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The
Why
What
Where
and How

Children's Homes

A sermon delivered at Putnam City Church of Christ,
Oklahoma City.

By

Lloyd Connel

Superintendent

TURLEY CHILDREN'S HOME

The Why, What Where and How



Children's Home

By Lloyd Connel

Superintendent Turley Children's Home

Thank you, Brother Lowder. It indeed is a pleasure to be here this evening to speak to you concerning some things that have become very dear to us since we have been working with the Turley Children's Home. We appreciate so very much the interest that you have manifested in the Home, the help that you have given us financially, the help that you are now giving; and, I am sure, the help that you will continue to give in the future. Of course, we are not only thankful for the financial way in which you have helped us, but also for the many prayers that you have prayed in our behalf and your feeling of interest in the work. All of these things we deeply appreciate, and we are thankful for the opportunity this evening to personally express our thanksgiving in behalf of the directors of the Home, who are the elders of the Northside Church of Christ in Tulsa, and also to thank you in behalf of the children, and also myself. Without any further introduction I want to go directly into the lesson and speak to you concerning this subject "Why, What, Where, and How" with reference to a children's home.

WHY HAVE CHILDREN'S HOMES?

I am reading to you at this time an article that I took from the DENVER POST, a special report, June 30, 1961, which portrays a picture of some 300 to 500,000 boys and girls in the United States of America. This article is entitled, "What Should Society Do With Tommy K?" This is the first two or three short paragraphs of that article. "Tommy K. is a handsome, dark-haired boy of 10. Neither he, welfare workers, nor police know who his father is or where he might be, if alive. But police know his mother. They have hauled her in several times on drunk charges. That's how they became acquainted with Tommy. They found him one day, undernourished, dirty and bruised, in a squalid two-room apartment where his mother had left him unattended while she went out on a 36-hour binge. What should society do with Tommy K.? The world is filled with Tommy K's, and their problems have been alternately ignored, compounded, aggravated, and partly solved by a puzzled and uncomprehending civilization. Tommy's case is one of 2,711 handled in 1960 by

the Child Welfare Division of the Denver Department of Welfare." This is briefly a picture of the society in which we live. When some five marriages are consummated, we know that a little better than two out of five are going to end in divorce. We are living in a society today in which children are made homeless in that they are deserted by their parents.

We took in five children in the Turley Children's Home about two years ago. The discovery of these children came about when their grandmother, who lived out in the eastern part of a state, heard that there were storm warnings in the western part of the state. Knowing that the mother of her grandchildren had divorced her son, her first husband, and was married to another man, she called the sheriff and described to him where these children lived and asked if he would make investigation relative to their need. When the sheriff found these children, he discovered that they had been left alone for three days while their mother and step-father were out taking in dances and drinking. The welfare took these children away from their parents, and called us and asked us if we would take them. One of the boys was 13 years of age and had already learned a lot of the things of the world. After we had him for a few weeks, I discovered that after he had been out working one day during the summer, he had hired a man to go into a saloon and buy him about four cans of beer. When I discovered what had happened, I called him in and asked him why it was that he had done such a thing. He answered that he just got thirsty for some beer—that when he lived with his mother, she and his step-daddy used to take him with them on Friday or Saturday when they went to a dance, and he used to drink and get drunk right along with them. Now, of course, we disapprove of anything of that nature, and I have mentioned this only to express to you the "why" and the necessity of children's homes. Alcoholism, divorce, dope, prostitution, desertion, and various things of that nature have so encroached upon the homes of the American people in the United States that there is somewhat around 500,000 boys and girls who are living separate and apart from their natural parents. This, I believe, explains the "why"—the necessity of

children's homes like the one that we have in Tulsa, known to you and to me as the Turley Children's Home. I could go on and give you case histories of several of the children that would just make you shudder. Some of these girls we have taken into the Home after they were 13, 14, 15, and 16 years of age with a very terrible background. Some of them we have been able to salvage; some of them are going to be graduating from high school one of these days and, we believe, attending a Christian college. We have relayed unto you a few things besides death of the parents that make it necessary for us to have homes whereby homeless children can be provided for physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Did you know that in the United States of America there are 95,000 boys and girls who are living in institutional homes? Did you know that of 95,000 that 75,000 of them are in Catholic homes? Think about that! 95,000 boys and girls living in children's homes. The Catholic church has 75,000 of them in their homes, and the denominational groups have about 10,000 in their homes. And then in others such as lodges and individual homes, there are around 8,500, while in the homes supported and operated by Churches of Christ, we have only 1,500 boys and girls. Think about that now!! 95,000 homeless boys and girls living in children's homes. Catholics have 75,000; Denominationalism has about 10,000; others about 8,500; and we, Churches of Christ, homes supported by individuals who are members of the Lord's church, have only 1,500. This, I believe, answers the question as to "why" it is necessary to have children's homes.

