

Johnny Carr

WITH LAURA CAPTARI

orphanjustice

How to Care for Orphans Beyond Adopting



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Introduction

Imagine children lined up shoulder to shoulder all the way around the earth's equator. Now consider that all of the orphaned kids in the world would not fit in that line. There are too many of them. According to UNICEF, 153 million kids worldwide have lost one or both parents due to all causes.¹ That's twice the total number of children in the U.S.²

You may think I am here to tell you that American Christians need to step up and adopt all of these orphaned children. I am not. I believe adoption is a great ministry; in fact, I have three adopted kids of my own. However, not all of these 153 million kids can—or need to—be adopted. But they do need our help. And we must give that help, because orphaned and vulnerable children have no other hope or future. More importantly, by obeying God to care for the fatherless, we have the opportunity to experience Him in ways we never imagined.

James 1:27 says, “Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you” (NLT). Though it did not come easily or naturally to me, I have learned to care deeply for orphans over the past several years. On September 5, 2005, we adopted our son, James, and he has changed our everything. As a

result of finding our son, we have all found so much more—this little boy has found a life and our family has found the pure religion spoken of in James 1:27.

I invite you to join me on a journey as we get to the heart of what God desires for every one of the 153 million orphaned and vulnerable children around the world. It's not just a statistic. We are talking about real children—children whom God our Father loves and longs to rescue. Deuteronomy 10:18 tells us, “[God] ensures that orphans and widows receive justice” (NLT), and Psalm 68:5 tells us He is “a father of the fatherless.” Yes, God fights for orphans and loves them as their Father, but His Word also exhorts *us* to “defend the cause of orphans” (Isa. 1:17 NLT).

In this book, you will discover the problems that go hand in hand with the orphaned children of our world—human trafficking, AIDS, poverty, and more. We must do all we can to alleviate and eradicate these problems. We cannot settle for cheap solutions because we as Christ followers have a responsibility before God to act and, more importantly, to *keep* acting. We cannot be silent while children around the world are being robbed of hope and life.

My Challenges to You

If you are like most people, you read a book—or parts of it—and then put it on a shelf and forget about it. However, the purpose of this book is not for it to be read, but for those who read it to be changed. To do something to make a difference in the lives of orphaned and vulnerable children around the world. With that in mind, I want to offer you several challenges as you read.

First, I encourage you to ask someone to read the book with you. Discuss it together at the end of each chapter or as part of

a small group. I have found that if I talk about what I have read with others, I often gain a fresh perspective and find that I missed insights that others caught. Discussion also helps us flesh out some of our own thoughts and areas of agreement or disagreement with these complex issues. This book is not designed or meant to resolve all of the problems related to orphaned and vulnerable children. It is meant to lead you to think, pray, and hopefully act.

The second challenge is to choose at least one action step you can take from each chapter and implement it within the next year. You will discover many ideas throughout these pages, and at the end of each chapter, under the “What You Can Do” section, you will find even more suggestions for how to help in three different levels of involvement. The first level includes areas where anyone can serve. These activities will require very little commitment. The second type of action step will describe steps many people can take, though these will require some commitment. Finally, the third level of engagement will suggest a lifestyle change that a few people can do. These tasks will require a lot of commitment, and are not feasible in some cases. As you prayerfully consider these options, remember that each level is just as important as the others. How you choose to become involved may be influenced by a number of factors, including your stage of life, the amount of time you can feasibly commit, the resources you have available, the leading of the Holy Spirit, and even your locale.

I also challenge you to get your children involved in orphan care. As you read, think about ways you can paint a vision for your kids to reach out and help children in need around the world. As a family, brainstorm ways that you can get involved, invest sacrificially, and make a difference in other kids’ lives. Challenge *your children* to do more than care about themselves, your biological family, and the things that make them comfortable.

Finally, I want to challenge you to commit to having an open mind as you read. If I had picked up this book six years ago, I would have responded with a defensive, critical attitude. I probably would not have read more than a chapter or two. My prayer is that as you read, the Holy Spirit will move you out of your comfort zone and into a place of gut-honest heart examination. Please know that I am writing from a broken spirit, not an accusatory spirit. My desire is to share with you what the Lord has taught me, starting with this truth: We can't say that we love orphans while failing to address the social ills that directly affect their lives.

