

**Orphan Ministry is more than caring for children in orphanages,
because children don't want to be orphans.
Children belong in families, and families everywhere already want to Adopt.**

Orphan Care and Adoption are equally important means of providing for the care and protection of orphan children, and they both deserve our prayers and financial support. Not all are adoptable, but children belong in families and every child needs a sense of belonging. God has already called countless families in churches around the world who want to adopt, and the Bible clearly shows us that adoption is God's way of loving and caring for orphans. Jesus himself said, "I will not leave you as orphans..." God is calling the church to choose adoption whenever possible as the preferred form of orphan ministry, while seeking even better ways to love and care for children who are not adopted. Even orphans need to bond, to have a sense of belonging, and to feel like family.

Adoption currently represents less than 1% of orphan ministry, but the potential is so much greater.

As many as 5% of families in churches around the world already have a desire to adopt. That amounts to untold millions of families and includes every strata of society. Most of them have never pursued adoption because they assume they could never afford it, and this vast potential remains virtually untapped.

By teaching about the biblical doctrine and gospel nature of adoption, and how it relates to evangelizing orphan children, and how adoption ministry can empower families to adopt, pastors will discover a latent ministry in their churches, and identify the hidden evangelists in their congregations who can become missionaries to bring the Gospel and God's love to orphan children by living example. This is clearly defined in Galatians 4:4-5 and John 1:12. Jesus Christ brought the Gospel and God's love to mankind by living example – *"that we might receive the adoption as sons."* These verses are the practical foundation for adoption as ministry, and for sharing the gospel with orphan children, who can far more readily comprehend the gospel in the context of their own adoption by a loving family on earth.

Not all are called to adopt, but every Christian is called to rescue orphans. Anyone can help rescue orphans by helping families they already know, who need assistance to adopt. Church Adoption Ministry is the vehicle that makes this possible, by identifying the families in each local congregation who already want to adopt, and helping them with whatever resources are necessary to ensure their success in adopting. God is calling the church to do everything possible to equip and empower the families in each local congregation whom the Holy Spirit has already called, or will call to adopt.

Adoption blesses two children at the same time – and greatly multiplies orphanage utilization.

Adoption frees up space in an existing orphanage to care for one more child who simply fills the vacated space of the child who was recently adopted. This can be repeated over and over again, without building a new orphanage. Constant turnover due to adoption will greatly multiply the number of children that can be cared for in every existing orphanage. But, with 99% of orphan ministry focused on institutional care, the number of orphans and orphanages will continue to increase, and so will the number of homeless orphans and street children.

By focusing more resources on adoption, we could significantly reduce the number of orphans, and be able to care for far more orphans in existing orphanage facilities, while significantly reducing the number of orphans who are currently living and dying on the streets. Imagine what would happen to the world's orphan population if the millions of families around the world who already want to adopt, were empowered to do so.

Caring for widows and orphans should be a part of the Global Mission Strategy of every Evangelical Church (James 1:27) and could lead to healthy church growth. (Matt 5:16 and Job 29:12-13) Whenever possible, adoption should be the preferred form of ministry to orphan children.

Bringing the Fatherhood of God to Orphan Children

For six years my wife and I participated in the work at a mission orphanage in the Philippines. We gave the children lots of attention and affection and did everything we could to love, care for and encourage them and improve their living conditions. Sometimes we even brought them to our home for extended stays, but we *always returned them to the orphanage*. We told the children we loved them, but leaving them behind in the orphanage left them wondering. We gave the children everything except our heart, our home and our name. We fulfilled their physical needs, but never succeeded in giving them a sense of belonging.

For a long time, the children were eager to greet me, and they competed for my attention every time I arrived at the orphanage. I had such joyful times with the children, but I always returned to my office on another island and left them behind in the orphanage. I wasn't there to observe their reactions after I left, and was unaware of how they felt to be left behind. But eventually things began to change. One by one, the children lost hope as they realized I was never going to adopt them, and they began to withdraw. Their eager greetings were gone, and they no longer wanted to soak up the attention and affection that I offered. That's when I finally began to put the pieces together. No matter how much love and attention I gave the children, they were still orphans. That realization grabbed my attention, broke my heart and caused me to ask God how to love the children His way. That was the day I began to realize that children just don't want to be orphans, but it would take years and many heart wrenching experiences before I fully understood the depth of their emptiness, and the desperate longing in their hearts to belong to a loving family.

Only two months after arriving in the Philippines I encountered an incident that shattered my traditional understanding of orphan ministry, and left me seriously disturbed, seeking answers to questions I didn't even know to ask. That's when I began asking myself over and over again, "*What's wrong with this picture?*" Answering this question is a major goal of this study, and it begins with this simple concept: "*Man created orphanages for children, God created families for them.*" (author unknown)

It was traditional for the mission to close the orphanage every Christmas so that each of the orphans could spend two weeks with a family to experience Christmas in a real home, but I could not understand the reaction of an eight year-old girl when it was time for me to take her back to the orphanage. She had begun to bond with the family who had hosted her, and they told me they wanted to adopt her, but they would not be able to afford the legal fees. I recall thinking to myself at the time, "*Wouldn't it be nice if I could just pay the expenses in order to make this adoption possible. It would be even better if there was a ministry for this purpose to help every family who wants to adopt.*" Both husband and wife were crying, the girl was crying and she absolutely did not want to go back to the orphanage. Though I never used any harsh words or physical force, simply taking her back to the orphanage must have felt like punishment to her. A brief glimpse of her dream for a loving family had been wrenched away from her, her heart was broken and her dream shattered. Before she met this family, the girl had been well behaved, but now she began sneaking out of the orphanage and chasing boys in the local village. Her behavior became so unmanageable that the caregivers could not handle her, so the orphanage director finally transferred her somewhere else. I have no idea what eventually happened to this girl who vanished into oblivion, but her memory burns forever in my heart, and will help fuel my passion for adoption ministry for as long as I live.

One day while visiting another orphanage, I met a girl who had been born with cerebral palsy and suffered profound hearing loss. She was a very pretty girl with a ready smile, and seemed to be totally comfortable with me. I was immediately drawn to her and we became friends quickly. I asked for permission to photograph her and use her story and photos to assist in raising the funds to purchase hearing aids and pay for the associated medical tests. While I went to get my camera, one of the orphanage staff explained to the girl in sign language what was about to take place.

As soon as I got my camera set up, and without any instruction from me, she began to strike poses like a professional model which resulted in a series of beautiful photos. I was already falling in love with her and couldn't help but wonder why she had been in this orphanage for ten years. Who wouldn't want to adopt such a sweet and friendly girl? I recall thinking, "*I could adopt a girl like her,*" but I began to grieve in my spirit, knowing there were so many more just like her who were just as lovable, and I was overwhelmed by the magnitude of it all. I didn't even recognize it when she said, "*I love you,*" in sign language, and many months passed before someone finally pointed it out to me in one of the photos. Immediately my eyes began filling with tears of joy, but I was sad that I had not noticed or appropriately responded to her message.

It was several months before I was able to return to the orphanage with the funds for her hearing aids, and I was excited to be able to see this little sweetheart again, and to finally respond appropriately to her expression of love. I was eager to scoop her up in my arms and just hug her as long as she would let me. But I was totally unprepared for what happened next. The moment she saw me, she frowned with obvious disapproval on her face, and walked away. I thought perhaps she had forgotten me, so I caught up with her and stooped down to pick her up, but she resisted and ran away. When I tried again, I could tell she really wanted nothing to do with me, and when I asked one of the staff if they would help me re-connect with her, they told me that she did not want to see me and that I should not make any further attempts. I was heartbroken, but that soon turned to a very sick feeling when I finally realized what had happened.

During the photo session I had made her feel like a princess. Though I did nothing special, I was giving her an amazing amount of attention. Suddenly I remembered about her signing "*I love you,*" and God showed me in that moment how my attention was all it took to give this girl a glimmer of hope that I might be the one to finally adopt her. She was already letting me know that she was willing and eager, and she confirmed it by signing that she loved me, but I was too naïve to figure it out. I didn't recognize how strongly she was wooing me. Instead, I just vanished out of her life, dashed her hopes to death and shattered her vulnerable heart. Apparently, I offended her so badly that it's no wonder she didn't want to see me again.

I'm convinced that I caused this girl to stumble, and now I can understand why so many of the other orphans I worked with displayed similar behavior when I tried to love them. They all carried the same unspoken and unanswered question in their hearts, "If you love me, why don't you adopt me?" My interaction with this girl accomplished the exact opposite of what I intended.

Its human nature for love to seek a permanent relationship, God made us that way, and that's what marriage is all about. So, I was forced to ask myself, "*Why was I not recognizing that this girl surely must feel the same way I do about love and relationship?*" As I sought to answer my own question, I discovered that I was paralyzed by the sheer number of orphans, and I had convinced myself I could do nothing to change their status. No matter how noble, my desire to help as many orphans as possible was the very thing that kept me from successfully loving even one. Jesus loves us by changing our status from orphans to Children of God, (Jn 1:12) from Orphans to Heirs. (Rom 8:16-17)

I am deeply grieved by this incident, but my grief can be nothing compared to the offense and grief that she must have suffered. Experiences like these have given me the passion to do whatever it takes to help people understand how difficult it is for a child to feel loved and wanted while they are still orphans, and how urgently and desperately they need and want to belong to a family, and how fragile and vulnerable their emotions are, whether they are on the streets or in an orphanage.

If you have ever visited an orphanage you can probably recall a vivid image of all the children with their happy, smiling faces, frozen in time, and never growing older. Your picture of an orphan is exactly what the children want it to be, because it's what they desperately hope will cause you to fall in love with them and take them into your heart, your home and your life. They are wooing you with every ounce of enthusiasm they can muster. They are so extremely skillful at putting on this facade that I was convinced they were contented to stay in the orphanage, and their facade accomplished the exact opposite of what they hoped it would. They not only put on the facade for visitors, they also put it on for orphanage staff and administrators! I became an orphanage administrator, and it was a very long time before the façade came down and I was able to observe behavior that demonstrated the children's true feelings.

I had the privilege of meeting two young ladies who were ministering to orphan children while living full time with them in an orphanage in another country. Because they were volunteers and not orphanage staff, they were free to devote all their time and attention to the children who were obviously enjoying this unique relationship. The children confided in them, and both of these ladies reported observing incredible differences in the children's façade or natural behavior, based on the presence or absence of visitors and orphanage staff. Their reports strongly confirm my own conclusions about the children's façade, after years of pondering their body language, and repeatedly asking myself, "*what's wrong with this picture?*"

When the children finally decided I was never going to adopt them, their behavior began to change and their body language began to unmask their true feelings. But even then, I still wasn't "*getting it.*" I was so strongly focused on caring for "orphans" who belong in an orphanage, that I couldn't think about caring for "children" who belong in a family. I was too blinded by the façade, and didn't realize the depth of loneliness in their little hearts. It took far too long for me to translate their body language, and the final breakthrough didn't come until I witnessed the facade completely crumble one day when I stayed behind with the children after some visitors left the orphanage. The look on the children's faces and the obvious lack of joyful child's play betrayed their pain and broken hearts, and it broke my heart. That's what finally ruined me, and I knew even then that I wanted to spend the rest of my life helping orphan children to find a home for good.

Over and over again God showed me by personal experience why belonging is so critical and adoption is so necessary, and why Jesus told us He would not leave us as orphans. I wept as I cried out to God in the orphanage one day and asked Him to show me how to love the children His way. How could I possibly help so many children? There were too many to adopt them all. I couldn't bear to adopt only one or two and leave the rest behind. By that time, I had observed the children's disappointment and discouragement after visitors left the orphanage. I had already witnessed how the children felt when they were the ones left behind after one of them had been adopted. God's reply to my question was immediate, clear and simple. I *could* get many more children adopted by sharing my experiences in the orphanage and by helping other families adopt. Little did I know when I joined the mission that God was already preparing me to be a strong advocate for adoption ministry.

A True-Life Testimony

Sheila was a very young child when she was abused by her alcoholic father and abandoned along a highway by her mother. Years later, after Torey Hayden had finally proven to Sheila that she loved her enough to play for keeps, Sheila wrote this beautiful and very insightful poem which speaks volumes about how it feels to be an orphan.

*"All the rest came. They tried to make me laugh. They played their games with me.
Some games for fun and some for keeps.*

*And then they went away, leaving me in the ruins of games, not knowing which were for
keeps and which were for fun, and leaving me alone with the echoes of laughter that
was not mine.*

*Then you came with your funny way of being not quite human, and you made me cry,
and you didn't seem to care if I did.*

You just said the games are over, and waited until all my tears turned into joy." ⁽¹⁾

Sheila's poem so accurately describes my own experience working with the children in the orphanage. The fun and games were over when they finally realized I wasn't playing for keeps.

Adoption is not a Game. Adoption is for keeps.

I am not surprised at the heartbreaking outcomes that await many children who are never adopted, and I cannot remain silent. The more I pray, read, study, and learn from orphans themselves, from others, and from God's Word, and the more I learn from children who were adopted vs. those who are not adopted, the more I am convinced of the need for adoption and the sense of belonging that it brings. Adoption is a new season in church history, a new paradigm of orphan ministry, and it's a ministry that we must not overlook.

This study includes statements and documented statistics which may seem unreasonable or exaggerated. But they are all based on observation and personal experience, and have all been confirmed by biblical truth, published statistics and numerous other adoption and social welfare professionals who have shared similar experiences. I have also sought out and interviewed adult orphans who were never adopted, which further strengthens my resolve to advocate for Christian orphan care and adoption ministry in the church.

God has provided the solution through Adoption Ministry

Adoption ministry is about bringing orphan children into loving families, so they can ultimately become children of God. Not all are called to adopt, but anyone can love and minister to orphan children in a practical and meaningful way by helping someone they know, who already wants to adopt.

In every church I visit, I find families who already want to adopt, but many of them need financial assistance to make adoption affordable. I also encounter people who have thought about adopting but lack the confidence to move forward. But praise the Lord, He has called faithful people everywhere who have the means and the desire to help, and when they learn about the ministry value of adoption, many are delighted to help families in their own church and community. Adoption ministry instills confidence in families which enables them to proceed with adoption, and networks them with others who can help provide necessary resources to ensure their success in adopting.

