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Hello, I hope this finds you well.

My name is Phil Krause and I am from Columbus, Ohio. I am the Co-Director of a family preservation ministry here in Columbus called My Village Ministries. I am also the Co-Director of a national collaborative called Upstream Collaborative that seeks to further equip family preservation ministries to be excellent in how they serve.

As a foster and adoptive parent, I am excited to see that the true story of Bishop Martin and his church engaging in the hard work of foster and adoptive care is becoming a feature film. It is also encouraging to see the press that this film has been getting through different media outlets and podcasts. I have no doubt it will inspire and encourage the Church to get involved in this important work.

I believe this is a crucial point in time that we must expand our understanding of how we serve vulnerable families to include strengthening and supporting them **before they are broken apart**. Because of the movie, "The Sound of Hope," there will undoubtedly be a lot of attention given to the needed work of foster and adoptive care through local churches. We cannot fail to also focus our attention on preserving the families that God created in the first place. I would argue the American Christian Church desperately needs to hear this message of preservation and to be challenged to respond to the need.

Allow me to explain:

In the child/family welfare world we have seen the Church step up to the plate over the past three decades. The Church has wisely rung the bell to call believers to serve in foster and adoptive care. While there is always room to do more, the Church has done a lot to answer that call. Included in these efforts are a large organization called Christian Alliance for Orphans (CAFO) that has a global following, Orphan Sunday (or Pure Religion Sunday) is recognized in over 100 nations, and the vast majority of those that foster or adopt are followers of Jesus. **And yet, the number of kids in foster care has not been on a steady decline over the years.** It seems to ebb and flow. The same is arguably true of kids needing to be adopted. While the Church can and should always enlist more Christians to engage in the needed work of foster and adoptive care, that keeps us in a reactive posture, trying to stem a tide that keeps rising.

Imagine you and nine of your best friends go on a walk in the woods. You unexpectedly come upon a beautiful stream. Collectively, you decide to sit down to enjoy the stream and all of God's creation. Then, suddenly, you start seeing all these kids floating past you. Eventually, one of the kids desperately shouts out, "Help us, we are in danger! We are not safe! Someone pull us out!" You will see one of three responses from you and your nine friends. You will probably have six, maybe seven, jump in to save the kids that are right in front of you - that's foster care. You will see two or three who go downstream to save the kids that got past - that's adoption. You may have one, two if you are lucky, who go upstream to figure out why they are ending up in the stream in the first place. Those workers go upstream with the hope to prevent kids from ending up in the stream - that's family preservation. All of these responses are valuable and needed. However, I would suggest we need **more** of the proactive work of family preservation and not such a heavy focus on the reactive work.

Children are ending up in the system because of neglect and abuse upstream. We are burdened by the pain and loss these children are experiencing. National Clearinghouse on Childhood Abuse and Neglect Information found that two of the top four reasons children are abused are temporary crisis and social isolation. *These are preventable situations that we would be wise to address by creating runways and equipping local churches to support families in this situation.*

There are nearly 400,000 kids currently in the foster care system. That number is extremely high. That number should create great pause and should demand us to ask the tough question, "How can we prevent this?". We should not be fine with 400,000 kids being neglected and/or abused. We have to go upstream to the source of the problem. We need to be reactive to situations of neglect and abuse but we ALSO have to be proactive. We can no longer ignore family preservation.

Family preservation is the needed work of not only keeping families together but supporting families in a way that gets them to the point of thriving. There are many outlets in which this can be done and the Church should be leading the charge in all of them.

Allow me to give you just one example of the church engaging in family preservation - Child Hosting. At My Village Ministries, we equip local churches to be the consistent care and community to socially isolated families facing crisis. The church provides this support by hosting children in the homes of our host families for a short period of time while parents get their feet back on the ground and gain a community of support. **It is through Biblical hospitality that we are beginning to see families preserved in our city. *By serving preventatively and relationally, the number of children in foster care is declining seven times faster in Franklin County than in the rest of the state, leading to 1000 less children in care than there were in 2020.** We are not able to prove that this is directly because of the work of My Village Ministries, but we believe we are having a strong impact as we have hosted more than 10,000 nights and have a reunification rate of 99.9%.

There are many other ways to engage in family preservation such as working alongside pregnancy resource centers (pro-life work), fatherhood initiatives, mentoring, etc. This is where Upstream Collaborative is beginning to thrive. We are spurring on a movement of family preservation across the United States by gathering and exhorting those who are already serving in these ways **and** launching new family preservation organizations.

And this is where you come into play.

Would you help us ring this bell just as loudly for family preservation as we do for the needed work of foster and adoptive care? Upstream Collaborative is not a branded house but instead a house of brands. Our goal is to mobilize organizations and churches to carry out the movement of family preservation across the country. We cannot afford to just be reactive. Proactively preserving and strengthening families is a God-calling that will benefit individuals, churches, communities, and our nation.

Will you join the movement?

Please, see attached links that will highlight our ministry and impact:

<https://youtu.be/ptfymBd824Y>

<https://myvillageministries.com/>

*Kids in Care current count for Ohio:

<https://data.jfs.ohio.gov/dashboards/foster-care-and-adult-protective-services/point-in-time-count-of-children-in-care>