**For more orphan care resources,
visit www.orphanjusticethebook.com.**



CHAPTER 1



True Religion

Orphans and My Family

Motionless bodies met my gaze as I stepped into the courtyard. James tensed up in my arms and clung desperately to my neck as I stood there in shock, trying to grasp the inescapable reality of this place he called home. The nearly two-dozen orphans with special needs in front of me were confined to crude high chairs. Flies were buzzing around pans positioned underneath each chair. A closer examination revealed why. The pans were full of excrement. James's eyes, full of fear, stared into mine and pleaded silently, "Please don't leave me here!"

Though the physical conditions were horrifying, that is not what haunts me the most about that day. It was the children's blank gazes. We were the first non-Asian people the children in this Chinese orphanage had ever seen, yet they didn't point, laugh, or even stare at us. They just sat there, some with their heads down on the trays and others simply staring aimlessly into space.

My wife, Beth, and I had traveled to Zhenshi,¹ China, to adopt our son from this orphanage. Guo Ya Zhou was brought to our hotel room the day before. I had quickly scooped up the precious four-year-old deaf orphan, and he had barely let go of me since.

The entire event was scary for all of us, but I was filled with love for our new son, who we renamed James Ze Carr. We had been told that Ze is the Chinese word for “chosen.” He had been chosen by his heavenly Father and given to us as a gift. I can’t fully express in words how it felt to play a part in his redemption.

The next day we were standing in the horrifying conditions of James’s orphanage in one of the poorest cities in Asia, as already described. Malnutrition and disease ravaged the small bodies of the children in the courtyard. Since James is deaf, I couldn’t comfort him with my voice or tell him we wouldn’t leave him there. I simply held him securely against my chest so that he would feel safe, yet James began to scream and cry uncontrollably.

Once inside the compound, Beth and I witnessed things that shocked us. I tensed up, much like James had done in the courtyard. Infants were starving. Children were dying from both major and minor medical issues. It was evident that the workers truly loved the children, but they were barely surviving themselves, and didn’t have the necessary resources to properly care for the children.

Standing in that orphanage, little did I know the radical changes that would take place in my life. Humbled and broken, I walked away a different man.

God, Football, and the American Dream

I was not always open to adoption. I grew up in a conservative Christian home in the South, and we were more focused on following the rules—no drinking, no smoking, no dancing—than on social justice issues.

Growing up in Alabama, you learn to love two things from birth: God and football (and not in that order). When it came to

football, I was an Auburn fan—the only one of “that kind” in my family. In the religious department, I was for Jesus. Everybody was. I didn’t know anyone who wasn’t a “Christian.” Although for many people going to church was optional, praying before a football game was not. Band members removed their fancy hats with tall feathers. Ball players took off their helmets. Fans held their caps in hand. Even the kids playing cup football on the side of the stadium scolded each other if their game accidentally continued while the cheerleader prayed over the PA system.

I was evangelical, conservative, and proud of it. I followed the rules and shared the gospel. Most of the people in our church were trained in Evangelism Explosion and went out witnessing door-to-door at least one night a week. We were good at keeping ourselves unspotted from the world and sharing our personal witness, but in all of our passion for the gospel, we neglected to place the same importance on caring for those in distress, as we are commanded to do in Scripture.

Every time I heard about missionaries digging clean wells, working with HIV/AIDS patients, or trying to alleviate poverty, I rolled my eyes. *Why are they wasting their time?* I thought. *Don’t they know that the gospel is what really counts?*

To be honest, I took a great deal of pride in the fact that I was right and they were wrong—*they* being anyone who didn’t agree with me theologically. I was especially contemptuous toward anyone who had fallen prey to the liberal “social gospel,” the trend in Christian circles where people were passionate about meeting people’s physical and emotional needs while neglecting to share the gospel. I often criticized my liberal colleagues. *They’ve missed the heart of the gospel*, I thought. *One day, maybe they’ll wake up and see the truth before they waste their entire lives doing humanitarian work.*

But now, as I look back, I see how narrow-minded I was. I seemed to frame everything in terms of either/or, all or nothing—either verbally sharing the gospel OR meeting people’s physical needs. I didn’t realize I was missing the true meaning of religion—one that includes BOTH sharing the gospel and meeting people’s physical needs.