Too often, orphan care and adoption are viewed as social welfare rather than ministry, and many want to invest their resources in something more evangelistic. When the church recognizes and capitalizes on the ministry and evangelistic nature of orphan care and adoption, she will begin to make a significant difference in the world's orphan crisis, and will make great strides toward fulfilling the great commission. Adoption Ministry should be a part of the global mission strategy of every evangelical church. Here are some glimpses of such a strategy from personal experience.

By helping unbelievers adopt, we can be instrumental in helping them to comprehend God's love in the context of adoption. Perhaps God already knows this is the only way they will ever be able to comprehend becoming His child - by way of adoption. Let's rejoice with those families and help them adopt orphan children, while we help them receive their own adoption into God's family! Let's teach them how they can become better adoptive parents when they fully comprehend the unconditional love of Jesus that paid for their own adoption into His family. Let's show them how to become missionaries who bring the gospel and God's love to orphan children by living example.

I know a couple who were unbelievers when they adopted, and it was their new children who led them to Jesus Christ and helped them receive their own adoption. Unbelievers can also be inspired simply by observing people who are helping other families adopt. They want to know what inspires people to do such amazing things. Even though they may not know or say His Name, these are the kind of people who are eager to hear about Jesus Christ, and many of them are more than ready to receive Him. (Matt 5:16)

Widows and Orphans: The apostles understood Jesus' tender heart for both widows and orphans. That's why they chose Godly men like Stephen and Philip and five others, to oversee their ministry to widows. The mandate for the church in James 1:27, "*..to care for widows and orphans in their distress..*," is just as much for widows as it is for orphans. Scriptures containing the words widow and orphan in the same verse occur numerous times in the bible, and many will instinctively recognize the "*pure and undefiled religion*" of James 1:27 when they observe a church involved in ministry to widows and orphans. Job chapter 29 tells us the church will earn great favor from the local community. Fulfilling the urgent needs of a widow with children, can stabilize her fragile home and prevent her children from becoming orphans.

Speaking the Truth in Love

Numerous scriptures demonstrate how passionate God feels about orphans and widows, and how strongly He defends them. It is understandable that some might feel guilty about not adopting, but God has provided a solution for the world's orphan crisis that does not require everyone to adopt. He has also shown us how anyone who really wants to help, can participate in the solution by becoming foster parents, by supporting an orphanage, by helping someone they know, who already wants to adopt, or by helping a widow in their own neighborhood.

I am called to present the truth and reality of the world's orphan crisis. It is offered in love, not to condemn, but to edify, to raise awareness of the need and to dispel misconceptions about orphans and adoption. It is also my privilege to share the beauty and simplicity of God's solution for the crisis. The enemy does not want you to know about the crisis, or to participate in the solution. I am a voice for the children who have no voice, (Pvb 31:8) and the children want you to know that they want to belong to a family. Ask God how He wants you to participate in rescuing orphans.

Spiritual warfare is real and it is constant. (Rom 7:21-23 Eph 6:12) The enemy always works to distort the truth of God's Word. He is the accuser who always tells us we are guilty and worthless. He wants us to feel paralyzed by the orphan crisis, overwhelmed by the message, powerless to act, and guilty for allowing the crisis to exist in the first place. If learning about the tragic truth of institutional care offends you, stop and think about the orphans who are offended by the tragic truth that dooms them to remain as orphans, when they could have been adopted by one of the millions of families around the world who are longing to adopt.

John 8:32 says: *"You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."* Jesus is truth. (John 14:6) To know Jesus is to know truth. God knows our limitations, that's why He has a unique plan for each of our lives. *"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them."* (Eph 2:10) He does not ask us to do everything, and there is no guilt in doing only that which we are called to do. Even Jesus expressed His limited calling: *"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."* (Matt 15:24) He also did no more than to start a small home fellowship that included a few close friends and the 12 apostles.

Holy Spirit conviction gently reminds us to do things God's way. When we know our calling and are walking in the works that God has prepared for us, there is no place for guilt. Jesus showed us how to achieve victory with the power of the spoken word: "It is written" He said to Satan as He proceeded to quote from the scriptures. So we can also say, "It is written" (Eph 2:10) *I am God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which my Father God prepared for me, and I am walking in them.*

Godly truth can lead orphan children to freedom. Sometimes truth can be offensive, but consider how much more it offends God and the children who have already been offended by abuse, rejection, abandonment or even worse, and are so vulnerable to exploitation. Consider the offense of thousands young orphan girls annually who are offered high paying jobs upon leaving an orphanage, only to discover that the offer came from a predator who forces them into sex slavery and keeps all the income for himself. Rather than be overwhelmed with guilt and paralyzed to act, I pray that knowing truth about the orphan crisis will embolden the reader to participate in this incredible solution that will ultimately help millions of orphan children who so desperately need and want to belong to a loving family.

Though some orphan children thrive in institutional care and succeed as adults, the sad reality is that the vast majority do not. Lack of awareness of this truth contributes to a false sense of security that has led many to mistakenly believe that adoption is an extravagant luxury, that all children thrive in institutional care and that they are adequately prepared for life and become normal, responsible adults.

The primary purpose for discussing problems and quoting statistics is not to condemn, but rather to underscore the need for solutions, and to foster understanding of the desperate need for children to have a sense of value and self-worth that comes from belonging to a family.

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I thank God for the children at the orphanage who so persistently yet painfully taught me the hard lessons that took me far too long to learn. Thanks for breaking my heart and giving me the desire and passion to launch a ministry and establish the Home For Good Foundation. God knows each of your names, and I pray that they are all written in His book of life, especially the ones who slipped through the cracks and vanished into oblivion and may have fallen victim to child traffickers and predators.

Thanks to my wife who spent so many hours proof reading, correcting, deleting my long-windedness, and reminding me to accentuate the positives while eliminating the negatives.

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Thanks to all of our friends and faithful supporters who continue to encourage us, and thank you also to all the families who have adopted the children that we have had some small part in accomplishing. Your sacrifices and Godly examples have been, and continue to be a huge inspiration to me as I observe the fruit of our shared labors in the lives of the children you adopted. The smiles on their faces, their joy and zest for life and their obvious awareness of Jesus' love for them is worth far more than all the time and effort I could invest in creating this study.

Thanks to our former Pastor, Jon Peterson who challenged me with the question, "What would you do for God's kingdom if cost were no object?" We accepted that challenge, and the result is so aptly stated in Eph. 3:20-21. "*Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever.*" Amen

“Why every Christian is called to rescue Orphans”

Full text can be found at www.ctlibrary.com/ct/2010/july/10.18.html

Chapter One

Laying the Foundation

A prayer and scripture to begin your study

Father God, Sovereign Lord, thank you that your spirit is upon me. Thank you that you have anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted, especially orphan children. You have sent me to comfort brokenhearted orphans and to tell orphans who mourn that the time of your favor has come. To orphans who mourn for love and family, you will give beauty for ashes, joy instead of mourning and praise instead of despair. Thank you Father that you adopted me. Let me magnify your name by bringing more orphan children into your family. Help me to demonstrate your love to orphan children by following your example of adoption, and Jesus' example of paying my debt to make my adoption possible.

Isa 61:1-3 *The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted....*

I pray that you will come understand the full richness of the biblical doctrine and gospel of spiritual adoption. We will study adoption as it relates to orphan ministry, and many scriptures which indicate that adoption is God's heart for orphans, and that caring for them is truly pleasing and honoring to God. We will also discuss adoption as an excellent way to fulfill the spirit of numerous scriptures as they apply to orphan children and their needs, and perhaps the best way to help them become children of God. We hope you will gain a deep appreciation for the practical and evangelistic value of adoption as a ministry, because bringing orphan children into God' Family is the ultimate goal of adoption ministry.

There are no explicit commands in the bible to adopt. But, many scriptures command us to rescue orphans, care for orphans, fulfill all of their needs, and to defend and plead the cause of orphans. Love is its own mandate, and adoption is the best way to love and care for orphan children, and to fulfill their deep need for belonging. The way we respond to the orphan's cry for love reveals the condition of our heart, our love for God, and the depth of our love and appreciation for Jesus Christ, who died to make it possible for us to become children of God. Not all are called to adopt, but anyone can love and minister to orphan children in a very practical and meaningful way, by helping other families adopt. Adoption ministry is about helping families we already know, in our own home church and community, who are already called to adopt.

God calls all believers to participate in making disciples of all the nations, (Mat 28:18-19) and to help fulfill the needs of others (John 21:15; Gal 6:2), especially orphans and widows. (Jas 1:27) We can minister to orphans in many ways that seek to fulfill immediate material needs for food, clothing and shelter, as well as social emotional, intellectual and above all, spiritual needs, but we must never lose sight of the fact that adoption into God's family is His way of fulfilling our deepest spiritual needs. Christian families who adopt are missionaries who bring God's love to orphan children by living example, while at the same time, fulfilling their needs and obeying God's command to make disciples of all the nations.

Jesus' death on the cross not only atoned for our sins, it also paid for our redemption and spiritual adoption, and set another example for us to follow. Many Christian families long to adopt, but need a financial miracle to make adoption affordable. Helping families adopt emulates Jesus' example of redemption, and is an integral part of orphan ministry. Orphan care and adoption ministry belong in the institutional church, and it is my prayer that God's people everywhere, both individuals and/or families, will become better informed, will eagerly respond, and will follow God's example to love and care for orphan children His way. I pray that you will be better equipped to spread the good news regarding spiritual adoption into God's family, and that you will be ready, willing and able to teach others about God's heart for orphans, and the urgent need for all children to belong to a loving family and to have a home for good.

This study is not intended to be an exhaustive comparison of various forms of orphan care, it is limited to the discussion of spiritual and legal adoption, and the children who are adoptable. A great number of children in institutions are not adoptable, and many who are will never be adopted. Loving and caring for all institutionalized children is a vital ministry, and for many, it's the first step on the path to adoption. Without this first step, children cannot be adopted! Let's just be sure this first step is not the only step. Let's be sure we give the children every possible opportunity to be adopted, or to be returned to their biological family or relatives, whenever possible.

Many children have encountered abuse or abandonment, and are already at risk before they ever come to an orphanage or foster home. Even if the only reason a child is an orphan is because their parents died, children are still prone to feeling unloved and unwanted, and can't understand why God would allow this to happen to them in the first place, so it's easy for them to blame God and hard to believe that He loves them. They are scared, vulnerable, lonely and desperate to be loved and to belong. Some will respond to the love and care they receive in an institutional setting, while many others will be haunted by unanswered questions: "What's wrong with ME?" "If God loves me, why am I an orphan?" "If you love me, why don't you adopt me?" For these children, no amount of love, attention or care in an institution will substitute for their hunger to belong to a family of their own. Should we blame orphanage staff and supporters? Should we condemn orphan sponsorship because these children don't respond to tender loving care? Of course not! Instead we need to recognize that many of these children have been forced into circumstances where it is simply impossible for them to cope or to succeed. Their hearts and emotions have been so badly damaged that without a sense of belonging, they simply are not able or willing to trust or believe anyone, no matter how much unconditional love we give them. All they know is that they are still orphans.

Just because we encounter less than perfect success does not mean we should stop trying to do all we can to help the children in every way possible. Not all children can be or will be adopted, and we must continue to love, nurture and protect them as much as we can. Orphanage staff and care givers must make every effort to bond with the children, to treat them like family, and to make them feel like family. I have personally witnessed this in a Philippine orphanage and it is working very effectively. The children feel like they are in a family, and they know they are loved. This model needs to be replicated in orphanages around the world.

I could not have stated it any better than to share what Doug Nichols, founder of Action International Ministries, wrote in an email. *"Although placing a child into a loving family should be our goal, it is not always possible. God centered orphanages could bring glory to God and save thousands of children the pain and abuse they face every day on the street. We need to support both adoption and orphanages. So, why shouldn't the church of Jesus Christ start many more orphanages around the world to place street and underprivileged children and orphans into a loving, Christian environment? Orphanages can be safe harbors where children can be lovingly protected and cared for until a home can be found."* (Notes from the Founder, March 26, 2009)

Historically speaking however, orphanages and foster homes have been accepted as an end in themselves, rather than as necessary steps on the path toward giving children a loving family and a home for good. Consider this statement by a government official in Africa in March 2009: *"We don't want any more orphanages in our country, the outcome for the orphan is not good....we want the children in families."* In 2011 an application to start a new orphanage in the Philippines was denied, citing the fact that new orphanages are not the desired solution. An orphanage should serve as a transition home where everything possible is done to achieve a permanent solution for a child by returning them to family or relatives, or accomplishing their adoption.

I have personally witnessed orphan children who displayed clear evidence of being an impossible case for adoption, they were so introverted and so unhappy in the orphanage that I could never make friends with them. Yet, when adopted they made such a miraculous turnaround that if I had not witnessed it myself, I would have found it hard to believe. This is enough to convince me that the best thing we can do for orphan and foster children is to give them as much unconditional love as we can possibly give, but we must also do everything we can to give the children a sense of permanence and belonging that seems to be possible only in a life-long, committed relationship that communicates to a child, "I will never abandon or forsake you."

I recall a situation with a very troubled young girl who had been badly abused, which resulted in her being placed in foster care. But because of her terrible behavior, she had been repeatedly bounced from one foster home to another until she was finally adopted by a Christian family. Her behavior there was hardly any different, but what made the difference in her life was convincing her that she was finally “home for good.” In one of her usual tantrums she blurted out, *“One of these days I’m going to do something so bad that you’re going to throw me out just like everyone else has!”* Her daddy took her in his arms and gently but firmly told her, *“Honey, you’ve already done those terrible things, several times, and guess what, you’re still here, we didn’t throw you out. We love you and we want you to stay with us.”* Her daddy told me that he could almost see the light coming on in her eyes as she came to the realization that what he was telling her was true. She could see it being acted out in her new parents. (1 Jn 3:18) He told me that her behavior changed overnight, as she was finally able to trust someone, perhaps for the first time in her life.

Without a loving family and the sense of belonging it provides, many orphan children are simply unable to comprehend that anyone could possibly love them. For many orphans, adoption is what it will take to convince them they are loved.

