer and support in difficult weeks, like weeks of new placements or reunification. Drop meals off quickly or provide practical needs for a new addition without asking for their story as you do. Ask, how can I show love to this child, without needing to weigh in on the details? Learn the kids' names, pray for them. Welcome them with excitement into the church family. Ask for dates of court hearings or foster care appointments, and remember to pray and then ask how those things went. Share family life with a foster family. Invite them over for dinner. Meet at a park for coffee. Just treat them like a family.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Weep when we weep. Rejoice when we rejoice. Affirm the ways that we're using our lives to serve God. Encourage the faint hearted. Bear burdens together. Rejoice in opportunities to raise children in the nurture and admonition of God. Show extra grace to the kids in foster care. Most have not grown up in loving Christian homes with routine or discipline.

Janet: Yeah.



Leah: We can't put the same expectations on them as kids who have had that. And it helps us if you recognize that too. Donate items to a local foster closet ministry. Find support groups to support or provide care packages for like groceries, cleaning supplies, household goods. And then ask DCS what needs there are for local foster families and try to fill in those gaps.

Janet: That's an incredibly helpful list that some of you may need to go back and listen to again and take notes. That's the good thing about it being a podcast. You can do that. I noticed though, while you were talking, a pattern that I kept having questions about in my mind, several of yours included statements like, without knowing their story, without weighing in on the details.

Janet: Can you elaborate on that temptation here? Of course. When there is suddenly a child in your life that wasn't there before, we're all very curious. And we might naturally ask a lot of questions, but what I'm hearing you say is that isn't very helpful.

Leah: Yeah. I mean, thank you for pointing that out because as I said at the beginning, a lot of the things I'm sharing come from my own and other foster parents experiences.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: And I think this is something that a lot of foster parents run into. When people offer to help, especially when a new child has been placed in our care, I do think our natural human curiosity tempts people to ask what happened.

Janet: Absolutely.

Leah: Or what problems do they have, or what did the parents do?

Janet: Yes. And that's just curious.

Leah: Right.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: And so when I say things like that, be willing to support or provide needs without knowing the kid's story or weighing in the details, I'm trying to address that temptation to give into gossip or even slander. For the friend who's asking, but also for me as a foster parent. And many times brothers and sisters with good intentions might ask those probing questions around the kids themselves.



Leah: I just wanna encourage others to think through and pray, do you need to know this child's story in order to love them? Or even just to remember that we can't and shouldn't talk about their story in front of others. And so this point is really hard to balance honestly. Because, I personally have many people in my life who I do share a lot of details with.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Because I want their prayer and support in those specific areas.

Janet: Well, and you may need help.

Leah: Right.

Janet: Like, how do I handle this? This is really hard.

Leah: Yeah.

Janet: What do I do? And that's not wrong. But you choose that privately.

Leah: Right.

Janet: We don't all need to ask about it.

Leah: Yes, exactly. Because it takes a lot of prayer, wisdom, and discernment to know when to share and what to share.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And even what my motivation is for sharing. So having others not ask a lot of questions, especially at the beginning, is helpful and serves to protect my heart from being tempted to just immediately complain about whatever circumstances have happened.

Janet: Right, right. It's helpful for those of us who want to encourage foster parents to just be aware of that personally. I mean, we are curious. But one way we love you and your foster kiddos is that we refrain from asking and we let you share when and what you think is best. And maybe if we're thinking, but I want them to know, I can say to you, I'm here.

Leah: Right.



Janet: If there's things you wanna talk about, if there's things you wanna ever brainstorm, I'm here.

Leah: Yeah.

Janet: And leave it at that.

Leah: Because I have just learned, you know, again, kids are listening to everything.

Janet: Yes. Yes.

Leah: And so when those questions are asked in front of them, even if I don't give answers, because I know it's not appropriate. The kid knows people's asking.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: You know? So everything,

Janet: and that's one way that they're different.

