

Fathers to the *Fatherless*

"God in His holy dwelling is a father to the fatherless and a champion of widows."

Psalm 68:5 (HCSB)

Bobby peered out the window and took in the light piercing through the shade. The light contrasted with the darkness he felt inside—hangover and numb. It gave an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work as memories stirred. Memories of sermons, Scriptures, Royal Ambassadors, and fatherly wisdom from the man who most closely resembled that role to him—Ricky. A local pastor, Ricky, and his wife, Robin, learned of Bobby's situation and had taken him into their home and care.

YOUNG BOBBY

At age five, Bobby lost his mother to a heart attack and his father to alcohol. He and his sister were left to the care of aging grandparents—care that could

not continue due to their grandparents' advanced age and poor health. The two were separated and entered the foster care system. From ages 5 to 10, home for Bobby equated to a series of temporary arrangements strung together. At 10, Bobby came into the care of Pastor Ricky and Robin. Under their care, he spent six formative years filled with school, friends, baseball on Saturdays, and church on Sundays, where Ricky preached. At 16, the trauma of childhood found expression in rebellion. The rebellion led Bobby down rocky roads for four years until the Father of Lights brought the good gift of Holy Spirit counsel.

FINDING HOME

Ricky's words were what softly stirred in Bobby's heart as a 20-year-old man lying in a dank basement observing light after rounds of personal darkness. "Commit your life to Jesus or you are on a road to nowhere," Ricky often said. Bobby knew *nowhere*. He felt it that day in the basement. With Ricky's words swirling in his head, Bobby picked up the phone

and called...*home*. The lost son who left four years before found home again through the extravagant love of Jesus on display through Ricky and Robin.

FOSTERING A PURPOSE

Coming home meant coming to Christ. Partying had to go and Christ had to stay. Girded with the counsel and care of Pastor Ricky, Bobby enrolled in college at Liberty University. There he met his future wife, Dell, and gained training in ministry. Pain fostered a purpose in Bobby—a career in youth ministry, particularly caring for the hurting. Pastor Bobby has now ministered to students for over two decades and currently serves as the student pastor at **Franklin Heights Baptist Church** in Rocky Mount, VA.

FOSTERING CHILDREN

As their biological children have aged, and with their permission, Bobby and Dell have begun fostering. To date, seven foster children have called their house a home. Two of those seven, sisters Chanty and Paulina, have been grafted into the family. Through families like this, foster children are moving from floundering to flourishing. Bobby enjoyed the privilege of baptizing Chanty and Paulina into the forever family of God. Like Ricky, Bobby became a father to the fatherless. And just like Bobby, Chanty and Paulina came to know of their Father in heaven through the love and care of a pastor who took them in. ■

RESOURCE:

There are over 5,000 children in foster care custody in Virginia. If you'd like more information on how to be a foster parent or how to support fostering families, contact:

 fostercare@sbcv.org