But we might mention one other thing relative to this thought. Ordinarily the question is raised, "Well, can't these children be adopted?" No, most of them cannot because of their background, and then they come in family units, and we like to keep them together. Not many people have had the training to deal with the children after they have come to the age of some 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, or 12 years of age, and into their teens. You'd be surprised at the people who think that they want to adopt children and take children of that age, keep them just a few weeks or a few months, and then bring them back and say,

"We're just not equipped to provide for them." They lose patience with the children. For that reason and various others, we have discovered that there are very few that are able to be adopted out. We have adopted out about 20 in the 5 years that I have been with the Turley Children's Home. And we have none right now that are eligible for adoption considering all things that we deem necessary to make a child eligible for adoption. But, this is the "why"—this is the necessity of the children's homes.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

But now we raise the question, "What are we doing? What are we doing relative to this situation that confronts us concerning homeless children?" As I just mentioned awhile ago, we are providing for 1,500 boys and girls in our homes that are supported by Churches of Christ. These children are being cared for in 28 homes. That is how many homes we have in the United States of America supported by Churches of Christ. A little over 5 years ago when I became Superintendent of the Turley Children's Home, there were only about 17 or 18 homes. It is good to know that in the past 5 years some 10 or 11 new homes have had their beginning. But these homes have not been able to provide for many children, for I remember a little over 5 years ago when I attended a meeting made up of the executives of the various homes supported by Churches of Christ, there were only 1,395 children in all our homes. So now we estimate that we are caring for only about 1,500, so that means that we have made an overall gain of only about 105 in the last 5 years. This means that these new homes that are having their beginning are having trouble getting support; they're having trouble finishing their cottages and getting things arranged so that they can take in children that are in need of a home. But, it is good to know that these new homes which have had their beginning in the last 5 years are going to be growing. It is good to know that plans are in the making for other homes a few places over our good land. It is good to know that other homes are planning an expansion whereby they'll be able to provide for more children in the future than they are able to provide for right now. We

are providing for 1,500 children in 28 different homes in various states in the good land in which we live.

Now, then, what are we spending in the care of these 1,500 children? We are spending about 1 million dollars a year in providing for all of the necessities of the children in our homes. You may be ready to say, "A million dollars is a lot of money. Do you mean that we are spending one million dollars a year in providing for homeless children; in feeding, clothing, educating and providing medical care?" Yes, that is what we are spending. One million dollars is a lot of money, but, you know, we have about 2 million members of the Lord's church today. I believe if you will look in the encyclopedia, you will find that it lists that the Churches of Christ number about 2 million members. But let's be conservative. Let's just suppose that 25 per cent of these 2 million people that are members of the Lord's church cannot be depended on, so let's just cut them off and say that we have a million and a half members and are spending one million dollars a year in providing homes for homeless children. That means that we're spending 66 and two-thirds cents per member of the Lord's church per year in providing homes for homeless children. Does that answer the question, "What are we doing?" We are spending an average of some 66 and two-thirds cents per member per year in providing homes for homeless children. Not 66 and two-thirds cents per month, per week, but per year for each member. Brethren, that's what we are doing, or should we say "that's all we are doing?"

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

But now we want to raise this question, "Where do we go from here?" I would like to feel that we are going to go forward in the care of homeless children. Certainly we cannot afford to go backwards. We cannot afford to stand still. So there's only one way to go, and that is to go forward. Well, forward to what?

We need to go forward in tender loving care. If you do any reading today relative to welfare work, social work, and anything in this field, you will run across this expression quite often, "Ten-

der Loving Care." It has become so common that often times you will just see the initials "T.L.C."—Tender Loving Care. We need to realize that we must go forward in tender loving care. Too often we have been willing to let someone else provide for homeless children. Too long we have justified ourselves by saying, "Why, in this land in which we live, this society is not going to let a little child starve to death. It is not going to let a child go hungry. It is not going to let a little child go without having some kind of a home." And I am thankful to be able to say that that is true. But, friends, can we afford to fold our arms and stand back and just be hearers of the word of God and not be doers because we realize the powers that be, the Civil government, or Catholicism, or Denominationalism will provide for these children? Does that excuse us? Can we longer stand back and say, "Well, because they'll be taken care of is there any need of our doing it?" I had a man ask me not too many days ago, "Doesn't the state have a home over here? Is it full? Can't they take care of them?" Well, they would. Yes, and that is a thing that has been a little peculiar to me that some members of the Lord's church are willing to stand back and let somebody else do that which the Lord has asked us to do. So we need to grow in tender loving care.

