



Student Guide: Introduction

Hello! Welcome to the six-week Bible study entitled, "God's Heart for Orphans." In this six-week study you will learn from several sources.

- The first and primary source will be the Scriptures. We will look through the Bible and read what God says about orphans.
- You will also experience the needs of orphans around the world using information from videos of organizations ministering to orphans.
- Each week there will be a reading assignment to read a small portion of an assigned book. Be prepared to discuss the ideas in the class each week.
- Finally, you will learn about how others became involved in orphan care.

We will discuss tangible ways you can get more involved in loving orphans. Here are several examples of ways that people can become more involved.

- Become an adoptive parent
- Foster children or provide respite (short term) care
- Start an orphan care ministry at your church
- Organize a mission trip to serve orphans
- Be a mentor to a foster child

At Cherrydale Baptist Church, in Arlington, Virginia, we offer this Bible study once a year and ask attendees to get involved with our Orphan Care Ministry. They can:

- Join the ministry committee that leads the various opportunities listed below
- Join the adoptive and foster care family support group
- Assist with putting on special events at the church for National Adoption month/Orphan Sunday (November) and/or National Foster Care month (May)
- Join a mission trip to an orphanage

We hope that this study will be useful as you and your church discover how God's heart for the orphan will change your heart forever. Please, feel free to contact us at orphancare@cherrydale.org with questions.



Week One- Defining the Problem: The big picture

Overview of the study

What is God's heart for orphans? How can we make our hearts line up with God's in this area? What are the needs of orphans? What can I do?

In this six week Bible study, our goal is to answer these questions together and discover our part in the equation. It is our prayer that we will end this short time with changed hearts.

Throughout the study, we will learn from several sources. Our first and primary source will be the Scriptures and each week we will memorize a verse. We will also learn about the needs of orphans around the world using information from the many groups ministering to orphans (videos and/or testimonies from individuals). Finally, our book study, we will read a small portion of the book weekly and discuss the ideas in the class.

Warning – some of the videos and topics may be disturbing. This is not meant to “guilt” you into service, but to help you become aware of what is happening today around the world in regards to the orphan, the widow and the stranger.

Here are the topics we will cover each week.

Week one – *Defining the Problem: The Big Picture*

This week, we will share an overview of the study and test your knowledge of the issues facing orphans today.

Week two – *Discerning God's Heart for Orphans: A Journey through Scripture*

What does Scripture say about God's heart for orphans? What do these passages tell us about God's view of orphans? And what does God want to do through his people on behalf of orphans?

Week three – *Discovering the Needs of Orphans and Foster Children*

This week we will look at orphans in the Bible, what their needs were and how God met those needs.

Week four – *Designed for Family: God's Plan of Adoption*

What does God think about adoption and about the adopted child? During this session, we will learn from Scripture about God's heart for adoption.

Week five – *Discerning the Role of the Church: Compassionate Giving*

How does God want his children to respond? During this session, we will learn about how many in the church are responding to God's heart for orphans.



Week six – *Determining our Response: As a Church, and as Individuals*

What does God want me to do? What can I do with limited time and resources? How can we work together as the body of Christ and as a local fellowship? During this session, we will discuss our personal response and how we can support each other in pursuing it.

Quiz to illustrate the problem:

The statistics come from:

UNICEF (<http://www.unicef.org/sowc/index.html>),

Christian Alliance for Orphans (<http://www.christianalliancefororphans.org/>)

Dave Thomas Foundation (<https://www.davethomasfoundation.org/>)

Bible Verse Discussion

Read Deuteronomy 10:14-20 and discuss.

¹⁴ To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. ¹⁵ Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendants, above all the nations, as it is today. ¹⁶ Circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiff-necked any longer. ¹⁷ For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. ¹⁸ He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. ¹⁹ And you are to love those who are aliens, for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt. ²⁰ Fear the LORD your God and serve him. Hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name.

- 1) According to the above passage, whom does God defend?
- 2) What do these people have in common?
- 3) What does God desire his people to do for these needy ones?

Homework: Reading and Memory Verse



Week Two- Discerning God's Heart for Orphans: A Journey through Scripture

Using the verses below, answer the questions for each section and be ready to discuss in class.

God's Heart for the Fatherless

In Scripture, we are told about the special relationship God has towards orphans (as well as widows and aliens).

- What is God's heart for the fatherless?
- How does he relate to them?
- What steps can I take to make my heart more like God's with regard to orphans?

Psalm 68:5-6

Psalm 146:9

Proverbs 23:10-11

God's Heart through the Hands of His People

One indication of the heart of God for orphans is the things He does to care for them through his people.

- What does God call on his people to do for orphans?
- What does that indicate about the heart of God for orphans?
- What do these verses mean for me personally?

Deuteronomy 24:17-22

Deuteronomy 14:28-29

James 1:27



Blessings and Curses

Another indication of the heart of God for orphans is the blessings he promises for those who care for them (along with the rest of the poor and needy). We can also learn about God's heart from noticing the curses he promises for those who fail to care for the fatherless, and for those who take advantage of them.

- What blessings and curses are given based on our treatment of orphans (the poor and needy)?
- What does that indicate about the heart of God for orphans?

