

the kingdom is meant to be walked together, and sometimes the person you showed up to help is further along that road than you realize. You are not just bringing them to the door. You are walking through it with them.

WHERE TO BEGIN

You do not need a fully formed plan. You need one step. Ask your pastor about local partnerships. Contact your school counselor about mentoring. Call your local foster care agency. Find an AA or NA meeting and ask how you can serve. Pray for one person you already know who is struggling and ask God what a next step looks like.

Freedom is possible. Families are being held together. Children are discovering they matter. Grandparents are finding they are not alone. The only question is whether you will be part of it.

“So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

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ADDICTION, RECOVERY, BROKENNESS

A Guide for Mentors, Sponsors, and Compassionate Leaders

THE BROKENNESS AROUND YOU

You do not have to look far to find someone who needs you. The need is not somewhere else. It is next door, across the table at work, and possibly in your own family. The numbers confirm what most of us already sense.

Nearly 80,000 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2024, and nearly 50 million had a substance use disorder in the past year (roughly 1 in 6 people). Fentanyl is now the leading cause of death for Americans aged 18 to 49. One in three adults personally knows someone who has died from an overdose. Problem gambling carries the highest suicide attempt rate of any addiction and leaves no visible signs until lives are already in ruins.

More than 10 million single-parent families struggle with poverty at four times the rate of two-parent households, and 77 percent of single parents describe themselves as lonely. Over 2.4 million children are being raised by grandparents, most of them because of parental addiction, incarceration, or death, and nearly half of those grandparent caregivers are 60 or older. On any given day, more than 340,000 children are in foster care, with over 70,000 waiting for a permanent family. More than 15,000 young people aged out of the system in 2023 with no family at all.

In schools across the country, nearly 18 percent of households with children face food insecurity, and 40 percent of high school students report persistent sadness or hopelessness. Research shows that a single caring adult mentor increases a child's likelihood of academic improvement by 45 percent and college enrollment by 55 percent. Many school counselors



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coordinate Lunch Buddy programs that match a child with one consistent adult, someone who simply shows up at lunch once a week. That is enough to change a life.

THE INVITATION:

ADOPT BROKENNESS INTO YOUR LIFE

The most transformative thing you can do for someone in crisis is refuse to leave them alone in it. These populations, people in addiction, single parents, grandparent caregivers, foster and adoptive families, and lonely children in schools, share one common need: someone who chooses them consistently.

WHAT PURE RELIGION LOOKS LIKE

“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” (James 1:27). The word translated visit, sometimes rendered care, carries the meaning of looking after someone with your own eyes. It does not mean to be generally aware of a need, or to write a check and outsource compassion to someone else, though giving matters. It means to be personally and physically present with people in their pain. That is the standard. Religion is the outward expression of genuine inward faith and is most clearly visible not in what we believe about the broken but in whether we show up for them, whether we allow Jesus to move through us, unconditionally and in person, toward the people who need someone.

There are practical ways to step in right now:

- Volunteer at a local homeless shelter, rescue mission, or recovery home
- Become a sponsor or mentor through AA (Alcoholics Anonymous), NA (Narcotics Anonymous), or Gamblers Anonymous
- Ask your school counselor about a Lunch Buddy or mentoring program
- Connect with foster care networks and ask what families need most
- Reach out to a grandparent raising grandchildren and ask how you can help
- Offer consistent, practical support to a single parent in your congregation or neighborhood

WHEN THE DOOR ISN'T OPEN: CREATE ONE

Some organizations are not immediately welcoming to faith-based volunteers. That is not a reason to stay home, it is a reason to get creative. If local programs do not have a place for you yet, consider what your church could start: a weekly meal, a recovery small group, a respite ministry for foster families, an after-school program, or simply a consistent presence in a neighborhood where people need to know someone sees them. These do not require large budgets. They require people willing to be inconvenienced by someone else's need. That inconvenience is often where transformation begins.

SCRIPTURAL ANCHORS FOR THIS WORK

This work is not driven by guilt or obligation. It flows from the heart of God, who moves consistently toward the broken and the overlooked.

Transformation Through Christ: “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Strength in Weakness: “But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness’” (2 Corinthians 12:9a).

Renewed Mind: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind” (Romans 12:2a).

Hope and Future: “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11).

These promises belong to the grandmother who never expected to start over, the single parent whose paycheck runs out before the month does, the child in foster care who has been moved four times and the trauma continues to mount, and the man in the AA meeting who is one conversation away from the door and has already lost everyone else. You may be the one who opens a new door.

YOU WILL FIND HOPE HERE TOO

Here is what surprises most people who step into this work: the person who changes most is often the one doing the mentoring. When you walk alongside someone fighting for their life or sanity, something happens to your own faith. It becomes less theoretical. The kingdom of God stops being a concept and starts being something you are living.

You will meet people who should have no reason to hope but somehow do. You will witness transformation that defies explanation. The journey to