

# CELEBRATING *National* FOSTER CARE MONTH



## **PADILLA FAMILY INTERVIEW**

*Shepherd Church sits down with Lorie Padilla to discuss the joys and challenges of foster parenting.*

### **SC: Why did you become a foster parent?**

LP: When I was 18 years old, I had my first experience with the foster care system. A friend of mine from church had foster children and I would watch one of her babies named Jennifer. I grew very attached to her, and would have loved to adopt her, but I was too young, and I knew she could have a better life with a married couple.

When I finally did get married, my husband and I opened up our home to serve and take in youth, interns, international students and various families. Our home eventually became our mission field. God showed us that we could provide a safe place for people to get back on their feet and live a much better life. Soon, we became foster parents, and are now able to help foster kids change the trajectory of their lives. We're thankful that we have the opportunity to show them the love of Jesus so they can one day invite Him into their lives.

### **SC: What is the biggest joy of foster parenting?**

LP: We enjoy being able to make a difference in so many lives, not just in the lives of our foster kids but their biological parents as well. We are so happy to love on each of the children because so many do not know what love truly is. We also have the ability to give them the time, attention, and material things, or necessities that they have never had.

### **SC: How many foster children have you had, or presently care for?**

LP: We have had a total of eight foster kids living in our home. Three are permanent and five have gone on to an adoptive family or to other foster homes.

### **SC: What are some of the challenges of foster parenting?**

LP: Many foster children have emotional, physical and mental needs because of all the trauma they have experienced in their lives. This means that as foster parents, we have to be available to take them to many different kinds of appointments, i.e. doctor, therapy, and biological family visits (could be up to 3 or 4 a week). So, finding time for all of these appointments can be very challenging. Even finding a babysitter to watch them for one day can be difficult, because foster children have so many needs that other children do not have.

### **SC: What are the greatest needs of foster parents and children today?**

LP: I would have to say the biggest need is respite or self-care. I can't tell you the last time my husband and I went on a date or took a vacation just to have some quality time alone to be together. Taking some time to get away is a huge need for foster parents and is very necessary for the long-term health of one's entire family.

### **SC: Why would you encourage others to consider becoming a foster parent?**

LP: First, it is important to know that foster parenting is not for everyone. It is a calling! However, even though not everyone is called to adopt or foster children in their homes, everyone is called to help the least of these. Matthew 25:40 says, "The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'" So I would tell anyone who is considering becoming a foster parent, to pray, pray, and pray again. You must also research the needs of foster kids in your area, and find a supportive team to help you through the journey. I'm so thankful that Shepherd has a Foster Care Ministry that walks alongside foster and adoptive families such as mine. I'm so thankful for their support. So I encourage anyone who believes that they are called to become a foster care parent to take the first step and start the process.

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