The majority of orphan and foster care delivery systems do not provide for children beyond age 18, and many who age out of the system are woefully unprepared for life. When asked if he would like to have a family, an 18 yr. old orphan boy told us he wasn’t sure, because he didn’t know what a family was. The following paragraphs are indicative of children with low self-esteem, who are convinced that no one loves them, and feel they have no purpose in life. How else can we explain these documented statements?

“Statistics regarding the future prospects for children who emancipate from orphanages or the foster care system are profoundly bleak. Ironically, the statistics for American children are almost identical to those for children around the world. Theft, prostitution, homelessness, substance abuse, incarceration, and suicide affect the lives of the vast majority of children who grow up as orphans and never find permanent, loving homes.” ⁽²⁾ *Children raised by the state are disproportionately likely to become homeless, go to jail, have (illegitimate) children as teenagers....”* ⁽³⁾ *“Children who spend long periods in institutional care are 50 times more likely to end up in prison than those who don’t.”*⁽⁴⁾

Philippine law states: *“Unless absolutely necessary, no child below nine years of age shall be placed in an institution.”*⁽⁵⁾ Many children who are not adopted are easy targets for predators, and become victims of human trafficking.⁽⁶⁾ The director of a well-known Christian adoption agency told me he has repeatedly witnessed predators at orphanages who are already armed with the names of girls and the dates they are scheduled to be released from the orphanage. A pastor told me that while visiting an orphanage in Eastern Europe, he personally witnessed a group of several men dressed in fancy suits arriving in two black limousines. After a brief visit, they kissed the orphanage director and quickly escorted a strikingly beautiful teenage orphan girl into one of their cars and sped away. Every year, nearly a half million young girls like this one go directly from an orphanage into the hands of predators who sell them as sex slaves.

I pray that these tragic truths will not overwhelm you with guilt, but rather will make you keenly aware of an orphan child’s desperate need to belong to a family, and that you will be motivated to do something to help the children, or to help families you already know, who need your assistance to make adoption a reality.

Institutional care is the first step toward meeting the needs of orphan children. Adoption is yet another step. A friend stated it this way: *“I have come to realize that my volunteering and trying to love and share Christ’s love with the children at the orphanage is like putting a band-aid on their real problem. The only (best) solution that will work for any of these children is to belong to a family.”* When orphans self-destruct, it’s not because God does not love them, it often happens because they *feel* unloved and unwanted. How can this be when so many people have given so sacrificially to love, care for and support these children in an orphanage or foster home? I believe the answer lies not in the quality of the care we give them, but rather in how the children perceive our care. No matter how much we love and care for the children, they are still orphans. The problem is not that we fail to care for orphans; the problem is that we simply don’t understand that children just don’t want to BE orphans, and we don’t understand their deep need to belong to a family.

Christian foster parents, orphanage staff and those whose sacrificial sponsorship enables others to minister to children in orphanages, all make it possible for many orphan and foster children to hear and respond to the gospel while they are still orphans, but only a few respond. Consider this example of a taxi driver I met in Manila who told me that he grew up as an orphan and was never adopted: He was 32, and married with 2 daughters in college. I was delighted to hear that he was so successful, but when I inquired about his life in the orphanage and the other children there, he told me that all his peers had become involved in drugs, prostitution or other criminal activities, and were all dead, he was the only living survivor. I couldn't help but ask why he survived, and he told me it was because of the Nuns who came to share their love with him in the orphanage. How could this be, did the Nuns ignore all the other children?

Surely his friends experienced the same visits from the Nuns and all the others who ministered to the children in this orphanage over the years. Why did only one of them survive? Why did only one respond to the love and the affection that was offered? Why did all the others self-destruct? This Bible Study seeks to answer these questions, or at least to offer some probable reasons.

Jesus tells us in John 14:18, *"I will not leave you as orphans."* It is interesting to note that the King James Version translates the Greek word "orphanos" as "comfortless." The Amplified Bible uses the word orphans, but amplifies it to mean comfortless, desolate, bereaved, forlorn and helpless.

When I heard a young orphan child ask, *"If Jesus loves me, why do I have no family?"* suddenly the word "comfortless" seemed to make sense, and it finally dawned on me why it's so hard for orphans to comprehend God's love, and so easy for them to doubt and wonder: *"If God loves me, why am I an orphan?"* I believe their conclusions result from feeling that they don't belong to anyone. God created us for belonging, and placed it in our DNA, then He said of Adam, *"it is not good for man to be alone,"* so He created the family to fulfill our need for belonging. Family and belonging are vital elements for emotional well being, as well as for comprehending God's love. Psalm 68:6 says, *"God places the lonely in families."* (KJV, NLT AMP) Adoption creates belonging, and demonstrates love in action. God chose adoption to demonstrate His love for mankind, and I believe that's why so many orphans instinctively feel that adoption is the best way to demonstrate our love for them, God made us that way.

In the Lord's Prayer we recite, *"Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."* Jesus said, "I will not leave you as orphans." (John 14:18) Doing God's will on earth as it is in heaven means following His example. Adoption of orphan children models what God has done for us in heaven. Helping other families pay adoption expenses models what Jesus Christ did for us on the cross. His blood paid for our adoption into God's family.

Christian families who adopt are missionaries who bring God's love to orphan children by living example. That's why it's so much easier for children who have been adopted to comprehend God's love, and to understand the message of salvation as it is so simply and clearly stated in Gal 4:4-5 and John 1:12. Regardless of whether we view adoption as ministry, or simply a way to build a family, adoption by a Christian family provides the best environment for a child to comprehend God's love, it's the fertile soil (Matt 13:23) where the gospel can take root and thrive. Many Christian families are eager to adopt, and Rom. 10:15 tells us that missionaries must be sent to proclaim the gospel. Therefore it is biblical to commission, support (Matt. 10:10) and send Christian families as missionaries to bring the gospel to orphan children by living example. Helping other families adopt is not just a good thing to do, it emulates Jesus' example of redemption, and it can literally be a matter of spiritual life or death for many children who may never have a better chance to discover how much God loves them.

"God is looking for people through whom He can do the impossible." (A.W. Tozer)

"What a pity we plan to do only the things we can do by ourselves!" (Dennis Rainey)

Why don't you ask God what He wants to do through you? Through your church?

Chapter Two

The Gospel, Doctrine and Spirit of Adoption

A prayer and scripture to begin your study

Lord, thank you that you have not left me as an orphan. Show me what my response to the world's orphan crisis should be.

Rom. 11:29 *for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable*

Let's begin our study by ensuring that everyone understands two commonly used words. The word "Doctrine" refers to teaching, while the word "Gospel" simply means good news - specifically, the good news that Jesus died for our sins and that He rose again on the third day. Jesus not only died on the cross for our sins and paid for our salvation, He also made it possible for us to become children of God, by adoption.

The bible says, in Gal. 4:4-5; *"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law (in subjection to the law), so that He might redeem those who were under the law (slaves to the law), that we might receive the adoption as sons."* (John 1:12) *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God."* Simply stated, God sent Jesus into the world to arrange for our adoption! We have all heard sermons about having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and adoption is the act which creates that personal relationship. Since adoption is the end result of redemption, adoption then is synonymous with salvation. Perhaps now you can understand why Vicar Mark Stibbe says that adoption is one of the ten major doctrines of the bible.⁽⁷⁾ Crucifixion, resurrection, redemption, forgiveness, salvation, justification, born again, eternal life etc. are all important components of the gospel message of God's love, which all result in the amazing blessing in Gal. 4:5, *"that we might receive the adoption as sons."* Our adoption into God's family is the ultimate expression of His love, and was the ultimate purpose of Jesus' life on earth and death on the cross. Pastor John Piper says it even more strongly, that adoption is the ultimate purpose of the entire universe!^(8A) and he also says that *"Gal. 4:4-7 is as central a gospel statement as there is."*^(8B) With His blood, Jesus ransomed us from slavery to the law, to make our adoption possible. According to J.I. Packer, *"Adoption is the highest blessing of the gospel"*⁽⁹⁾, Vicar Mark Stibbe says that *"The doctrine of adoption has been neglected for nearly two thousand years of church history,"*⁽¹⁰⁾ but adoption is as much a part of "The Gospel" as any other metaphor that is used to describe it. Dr. Russell Moore, Dean of the School of Theology at the Southern Theological Seminary wrote: *"Adoption is about an entire culture within our churches, a culture that sees adoption as part of our great commission mandate and as a sign of the gospel itself."*⁽¹¹⁾ R. Albert Mohler, Jr., President of the same Seminary asks, *"How could the church have been missing this for so long?"*⁽¹²⁾

According to Ken Fong, adoption is an *"oft-overlooked biblical metaphor for salvation."*⁽¹³⁾ This study is intended to help you understand and appreciate that adoption is an integral part of the gospel, and that the gospel is incomplete if it fails to include the doctrine of adoption. Children who are adopted can readily relate to the Gospel when it is presented in the context of adoption as stated in Galatians 4:4-5 and John 1:12, and further amplified in Romans 3:23; 6:23; 8:15-23 and 10:9-10

God chose adoption to demonstrate His love, and Romans 8:15 tells us that we have received *"the spirit of adoption as sons"*, by which we shout to God: "Abba". (most closely translated "Daddy," or "Papa,") From Easton's Bible Dictionary, Abba is a term of endearment used by children who are totally confident they are cherished and adored by their father. But, because of abuse or abandonment by their father, many orphans struggle with a distorted image of a harsh God. Jesus tells us, *"Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all."* (Mark 10:15) This verse is not just for orphans, it's for all of us. God wants everyone to relate to Him like a little child with an adoring Daddy. Adoption gives orphan children a daddy who can help rebuild their trust in God as a perfect Father. Dr. Russell Moore also describes the Abba cry as a primal scream of terror or panic⁽¹⁴⁾, as a child screaming for the daddy whom they know and trust, because they are confident He is able to rescue them from whatever threat is terrorizing them.

Adoption and Redemption

In Romans 8:23 and Galatians 4:5 the words redeem and redemption are directly related to adoption. In fact, they are inseparable. Simply stated, God's redemption results in our adoption.

Rom.8:23 (NASB) *“And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.”* Jesus promised that He would not leave us as orphans in (John 14:18). He also tells us in (John 14:2-3), I go to prepare a place for you... and I will come again to (redeem) receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also. Love, commitment, permanence, security, face-to-face relationship and adoption are all unspoken sentiments, assurances and promises included in these verses. These are some of the many ways that Jesus communicates His love for us, all in the context of adoption.

It's interesting to consider the parallel found in our culture. When a family adopts a child there are many legal matters to accomplish, both in paperwork and court appearances. This is when the child's redemption from orphanhood takes place. Often a family needs to add a room onto their house to accommodate their new child. In most cases the child is still in the orphanage, even though everything else is complete. The family must still travel to the orphanage to physically fetch (redeem) their child. This is the day the orphan child has been longing for! For us as Christians this is the day when our adoption becomes truly final, the day we leave this earth to go home for good - to join our permanent family, where we meet God, our Abba Father, face to face.

By examining every occurrence of the word redeem or redemption in the bible, the original Greek or Hebrew means to release or rescue from loss by the payment of ransom, in other words, to pay whatever debt is owed in order to buy back whatever had been lost, stolen or was forced to be sold. Redemption in the biblical context means to restore a person to his or her original status and position in a family. God restores us to His family by means of adoption, and gives us a name, a sense of belonging, and full rights of inheritance. Legal adoption of an orphan child is an earthly model that fully emulates God's plan of redemption and spiritual adoption.

Let's look at some biblical examples of redemption: Lev. 25:25 Explains the kinsman redeemer who restored land ownership to its original owner. The Hebrew word for redeem includes “to act as a kinsman” (a close relative e.g. “next of kin”) as part of its definition. The concept of a kinsman redeemer gives us a deep understanding of our redemption and adoption by our Heavenly Father. Jesus is our kinsman redeemer.

In the book of Ruth, Naomi and Ruth were both widows with no sons, and thus no inheritance. With no son, Naomi was required by law to sell the land owned by her deceased husband, and with no husband, Ruth would inherit no land. But, Boaz became the kinsman redeemer who restored land ownership to the family of Naomi's deceased husband. Full payment of debt to redeem the land required Boaz to also take Ruth as his wife because, as Naomi's daughter in law, Ruth was now Boaz' relative. The bible points out that Boaz was thoroughly delighted with this requirement to marry a beautiful, young woman. This act of redemption returned Naomi and Ruth to their original status in the family, giving Naomi the justice due her, and giving Ruth a son with full rights of inheritance of the land of Naomi's deceased husband. As a result of this redemption and inheritance, both Ruth and her son, Obed became ancestors of King David and Jesus! The right of inheritance is incredibly important to God, and is an equally important aspect of family membership that helps to create a sense of belonging. Legal adoption conveys this full right of inheritance to a former orphan child.

The book of Ruth is a beautiful picture of God's plan of redemption and adoption, by restoring the widow and the orphan to their original family. This is an example of what Jesus Christ has done for us by paying for our redemption to restore us to God's family, and to restore our inheritance as His fellow heirs. (Rom 8:14-17)

We are all born in sin, separated from God, *illegitimate children and not sons*. (Heb 12:8) We are spiritual orphans, but Jesus is our Kinsman Redeemer who offers to restore us to our original status as children of God, and He has already paid the debt of sin that we owed. We have already discovered in Rom 8:23 and Gal. 4:4-5 that redemption results in adoption. The words redeem or redemption appear over 400 times in the bible, showing us that the theme of adoption is an important doctrine that is woven throughout the entire bible. This establishes a clear picture that children belong in a family and gives a Godly model to follow.

Adoption in Greek, Roman and Hebrew Culture

Galatians 4:4 begins with: “*the fullness of the time*.” This means that God chose a specific time in His Story (history) to reveal His irrevocable, infinite, unconditional love for us in the life and death of His Son Jesus Christ, and to unveil His plan for us to become His children by means of adoption. The fullness of time means the precise time chosen by God, which placed Jesus and Paul in the Roman culture so that (among many things) we could fully comprehend Paul's writing about adoption in the context of Roman culture, law and practice.