We need secondly to restore true mercy in Christianity. In Matthew, the 23rd chapter, verse 23, Jesus said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Now Jesus did not condemn these scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites for the things that they had done, but he did condemn them in that while they were doing these things, they left all of these other things undone. So we need to realize that in the Kingdom of God we have too long left undone tender loving care. We have too long left undone true mercy in Christianity. Jesus Christ said that they had left undone justice, mercy, and faith, and "these ye ought to have done." We today need to practice mercy in the Lord's church.

Where do we go from here? We need to go on to a greater kingdom and we can do so my friends by pressing on and teaching the word of God. And not only teaching, not only being hearers, but being doers of the word. We can go on to practice benevolent work as it was practiced during the first century of Christianity. We need to learn to work at the job as well as pray. You know, when we pray we nearly always pray for the widows and orphans, and that is well and good. Certainly we ought to pray for the widows. Certainly we ought to pray for the orphans and homeless children. But will that alone provide for them? It is time my friends that we did more than pray. I remember a place where I was preaching not too many years ago. The congregation was talking about starting a new work. One of the men in the church was very interested in starting the new work and so he brought this up in the business meeting. And one of the elders spoke up and said, "Brother So and So—that is fine. You go ahead. We think it will be a good thing to start a new work. And we want you to know that you will have our blessings." This brother said to the elders, "Brethren, we are going to need something besides your blessings to start a new congregation." Now that is the thing that I am talking about. You say, "You have our blessings." I had a letter from the elders of a church the other day which said: "Brother Connel, we want you to know that we sympathize with you in the work that you are doing, and we believe in it, and we want you to know that you have our blessings, but our budget is so pressed this year that we are not going to be able to do such and such for you." Well, I am not disputing that fact. I am sure that they are aware of their business and know more about it than I do. But the thing about the benevolent work in the Lord's church is that we often pray the blessings upon the widows and upon the orphans, and then sometimes we do not go ahead and work at the job. I got a sermon outline the other day entitled "Stop Praying." And I thought, that looks peculiar—"Stop Praying." We teach each other to pray. One of the points of the lesson was don't just pray for the widows and orphans, etc., but stop praying and go out and do something for

them. Like the little boy that heard his daddy pray for the widows and the orphans and the unfortunate and everyone that would need any help materially, and when he had finished praying, the little boy said to his daddy, "Daddy, I wish that I had your money." And his daddy said, "What would you do with my money?" and the son replied, "I'd answer your prayer." Now, brethren, we want your prayers, but we want you to help answer those prayers in the benevolent work of the Lord's church.

HOW CAN WE GET RESULTS?

And now we raise the question, "How can we get results?" First of all by teaching on the subject. This is the most neglected subject, I believe in the Lord's church today insofar as the teaching it receives. I have preached for over 20 years, and I will confess that up until just a few years ago I so sadly neglected to teach the church concerning its responsibility in benevolence. Why, I had not learned it myself. How could I teach it? That is one of the secrets of teaching. We first must learn ourselves and then we can teach. And so we must teach on the subject. I heard a brother say the other day that he believed that the people in the Lord's church would do anything they were taught to do if when they were taught to do it, they were convinced that it was the right thing to do. I believe we will begin doing benevolent work in the Lord's church when we have been taught, and when we are fully convinced that it is right. Oh, I don't mean to leave the impression that we are what is sometimes classed as antis. Certainly not. But, you know, we are sometimes just kind of on the peak. We have not fallen far enough to really go to work at the job. So we need to be taught on the subject. Let me give you some illustrations that I personally have come across in my years in working in the Lord's church. I was preaching for a congregation one time that had about 600 members on the roll. When we were working up the budget, a man who had been recently restored and his wife had been baptized said, "I think it is a shame the amount we spent in benevolent work the past year." Someone said, "How much is it?" We looked and it was \$200.00. And, in addition to that, we were sending \$10 a

