

THE EVERYONE CAN DO SOMETHING MINIBOOK SERIES



PREACH

Key **PRINCIPLES AND THEMES** to use when **PREACHING AND TEACHING** on God's heart for the vulnerable.



PURE RELIGION
PROJECT

A large, stylized blue quotation mark icon consisting of two curved shapes facing each other, positioned at the top left of the page.

To be effective the preacher's message must be alive; it must alarm, arouse, challenge; it must be God's present voice to a particular people."

A.W. TOZER

Certainly among the highest and heaviest callings is to be a preacher or teacher who communicates “God’s present voice to a particular people” week in and week out. This is a task with eternal significance.

A HOLY AND HEAVY CALLING.

Scripture itself speaks to this fact when, in James 3:1, it says, *“Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness”*. A high calling with serious implications.

Combine that with the uniquely joy-filled and heavy-hearted privilege of preaching on God's heart for the vulnerable and challenging your people to respond, and it feels like a double portion of responsibility.

Whether you're

PREACHING FROM THE PULPIT,

LEADING A CLASS

OR

FACILITATING A SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION IN YOUR LIVING ROOM,

it's an exciting privilege to get to speak to those in your congregation and community about the gospel and what it means to live that gospel out in "pure and undefiled" ways (James 1:27).

This minibook is not intended to answer all the questions or give you all the information, but it is designed to help you get started as you faithfully work to make the most of whatever preaching, teaching or speaking opportunities you have. You'll find some key biblical themes to focus on, a few principles and practices to consider and some additional resources you can use as you see fit.

**THE GOSPEL
IS OUR
"WHY"**



First and foremost,
we must remember that

**OUR GOAL IS
NOT RECRUITMENT
OR ACTIVISM;
IT IS DISCIPLESHIP
AND FORMATION.**

This is the essence of 1 John 4:19 –
We love because He first loved us.





THIS IS NOT A
MESSAGE
ABOUT
ACTIVITY, BUT
IDENTITY.

Rather than trying to churn up more acts of service or make busy people even more busy, we want to see the gospel transform hearts and minds to the point that caring for vulnerable children and families becomes an extension of our identity as the people of God. In other words, it's not just something we do as a church; it's who we are as a church. We preach the gospel above all else, then invite others to demonstrate that gospel in specific ways.



James 1:27 says it this way:

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.”

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

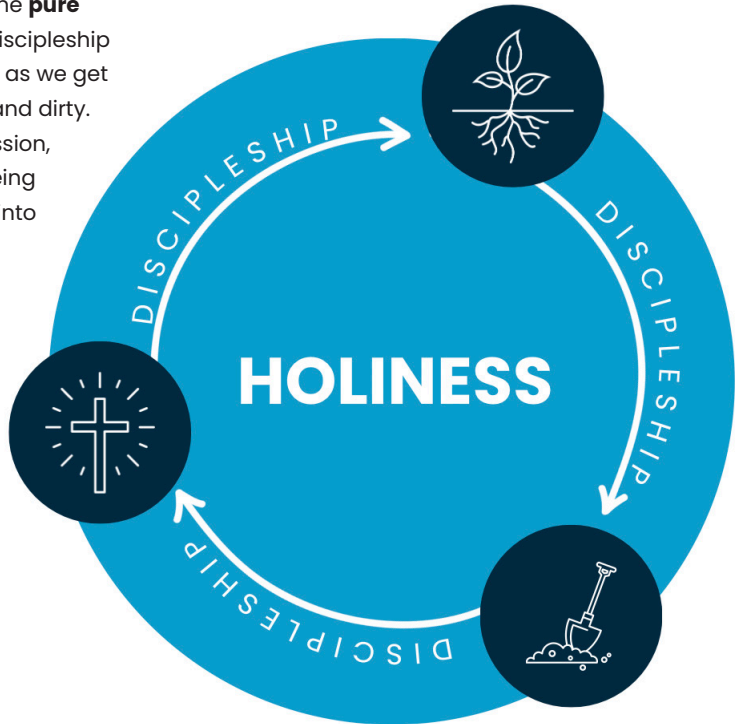
It means that we are called to be both:



We do not stand at a safe distance away from the brokenness of the world; instead we roll up our sleeves and get our hands dirty doing this holy and helpful work.