Paul was a lawyer, a Roman citizen and also a Pharisee who was highly educated and well acquainted with ancient Greek and Hebrew culture and law. When Paul wrote about adoption in the Bible, he was writing in the context of the existing Roman culture.⁽¹⁵⁾ Why? Although adoption was practiced in Greek culture, if the child did not please the family, he or she could be disowned at any time up to age 18. There was no permanent security in a Greek adoption. Adoption did not even exist in Jewish law and was considered unnecessary and therefore unknown in Israel. The “seed” or blood connection was vitally important. The concept of adopting someone who was not from the seed of your own family was quite foreign to them.⁽¹⁶⁾ Since the bible speaks so much and so strongly about caring for widows and orphans, it suggests that throughout history, man has generally failed to give them the care that God desires. Roman law was designed to protect and provide for orphans, and most closely demonstrates what the biblical *doctrines of election, justification and sanctification imply*.⁽¹⁷⁾

The Roman culture gives us a living example of the relationship our Abba Father offers to us. The metaphor called adoption describes how Jesus shed His blood on the cross to pay our debt of sin in full, and make it possible for us to become children of God. In Roman law, adoption was final and irrevocable. A father could disown a biological child but he could not legally disown a child that he had adopted. Paul used the metaphor of adoption to describe God's great love for us. Like an orphan, God elevated us from a destitute condition to become full members of His royal family. Thus it was the Roman culture that God chose to reveal his plan of adoption to us, and represents one segment of the concept of “the fullness of time.” This irrevocable aspect of Roman law is a beautiful metaphor that communicates the nature of God's unending love for the children He has adopted. When a Roman citizen adopted a child, he was required to pay off whatever debts were associated with that child.⁽¹⁸⁾ The Greek word for “redeem” means to pay the ransom, in other words to pay whatever debt is owed. God redeemed Israel from Egypt, Jesus redeemed us from the debt of sin, and this gives us the model to redeem orphans by helping to pay the cost for their adoption. Whether we adopt a child ourselves, or help someone else adopt, we are like the kinsman redeemer who restores an orphan child to a family, and gives him or her what they so desperately lack. It blesses us beyond measure, and pleases God immensely.

Adoption is a beautiful picture of how God chose us and loved us, even before the foundation of the world, and how He sought us when we were not even looking for Him. (Eph. 1:4-5) *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will*. This assures us that adoption is not God's second best, and adopted children are not second-rate. Our adoption by God is irrevocable (Rom. 11:29) which gives us an amazing sense of eternal security.

(Col. 1:13-22) *“For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father’s good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach.”*

God did all this through Jesus Christ, so that we might receive (among countless other blessings) the adoption as sons. Amazing grace! All of world history can truly be called “His Story” because it is the story of what God has done through His Son Jesus Christ, to bless mankind and give us the opportunity to be reconciled to Him as His beloved children.

Adoption is a beautiful picture of The Gospel

God calls to me and He says, “I love you and I long to have a personal relationship with you. Let me adopt you to be my very own child and come, live with me forever.”

The orphan child calls to me and he says, “I long to be loved and to have a personal relationship with you, please come and adopt me and let me live with you as your very own child.”

Jesus said, “I am going to prepare a home for you, that where I live, there you may live also, and one day I will return for you and take you home with me. (John 14:2-3) Then He said, “In the meantime, I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you and live with you.” (John 14:16-18)

The orphan child cries out, “please don’t leave me as an orphan, come to me quickly and take me home with you and let me live with you forever.”

What an excellent way for an orphan child to experience the fullness of God’s love by being, as Michael Reagan calls it in his book: “Twice Adopted!”

Chapter Three

The Family of God and our Divine Heritage

A prayer and scripture to begin your study

Abba, Father! Thank you for allowing me to become your beloved child. May this knowledge inspire me and may your love fill me to overflowing so I can be a part of bringing your gift of adoption to countless orphans who don't yet know you.

Rom. 9:4 *Who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises.*

By now we know we are, or can be adopted into the family of God. At the same time we are adopted, we also become sons of Abraham. (Gal. 3:29 NLT) says, “*And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and now all the promises God gave to him belong to you.*”

This is very comforting to us all, but especially to those who have never known their earthly father, or whose father was not loving and kind. Adoption is our spiritual heritage, but what about earthly adoptions? Indeed there are some stunning examples in the Bible. You may be very familiar with the stories and characters, but rarely are they discussed in the context of adoption. When you look at these stories in the context of adoption, you will see that God chose to change the world and to fulfill prophecy by using people who were adopted.

Jesus, the Son of Joseph, “The Son of David”

In numerous scriptures, Jesus is called the Son of David. Some say this implies that Jesus was adopted by Joseph.” Isaiah prophesied (verse 7:14) that Messiah would be born of a virgin, and Joseph knew he was not Jesus’ biological father. (Matt 1:19) By adopting Jesus, Joseph would have given Him the legal right to be called the Son of David. Joseph raised Jesus as his own child, and other children in Joseph’s family are referred to in the bible as brothers and sisters of Jesus.

Some believe that Mary was also a descendant of King David, but even if she was, in the Hebrew culture, family lineage was transmitted from father to son,⁽¹⁹⁾ and Jesus’ ancestry and lineage from King David is traced though Joseph. (Matt. 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-31)

Isaiah, Jeremiah and David all knew that Messiah would be called the “Son of David” as seen in the following scriptures: Ps. 132:11-18 Isa. 9:6-7 Isa 11:1-5 Jer. 23:5-6. The people who lived in Jesus time also knew that Messiah would be known as “The Son of David”. This is found in Matt. 1:1, 12-23, 21-9, 22:42-45 and Luke 1:31-32. The genealogy of Jesus establishes a clear line of ancestry, which many believe could only be complete if Jesus was recognized as a legally adopted son of Joseph.

The bible indicates that Jesus was considered to be a legal member of the family, and regardless of how we define it, Jesus’ relationship to Joseph and to King David gives us a picture of adoption that bestows full rights of family lineage and inheritance upon the adoptee. These are the same benefits we receive as children of God.

Beth Moore says this so beautifully in one of her bible studies: “*Christ's royal lineage comes through His adoptive father, Joseph. We should not be surprised at the profound significance with which God views adoption. God the Father allowed His Son to be adopted into a family on earth so that we could be adopted into His kingdom in heaven.*”

Moses was adopted

Moses was adopted and so was Queen Esther. Both brought a form of "salvation" to the nation of Israel, and serve as living parallels to God's plan of redemption through adoption that He revealed to us in the life and death of His Son Jesus. All the male children of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt were condemned to death by decree of the Pharaoh, yet Moses' life was redeemed, i.e. saved, when he was adopted by Pharaoh's own daughter. This is another example of redemption by adoption, as earlier noted in Rom. 8:23.

Moses' adoption prepared him for a remarkable life. Since he grew up in Pharaoh's household, he was very acquainted with, and not intimidated by the power of Pharaoh's position. When God sent Moses to ask Pharaoh to let His people (Israel) go, Moses was well equipped for face-to-face confrontation with Pharaoh. At age 40, when he killed an Egyptian for beating an Israelite, Moses was forced to flee for his life, and live for 40 years in the wilderness. God used this time to prepare Moses for his future assignment of leading Israel out of Egypt, through the Red Sea into the very same wilderness where he would eventually spend another 40 years before reaching the Promised Land. It was the same wilderness where Moses first met God in the burning bush on Mt. Sinai. After leading Israel out of Egypt, Moses again met God on the same mountain, when he received the Ten Commandments.

Bible scholars say that Moses is a "type" of Messiah, because just like Jesus, Moses grew up to become God's instrument of salvation for Israel. The story of Moses' adoption would help Israel recognize their coming Messiah, and Moses referred to that when he prophesied of the coming Messiah in Deut. 18:15-18. *"The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. "This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.' "The LORD said to me, 'They have spoken well. I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him."*

It's interesting to note that Moses did not lose his biological family identity. God arranged for Moses' biological mother to become a servant of Pharaoh's daughter, assigned to raise and care for him.(Ex. 2:1-10). Not long after Moses escaped from Egypt, God sent his brother Aaron to find him in the wilderness. Moses, Aaron and their sister Miriam lived out the rest of their lives together after leaving Egypt.

Esther was adopted

Take a few minutes to read the inspiring book of Esther. You really must see Esther's story in light of this study. Before becoming Queen of Persia, Esther's parents died, and verse 2:7 tells us that her cousin, Mordecai raised Esther as his own daughter. Like Moses and Jesus, this child of adoption grew up to become God's instrument of salvation for the entire nation of Israel. God truly wants us to understand that people who were adopted play major roles in His plan of salvation. They are not second class citizens.

The bible tells us that both Moses and Esther were treated like full members of the family. They were both chosen, not of their own doing, and found themselves in royal families which led to their becoming God's instruments of salvation. I believe God intended for us to understand these stories as examples of our own adoption into His royal family, so that we could understand His plan for us to also become instruments of salvation for those in our world today.

God has placed in our hearts a strong sense of family heritage. Because we are made in His image we have a natural desire to belong, not only to an earthly family, but also to God's family. It is this longing that leaves such an empty void in the core of every orphan child that adoption fills so beautifully. Isn't it great to know that no matter what our family circumstances are here on earth, we have a priceless heritage to claim? All the promises God gave to Abraham already belong to us, but even more than that. We are humbled to know that upon our entrance into heaven, we will share equally with Jesus all the blessings of God's Kingdom. Rom. 8:17 *"and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him."* All because we are God's children!

Chapter Four

God's Commands, Promises, Blessings and Warnings regarding Orphans

A prayer from Beth Moore: *“Disturb us from our complacency oh God. May your command to take care of orphans be burned into our hearts and drive us to action. When the day is over may we say thank you for this divine privilege.”*

God derives great pleasure in using ordinary people to accomplish His purposes and fulfill many of His promises. They are obedient servants who are equipped with the knowledge of His word, and they know what pleases Him. God loves to abundantly bless faithful servants who are prayed up, ready for action, and who are Spirit-led and pro-active about doing His will.

Psalm 10:17-18

LORD, you know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will listen to their cries and comfort them. You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed, so people can no longer terrify them.

James 1:22 tells us to be doers of the word, not merely hearers who deceive ourselves. Verse 25 says, “this man will be blessed in what he does,” emphasis on the doing. James 2:15-17 says that if we don’t do something to fulfill the needs that God sets before us, our faith is useless. John 21:15-17 shows us clearly that it is what we do that proves our love for Jesus, who said in John 21:15, “Do you love Me?” “Tend my lambs.” He also said in Matt. 25:40, “to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, even the least of them, you did it to me.” All these verses direct us to the doing of God’s will and work.

Numerous scriptures tell of God’s concern, love, protection and provision for orphans. We have already learned that adoption is God’s best model to provide for physical, social, emotional and spiritual needs of orphans. We will now examine God’s commands, promises, blessings and warnings regarding orphans, and how He has called us individually and corporately as the church, to be His instruments of blessing to fulfill His promises. We are the provision that God has already supplied to preserve the orphan’s life, to defend the orphan, to provide a home, and to show love and mercy to orphans.

Commands

Fields of the Fatherless The Law and Practice of Gleaning

Lev. 19:9-10, 23:22; Deut. 24:19-21

God commanded farmers not to harvest the crops out to the very edges nor into the corners of their fields. This strip of land was like a wide border completely surrounding the field, and it was reserved for Levites, aliens, widows, orphans and the poor and needy, who could come and harvest whatever crops were there. This was called gleaning, and gleaners were the only ones allowed to harvest what grew in the borders. Every land owner was required to provide them as an integral part of God’s plan to ensure that His people would always provide for orphans and widows.

These fields eventually came to be known as **the fields of the fatherless**. In God’s mind as revealed in the following command, this land literally belonged to the fatherless. Prv. 23:10 commands: *“Do not move the ancient boundary and do not go into the fields of the fatherless.”* The dividing line between the farmer’s field and the fields of the fatherless was called “the ancient boundary.” Harvesting in the fields of the fatherless was a sin unless one was in the named group of gleaners. Some landowners would actually move the ancient boundary to make his harvest area larger and the fields of the fatherless smaller. This too was a sin, which is specifically prohibited in Prv. 23:10

A second command applied to the farmer's portion of the field. Once the workers had harvested the owner's crops, they were not allowed to return again for any further harvest, even if more crops remained or would ripen at a later date. The entire field was required to be left for the gleaners after the first harvest.

True Justice Due an orphan Deut. 24:17 (NASB)

17. *"You shall not pervert the justice due an alien or an orphan, nor take a widow's garment in pledge."*

C.Thomas Davis, author of "Fields of the Fatherless, said it this way: *"The sure way to deprive orphans of the justice due them is to do nothing."*⁽²⁰⁾

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those who are perishing. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice. Pvb 31:8-9 (NLT)

The Center for Adoption Research reports that the longer a child spends in institutional care, the more emotional trauma they accumulate.⁽²¹⁾ This statement, and the statistics in Chapter One regarding negative outcomes that await many orphan children can hardly be called justice. Many children can't understand why God would allow them to become orphans in the first place, and when children know they don't belong to anyone, and don't feel loved, they are far more likely to develop a perverted image of God's love and are prone to self-destruct.

Adoption can and does rescue orphans from ongoing emotional trauma, from predators and child traffickers and from various behaviors that can lead to self-destruction. In Deut. 15:8 we learn what we should give: *but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks.* "Whatever" an orphan lacks surely includes a home and a family. I believe that true justice due orphans is simply doing for orphans what God has done for us. Freely we have received, freely we should give. (Matt 10:8)

The Sacred Portion

Deut. 14:28-29 commands: *"At the end of every third year you shall bring out all the tithe of your produce in that year, and shall deposit it in your town. The Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance among you, and the alien, the orphan and the widow who are in your town, shall come and eat and be satisfied, in order that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do."* To be sure we didn't miss it, God repeated the instruction in Deut. 26:12-13, and for further emphasis, He gave it a special name: **The Sacred Portion**. This portion is in addition to the gleaning that was already allowed in the fields of the fatherless. God has assigned such high priority to this ministry that He has even established this special, designated funding for it, the Sacred Portion. Malachi 3:8-9 tells us that Israel was cursed for withholding tithes and offerings. But, note the amazing blessing promised in verse 10, if we are obedient to give the full tithe, and the sacred portion, from which to feed and care for orphans. *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows."*

God is calling the church to re-establish her ministry to orphans and widows, and He promises to abundantly bless the people, churches and nations who heed that call.