month to Boles Home, so that would have been \$120. That made a total of \$320.00 set aside for benevolent work for one year. But you know, we didn't use all of that. One of the elders said to this man, "What would you suggest that we put in the budget for next year?" And he replied, "I would put at least a thousand dollars down for benevolent work." And I must confess that at that time I was just a little shocked myself. As I said awhile ago, I hadn't learned the lesson until recently. And so we put a thousand dollars in the budget. And then, during the coming year, a woman was baptized who had 8 children. Her husband was an alcoholic. All of a sudden he disappeared and was gone for about 3 weeks. I went to one of the elders and said to him, "Don't you think we ought to help this woman and her children?" And he answered, "Lloyd, she's not a widow in deed." And I said, "No, she's not a widow in deed, but she's a widow in need. And I don't believe that Paul intended to say that the church could not help a woman who had an alcoholic husband who ran off and left her with 8 children. I don't believe that Paul intended to leave that impression when he gave the qualifications of a widow in deed and said that the church was to completely support her." He agreed after we'd talked a little while that that was right and that the church should help her. But, you know, I have found in over 20 years of preaching the gospel that when there is a case of benevolence in the community, it is just like pulling eye teeth to get money from the Lord's church in the various places where I have lived. I have talked to a lot of other gospel preachers, and I have tried to make it my business to find out. I don't know what your situation is, but sometimes it is so difficult to get the Lord's church to spend any money in benevolent work locally or anywhere else. Oh yes, we need to be taught on this subject!

Secondly, we need to recognize its place in the work of the church. It has a place. You read your New Testament. You go to the book of Acts. The church had not more than had its beginning when there arose murmuring between the Grecian and the Hebrew widows. Immediately the apostles appointed 7 men and they went to work, and what were they doing? They were taking care

of the situation. We find this all through the book of Acts; all through the writings of the apostle Paul, and various others. They certainly wrote enough and taught enough on the subject that if we halfway make a careful study, we will recognize the place of benevolence in the Lord's church. But, friends, we have not recognized it yet. Now, how do I know this? One of our brothers wrote to all of the churches of Christ all over the country and asked for their church budgets or their financial report for the preceding year. He took all of these budgets or financial reports of the Lord's church, added them all up and found the total amount of contributions. He then found the amount that was spent in benevolence. In other words, all benevolent work. He took the entire contribution and divided that into the benevolent work, and do you know what he got? He found out that on an average, Churches of Christ were spending less than 5% of the entire contribution in benevolent work. Now, I am not saying that they were spending less than 5% in helping children's homes. What I said was churches of Christ on the average are spending less than 5% of their total contributions in all benevolence, including their local and what they spend away from home. Someone may say, "What about it?" Begin reading through your New Testament and every time you find a verse of scripture that has anything to say concerning giving, you will discover that about 95% of the scriptures on giving will have to do with benevolent work. The preacher has taught the church to give by using scriptures that deal with benevolent work and when we take up the contribution, then we turn it around. In other words, we put the cart in front of the horse, and we use a little over 95% of the contribution for other work of the church and less than 5% in benevolent work, but we used 95% of the scriptures on benevolence to get the people to give. I just wonder if that proportion is right. We're not opposed to beautiful church buildings, we believe in them. They are indeed a necessity. I have been with 3 or 4 churches where we built church buildings. We built a beautiful auditorium at 10th and Rockford while I was preaching for that church in Tulsa. In Big Spring, Texas, we built a church building. We had a part in the beginning of one at Valley View in Tulsa.

The first local work I ever did in Douglas, Arizona, we built a church building, so we are not opposed to building. We're not opposed to preaching the gospel. I know that more of it needs to be preached today than we're preaching. But, friends, we are pleading for a proportion of the Lord's money to be used in benevolent work. I want to invite your attention to something that perhaps you have never thought about. How can we get results? How can we raise the contribution in the local church? And everyone of us is interested in doing that. The elders are, and preachers, deacons, and interested members of the Lord's church are always wanting to see the contribution grow. How can we get results? How can we raise the contribution? Let me invite your attention to II Corinthians, 8th chapter, beginning with verse 1. "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." Friends, I believe that this is the only example in the entire New Testament of any church or any group of churches ever giving beyond their power. I don't believe you will find another example in the entire New Testament of people giving beyond their power. But these churches in Macedonia did it. And what were they giving for? For the ministering of the poor saints. And I believe today that Churches of Christ are missing the point. If we were spending more for the care of the unfortunate in our own community, in the care of homeless children, and the widows, and the aged, I am sure that the church would give more and we would even perhaps hear of some churches giving beyond their power. These churches in Macedonia did, and I believe that is something to think about when we have only one group of churches that gave beyond their power. When we recognize that it was for benevolence that they gave so much, we should put some of that in the practice of the Lord's church, and we'd see the people giving more. One of the

greatest appeals that we have is to raise money for homeless children.