Then I met Beth, the sign language interpreter at our Baptist campus ministry in northern Alabama. The first time I saw Beth, she was signing for Heather Whitestone, who would later become the first Miss America with a disability. I barely noticed Miss America, though; Beth was the one who caught my eye.

I finally mustered the courage to ask Beth out. In one of our early conversations, she shared with me how she ached to adopt a deaf child. Without thinking too much about it, I responded, “Wow. That would be a great thing to do.” What I didn’t tell Beth was that adoption was out of the question for me, *especially* adopting a child with a disability. Sign language was cute for college girls, but definitely not for me. After all, I wanted to laugh, roughhouse, and play football with my little boys. I wanted to talk with them about the latest baseball trade or which NFL teams would make the playoffs, not sit and contort my fingers into weird shapes.

A year later, the sign language interpreter walked down the aisle to be my wife, and I could not have been happier. I had dismissed adoption as nothing more than Beth’s college dream, particularly when our daughter Heather was born. I was such a proud dad. She was perfect with her little pinched red face, a startlingly loud scream, and big brown eyes. Four years later, along came Jared, and I thought that our family was complete.

I had the American dream—a beautiful and educated wife, two great kids, a fantastic job, two cars, and a house in a neighborhood with restrictive covenants. The only thing we were missing

was the white picket fence because those stupid covenants wouldn't allow it.

How God Broke Through

I started working in church ministry when I was twenty-three years old, and by the time I graduated from Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary in 2001, I was steadily climbing the Christian ministry ladder one rung—one church—at a time.

At Jerry Falwell's university, I was able to spend time with him and learn from the best of the best in conservative evangelicalism . . . and I was determined I would *be* the best. Swept up in not only the American dream but also the "Christian dream," I dreamed big about how God would use *me* (big emphasis on me). As the churches where I ministered grew, my head grew, and my family was along for the ride. Every congregation I served was a little bit bigger and offered a little nicer perks than the previous one. In 2004, I took a position as Pastor of Ministry and Leadership Development at one of the fastest growing churches in the Florida panhandle.

While on the job, I met with a visiting missionary who wouldn't stop talking about a deaf orphanage in Belarus. I didn't have any idea where in the world Belarus was, and I had zero interest in deaf orphans, but I was a pastor, so I knew I had to at least seem interested in what this missionary was saying. Apparently the orphans needed loving, Christian families to adopt them. As the words "that would be a great thing to do" came out of my mouth, I remembered that I had spoken the same sentence to my wife many years earlier, before we had "moved past" the adoption thing.

A month after that meeting, Beth and I were having another conversation about adoption, much like the one we had while we were dating. But this time I didn't pull the "that would be great" card and tune her out. I actually listened. Hearing my wife's deep desire to welcome a deaf orphan into our home struck me like it never had before. I began to see my selfishness and arrogance. God was chipping away at my American dream, and I finally promised to call and get some information about the adoption process.

I did an Internet search for "Belarus international adoption" and picked up the phone to call the first hit—Nightlight Adoption Agency. I was somewhat relieved to find out that Belarus was closed to international adoptions. *Well, I guess God is closing that door.* I was just about to hang up when Ron, the guy on the other end of the line, asked me a strange question: "What specifics are you looking for in an adoption?" I stumbled over my words, but managed to tell him we were looking for a child under the age of six, deaf, and with no other disabilities. Then we hung up.

Ten minutes later, the phone rang again. It was Ron. "Check your e-mail," he told me. I opened a picture of a four-year-old Chinese boy and just stared. *Could this be my son?* I thought. *He doesn't look like me—but he needs somebody to call Dad. He needs somebody to call him son.*

Exactly seven months later, Beth and I were in China, along with Heather and Jared, getting ready to meet our new son. You've already read about how God gave James to us. But that's not the end of the story.

In the process of James's adoption, Beth came across an adorable picture online of a little Chinese girl sitting on a footstool, sticking her tongue out. A family who had adopted a child from an orphanage two hours from James's city had snapped the photo. The caption read, "I tried to whisper 'Jesu aye ni' to her, which

is ‘Jesus loves you’ in Chinese, but the orphanage worker told me that she was deaf and couldn’t hear anything.”