Promises & Blessings

In an ideal world, there would be no sin, no suffering, no poverty and no orphans. But this is a fallen world; there is sin in the world. But what if there was an ideal church, even in a fallen world? The bible clearly states in Deut. 15:4-5 there would be no poor among us IF only we would listen obediently to the voice of the LORD our God, to observe carefully and obey all His commandments. There might also be far fewer orphans if God's people were carefully obeying His commandments regarding orphans. The words bless, blessed or blessing is repeated more than 40 times in Deuteronomy, because God wants us to know that He really, really, really means it. Take special notice of Deut. 14:28-29 regarding blessings and orphans. The more we bless and care for orphans and the more we give them of what they really need, the more God will bless us. (Deut. 15:8) *"but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks."*

Read Deuteronomy chapter 28 about God's promises of blessing. Verses 1-2 say, *"Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God."*

Notice two things about these verses. First, the words "careful to do," As we learn in the book of James chapters 1-2, we must be doers of the Word in order to receive the blessings. Second is the word "overtake." Blessings will overtake us, we cannot escape them, if only we do what we are commanded to do. This chapter alone repeats the words bless, blessed or blessings 10 times.

God considers helping orphans to be an unblemished act of worship. (James 1:27) and He blesses people and nations who are willing to fulfill their needs. When we do so, the Lord will bless us in all the work of our hands. (Deut. 14:29). We should take special note whenever God repeats something in His word. Several such repeated promises of blessing are listed later in this chapter. Loving orphans is the very heart of God. That's why He says, *"Anyone who receives a child in My name receives Me."* (Mark 9:37) When we live our lives in a way that reflects the heart of God, He is pleased, and promises to bless us.

Blessings upon those who are generous to the poor and to widows and orphans

Deut. 14: 29 *the orphan and the widow who are in your town, shall come and eat and be satisfied, in order that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.*

Deut 24:19 *"When you reap your harvest in your field and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the alien, for the orphan, and for the widow, in order that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands."*

Ps. 41:1 *How blessed is he who considers the helpless; The Lord will deliver him in a day of trouble.*

Prv. 11:25 *The generous man will be prosperous*

Isa. 58:7-8 NLT (regarding fasting) *"I want you to share your food with the hungry and to welcome poor wanderers into your homes. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help. 8 "If you do these things, your salvation will come like the dawn. Yes, your healing will come quickly. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the Lord will protect you from behind."*

Jer 22:16 *He made sure that justice and help were given to the poor and needy, and everything went well for him. "Isn't that what it means to know me?" asks the Lord.*

Matt. 25:40 *"Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me."*

Mark 9:37 *"Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes my Father who sent me."*

Other Promises

Deut. 10: 18 *He gives justice to orphans and widows.*

Ps. 10:14 *You are the defender of orphans.*

Ps. 68:5-6 *Father to the fatherless, defender of widows.... God places the lonely in families*

Ps. 146:9 *The Lord cares for orphans and widows.*

Hosea 14:3 *For in you the orphan finds mercy.*

Other Commands regarding Orphans

Deut. 16:14 *and you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter and your male and female servants and the Levite and the stranger and the orphan and the widow who are in your towns.*

Ps. 82:3 *Give fair judgment to the poor and the orphan.*

Pvb. 3:27 *Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, When it is in your power to do it.*

Pvb. 31:8-9 *Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those who are perishing. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice. (NLT)*

Isa. 1:17 *Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow.*

Jer. 22:3 *Do not mistreat foreigners, orphans, and widows.*

Zech. 7:10 *Do not oppress widows, orphans, foreigners, and poor people.*

Mark 10:14 *“Permit the children to come to Me; do not hinder them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.”*

Love may be expressed with words, but is best demonstrated in Action

Jesus taught His disciples to demonstrate their love for Him by their actions

John 21:15 *“Simon Peter do you love me? ... tend my lambs.”*

Jas 1:22 *But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.*

1 John 3:18 *Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.*

Dan 11:32 *people who know their God will display strength and take action.*

In a song from the movie: “My Fair Lady,” she is singing to her sweetheart: “Don’t talk of stars burning above, if you’re in love, Show Me!”

Warnings

Numerous scriptures clearly indicate that God is very displeased with those who exploit or oppress orphans. His strong warnings are easily understood but frequently overlooked. Child traffickers constantly prey on orphans, and predators lurk at orphanage gates waiting to snatch their victims the moment they age out. God is calling His church to defend and protect orphans in every way possible which gives her a wealth of opportunities to demonstrate God’s love to the entire world. (Matt 5:16)

Chapter Five

Fulfilling our divine privilege as members of the family of God

A prayer and scripture to begin your study

Abba Father, break my heart with the things that break your heart. Fill my heart with the love that fills your heart. Fill me with compassion to care and courage to act. Let me become a doer of Your Word with faith to move mountains, better yet, faith to move children, from bondage to freedom, from slavery to redemption, from orphans to heirs!

Phil. 2:13 *For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him.*

By now you may be thinking, there are so many important things to do for the kingdom of God. How can we do them all? Remember, God never calls anyone to do them all. Each member of the family of God has different skills, gifts and responsibilities. Eph. 4:11 tells us that some are called to be apostles, some prophets, others evangelists, pastors or teachers. 1 Corinthians 12 describes spiritual gifts, and how God uniquely equips each person to be involved in a specific ministry function. 1 Cor. 12:28-30 tells us there are gifts of miracles and healings, the gift of helps, administrations and various kinds of tongues, but not all are given the same gifts. Just as we are not all called to adopt, the Holy Spirit distributes spiritual gifts and talents according to God's will and plan for each person.

God calls each of us to a specific ministry for which He has already gifted and equipped us and He has already pre-ordained a plan for our life that will result in a significant contribution to His kingdom. "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, so that we would walk in them." (Eph. 2:10 NASB) God often confirms His calling through ordinary people and normal life circumstances, as well as our natural talents and desires. Ps 37:4 tells us to delight ourselves in the Lord, and He will give us the desires of our heart. For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him. (Phil. 2:13 NLT) When we function within our calling, God blesses us and we are energized and enthusiastic about our work, and rarely tire of it. The fact that you have a desire to adopt, or have an interest in learning about adoption and ministering to orphans, is a good indicator that God may have called you to this specific ministry. Prayerfully ask Him to confirm His plan for your life. Ask for faith and discernment to follow His plan, one day at a time, one prayer at a time.

Many people in ministry encounter incredible resistance, opposition and persecution. Some see it as evidence of being out of God's will. But remember, Jesus was never out of God's will, yet He encountered severe opposition and persecution, and finally they crucified Him.

Love is more than just thoughts or feelings. Love is best expressed in action. (1 John 3:18) Any activity that claims or intends to be ministry must include a powerful expression of the gospel acted out daily in our lives that inspires others and attracts them to the love of Jesus Christ. Adoption is an example of a powerful expression of the gospel, lived out daily in the life of a former orphan child. That's why we say that Christian families who adopt are missionaries who bring God's love to orphan children by living example. After being adopted, imagine a child maturing in his or her faith, and discovering this amazing parallel to his or her spiritual adoption. Imagine other people discovering this same parallel. Matt. 5:16 says "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Adoption not only blesses orphan children, but it also touches the hearts of others who are often inspired simply by hearing that someone cares enough to adopt an otherwise unwanted child. Simply by sharing our desire to help others adopt orphan children, I have heard people say, “My, what a wonderful thing you are doing, the world needs more people like you.” Whether intentionally or not, they have just glorified God because of what they observed. If someone says that to you, be prepared to reply by saying, “what the world really needs is more people like Jesus Christ.” You’ll be amazed at what may happen next. You can capitalize on an opportunity to pray with them, and people who glorify God in this manner are open to hearing the gospel. Be prepared to introduce them to Jesus Christ and share how they too can become a child of God by adoption! I have seen it happen! It suddenly becomes relevant to share the Good News of Adoption with them.

This is how our Father’s business plan is carried out!

This is a good time to review Gal. 4:4-5 and John 1:12 and practice incorporating these verses into your preparation for sharing the gospel.

Ways to participate in the family business

- Pray for orphans in your land on a regular basis
 - Give clothing and food to orphans
 - Offer personal hands-on assistance to orphanages and social workers
 - Financially support an orphanage
 - Become a foster parent
 - Organize and lead church outreach visits to orphanages
 - Work for an agency that cares for orphans
 - Become an active member of a group that supports orphan care
 - Participate in a medical outreach to an orphanage
 - Teach about adoption in churches and Sunday school, on radio and TV.
 - Conduct adoption forums
 - Adopt a child
 - Help a family you know to raise funds to pay adoption expenses
 - Start an Adoption Ministry in your church to help many families adopt.
- We’ll be glad to help you with free resources & consultation.

Chapter Six

Orphan Care and Adoption as Ministry

Some Biblical Bases for Adoption

A prayer and scripture to begin your lesson

Thank you Father for this opportunity to be a part of your family business. I pray that you will make it clear to me what role you have for me, and empower me to carry out your desires.

Ezra 8:23 *So we fasted and sought our God concerning this matter, and He listened to our entreaty.*

Lack of understanding of the need for adoption is very common, and you can even find orphanages where the children are not being processed to become eligible for adoption. Until now, you may have never known how desperately orphan children need and want to belong to a loving family. Most people would define Orphan Ministry as caring for children in an orphanage or foster home, and that was my own definition until after I had worked in an orphanage for a couple of years. Most of us never think about adoption as ministry, or as a way of caring for orphans.

Each year, millions of children around the world join the ranks of those who will never be adopted. Many other children in institutions are not legally adoptable, and caring for all of them is very important. But, orphanage and foster care should be viewed as stepping stones leading to the ultimate goal of returning a child to his or her biological family, or relatives, if at all possible, or permanent placement in a family via adoption. We must continue to support orphanages and foster care, but we must place even stronger emphasis on permanent homes for all children.

Some Biblical Bases for Adoption *“Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matt. 6:10)*

There are no spiritual orphans in heaven, only spiritually adopted children, and Jesus himself said, *“I will not leave you as orphans.”* (John 14:18) Adoption is the best way to demonstrate God’s love for orphan children, and accomplishes His will on earth by living example. Helping other families adopt emulates Jesus’ heavenly example of paying the cost for our spiritual adoption.

James 2:15-17 says: *“If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,’ and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?”* But Jesus asks in Matt. 6:25, *“Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?”* In verse 33 He continues, *“but seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...”* Matthew helps us discern the hidden, deeper meaning of this allegory in James that speaks of every human need. Indeed, when these verses are applied to the needs of orphan children, they define a ministry that not only provides food, clothing and shelter, it must also fulfill their need for family, love and belonging that can much more effectively lead them to the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. When these needs remain unfulfilled, Satan is eager and ready to fulfill them in all the wrong ways. Orphan children need family and belonging, they need a permanent solution. If we don’t provide it for them, the enemy will, and he always plays for keeps. Many children without fathers or stable family environment eagerly join street gangs for the sense of belonging that it brings.

Deut. 15:8 commands us to generously fulfill the needs of others, and not be superficial about it. *“but you shall freely open your hand to him, and shall generously lend him sufficient for his need in whatever he lacks.”* Can the word “whatever” mean only food and clothing? If we accept James 2:15-17 in its full depth, we will understand that the needs of orphans include family and belonging.

Most of us have been raised to relate to God as a Father to be revered, respected and even feared, but God wants us to know that He is also the adoring daddy that many of us never had. I weep in humble joy when I consider that I am a child of God, and that He is my adoring Daddy, the perfect Father who can't wait to forgive this prodigal son. I couldn't make it without knowing this one, simple truth about God. It's one of the most loving images of God I can imagine. But too many orphan children have a distorted image of God.

I discovered from years of experience in the orphanage why so many children cannot accept the idea of God as a perfect, loving Daddy. To speak of a loving Father God to an orphan child who has been abused, abandoned, sexually molested or neglected by his or her own father can easily evoke pain and anger. It's nearly impossible or difficult at best, for such a child to comprehend the word love, or to trust anyone as a loving father, unless someone demonstrates to them by living example what a loving father really is.

It's hard for an orphan child to comprehend a loving Father God when their image of father evokes pain, anger or fear. How can they comprehend God's love if they have never experienced a father's love? How can orphan children believe that *"My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in Glory in Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 4:19) while their need for home, family and belonging remains unfulfilled? How can a child trust that God will never leave or forsake them, when they have already been abandoned and left to languish in an institution? How can a child believe that Jesus loves them when they don't believe I love them? How can I convince orphan children I love them if I leave them in an orphanage? (1 John 3:17-18) *"If you love me why don't you adopt me?"* My not adopting the children led them to believe that I didn't love them at all. How can we answer the cry of the orphan who asks, *"if God loves me, why am I an orphan?"* Does this mean that we should stop caring for children in institutions? Of course not! That could only happen in a perfect world. But we must find a better way to give every orphan child a sense of belonging that seems to be possible only in a committed, permanent relationship with other human beings.

Matt. 7:9-10 says, *"Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?"* When children are longing for a home and family, should we give them an orphanage? Psalm 68:6 says, *"God places the lonely in families."*

In First John 3:18 we read: *"Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."* Living the gospel can reach more orphans than preaching the gospel. James 1:27 is a good example of living the gospel. This verse is frequently quoted regarding caring for orphan children, but its deeper meaning is often overlooked. *"External religious worship [religion as it is expressed in outward acts] that is pure and unblemished in the sight of God the Father is this: to visit and help and care for the orphans and widows in their affliction and need, and to keep oneself unspotted and uncontaminated from the world."* (The Amplified Bible. La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation).

Consider what usually comes to mind when you hear or read James 1:27 about caring for widows and orphans. Does it ever include adoption? Do you ever wonder why this is the only reference to pure and undefiled religion in the entire bible? Let's take a deeper look into the meaning of James 1:27. Does your vision of visiting or caring for orphans (Strong's 1980a) ever look or sound anything like the following?