Leah: Exactly. Yes. So this is really a beautiful and impactful way to love us and our kids again, is let us lead in disclosing that information.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And again, I went through that whole list of practical ways to serve pretty quickly, but I want to talk about a few really important ways that you can love and encourage foster families with some biblical truths behind it.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: So one of the biggest ways you can support us is by becoming a trusted, available, and flexible babysitter. It's invaluable to have a steady home for the child to go to when needed. And it's a great way for these kids to be around other safe, loving, Christian families. Offering this kind of love to foster families is a great way to serve and to live out Hebrews 13:16, which says, do not neglect to do good and to share what you have for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. We personally have five or six families who've all agreed to be a part of our DCS childcare team, which means they've all done background checks and paperwork.



Janet: Yep.

Leah: To be able to watch our kids for us when needed. We didn't have to beg these people either. They willingly put in the time and effort to go through that process to help us love and care for our foster daughters. And when we had submitted the maybe fourth or fifth family to our foster care specialist, who's the one who helps us with our licensing, she told us, I don't think there's any other foster family in this county who has as many people as you do on their care team.

Janet: Wow.

Leah: And I just thought, wow, we are so, so blessed. And yet also wow. That's so sad that that is unique.

Janet: Oh, it is so sad. And I hope for many of us, it gives us a reason to ask those fostering around us if they have that extended care team that they need. And I love that concept because it's not just, are there people in the church who would help your kids? 'Cause there's probably way more than that.

Leah: Yes.

Janet: That would do it. But like with my own kids and grandkids, I don't just want to leave them with someone they don't know.

Leah: Right.

Janet: So yours has the extra they need to have background checks, but there's also, they need to be in your life regularly enough that it's not a stranger watching them.

Leah: Right.

Janet: So. I love that level of community and commitment.

Leah: Yeah. And you know, another way that our friends and church mates have helped us, especially encourage us is in our actual parenting. We have been so blessed by the friends around us who live out 1 Thessalonians 5: 11, which says, therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. Foster parents have to discipline their children differently.

Janet: Yep.



Leah: Without physical discipline.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: And that can honestly be difficult to explain in a lot of Christian circles.

Janet: Wow.

Leah: So it's been helpful for us to have friends who share encouragement and ideas for how to discipline biblically, how to give consequences without spanking, rather than just judging our parenting styles.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Or assuming that it's, you know, a lesser kind of parenting.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: Our friends have been quick to offer encouragement, wisdom, and advice without always telling us all the things that we're doing wrong.

Janet: Oh, in so many areas it's such a good reminder to verbalize encouragement. You know, a lot of times it can be easy to think, oh, they need some help and I see something that might not be best, and so I share it and that's good and right. We need to do that. But am I also quick to encourage to let them know how I see God at work? That's so good.

Leah: Yeah. And trust me, we have definitely also received loving correction and I'm so thankful for that.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: And I know that more is needed.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: But it really is encouraging for us as foster parents to hear other families share how our kids really aren't different from their own.



Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And how they struggle with behavior and sin and in how they need the Lord.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: The struggles my foster daughters go through are not unique to them.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: So for those of us who do not have our own biological children, it's really helpful to be reminded of that. And I just wanna give a big thank you to all of our dear friends who share the messiness and struggles of their own parenting. Because that really blesses our hearts and it helps us trust God more in the work of bearing Christ image to the children in our care.

Janet: I love it. And it's all being done in the context of relationships you have with these families. I can't build relationships with each foster family, that's deep. I can't do that. But I can encourage wherever I am, and I can build relationships with some, and encourage those relationships with others. I can encourage them. Love it.

Leah: Yeah. You know, one more way you can come alongside and encourage foster families around you is by helping us think and speak lovingly of the biological families in DCS.

Janet: Yes,

Leah: it is so easy to fall into complaining about different issues in the cases we live through. And I believe it is beneficial to share specific prayer requests regarding what's going on, but it's so easy to let myself just fall into complaining.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: And ultimately gossip about what's going on in the life of my kids and in their biological families.