My wife immediately called Heather into the computer room. A few seconds later I heard, “*Johnny?!?*” It was that all-too-familiar tone that communicates, “Honey, I really want something and you are going to think that I am crazy for asking but I am going to sound so sweet that you will not be able to resist it.”

Beth was beaming as she spoke, “Look at this little girl. She is four years old, in the same province where James is from, and she’s deaf! She really needs a family!” I would love to say that I responded with a very spiritual answer, but I didn’t. I balked. The amazing thing is that even in my doubt, God worked. In May of 2007, we found ourselves back in China adopting Xiaoli (Shao-lee).

During the twenty-six-hour flight home from China after adopting Xiaoli, all I could think about were the starving, desperate, and forgotten children in the deplorable orphanages James and Xiaoli had been rescued from. A question kept running through my head: *If what I’ve seen in these orphanages is real, do I care enough to do more than adopt two kids?*

It continued to plague me as I returned to my American dream life. I suddenly realized I didn’t need the white picket fence or the sleek Honda. As I stood in line at Starbucks for a five-dollar latte or ordered a twenty-dollar steak at a restaurant, I was struck by the difference between my life and that of the orphans back in China and around the world. Sitting behind my big desk as Pastor of Ministry and Leadership Development, I wondered what that title really meant. Did I have a responsibility toward the orphans of the world, beyond James and Xiaoli?

I began to study Scripture like never before, discovering God’s great love and concern for the fatherless. Verses about orphans that I had never noticed jumped off the page, and the one that

stuck out the most was James 1:27, which I've already mentioned: "Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you" (NLT).

In our Western church culture, we tend to view religion as a negative thing. It is no surprise that the YouTube video titled "Why I Hate Religion, But Love Jesus" went viral. However, James offers us the meaning of true religion—caring for orphans and widows in their time of need and keeping ourselves unstained from the world. We frequently focus on keeping ourselves unstained, but we often fail in the area of taking care of orphans and widows.

The Grim Reality

We live in a fallen world. War, famine, and disease ensure that there will always be orphans among us. Every day, children are orphaned or abandoned due to economic need or disabilities. Understanding the plight of orphans and their families is critical.

In many cultures, mystic beliefs lead people to assume that a child born with a disability is possessed by an evil spirit or is the direct result of a curse. Families believe they must dispose of the child to free themselves from the curse. In other cases, families know that they will not have the resources to take care of the child, especially in the case of a disability. The sad reality is that many parents believe that their child will have a better life in an orphanage.

James and Xiaoli were both born deaf. Their parents probably could not confirm that they were deaf until they were about two or three years old. James was abandoned at a bus station, and Xiaoli was abandoned at a grocery store. Surprisingly, these were actually very safe places to leave the children because they were

public locations. The toddlers were noticed, law enforcement was notified, and the children were delivered to an orphanage. My children's birth parents were most likely not cruel, but probably felt very desperate. They likely were hoping for the best for their kids. If they had wanted to be cruel, these parents would have left their toddlers in an abandoned field or drowned them in a river. This practice, known as infanticide, is common in many cultures.² James and Xiaoli's parents actually took a huge risk by leaving their children in crowded places, because someone could have caught them in the act. Punishment would have been swift and severe. This does not excuse their behavior; it simply serves to show that these parents were not intending cruelty toward their children.

It is hard for me to understand abandonment as a sacrificial, merciful act. But as I have talked with Christian leaders around the world and as I have walked through the process of adopting my children, I have developed a new understanding of the desperation that hopelessness brings. I am still unable to fathom abandoning my child, and it does not change the fact that such behavior is wrong, but my eyes have been opened.

Parents who abandon their children are often unable to provide for basic physical needs and hope that an orphanage will be able to help. But more than just food and shelter, *these children need a family*. As Christ followers, we have a responsibility to do something . . . and most of us need to consider doing something more than just writing a check. We must humble ourselves to consider where we have been wrong—where we have disobeyed God's Word and neglected to care for orphaned and vulnerable children.

I explained in the introduction that UNICEF has estimated that there are 153 million orphaned children worldwide. It is important to note that while most of us think of an orphan as a child who has lost both parents, these children are actually called

“double orphans.” Children with only one living parent are called “single orphans.” Many children lose one parent through war, famine, or disease. Two-thirds of the time, kids lose their fathers first. Though they technically still have one parent, these single orphans are extremely vulnerable to disease, poverty, abuse, and other social ills and stigmas. Many of these children end up in orphanages, living with other family members, or living with an entirely different family even though they have a living parent. Most sources agree that there are approximately 18 million double orphans worldwide.

