



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.

Session 11: Rejecting Legalism
Suggested Week of Use: February 15, 2026
Core Passage: Matthew 12:1-14

News Story Summary

Three years ago, Jeremy Wright was a high school principal in Plainwell, Michigan, when Bridgett walked into his office and said she had no place to go for Christmas break. At 15, the troubled girl had spent time in twenty different foster homes over the course of seven years and was being kicked out of her current placement. As a child, she had been sexually abused. As a teen, she was dealing with mental health issues and was addicted to marijuana and alcohol. She also had stolen \$300 from her foster mother.

Jeremy called his wife Jennifer to ask if they could take Bridgett in for the holidays. At first, Jennifer said “no,” but she later agreed, not knowing the full extent of Bridgett’s problems. Taking her in was not easy, but they didn’t send her back to foster care after the holidays. Instead, they got help from mental health experts, including a residential stay at a Wisconsin facility. In time, Bridgett’s life transformed. Upon returning home, she began passing her classes and got involved in sports. She also continued seeing a therapist.

In 2024, the Wrights adopted Bridgett. Today, she is a senior in high school and looking toward a future she never could have imagined just a few years ago. After graduation this spring, she hopes to become a dental hygienist or a flight attendant. And Jennifer, who initially hesitated to bring Bridgett into her home, now says she has “completed our family.”

For more about this story, search “Michigan principal and troubled teen.”

Engage

To supplement the Engage activities, share the first part of the story of Jeremy and Jennifer Wright bringing Bridgett into their home. (Note: Save the end of the story for the Challenge activity below.) Emphasize all the things working against her. Ask: *If you were Jeremy, would you take her in or not? Why? What if she showed up at our church? Would we accept her?* Discuss responses. Affirm that even Christians can fall into the trap of legalistic judgments toward those who are different or struggling. Explain that today’s lesson examines how compassion can overcome legalism and help us respond to others as Jesus would.

Challenge

To supplement the Challenge activities, remind adults of Bridgett's situation. Say: *This story has a happy ending.* Relate what has happened in the last three years to Bridgett and how she's now a successful student, ready to graduate. Ask: *How would her life have been different if the Wrights had refused to take her in? What can we learn about accepting others instead of judging them?* Encourage adults to examine their attitudes toward others and to ask Jesus to replace any legalism with love and compassion.