Leah: Ephesians 4: 29 clearly commands us to not let any unwholesome talk come out of our mouths. Only what's helpful for building others up according to their needs that it may benefit those who listen. So we need brothers and sisters in Christ who are willing to call us out when we slip into unwholesome talk.



Leah: And we need brothers and sisters to not egg us on by saying we're justified in our complaints against the system or the DCS workers or the biological families. I think Hebrews 3:13 is another good verse to think about here. Janet, could you read that for us?

Janet: But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today. So that none of you may be hardened by sins deceitfulness.

Leah: As part of the body of Christ, you have the opportunity to encourage others to righteous living and thinking by speaking words of life and truth, rather than encouraging sinful habits.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: My husband and I as foster parents have needed those reminders of how God calls us to live righteously, and that has helped protect our hearts from being hardened by the deceitfulness of those sins.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: That complaining is justified or that criticism is warranted. It's a beautiful thing when a godly friend is bold enough to confront us in our sin and help us think and live in ways that honor God.

Janet: Ah, we all need that, and it's such a great reminder for us to be using encouraging God-focused words that can help you keep that focus too. That's a way we can serve you.

Leah: A big way. So finally today, I wanna challenge those listening who aren't foster parents to think about becoming one. Time and time again I have people tell me that they are so glad I'm doing this, but it would just be too hard for them.

Leah: I've also heard many people say things like, it's not the right time, or, I'd love for our family to do that when my kids are older. Or especially this one, I just couldn't do it. Knowing I might have to say goodbye to those kids.

Leah: And I get it. New things are hard. Saying goodbye to kids is hard. And fostering is not the norm that most people have grown up with. But as a Christian, we are called to care for those in need. Janet, can you read these two verses for us?

Janet: Sure. Hebrews 13:2, do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers. For thereby, some have entertained. Angels unaware. James 1:27, religion that is pure and undefiled before God the



father is this. To visit orphans and widows in their affliction and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Leah: As believers, we are called to be hospitable and to take care of those in need, and we're specifically called to care for the orphan. And this is the scary reality. For every Christian who chooses not to foster. That means another kid. Ending up in a non-Christian home. And they may not hear the good news of Jesus or experience the father's love lived out in a family. The social justice movement of the world is stepping in where the church should be.

Leah: Every foster training I attend. It is just clear that the world is doing what we as believers have been called to do. And it really saddens me. And again, I know not all of us will be called to foster, but I do pray that more people in the church would consider this ministry.

Janet: Well and maybe, the next thing is that all of us would say to the Lord, I will love in whatever way you allow me to. And I'm willing, and I trust you to help me with whatever that is. Not based on this I will foster, but I'm willing. I'm willing to do whatever. And, if nothing else, I will start by praying, for even those who are fostering and for the precious children there, that God would raise up people and that we're willing to be them if God would ask.

Leah: Yeah. And you know, maybe a listener has never been around a foster family before, or maybe you have no idea what fostering really even means, or maybe you've thought about it, but also have thought, this isn't for me or my family. Maybe you have considered it strongly and you've even prayed about it. So my encouragement to you is this. There is never a right time or a right family for foster care.

Leah: God can use whatever efforts at love and hospitality towards a stranger and orphan that you can give to plant seeds of truth that could change someone's life. I also wanna encourage you that fostering is not as scary as it sounds. Now, you will have administrative tasks added to your life.

Leah: Scheduling visits with biological families, DCS and CASA, which are the court appointed special advocates for children. You'll be submitting foster parent reports to update the court. And hopefully attending court hearings to advocate for the children in your care. And that does sound like a lot, but it's all worth it. And you don't have to do it alone.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Again, I've already shared how amazing it has been to foster, because of the great community of believers we have around us, supporting, loving, and just praying for us. And



when you decide to foster, you don't have to accept any placement. You are able to tell DCS what you're comfortable with. And trust me, it doesn't mean you won't get calls for kids that are way beyond your means for caring for, but you can say no.

