



## Small Group Curriculum

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Love Local: Jesus' heart for vulnerable children • Week 3 • James 1:27

We are wrapping up our Love Local series with Jesus' heart for vulnerable children, focusing on the work of foster care in our area. Throughout scripture, we see God's care for the vulnerable who live among his people. This week, we are challenged to consider how God cares for the vulnerable and his invitation to join him in the restoration and redemption he is working in our midst.

### REMINDERS

- **Foster the City Interest Meeting:** Everyone can be involved in supporting foster kids and families in some way. To find out more information about how, rsvp for an online interest meeting [here](#).
- **Winter Coat Drive:** Please join us in partnership with City Team ministries by blessing someone in our community with a NEW or GENTLY USED winter coat or jacket. Bring your items to church on Sunday 11/30, 12/7, or 12/14 or use our Amazon [registry](#) to purchase and have them delivered.
- The **Del Mar Giving Fund** will be available from November 2nd – December 31st. More information can be found [here](#).

### ICEBREAKER

Option 1: Who is your favorite fictional hero or villain with the greatest redemption arc? Why?

Option 2: When was a time you helped someone (friend, family member, stranger), or someone helped you, at great personal cost? Tell the story and the outcome.

### INTRODUCTION

Pray over your group to begin. Read James 1:27.

*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. (NIV)*

In this verse, we hear two kinds of sacrifices the Lord is pleased to receive from us: caring for the vulnerable and being set apart as His. *'To look after'* is to make an appearance to help - in other words, to show up. *'To keep oneself from being polluted by the world'* is to have untainted character. When we think of someone with good character, we imagine the kind of person *they* are based on the things that *they* do. Untainted character is an inward condition that leads to outward expression. These together form our offering to the Lord - who we are and what we do.

To understand what God is asking of us, let's explore how God has looked after and set apart his people, and helps us to do the same.



## DISCUSSION

Read Luke 7:11-17.

*They were all filled with awe and praised God.  
“A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said.  
“God has come to help his people.”*

- Why are the people filled with awe? What moves them to praise God?
- What is their conclusion about Jesus based on what they’ve seen?
- The phrase ‘God has come to help his people’ is the same meaning of the phrase James uses to tell us to ‘look after’ the vulnerable as pleasing worship to God.
  - When have you seen God come to help his people? How did it change their lives? What did it show them about God?
  - When have you felt him looking after you? How did it change your life? What did it show you about God?

Read Romans 12:1-2.

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

- What reason does the scripture give for offering ourselves to God?
- How have you received God’s mercy? What has it done in your life?
- What ‘patterns of this world’ appeal to you? What is an area you can confess is in need of God’s mercy and transformation?

## RESPONSE

Courtney Berry, the East Bay Director of Advocates at Foster the City and foster parent herself, had this to say about her experience with comfort, fear, and obedience: “When you follow Jesus into broken spaces, He carries you through them.”

The prophet Isaiah has these words for the people of Israel, to offer comfort from God following the devastating news of their exile to Babylon.

*He tends his flock like a shepherd:  
He gathers the lambs in his arms  
and carries them close to his heart;  
he gently leads those that have young. (Isaiah 40:11)*

What circumstance in your life do you need Jesus to carry you through? What is one broken space in this world Jesus is inviting you to follow him into, trusting that he will carry you in the midst of it?



## PRAYER

Mediate on Luke 1:68-75. Ask the Holy Spirit to highlight a phrase or two to dwell on.

*Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,  
because he has come to his people and redeemed them.  
He has raised up a horn[a] of salvation for us  
in the house of his servant David  
(as he said through his holy prophets of long ago),  
salvation from our enemies  
and from the hand of all who hate us—  
to show mercy to our ancestors  
and to remember his holy covenant,  
the oath he swore to our father Abraham:  
to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,  
and to enable us to serve him without fear  
in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

Pray these words back to God, praising him for his mercy, for entering the broken spaces of this world and our lives, for saving us, for making us holy and righteous through Jesus, and for carrying us through every high and low of our lives.

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Note: all scripture references can also be found [here](#).