An orphan's foremost affliction, or distress is not belonging to a family, and the word **visit** means more than just a social call to an orphanage. **Visit** in the original Greek: *Episkeptomai* (Strong's 1980a) means to go in person to "inspect" (author's note: for the purpose of discovering someone's needs), and then to "select" (author's note: for the purpose of helping to fulfill the needs we discover). James 1:27 could be paraphrased: *"Action that demonstrates a pure and undefiled relationship with God is to inspect widows and orphans in their affliction, and to select them to be delivered them from their affliction or distress."*

James also tells us in chapter 2 verses 15-17, that our faith is useless if we don't do something to fulfill the needs we discover. God set the example when He visited us as spiritual orphans. Luke 1:68 says, "*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people.*" Why did He do this? "*so that we might receive the adoption as sons.*" (Gal 4:5) Luke uses the same Greek word for "visit" that James used in 1:27. God visited us in our affliction so that He might deliver us from it. He inspected us, saw our need for redemption, and selected us for adoption into His family. God wants us to visit orphans in their affliction so we will discover their desperate need for love and home and family, and He showed us by His example that fully delivering orphans from affliction must include adoption.

We can best rescue orphans from their affliction, either by adopting, or by helping other families adopt. In the mean time we must continue to love and provide for the needs of those who remain as orphans.

The Bible challenges the sincerity of our love if we refuse to help fulfill the needs that God brings to our attention. "*Whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?*" (1 Jn. 3:17) Verse 18 gives us the answer to this rhetorical question: Love must be more than just words, it must be action that demonstrates God's love by living example.

Matthew 5:16 says: "Let your light shine (i.e. practice your religion) before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Adoption is an excellent example of letting our light shine, and it is not uncommon to hear someone say regarding this ministry, "My what a wonderful thing you're doing, the world needs more people like you." I know a family who has adopted ten children, and I was dining with them in a restaurant one day when a total stranger stopped by our table and said that he was so blessed and inspired by their example that he wanted to pay for all of their meals. Whether intentional or not, his compliments to the family glorified God. Later they told me that incidents like this are common for them.

When we practice pure and undefiled religion, Jesus is lifted up (glorified, exalted), and Jesus said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto myself." (John 12:32) Christian orphan care, foster care and adoption are included in James 1:27. They not only bring God's love to orphan children, they glorify God and draw others to Jesus Christ.

Pastor John Piper says that "*adoption is the most beautiful display of God's grace.*" and "*is the purpose of the universe.*"^(8a) Eph 5:27 tells us that Jesus actually wants to share some of His glory with His bride, the church, because He wants the church to look beautifully attractive to the world (Matt 5:16), reflecting and radiating the fragrance of His love for all mankind (2 Cor 2:15).

After hearing one of our staff teach about the Biblical basis for adoption ministry at a pastors conference in Zzana, Uganda, Pastor Daniel Ouma shared his insight about how the following scriptures could very well be describing the church and her involvement in ministry to orphans and widows. After the conference, many of the 62 pastors and church leaders who attended were discussing how this kind of ministry is missing in the church today. Notice the references to widows, orphans and the poor in the following verses from Job Chapter 29. (NLT)

2 "I long for the years gone by when God took care of me, 3 when he lighted the way before me and I walked safely through the darkness. 4 In my early years, the friendship of God was felt in my home. 5 The Almighty was still with me, and my children were around me. 6 In those days my cows produced milk in abundance, and my olive groves poured out streams of olive oil.

7 "Those were the days when I went to the city gate and took my place among the honored leaders. 8 The young stepped aside when they saw me, and even the aged rose in respect at my coming. 9 The princes stood in silence and put their hands over their mouths. 10 The highest officials of the city stood quietly, holding their tongues in respect.

11 "All who heard of me praised me. All who saw me spoke well of me. 12 For (because) I helped the poor in their need and the orphans who had no one to help them. 13 I helped those who had lost hope, and they blessed me. And I caused the widows' hearts to sing for joy. 14 All I did was just and honest. Righteousness covered me like a robe,

and I wore justice like a turban. 15 I served as eyes for the blind and feet for the lame. 16 I was a father to the poor and made sure that even strangers received a fair trial. 17 I broke the jaws of godless oppressors and made them release their victims.

18 "I thought, 'Surely I will die surrounded by my family after a long, good life. 19 For I am like a tree whose roots reach the water, whose branches are refreshed with the dew. 20 New honors are constantly bestowed on me, and my strength is continually renewed.'

21 "Everyone listened to me and valued my advice. They were silent as they waited for me to speak. 22 And after I spoke, they had nothing to add, for my counsel satisfied them. 23 They longed for me to speak as they longed for rain. They waited eagerly, for my words were as refreshing as the spring rain. 24 When they were discouraged, I smiled at them. My look of approval was precious to them. 25 I told them what they should do and presided over them as their chief. I lived as a king among his troops and as one who comforts those who mourn.

We learned from Pastor Daniel that if we view this incredible picture of Job's influence and position in his community as an illustration of the Church's potential for influence in this world, we may have discovered something that God is encouraging us to reconnect with and embrace. Job received this great honor and respect from his community *because* (vs. 12) he helped the poor and the widows who were crying for help, and he rescued orphans who were not being helped by anyone. But Job did more than rescue orphans. Verse 31:18 tells us that he adopted orphans and raised them as a father. God praises Job as a blameless and upright man (Job 1:8) and says there is no one like him in all the earth. Could the abundance that Job enjoyed in verse 29: 6 illustrate the glory and lasting fruit of the church if she were to fully embrace and act on James 1:27? Has the church missed for so long the blessings God intended for her to receive when she gives to orphans and widows the things they really need like home; family; love and a sense of belonging?

Could these simple acts of love, commitment and practical support, become the "lens" or "storefront" of the church that people would look through, enabling them to see Jesus more clearly? Matthew 5:16 says they will.

What a great witness to be able to share when people praise you for helping widows and orphans, or ask why you do these strange things. Here's what I might say, *"When no one cared about me, when friends and family deserted me and my father abused me, I felt like an orphan myself. But then Jesus offered to pay for my adoption into God's family, and when I accepted His offer and became a Child of God, I felt love and forgiveness and acceptance like never before in my life. Jesus doesn't just talk about loving me, He constantly proves it by His presence and His example. Jesus paid for my adoption and that inspires me to bless widows and help pay for someone else's adoption. Now that I've experienced how joyful it is to follow His example, I just want to keep doing more of it. That's why I want to share how you too can become a child of God and find real joy and meaning and peace in your life. This world isn't perfect, but heaven is!"*

Remember the model that Jesus gave us when He willingly shed His blood on the cross to pay for our adoption. Also recall from chapter one, that not all are called to adopt, but anyone can love and minister to orphan children by helping other families adopt. This can be especially meaningful when the families we help are in our own home church. Families who choose to adopt encounter many obstacles, and it is clearly a ministry to step in and offer the kind of assistance that will ensure their success. They need prayer and encouragement, they need help to raise funds, they need to make room in their home, and they need to accomplish heaps of paper work. There will be travel expenses as well as legal and agency fees. Though the ordinary expenses of raising a child are manageable, the up-front costs of adoption can be prohibitive. Adoption should not be only for the rich. Consider Gal. 6:2 to bear one another's burdens.

Adopting families deserve all the help they can get, (Matt.10:10) especially in developing countries where families need help just to put another plate on their table. Helping them raise funds for adoption expenses may be a new idea to you, but it is biblical and is an important part of orphan ministry. We have already mentioned that Christian families who adopt should be thought of as missionaries. Romans 10:15 asks regarding missionaries, *"how can they go unless they are sent?"*

Without senders, many Christian families will not be able to adopt, those who help with financial support are just as important as those who adopt, and the bible says in 1 Samuel 30:24-25 that all team members receive equal credit for the victory. Helping other families adopt is far more than just a good thing to do, it can literally be a matter of eternal life or death for many orphans who have never experienced the love of a family. Adoption by a Christian family may be their only chance to learn how much God loves them.

Many sermons teach us that Jesus' death on the cross was an incredibly extravagant gift that paid for our salvation and adoption into God's eternal family, and they challenge us to practice the same extravagant love for our neighbor, and extravagant giving to support the work of the church. Yet many still believe that adoption is an extravagant luxury, and they see no reason to help fund someone else's luxury, implying that orphans are not worthy of extravagant love. None of us are worthy of Jesus's extravagant love, but He gave it to us anyway. Extravagance is the only model Jesus gave us for loving orphans or anyone else.

Adoption is not a luxury, it is a spiritual necessity, and it's the only way into God's family. We need to understand that adoption should be a part of the global mission strategy of every Evangelical Christian church. Adoption provides the fertile soil for an orphan child where the gospel can take root and thrive. Giving an orphan child the gift of love and home and family and belonging gives them an excellent opportunity to become a child of God. Yes, the family will surely be blessed in the process, but it's the child who is the ultimate beneficiary of any assistance or financial support given to help a family adopt.

Many share the misconception that adoption is unnecessary, and some even believe that it's more cost effective to raise children in an orphanage. I've even heard the challenge that it's better to get orphan children saved than to get them adopted. Let's go back to the basics in Galatians 4:4-5 God sent Jesus into the world, "*that we might receive the adoption as sons.*" It's not a case of salvation OR adoption, it is a case of salvation by way of Adoption. Yes, adoption is extravagant, our adoption into God's family was the most extravagant gift ever given. That's what love is, Extravagant. But, adoption can truly be more cost-effective, if we are willing to accept that Americans are not the only ones who adopt. Consider the much lower cost of helping foreign nationals adopt children in their own country and culture.

Helping foreign nationals adopt children in their own country makes adoption a very cost-effective solution. In the Philippines, Home For Good Foundation is helping Filipino families adopt 20 - 25 Filipino children for the same cost as raising only one child in an orphanage.* We are also helping Filipino families adopt 15 - 20 children for the same cost as only one international adoption by an American family.

From a practical point of view, a successfully adopted child is no longer a burden on society. This makes adoption a surprisingly cost-effective way of caring for orphans. Instead of spending our money to build a new orphanage, we can spend the same money to empty existing orphanage space by getting children adopted. For every child we can help to be adopted, that's one more child we can care for in an orphanage without spending money for a new building, or staffing a new orphanage. If we focused more resources on empowering families who already want to adopt, we could free up sufficient space in existing orphanages to care for millions more homeless orphans around the world !

* For an average of 10 years

Orphan Ministry Other Than Adoption

Professionals can play a major role in orphan care by providing adoption related services, or simply promoting adoption as ministry. Contractors can help adoptive families add a necessary room onto their house. Anyone with leadership skills can organize an adoption information meeting at their church, and can also invite people from other churches to attend, in order to help spread adoption ministry. You could simply give a book about adoption as a gift to someone who is considering adoption. Finally, Christian missionaries are needed to plant adoption ministries in churches everywhere.

Foster Care

Much overlooked is the ministry of foster care, which is another important aspect of orphan ministry. After licensing by a government agency, foster families care for children in need, and the child has a chance to experience the workings of a real family, while bypassing orphanage care. Though often mistaken for adoption, foster care ministers to children who have been legally removed from their home, or in some other way have lost their home or family, and are awaiting court decisions about their permanent placement. Some may eventually be returned to their biological family, or to extended family members, while others await permanent placement by adoption.

Many foster children need and want to be adopted just as much as do children in orphanages. A significant percentage of foster families actually do end up adopting a foster child, while others find foster care a rewarding ministry to children while they await adoption into someone else's family. Christian foster families are in great demand, and you could make an important contribution to convince a foster child that God really does love them. Even though foster care implies a temporary connection, establishing a life-long relationship with a foster child might be the best thing you could do to ensure their success in life. Your living example and committed love can also be the best way to help a hurting child comprehend God's love. Both private and government agencies provide training to prepare you for this kind of ministry.

Assisting foster families is another important aspect of orphan ministry. Foster families need encouragement, respect and support from friends, family and people like you. Sometimes they just need someone to watch the children temporarily while they attend to pressing personal business. This is called "Respite Care." Providing encouragement, transportation, food, clothing and help with schooling, are all aspects of this ministry that offer opportunities for participation. A church foster care ministry may be a new idea to you, but it is rightfully the work of the church.

Deciding what to do

God is the perfect Father who already has a plan in place for each of us. When we prayerfully seek His guidance He will give it. Isa. 30:21 says, "*Your ears will hear a word behind you saying, 'This is the way, walk in it'...*" The fact that we hear a word behind us might imply that we are walking the wrong way and need to turn and go the Lord's way! But too often we pray with wrong motives, asking God to bless our plans, instead of asking what are His plans for our life. Often He answers "wait" or "no" which we usually misinterpret to mean that He did not answer our prayer. Sometimes God's guidance only comes after much prayer and fasting, (Ezra 8:23; Dan. 9:3; Acts 13:3) and sometimes His answer is delayed by spiritual warfare. (Dan. 10:12-13 delayed 21 days) Sometimes God waits to see if we are qualified in the areas of determination and perseverance, or He may send us on a side trip for an educational experience to give us the missing qualifications needed for the ultimate plan He has in store for our future. In addition to prayerfully seeking God's guidance, there is wisdom in a multitude of counselors. (Pvb. 11:14; 15:22 & 24:6) Seeking Godly advice from fellow Christians is always part of God's way of speaking to us through other people.

The grim truth when God's people fail to act

It's no surprise that the statistics regarding children who grow up in institutional care are so grim. Many end up in institutions because they have been abused, neglected, molested or abandoned. Even if children become orphans only because their parents died, they can't understand why God would allow that to happen to them. By the time a child arrives at an orphanage or foster home, they have probably lost everything they have cherished in life. Their home, family, love, sense of belonging, security, value and self worth are devastated. Their future is totally uncertain and they are really scared. They have no physical or emotional security, and it's easy to understand why it's difficult or even impossible for them to comprehend God's love and His offer of eternal security. They are easily convinced that God must not love them. Giving an orphan child a permanent home, a loving family and a sense of belonging through adoption is the best solution for demonstrating God's love by living example, and restoring what too often has been unjustly taken from them. Doing nothing serves to perpetuate the injustice, and I believe it's why most orphans feel that just being an orphan is an injustice, especially when it causes them to stumble and turn away from God.

A Special Word for Pastors

Pastors should not feel any pressure or guilt for not adopting if they are not called by God to adopt. There is also no pressure for pastors, or anyone else in the church to recruit anyone to adopt, the Holy Spirit has already called millions of families in churches around the world who are willing and eager to adopt.