Leah: We only said yes to the age and ability level that we felt equipped for. And while I thought that meant we'd be waiting a long time for a placement, we've only waited about two weeks each time we've opened up a place.

Janet: Wow.

Leah: Yeah. In our home. So even with several nos to phone calls that we got. But you also have rights as a foster parent. And I wanna point this out that in a more conservative state like Indiana, we are really blessed with a lot of freedoms in how we foster. We're very open about our faith and church involvement with our caseworkers and CASA workers. And as of this recording, we've been blessed with favor from those individuals.

Janet: Yeah. Yeah.

Leah: As well as from the judges involved. But that's not always the case, of course. But our world is not becoming more God honoring. So, if the church waits to get more involved in things like foster care, we may eventually lose our opportunity and hold on making a difference in serving such a needy group of people around us.

Janet: Wow. You know, as part of the podcast, we like to help people with what if I want to think more or know more. Are there any specific resources that you could share if you're considering being a part of foster care?

Leah: Yeah, there are some great Christian podcasts about the foster care system that I actually was able to find and I've been listening to this past year. I'd encourage all of you to take a listen as these people and their stories really help display the doable ness of fostering and the impact it can have, no matter how hard it seems. So, the Forgotten Podcast by the Foster Initiative interviews people involved in all kinds of ways with foster care, and then the foster movement tell stories of adults who came out of the foster system themselves.

Janet: Wow.

Leah: so that's really impactful just to hear those individual stories. Now another thing you could do is get certified through DCS to offer respite care. So this means you're open to watching kids short term for set dates in advance, like when a foster family goes on vacation out of state.



Leah: And like I said. Not all foster families have care teams like ours, so your local DCS office needs good faithful homes to be a safe place for kids, even if it's temporary. You can also get certified to be an emergency placement, which helps prevent kids from having to sleep in hotels or, ugh, it kills me, but the DCS office when they're trying to find a foster family for them.

Leah: So these short term commitments are a great way to try out fostering, to adjust your family to the idea of having foster kids in your home or just as a good way to serve your community.

Janet: And so those are more things that we can link those podcasts in the show notes and more things we can be praying about and pursuing.

Leah: Yeah. And again, I wanna emphasize this. There will never be a right time to start fostering, but if we don't do it, the world will. Everyone in the church can and should do something. It's clear that God cares about the orphan, those being oppressed, the vulnerable, the weak. We are to speak up for those who can't speak for themselves, and we're called to seek justice.

Leah: So foster care is a mission field that's in our own neighborhoods and communities. A way to serve our literal physical neighbors.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: So if you aren't fostering, please pray. Please pray for eyes to see the needs around you, and then to find a way to get involved with the gifts, abilities, time and resources that God's given you. Because those efforts, no matter what they are, won't be wasted now or in eternity.

Janet: Well, I think we need to pray. I would like to pray for those things. Pray for those of us hearing it, pray for those who are in foster care before we close. Oh, Father. I just thank you that your heart is for those who are weak and powerless. And God in other ways that's all of us, but in very, specific ways that's foster kids. And your heart is for them. And then those of us who are yours, you've given us your heart. So would you give us a heart for the weak and the powerless for those who are in these situations? Not by their own choosing and not with their own ability to get out of them. But I pray, father, that these kids would know you care. You love them. You created them. And that you would draw their hearts to love you. And God for those in the church, would you help us to have that heart and to be looking for ways that we can demonstrate your heart for these kids in whatever way we can in whatever season we have. Father, many of us that's scary. But you're a good God. You love us. You're not gonna ask anything of us that isn't best for us, that isn't what would be best for our soul, and we can trust you. And so we ask, how would you like us to be involved? And knowing your heart for us, we are willing to show your



heart for those in foster care in whatever way you give us. And we pray in confidence knowing that Jesus loves us and delights to hear us and answer. So it's because of him that we pray. Amen.

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Host Janet and her husband, Brent, also speak at a variety of conferences as a way to raise money for the seminary. If you want to look at what they offer or book them for a conference, [go to their website](#).