Research about orphans shows that “more often than not, the neediest children are sick, disabled, traumatized, or older than five.”³ These children are susceptible to poverty, HIV/AIDS, human trafficking, being stuck in an orphanage for their entire childhood, and many other issues that we will explore at length in this book.

Lest we think that orphans only exist in other countries, we must also look at our own problems. Here in the United States, there are nearly 400,000 children in the foster care system at any given time, and some of those foster homes are not exactly ideal. In addition, more than 100,000 of those children are waiting to be adopted.⁴

The numbers can be confusing, and knowing how to minister to these children’s needs can be difficult. Some need family reunification, sponsorship, education, or medical assistance. Others need a temporary family to live with or permanency through adoption. All of the 153 million children worldwide do not need to be adopted. “It is very difficult to identify exactly how many orphaned children do not have families or will never be able to return to their family if the family is still alive or accessible,” says Bill J. Blacquiere, CEO of Bethany Christian Services and a thirty-year veteran of advocacy for orphaned and vulnerable

children. “Although we don’t have a clear estimate of the number that need to be adopted, the numbers are in the millions, not the thousands.”⁵

For the purposes of this book, we will refer to the UNICEF estimate of 153 million children who are *orphaned* and *vulnerable*. Some of these children need adoptive families. Others need support so their families can keep them out of an orphanage. All of these children have physical, emotional, and/or spiritual needs. They face a host of challenges. In the midst of their desperation, they cry out for hope. And our redeemer God longs for His people to be on the front lines of providing compassion, support, and gospel-centered care.

God’s Heart for Orphans

I see time and again that caring for orphaned and vulnerable children is not often on the radar screen for many Christians. Somehow, in our concern for living a “good Christian life,” many of us are missing God’s passion for the fatherless.

Yet, caring for the needy is one of the main purposes of the church. Throughout Scripture, it is easy to see that God has a special place in His heart for the fatherless, the widow, and the alien. This is a rebuke and a wake-up call to us. Scripture is not silent on the issue of orphan care. Throughout the Old Testament, “orphans” and “the fatherless” are mentioned forty-one times. In Old Testament law, many specific guidelines are given for interacting with orphans. As you read the following verses, look for God’s heart.

- “He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner, giving him food and clothing” (Deut. 10:18).

- “Do not deny justice to a foreigner or fatherless child” (Deut. 24:17).
- “When you reap the harvest in your field, and you forget a sheaf in the field, do not go back to get it. It is to be left for the foreigner, the fatherless, and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands” (Deut. 24:19).

Caring for the marginalized of society—widows, orphans, and foreigners—lies at the heart of Yahweh’s covenant with His people. These verses speak blatantly about the role of God’s people in caring for the fatherless and inviting them into community. It seems apparent that in Old Testament culture, orphans lived as part of the community and were cared for by God’s people.

Scripture doesn’t spell out a detailed strategy for orphan care, but God does speak directly to the role of His people. In fact, God promises judgment on those who do not take care of the weak and needy: “Cursed is anyone who denies justice to foreigners, orphans, or widows” (Deut. 27:19 NLT).

To our God, taking care of orphans isn’t just a “great idea.” It’s critical. Why? Because every man, woman, boy, and girl—including orphaned and vulnerable children—has been created in God’s image and is precious to Him. In Scripture, God describes Himself time and again as the helper of orphans.

Psalms 10:16 praises Yahweh as “King forever and ever.” Interestingly, in describing the kingly duties of Yahweh, the psalmist places primary importance on God’s care for the weak: “LORD, you know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will hear their cries and comfort them. You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed” (Ps. 10:17–18 NLT).

Other psalms strike a similar tone, extolling Yahweh as “father to the fatherless, defender of widows” (Ps. 68:5 NLT). Jewish scholars

point out that God's care for orphans flows directly from His position as king over all the earth.⁶ God's people, then, are commanded to care for orphans *as a direct result* of who God is.

As God's messengers, the Old Testament prophets rebuke Israel for ignoring the needs of widows and orphans. God tells His people to stop bringing Him meaningless sacrifices: "When you lift up your hands in prayer I will not look . . . I will not listen" (Isa. 1:15 NLT). Why? Because of the people's failure to care for orphans. "Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans" (v. 17).