As CAFO President Jedd Medefind says, “Holiness is pure, but with purpose. It is unpolluted so that it might be useful. Its heart is pure, but its hands are dirty – holy, and helpful.”

And holiness is a cyclical process: through **discipleship**, we are rooted in the foundation of the **pure gospel**. From there, discipleship gives way to **mission** as we get involved in the hard and dirty. And as we live on mission, we are continually being disciplined even more into the **image of Jesus**, and our expression of religion becomes increasingly **pure and undefiled**.



THREE KEY BIBLICAL THEMES



Consistent themes about who God is, what He does and how we should live in response are interwoven throughout the fabric of the biblical narrative. Consider using these three key themes in your message to highlight the work of God on our behalf and our right and necessary response as followers of Him.



THEME ONE: **GOD INCARNATES**

Throughout Scripture, we see a God who moves toward hard places and struggling people. He is not afraid of our brokenness, but draws near to us in the midst of it.

When we do the same and draw near to the vulnerable, it puts God's heart on display in vividly "pure and undefiled" ways (James 1:27).

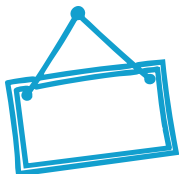
VERSES FOR REFERENCE:

"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call Him Immanuel (which means 'God with us')."

-MATTHEW 1:23

"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us."

-JOHN 1:14



THEME TWO: **GOD WELCOMES**

In God's character as our good Father, He welcomes us into the security and provision of His family as His dearly loved sons and daughters.

Welcoming others is a natural response to God welcoming us. When we foster, adopt or otherwise open our lives, families or homes to others, we follow in His footsteps.

VERSES FOR REFERENCE:

"A Father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families..."

-PSALM 68:5-6

"To those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God."

-JOHN 1:12



THEME THREE: **GOD PROTECTS**

God fends off that which seeks to destroy us and defeats that which we are powerless to fight on our own.

We extend protection to those in need because we have received God's Fatherly protection. We're invited to "seek justice...defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow" (Isaiah 1:17).



VERSE FOR REFERENCE:

"He defends the cause of the fatherless."

-DEUTERONOMY 10:18

The consistent theme in Scripture is this:

WE DO FOR OTHERS IN RESPONSE TO WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US

THROUGH JESUS.

This ultimately becomes the “why” that drives our people to engage and sustains them along their journeys.

**GOD
INCARNATES...**

so we move toward hard places, not away.

**GOD
WELCOMES...**

so we open our lives and homes to the most vulnerable.

**GOD
PROTECTS...**

so we fight against that which fights against them.

**THREE KEY
STRATEGIC
PRINCIPLES**



Consider these key concepts as you strategize **how and when** you will preach or teach in order to make the message and follow-up as engaging and impactful for your church as possible.



PRINCIPLE ONE: **MAKE IT SPECIAL**

We celebrate that which we consider to be special. In any kind of celebration, we pause from the norm and give our focus to something or someone worthy of recognition.

Consider birthday parties, for example. You certainly value your loved one all year round, but there is something meaningful about dedicating a particular day out of the year to give special attention to them. In the same way, letting your message stand out from the norm at specific times of year can be incredibly powerful.

Some ideas on how to make your message special:

- **Dedicate a particular Sunday or weekend to discussing God's heart for the vulnerable.**
- **Plan an entire sermon series about the missional vision and values of your church.**
- **Include a special time of prayer and dedication over foster and adoptive families in your congregation.**
- **Engage in a service project aimed at families, children or organizations in your local community.**
- **Invite people to an informational meeting where they can learn more about fostering, adopting or providing wraparound support care for families.**

Pure Religion Sunday

SECOND SUNDAY IN NOVEMBER

Perhaps one of the most powerful and special ways to emphasize God's heart for the vulnerable is by participating in Pure Religion Sunday. Recognized on the second Sunday in November, this is a day in which thousands of churches around the world stand together and engage their people on behalf of vulnerable children and families. You too can leverage Pure Religion Sunday to inspire and drive action within your congregation; explore our library of resources designed to help you do just that.

Visit cafo.org/purereligion/pure-religion-sunday/



PRINCIPLE TWO: **MAKE IT NORMAL**

Preaching on this doesn't always have to be a "special" thing; in fact, in many ways we want it to be a "normal" thing.

Throughout the year, take every opportunity to spotlight the moments in Scripture in which you see God moving toward hard places and struggling people, rather than away. A few examples:

God appearing to the Israelites in various forms (cloud, fire, etc.)