The bible commands us in Pvb. 31:8 to speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves. A pastor's endorsement (or lack thereof) carries considerable influence, either positive or negative. Your endorsement, coupled with teaching that adoption is ministry and evangelism, validated with what God's word says about orphan care and adoption, can be your gifts and blessings to orphan children. By endorsing a ministry which offers to empower the families in your church who are already called to adopt, you will discover hidden evangelists in your congregation who are eager to bring the gospel to orphan children by living example. Your encouragement will also inspire others to become involved in ministry and evangelism in ways they never thought possible. Every Christian needs to understand that adoption is an integral part of the gospel, and the Gospel is incomplete if it fails to include the doctrine of adoption. People need to be taught that adoption can provide the fertile soil in the life of a child where the gospel can take root and thrive. Dr. Russell Moore, Dean of the School of Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary writes that the first step to becoming an adoption friendly church must begin in the pulpit. ⁽²²⁾

When the church recognizes the evangelistic value of adoption and foster care, and embraces them as ministry equal to any other evangelistic activity, and fully directs the Sacred Portion of the tithe as the bible commands, she will begin to make such a significant difference in the global orphan crisis that the world will notice, and God will be glorified. (Matt 5:16) Unprecedented church growth would be the natural result.

God has exceedingly blessed the church with this new ministry, and in all of church history, there has never been a more willing army of evangelists than can be found in the number of Christian families in churches around the world who already want to adopt. The church needs only to equip and empower them to carry out their calling.

Pastor John MacArthur says: *“Every Pastor should consider the responsibility he has in making adoption a priority for the church as a viable representation of the gospel doctrine of adoption.”* ⁽²³⁾

Adoption / Orphan Care/ Foster Care should be an official ministry of the church. Periodic preaching of the scriptures found in this Bible Study could help the ministry to become a part of the Global Mission Strategy of the church, and The Holy Spirit will call those whom He chooses to be part of it. Here are some other things a pastor can do that will encourage others to be involved in the ministry:

- Preach the Gospel in the context of adoption (Gal 4:4-5 & John 1:12; Eph 1:4-5)
- Enthusiastically endorse adoption ministry, orphan care & foster care from the pulpit during Sunday services.
- Participate in an annual “Orphan Sunday” Event. See www.orphansunday.org
- Teach about the plight of orphan children and their need for love, family and belonging.
- Read and teach from the book, “Adopted for Life” by Dr. Russell Moore.
- Inform the congregation of the priority for this ministry, and the church's commitment to help families adopt.
- Encourage members to sponsor an orphanage and become personally involved with the children.
- Encourage the entire congregation to help sponsor adoption expenses for families who need assistance.
- Acknowledge and thank those who provide sponsorship, without mentioning names.
- Celebrate, honor and affirm adoptive families and their children in front of the entire congregation.*
- Allow use of church facilities for meetings or fund raising activities related to the ministry.
- Treat adopting families as missionaries, and identify them to the congregation as such.
- Encourage other related ministries, for example, one which could provide post-adoption support.
- Encourage the congregation to participate in ministry to widows in your community.
- Network with local businesses who will partner with you to support orphan ministry and adoption.
- Incorporate the adoption resolution found in the appendix of this study as an official statement of your church.

* Be sensitive to adoptive families and children who may be uncomfortable with this publicity.

Chapter Seven

Advice for families who adopt and those who minister to them

A prayer for those considering adoption

Dear Father God, use this study to expand my vision and to overcome my uncertainties. Holy Spirit, give me wisdom far beyond my own understanding and the courage to act upon that wisdom. I thank you for this opportunity.

Psalm 68:6 “*God places the lonely in families.*” NLT

Adoption of orphan children by a Christian family is a perfect example of a powerful expression of living out the gospel. But with any true expression of the gospel comes the probability of attack by enemies who do not want God’s plans to prevail. When you choose to adopt, you will be better prepared if you are equipped with whole armor of God. Ephesians 6:10-18 is the recipe for protecting ourselves from the trials and attacks that may come. It applies to adoption as much as it applies to everything we do.

This chapter will consider questions for those who may feel called to adopt, and for those who want to help others adopt. Numerous questions will arise for couples considering adoption, while many others come from extended family and friends. Answering them all in this study would be impossible.

Counseling and additional resources are available, however, adoption counseling from a Biblical perspective may be difficult to find. Many pastors today do not have sufficient practical knowledge or education about orphans and adoption, and do not have the personal experience to draw from. You can learn from other adoptive parents, or family members and friends who believe in what you are doing, and who will give of their time and energy to encourage you. *There is wisdom and success in a multitude of counselors.* (Prv. 11:14; 15:22 & 24:6) The family of God plays a vital role in helping families with both their decision to adopt as well as logistical help. There are good people out there who are ready and willing to help! You can learn how to be open about adoption, and how to be open with the children you adopt. You can even use conversations about adoption to share the gospel, using adoption as a living example.

Jesus said in John 8:32 “*you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.*” Anything not of truth is not of God! The truth of God’s Word and truth in our daily lives indeed brings freedom. It is always better for children and others involved to know the truth about adoption from the beginning. At times, there may be a need not to talk about it in public, which will vary depending on the needs of the child and the people around you. Many children who were adopted will not have the confidence to stand out in a crowd and will not want to be thought of as different, while other children may be excited to let people know they were (not are) adopted. God is proud that we are His children, and we should be as proud about adoption as God is. We should also inspire the same pride in the children we adopt. If we are ashamed of our adoption into God’s family, Jesus will be ashamed of us. (Luke 9:26) Hiding the truth from a child who was adopted only leads to hurt and shame when the truth is discovered. This can turn children away from God and away from the parents who adopted them. Whether a child joins our family by birth or by adoption, they are simply “our children.” We should never call them “adopted children” because it implies they are something less than a biological child. Calling a child “adopted” can make him or her forever doubt their sense of belonging.

This study may be God’s way of preparing you to become a resource person and mentor for others. Once you have the biblical knowledge, you will know how to discern the advice of others. When properly prepared, you can answer objections or negative comments from well-meaning but uninformed friends and even strangers. School children can be merciless with each other and may try to demean a child who was adopted. You can help your children and their school teachers learn how to handle these potentially harmful situations.

Many people don't understand adoption and they may even challenge you with questions that test your motivation and resolve. You may not always have the right answer, but you can become a witness on the spot by saying, "I don't know the exact answer to that question, forgive me for needing to get back to you on that, but I can tell you right now, if God was willing to sacrifice His very own Son to adopt me, I'm sure there must be something right about what I'm doing."

Looking for ways to answer challenges helps others overcome their lack of understanding about adoption, and brings more people closer to the heart of God. Knowing that Jesus was adopted is evidence that God does not consider adopted people to be "second class." Anyone who is struggling with adoption and their identity should take great comfort in this truth.

Concerns and comments will come in many forms. Some will worry about family inheritance, and what must be shared with other children already in the family. Others may worry if they will like this new child in their home, and wonder if they can truly love them the same as they would love their biological children. Still others may wonder if they can parent a child with an unknown background. God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and love and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7 KJV). Questions and challenges can be healthy, but we must ask ourselves if they come from common sense, negative attitudes, or fear.

Someone may ask, "Aren't you bringing bad blood into the family?" The significance of blood is very real and this question presents a great opportunity to share with them what God's Word says about bad blood. The bible tells us in Rom. 3:23 that "*all have sinned and fall short of God's glorious standard*" (of perfection). We are all born with a sinful nature. Sin is "in our blood" so to speak. In other words, we all have bad blood, and our blood is no different than the blood of orphan children. Because of our bad blood, "*all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment.*" (Isa. 64:6) But praise God that "*the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.*" (1 John 1:7), Therefore, what God has cleansed, let us not consider unholy (Acts 10:15 and 11:9). It is not biblical to consider orphans or adoption as unholy, or to stigmatize anyone for having bad blood, for in so doing we render useless the blood of Jesus Christ. Remember, Jesus died to cleanse us "*while we were yet sinners*" filled with bad blood. (Rom. 5:8) Jesus was willing to give us His name, even though we continue to bring Him shame. How can we who claim the name of Jesus be ashamed to give our name to a child whose blood has been cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ?

When people challenge you or ask difficult questions about adoption, respect the one who asks, because he or she has been kind enough to reveal what is on their mind, rather than just thinking bad thoughts. You can honestly say, "I'm glad you asked that question." Now you have an open door to tell them about adoption, God's heart for orphans, and the power of the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse us from all sin. This may even be the right time to share how they too can become a child of God by way of adoption.

I have never encountered an objection regarding adoption that could not be answered from God's Word. Even those who are not open to God's leading will be impacted by a biblical truth. The bible tells us that God's word will not return to Him void or empty, without accomplishing His purposes. (Isa. 55:11)

"Ephesians 1:3-5 clearly teaches that we have been adopted into God's family solely through His gracious act of love and have been given access to all of the blessings, privileges and rewards of His act. In response should we not act accordingly by exalting Christ through various models of care that demonstrate love and concern and, when appropriate, the adoption of orphans. These acts are not based on results, pragmatic methodology or psychological principles, but are based on the nature of God's love for us and the response due Him. Is this not the best model that we should be pursuing? We should strive to provide the best care, love, instruction and opportunities for orphans, just as God has done for us". ⁽²⁴⁾

Conclusion

My learning experience about orphans began the first time I asked myself, *“What’s wrong with this picture?”* Then I began asking, *“What’s wrong with these children? They’re acting like they don’t appreciate all this good care we’re giving them in this orphanage.”* It wasn’t until I heard Kay Warren phrase the question, that I finally understood it. *“What’s wrong with ME that I’m not getting it?”* Children just don’t want to BE orphans!

The most frequent reports we hear from people who have visited orphanages describe the words, or the deathly silence⁽²⁵⁾, and body language of the children communicating their desperate hunger and need to belong to a loving family. I have experienced this myself numerous times in several orphanages.

Jesus says if we love Him we will obey His commandments, one of which is in James 1:27 to care for widows and orphans. James also tells us that faith without works is useless. First John 3:18 confirms our own experience, that love is best demonstrated in action, and if it is not voluntary, it is not perceived as love. Jesus clearly showed us the voluntary nature of love when He said In John 10:18, regarding His own life: *“No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative.”* Love goes beyond the call of duty, and acts when there is no command. True love is giving that which is not owed. Love is its own mandate. (Matt 22:37-40)

There are clear examples, but no explicit commands in the bible to adopt. Love fulfills every command (Matt 22:40) and adoption is a purely voluntary expression of love. No matter how we define pure and undefiled religion in James 1:27, or the needs of orphan children in James 2:15-17, or the true justice due orphans in Deut. 24:17, the way we respond to the orphan’s cry reveals the condition of our heart. Responding with adoption reflects the Heart of God, and orphan children instinctively know that adoption is a true expression of love.

How can we explain the outcomes of institutional care when so many loving people have given so generously to provide for children in institutions? I am convinced that the answer lies not in the quality of the care we give the children, but is deeply rooted in how they perceive our care. The secret to this apparent mystery lies in the voluntary nature of love, and the need for belonging that God has placed deep in the heart of every human being. Our visits to an orphanage, our attention, affection and the food and clothing we provide are all important, necessary and they honor God. But the children are still orphans, their basic need for belonging remains unfulfilled and they desperately want to know, *“If you love me why don’t you adopt me?”* Adoption is a voluntary act. It proves our love, gives a child a sense of belonging and demonstrates God’s love by living example.

The ultimate goal of any orphan ministry is (or should be) to bring the children into God’s family. For most orphan children, giving them our heart, our home, our name and our inheritance is what it will take to make this happen. Therefore, becoming parents to an orphan child can certainly be implied from Paul’s comments in 1 Cor 9:22, *“I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some.”*

Many Christian families long to adopt but are prevented by the cost. Adoption is both ministry and evangelism, because Christian families who adopt are missionaries who bring the Gospel and God’s love to orphan children by living example. Adoption ministry empowers them to accomplish their mission. Adoption models the Father heart of God for orphans, and sponsoring expenses to help other families adopt emulates Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross to pay for our own adoption. Providing financial support for adopting families is no different than sponsoring any other missionaries.

Spiritual adoption speaks of a personal relationship with a perfect Father who loves us so much that He wants to make us His children, and give us an inheritance equal to that of His Son Jesus Christ. What a wonderfully personal way to envision eternal life as God’s special little boy or girl. What a simple concept to understand. I stand in fearful awe, and I revere, honor and serve God, yet I weep in humble joy when I consider that I am His child, and that He is an adoring Father who longs to forgive this prodigal son, and restore me to His perfect fellowship so I can relate to Him as my Abba Daddy. I couldn’t make it without knowing this one, simple truth about God. It’s the most personal expression of His love that I can imagine.

Eph. 1:5 tells us that even before God created the world, adoption was His plan to bring us into His family. Adoption is not God’s second best, and He was willing to pay an enormous price to prove it. Oh His extravagant love that He gave us His Son, Jesus Christ, who willingly shed His blood on the cross to redeem us, *“that we might receive the adoption as sons.”*

Endnotes

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“The Father’s Love Letter” A DVD Available in over 90 Languages

We highly recommend this inspirational Video that simulates a Love Letter from God, written to every person on earth. It is simply a collection of scriptures which have been paraphrased into everyday language, and read aloud as if God Himself is speaking to us. HE IS! It is a very powerful message that is sure to bring tears to your eyes and love to your heart. It ends with a challenging question that reflects the purpose of this Bible Study. “Will YOU be my Child? Following is the text of “The Father’s Love Letter” DVD Shared - with permission of its author, Barry Adams.

My Child...