But somebody says, "That was an emergency concerning the saints so, naturally, if any emergency arose here, we would give that way." I know that here a while back an emergency arose down in Texas when the hurricane came in and about 500,000 people were left homeless. I am sure that in all probability you took up a collection here. I know a lot of the churches in Oklahoma City did, and in Tulsa, and all over the state. Thousands of dollars, clothing, food, and things of that nature were sent to Texas. Why? A calamity! Well, it is wonderful that the churches of Christ are doing that now. Only about 10, 15, or 20 years ago we wouldn't have been there. We wouldn't have sent anything down there. The Red Cross and the Salvation Army would have been there, and if we had sent anything, we would have sent it to them and they would have distributed it. So we are learning. We are growing. We are progressing relative to the benevolent responsibility of the Lord's church. People gave to that because it was an emergency and the need was there. But let me ask you this question. Which creates more of an emergency? 500,000 men and women, boys and girls who lost the physical structure of the house they lived in, or 500,000 homeless little boys and girls whose house hasn't been washed away, and hasn't been broken down, but whose daddys and mammas have been taken away? I care not whether it be death, prostitution, alcoholism, dope, desertion, or whatever it might be. If that child is left without parental care, he is an orphan. Just as much as if his mother and daddy were dead. The society which we live in has created that. Which creates the greatest emergency? Friends, we need to be doing something with these children. And certainly all of this should show us the advantages of providing for these children physically, mentally, and spiritually.

Two men were riding on a bus in Lubbock, Texas, and a member of the church was sitting behind them. The bus drove in front of the Broadway Church of Christ building. And this member of the church heard one of the men in front of him say to his companion, "When I become a

member of a church, it is going to be that one right there." And his companion said, "Why that one?" He answered, "Have you heard of Children's Home of Lubbock?" And his companion said, "Yes, I have heard of it." The man answered and said, "This church is the one that oversees that work and takes care of those children. And when I become a member of any church, I am going to be a member of one that practices what it preaches." Now, friends, things like this is what we need to bring the Kingdom of God nigh to the hearts of men. Too long we have been known as a hard-hearted group of people that preaches that you must sing without the use of mechanical instruments of music, and we must keep teaching that. We have been known as a group of people that preaches that an individual must be baptized in order to be saved, and we must keep on preaching that. We have been known as a group of people that preaches the one body, the one church, and we must keep on preaching that. We have been known as a group of people that preaches that unless you are a member of the church of Christ, you are going to die and go to hell, and we must keep on preaching the one church, the one body because the Bible teaches it: Ephesians 4, verse 4. But, friends, suppose you were out doing personal work and you knocked on the door of this man that I just mentioned, who said, "When I become a member of a church, it is going to be that one." You went up to his door and knocked. He comes to the door and you say, "I am a member of the church of Christ." What's he going to do? He is going to let you in. "Oh, yes, you are the people that are taking care of those children out there, aren't you?" Of course, he's got to know more than that in order to obey the gospel. I realize that. But is he not in a good frame of mind to be taught? Oh, there is so much prejudice against us today. But so much of that can be removed. If we would begin to practice benevolence as it was practiced in the first century, we then would bring the Kingdom of God nigh to the hearts of men.

Georgia Harkness expressed this view in her poem "The Agony of God."

I listen to the agony of God . . .

I who am fed,
Who never yet went hungry for a day.
I see the dead . . .
The children starved for lack of bread . . .
I see, and try to pray.

I listen to the agony of God . . .

I who am warm,
Who never yet have lacked a sheltering home.
In dull alarm
The disposed of hut and farm,
Aimless and "transient" roam.

I listen to the agony of God . . .

I who am strong,
With health, and love, and laughter in my soul.
I see a throng
Of stunted children reared in wrong,
And wish to make them whole.

I listen to the agony of God . . .

But know full well
That not until I share their bitter cry . . .
Earth's pain and Hell . . .
Can God within my spirit dwell
To bring his kingdom nigh.

Yes, we need to bring the Kingdom of God
nigh to the hearts of men.