The incarnation of Jesus (the ultimate expression of God "moving toward" the broken)

Jesus' encounters with the blind, lame, tax collectors, sick, shame-filled and more.

Each of these is an opportunity to reinforce vision for your church and invite people to take action.

EXAMPLE: “Here again we see the character of God in how He moves toward a hard situation or a struggling person. This is who we are striving to be as a church. That’s why we have strategically engaged in the space of caring for vulnerable children and families through foster care, adoption and global orphan care. Learn more about how to get involved in those spaces at our church by...”

**Be sure to regularly share stories
that celebrate what God is doing
and the ways people are engaging
within your own community;**

THIS WILL KEEP THE MESSAGE IN

FRONT OF YOUR CONGREGATION!



PRINCIPLE THREE: **MAKE IT FOR EVERYONE**

We're not all called to do the same thing, but everyone can do something!

This is the essence of what it means to be members of the same body, each with unique gifts and functions yet working together for the good of the whole (1 Corinthians 12).

Though we all celebrate the same gospel, we get to demonstrate that gospel in diverse ways! This means the question is no longer **"Can I do something?"**, but now...

**"IN LIGHT OF WHAT
JESUS HAS DONE
FOR ME, WHAT IS
MY SOMETHING
I CAN DO FOR
OTHERS?"**

Provide your people with a variety of ways to get involved, reinforcing the “everyone can do something” message while highlighting and celebrating the different “somethings” that your people are doing.

EXAMPLES COULD INCLUDE:

- **Opening their home through foster care or adoption.**
- **Bringing meals or providing tangible goods for families welcoming children.**
- **Offering relational support to families.**
- **Using their gifts and passions (i.e. home repairs, car maintenance, etc.) to serve families.**
- **Regularly praying for and encouraging families in the church and community.**
- **And more!**

The “everyone can do something” message encourages your people to think creatively about what God has given them and how they can use it for the good of others!

**WE'RE NOT
ALL CALLED TO
DO THE SAME
THING, BUT
EVERYONE CAN
DO SOMETHING!**

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

While a short booklet like this can't answer all your questions, it can at least serve as a framework to help you get started. Now, as you go and prepare to talk about God's heart for the vulnerable, know that resources and support are available to help you, your church and your ministry along the way. You can find a few of these resources below; a more exhaustive library can be found within the Pure Religion Project (cafo.org/purereigion/) resources at CAFO.



[WEBINAR]

Preaching that Moves:

A Biblical Framework for
Preaching and Teaching on
God's Heart for the Vulnerable



[VIDEO]

A Pure and Undefined Reflection



[AUDIO]

**Preaching about the Gospel
and God’s Heart for the
Vulnerable**



[PODCAST]

**Father to the Fatherless
(with David Platt)**



[RESOURCES]

**Pure Religion Sunday
Resources**



[BOOK]

Everyone Can Do Something:
A Field Guide for Strategically
Rallying Your Church Around the
Orphaned and Vulnerable



[MINI-BOOK]

Leverage:
A Framework for Harnessing
the Power of Your Pure
Religion Sunday Event



PURE RELIGION
PROJECT

ABOUT PURE RELIGION PROJECT

The Pure Religion Project, facilitated by CAFO members and the broader CAFO community, helps churches live out their calling to care for vulnerable children and families while growing closer to Jesus as His disciples. Simply put, the Project aims to inspire and equip God's people to live the "pure religion" described in the book of James and invited throughout Scripture. Learn more at cafo.org/purereligion.



ABOUT JASON JOHNSON

Jason Johnson is the Director of the Pure Religion Project at the Christian Alliance for Orphans. With 20+ years of experience in church-based ministry along with his family's foster and adoptive journey, Jason now spends his time speaking, teaching and coaching church and organizational leadership teams around the country on how to start, lead and grow ministries within their church or organizations.

Jason is the author of ReFraming Foster Care (for families and support groups), Everyone Can Do Something (for church and ministry leaders), ALL IN Orphan Care (small group based study for those considering) and he blogs regularly at Jason Johnson | Blog. Jason has a passion to equip churches and encourage families no matter where they are in their foster care and adoption journeys.

He and Emily and their four girls live in Texas and enjoy whatever it is they're doing, as long as it's together.



EVERYONE CAN DO SOMETHING

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