You may not know me, but I know everything about you
...**Psalm 139:1**

I know when you sit down and when you rise up
...**Psalm 139:2**

I am familiar with all your ways
...**Psalm 139:3**

Even the very hairs on your head are numbered
...**Matthew 10:29-31**

For you were made in my image
...**Genesis 1:27**

In me you live and move and have your being
...**Acts 17:28**

For you are my offspring
...**Acts 17:28**

I knew you even before you were conceived
...**Jeremiah 1:4-5**

I chose you when I planned creation
...**Ephesians 1:11-12**

You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in my book
...**Psalm 139:15-16**

I determined the exact time of your birth and where you would live
...**Acts 17:26**

You are fearfully and wonderfully made
...**Psalm 139:14**

I knit you together in your mother's womb
...**Psalm 139:13**

And brought you forth on the day you were born
...**Psalm 71:6**

I have been misrepresented by those who don't know me
...**John 8:41-44**

I am not distant and angry, but am the complete expression of love
...**1 John 4:16**

And it is my desire to lavish my love on you

...1 John 3:1

Simply because you are my child and I am your Father

...1 John 3:1

I offer you more than your earthly father ever could

...Matthew 7:11

For I am the perfect father

...Matthew 5:48 Luke 15:20-24

Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand

...James 1:17

For I am your provider and I meet all your needs

...Matthew 6:31-33

My plan for your future has always been filled with hope

...Jeremiah 29:11

Because I love you with an everlasting love

...Jeremiah 31:3

My thoughts toward you are countless as the sand on the seashore

...Psalms 139:17-18

And I rejoice over you with singing

...Zephaniah 3:17

I will never stop doing good to you

...Jeremiah 32:40

For you are my treasured possession

...Exodus 19:5

I desire to establish you with all my heart and all my soul

...Jeremiah 32:41

And I want to show you great and marvelous things

...Jeremiah 33:3

If you seek me with all your heart, you will find me

...Deuteronomy 4:29

Delight in me and I will give you the desires of your heart

...Psalm 37:4

For it is I who gave you those desires

...Philippians 2:13

I am able to do more for you than you could possibly imagine

...Ephesians 3:20

For I am your greatest encourager

...2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

I am also the Father who comforts you in all your troubles
...2 Corinthians 1:3-4

When you are brokenhearted, I am close to you
...Psalm 34:18

As a shepherd carries a lamb, I have carried you close to my heart
...Isaiah 40:11

One day I will wipe away every tear from your eyes
...Revelation 21:3-4

And I'll take away all the pain you have suffered on this earth
...Revelation 21:3-4

I am your Father, and I love you even as I love my son, Jesus
...John 17:23

For in Jesus, my love for you is revealed
...John 17:26

He is the exact representation of my being
...Hebrews 1:3

He came to demonstrate that I am for you, not against you
...Romans 8:31

And to tell you that I am not counting your sins
...2 Corinthians 5:18-19

Jesus died so that you and I could be reconciled
...2 Corinthians 5:18-19

His death was the ultimate expression of my love for you
...1 John 4:10

I gave up everything I loved that I might gain your love
...Romans 8:31-32

If you receive the gift of my son Jesus, you receive me
...1 John 2:23

And nothing will ever separate you from my love again
...Romans 8:38-39

Come home and I'll throw the biggest party heaven has ever seen
...Luke 15:7 Luke 15:22-24

I have always been Father, and will always be Father
...Ephesians 3:14-15 Isaiah 9:6

My question is...Will you be my child?
...John 1:12-13

I am waiting for you
...Luke 15:11-32 (The parable of the Perfect Father)

Love,

**Your Dad (Abba),
Almighty God**

<http://www.fathersloveletter.com/>

How to become a child of God, by adoption

Note: Just as in the Father's Love Letter above, assume that God is speaking to you in person.

I have already sent my son, Jesus Christ to make all the arrangements and pay all the costs for your adoption. (Gal 4:4-5)

“But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law (in subjection to the law), so that He might redeem those who were under the law (slaves to the law), that we might receive the adoption as sons.” (John 1:12) “But as many as received Him (Jesus), to them He gave the right to become children of God.”

Read Romans 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; and Eph. 2:8-9

If you accept my invitation, I will adopt you and make you my very own child, (Jn 1:12) and I will never leave you or forsake you. (Heb 13:5)

You will become a joint heir of everything in my kingdom along with my beloved son Jesus. (Rom 8:17)

You don't need to live like an orphan for one more day. (Jn 14:18) I will come and live with you.

Perhaps no-one has ever told you, but I chose you to be my child even before you were born. (Eph 1:4-5)

Nothing you could ever do would cause me to stop loving you. (Rom 8:38)

It's up to you, I am waiting for you.

I am the perfect father who longs to have fellowship with you. No matter what you have done or how you have failed, my heart aches to love you and make you my child. I will gladly forgive you, the moment you come to me. (Luke 15:11-32) Rom 3:23

Romans 6:23 tells us that “*the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life.*” The only way to receive the free gift of God is to become one of His heirs. We become an heir of God and a joint heir with Jesus when we accept the fact that Jesus' death paid the penalty for our sin. (Rom 5:8) Therefore, our spiritual death (separation from God) is no longer necessary when we receive Jesus Christ and become a child of God by way of adoption.

Receiving Jesus Christ means to renounce (turn away from) sin (which means to repent) and just like the prodigal son did, confess that you are not worthy to be a son anymore because you know you are a sinner. Ask God to forgive your sins, and then read the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32. Notice how the father in this story could not wait to forgive his son. These verses are telling the story of how God, the perfect father, wants to forgive us. Receiving Jesus Christ is more than just an intellectual or emotional experience. It is an act of your will in simple child-like faith. Rom 10:9 says, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is (your) Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.” To be saved means the same thing as becoming a child of God. (Rom 8:23) It means to be saved from your sins, saved from judgment and saved from hell. Once you receive Jesus Christ, then you really are worthy to be God's beloved child. You are worthy because Jesus cleansed you with His blood, which paid the penalty for all of your sins. “*Therefore, what God has cleansed, let no man consider unholy.*”

This is not The End
Only the first Installment.

God's Love lasts for Eternity!

On Adoption and Orphan Care
a resolution adopted by the messengers of
The Southern Baptist Convention
June 23-24, 2009
Louisville, Kentucky

WHEREAS, In the gospel we have received the "Spirit of adoption" whereby we are no longer spiritual orphans but are now beloved children of God and joint heirs with Christ (John 14:18; Romans 8:12-25; Galatians 3:27-4:9; Ephesians 1:5); and

WHEREAS, The God we now know as our Father reveals himself as a "father of the fatherless" (Psalm 68:5) who grants mercy to orphans (Deuteronomy 10:18; Hosea 14:3); and

WHEREAS, Our Lord Jesus welcomes the little ones (Luke 18:15-17), pleads for the lives of the innocent (Psalm 72:12-14), and shows us that we will be held accountable for our response to "the least of these brothers of mine" (Matthew 25:40); and

WHEREAS, The Scripture defines "pure and undefiled religion" as "to look after orphans and widows in their distress" (James 1:27); and

WHEREAS, The satanic powers and the ravages of sin have warred against infants and children from Pharaoh to Molech to Herod and, now, through the horrors of a divorce culture, an abortion industry, and the global plagues of disease, starvation, and warfare; and

WHEREAS, Southern Baptists have articulated an unequivocal commitment to the sanctity of all human life, born and unborn; and

WHEREAS, Churches defined by the Great Commission must be concerned for the evangelism of children—including those who have no parents; and

WHEREAS, Upward of 150 million orphans now languish without families in orphanages, group homes, and placement systems in North America and around the world; and

WHEREAS, Our Father loves all of these children, and a great multitude of them will never otherwise hear the gospel of Jesus Christ; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, June 23-24, 2009, express our commitment to join our Father in seeking mercy for orphans; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we call on each Southern Baptist family to pray for guidance as to whether God is calling them to adopt or foster a child or children; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we encourage our pastors and church leaders to preach and teach on God's concern for orphans; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we commend churches and ministries that are equipping families to provide financial and other resources to those called to adopt, through grants, matching funds, or loans; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we encourage local churches to champion the evangelism of and ministry to orphans around the world, and to seek out ways to energize Southern Baptists behind this mission; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we encourage Southern Baptist churches to join with other evangelical Christians in setting aside a special Sunday each year to focus upon our adoption in Christ and our common burden for the orphans of the world; and be it further

RESOLVED, That we pray what God is doing in creating an adoption culture in so many churches and families can point us to a gospel oneness that is determined not by “the flesh,” or race, or economics, or cultural sameness, but by the Spirit, unity, and peace in Christ Jesus; and be it finally

RESOLVED, That we pray for an outpouring of God's Spirit on Southern Baptist congregations so that our churches will proclaim and picture, in word and in deed, that “Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world.”

Louisville, KY

<http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/amResolution.asp?ID=1194>

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Bishop Efraim Tendero Endorses the SBC Resolution

Warm greetings in the mighty name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

On behalf of the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC), I am highly endorsing the Southern Baptist Convention Resolution on Adoption and Orphan Care.

PCEC is one with the Southern Baptist Church in deeply valuing the spiritual worth of adoption, and the sanctity of human life.

As Christians, it is our responsibility to care for our orphaned brothers and sisters. We ourselves are “adopted children,” spiritually invited by God to share His riches in heaven and being loved by Him as if we were His own. God has shown His supreme love for all kinds of children, including orphans, in Luke 18, and He has commanded us to look after them and answer to their need. Also, by disregarding cultural or racial barriers through adoption, we magnify our being one as a spiritual family with God as our Father.

In a PCEC statement released last July 2008, we had clearly affirmed our belief that life begins at conception and any unborn baby at whatever stage of pregnancy should be cared for and protected. God commanded us to be good stewards of His creation and not just to multiply. Responsible parenthood and care for orphaned children is part of this command. In a world where human life is disrespected through abortion, diseases and abuse, we commend the foster parents, and organizations like the Home for Good Foundation, who advocate for orphan children yearning for a loving family, and actively promote their adoption. In their own small ways they have been good stewards, responding to the cry of millions of orphans suffering worldwide.

I encourage the whole evangelical body to also preach and tell about God’s love for the orphans. To the church members, I advise you to discern prayerfully whether you are called to adopt a child or children. This will not only lessen the cries of the yearning, but also emphasize our identity as children of God.

God bless you!

Your co-laborer in Christ,

Original signed by:

BISHOP EFRAIM M. TENDERO

National Director

Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches

Scriptures relating to Adoption, Orphans and Children of God

ORPHAN (26 instances)

shall not afflict any widow or orphan .	Ex 22:22
justice for the orphan and the widow,	Dt 10:18
the orphan and the widow who are in	Dt 14:29
and the stranger and the orphan and the	Dt 16:11
the stranger and the orphan and the widow	Dt 16:14
the justice due an alien <i>or</i> an orphan ,	Dt 24:17
alien, for the orphan , and for the widow,	Dt 24:19
alien, for the orphan , and for the widow.	Dt 24:20
alien, for the orphan , and for the widow.	Dt 24:21
to the orphan and to the widow,	Dt 26:12
the alien, the orphan and the widow,	Dt 26:13
justice due an alien, orphan , and widow.	Dt 27:19
snatch the orphan from the breast,	Jb 24:9
help, And the orphan who had no helper.	Jb 29:12
And the orphan has not shared it	Jb 31:17
He grew up with me as with a father	Jb 31:18
lifted up my hand against the orphan ,	Jb 31:21
have been the helper of the orphan .	Ps 10:14
vindicate the orphan and the oppressed,	Ps 10:18
Defend the orphan , Plead for the widow.	Is 1:17
They do not defend the orphan ,	Is 1:23
the cause, The cause of the orphan ,	Jer 5:28
the alien, the orphan , or the widow,	Jer 7:6
the stranger, the orphan , or the widow;	Jer 22:3
For in You the orphan finds mercy.”	Hos 14:3
do not oppress the widow or the orphan ,	Zch 7:10
in his wages, the widow and the orphan ,	Mal 3:5

ORPHANS (10)

would even cast <i>lots</i> for the orphans And	Jb 6:27
strength of the orphans has been crushed.	Jb 22:9
drive away the donkeys of the orphans ;	Jb 24:3
the stranger And murder the orphans .	Ps 94:6
pity on their orphans or their widows;	Is 9:17
And that they may plunder the orphans .	Is 10:2
Leave your orphans behind, I will keep	Jer 49:11
We have become orphans without a father	La 5:3
“I will not leave you as orphans ;	Jn 14:18
visit orphans and widows in their distress,	Jas 1:27

continued

FATHERLESS (6)

the **fatherless** and a judge for the widows,
Vindicate the weak and **fatherless**;
be gracious to his **fatherless** children.
He supports the **fatherless** and the widow,
Or go into the fields of the **fatherless**,
the **fatherless** and the widow they have

Ps 68:5
Ps 82:3
Ps 109:12
Ps 146:9
Pr 23:10
Ezk 22:7

ADOPTION (5)

of **adoption** as sons by which we cry out,
waiting eagerly for *our* **adoption** as sons,
to whom belongs the **adoption** as sons,
we might receive the **adoption** as sons.
He predestined us to **adoption** as sons

Ro 8:15
Ro 8:23
Ro 9:4
Ga 4:5
Eph 1:5

CHILDREN OF GOD (3)

power to become the **children of God**,
our spirit, that we are the **children of God**
that we should be called **children of God**

Jn 1:12
Rom 8:16
1Jn 3:1

HEIRS

heirs of God, and joint-**heirs** with Christ

Rom 8:17

ILLEGITIMATE (2)

No one of **illegitimate** birth shall enter
you are **illegitimate** children and not sons.

Deut 23:2
Heb 12:8

LONELY

God places the **lonely** in families

Ps 68:6

Written by: Gerald D. Clark

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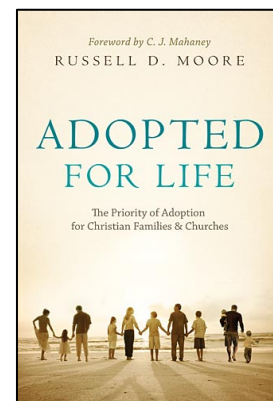
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Adopted For Life
A Highly Recommended book
for those considering adoption
or Adoption Ministry

www.crossway.org/product/9781581349115

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Version date: 3.3.12

Full text of Why every Christian is called to rescue orphans
can be found at www.ctlibrary.com/ct/2010/july/10.18.html

James Dobson's Focus on the Females • Moishe 'Jews for Jesus' Rosen's Legacy

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Adoption

***Bringing the Gospel and God's Love
to Orphan Children by Living Example***

***An In-Depth Bible Study
of the Biblical Basis for Adoption
as Ministry, Adoption as Evangelism***



Home*for***Good Foundation**

To ensure that more Orphan Children are Adopted

***“God sent forth His Son...
...that we might receive the adoption as sons.” Gal 4:4-5***