Malachi 3 echoes this same judgment on Israel as Yahweh confronts His people:

"At that time I will put you on trial. I am eager to witness against all sorcerers and adulterers and liars. I will speak against those who cheat employees of their wages, who oppress widows and orphans, or who deprive the foreigners living among you of justice, for these people do not fear me," says the LORD of Heaven's Armies. (Mal. 3:5 NLT)

In our tendency to place ourselves above Israel, we dare not overlook one of the root causes of God's judgment—failing to care for orphans. When I understood this for the first time, it shocked me. We're not just reading history here. It hits close to home for those of us who haven't considered before that God is commanding *us* to care for orphaned and vulnerable children.

Stop and consider this: Just like the children of Israel, we, as God's people, will be judged for withholding justice from the oppressed and the orphan. If we have the means and the capability to care for orphaned and vulnerable children, yet fail to do so, we are in direct disobedience to God.

There's No Going Back

I am often struck by my past failure to truly care enough to act in the interest of orphans, and it grieves me. For most of my life, I had been so sure I didn't have the time or money for another kid, especially *somebody else's* kid. But when it came to a new car or vacation or even that picket fence, money never stopped us.

It is not as if I—or the church as a whole—was hard-hearted and didn't care about the plight of orphans. I simply did not know the enormity of the problems. No one had seriously engaged the issue of orphan care in any of the churches or schools I attended. But in this case, ignorance is not bliss. Millions of kids around the world are hurting in ways we cannot imagine, and we are called to respond with compassionate care.

Once I was awakened to the issues, God took a formerly anti-adoption guy and began to shape the first National Director of Church Partnerships for Bethany Christian Services, the nation's largest adoption agency. We have more than 1,300 employees, 85 locations in 34 states, and minister to more than 65,000 children and families each year.

God definitely has a sense of humor. I spent much of my life judging Christians who were sidetracked by social justice issues and lost the true gospel message. Now, I spend my time meeting with pastors and educating churches on the needs of orphans around the world. In this journey, I have become increasingly convicted about my lackadaisical attitude—and that of many conservative evangelicals—toward the plight of orphaned and vulnerable children. This is what drives me to write.

Developing a holistic model for orphan care forces us to dive into every aspect of an orphan's struggle, even when it's uncomfortable. The fact is that very few orphans around the world have only to deal with the emotional consequences of losing one or

both parents. In addition, nearly all of these children are faced with the nightmare of poverty, human trafficking, HIV/AIDS, deplorable orphanages, abusive foster care situations, racism, and a host of other social evils. In the twenty-first-century American church, we have wrongly dismissed many of these issues, and for that we need to repent. On other fronts we have been silent, and we must now become a voice.

This is not primarily a book about adoption. This book is about *caring for orphans whose lives and plights cannot be separated from complex social issues*. There's a saying within the adoption and orphan care movement: "Adoption is not for everyone, but caring for orphans is for everyone."

Formulating a practical, biblical strategy for global orphan care forces us to confront and wrestle with these challenges that we have not taken as seriously as we should have. If we were honest, many of us would have to admit that we have no clue how to respond, beyond well-meaning prayer or writing a check. We have relegated these social justice issues to the secular world, but if we truly desire to care for orphans, we must be willing to address and respond to their deepest needs.

We can't care about orphans without caring about their daily reality of poverty, HIV/AIDS, trafficking, and other horrors. We can't honestly be satisfied with children living out their entire childhoods in orphanages that our churches have built and then being cast into what is often an even more terrifying reality on the streets when they turn eighteen. As we grapple with the complex situations of orphaned and vulnerable children, we will see that if we reduce the number of orphans in the world by placing them in families, it could dramatically affect the number of HIV/AIDS cases, the number of children trafficked, and the number of children living in poverty.

As an interest in orphan care and adoption ministry begins to sweep through the American church culture, we can't just treat it like a one-week summer VBS. We need "Orphan-focused Sundays," but we also need far more—*we need orphan-focused churches*. Choosing to stand by and do nothing where we see injustice, suffering, and evil is wrong. It is sin. We must take active steps to care for orphans. To do anything less is blatant disobedience.