Exodus 22:22-24

Deuteronomy 27:19

Proverbs 19:17

Isaiah 10:1-2

Malachi 3:5

1 Peter 3:8-9

My Heart

What steps can I take to make my heart more like God's with regard to orphans?

Homework: Reading and Memory Verse



Week Three- Discovering the Needs of Orphans and Foster Children

Use the Biblical examples below to see the needs of the people and what God did to meet those needs. For each section, note the needs in the first column and then how God met those needs in the second column. This may include physical, emotional, educational and spiritual needs of orphans.

Ruth

Passage(s)

Needs

How God Met the Needs

Ruth 2:2-16; 4:13

Moses

Passage(s)

Needs

How God Met the Needs

Exodus 2:3

Acts 7:21-22

Joseph

Passage(s)

Needs

How God Met the Needs

Genesis 45:3-8; 50:15-21

Esther

Passage(s)

Needs

How God Met the Needs

Esther 2:10, 20

Esther 2:11, 19; 4:6-16



Additional people in the Bible who were adopted.

- Samuel 1:1-2;10-11;19-28
 - Hannah gives him to Eli to raise and teach him.
- Jesus' adoption by Joseph in the Gospels (prophesy in Matt. 1:1-17)
 - Joseph names him, protects him, teaches him carpentry

Homework: Reading and Memory Verse



Week Four- Designed for Family: God's Plan of Adoption

This week we will look at what the Bible says about adoption. Adoption is a covenant. A covenant is a promise or an agreement between God and man. A covenant may be conditional or unconditional. It is more than a legal contract; it's a relationship of promise.

Read Genesis 15:8-12; 17

Adoption: God's Covenant with Man

The Bible uses the idea of adoption to illustrate our relationship to God the Father. Use the following passages to answer the questions. What does God say about our spiritual adoption? What spiritual reality is illustrated by adoption?

- God's covenant with Abraham
 - Genesis 17:1-14

 - Galatians 3:6-7; 29

To whom does this covenant apply?

- Our adoption by God
 - John 14:1-3, 18

 - Ephesians 1:3-7

 - Romans 8:15-17; 22-23

 - Galatians 4:4-7



How do we know that we have been adopted by God?

What is promised us as part of our adoption by God?

Homework: Reading and Memory Verse.

Additionally, research a ministry that is working on the front lines of orphan care. This can be a missionary, an organization you or your church works with today or an organization listed on the CAFO website (<http://www.christianalliancefororphans.org/>). Be prepared to share with the class for 2 – 3 minutes on the ministry that you researched.



Week Five- Discerning the Role of the Church: Compassionate Giving

How should we respond to God by meeting the needs of orphans? This week we will look at what the Scripture says about giving. We will also share how God has moved those in our group and other believers to give to orphans.

Bible Study and Discussion

How has the Church as a whole been reaching out to orphans? (Researched ministries)

Read the following passages and answer the questions.

The Heart of Compassion

Matthew 9:35-38

³⁵Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

What was the context in which Jesus was filled with compassion?

What were the reasons for his compassion?

What was the response to his compassion?

The Heart of Giving

2 Corinthians 9:6-11

⁶Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ⁷Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. ⁹As it is written:

"He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

¹⁰Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. ¹¹You



will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.

What principles apply to our giving?

How should we give?

How does God respond to our giving?

Describe how you have seen these principles revealed in your life.

Applications Question

What keeps me from doing more to help orphans?

Homework: Reading and Memory Verse



Week Six- Determining our Response: As a Church, and as Individuals

This week, we will discuss how we could respond to all that we have learned in this study and what our church has been doing.

Why did you come to the study?

What did you learn from this study? How has God used this study to speak to you?

How has it changed/affected you?

If God is leading you towards adoption/fostering or serving orphans what fears/unknowns are holding you back?

PRAYERS

What keeps you from doing more to help orphans? (this could include some of the of the answers from the previous week)

Answers we have heard from others...

- Fear that my life will be interrupted
- I already feel overwhelmed as it is.
- I am selfish and do not want to change my lifestyle.
- Fear that I will not have enough left over for me or my family.
- I am concerned about the impact on my other commitments
- I do not fully understand the depths from which I was saved.
- It will compromise my lifestyle.
- Fear that I will be alone doing this.
- It would be too emotionally exhausting.
- I forget, I don't see the problem and become unaware of the need
- I don't know how to start... how to help
- I am complacent
- "Someone else will do it."
- It is not my spiritual gift
- Fear that I will not be successful at whatever God leads me to do.
- The need is too overwhelming to even start, I cannot make a difference.
- I do not know what other people will think of me if I do this.
- It is too much out of my comfort zone.
- I have dreams/plans for my life and following God will take those dreams from me and lead me somewhere else.
- What if I am not enough, what if they want more than I can give.



Orphans Today

- Still the vulnerable, unprotected- maybe more than the stereotyped orphans from Africa, but for the purpose of the study we will be focusing on children who are orphaned for various reasons.
- Children in other countries are orphaned due to poverty. Often the parents make the hard choice of giving up the child, or he/she is abandoned.
- In the US- most kids in foster care are there because of abuse/neglect.
- Many older children/sibling groups

Final Thoughts

Brainstorm the different ways our church currently supports orphans or consider areas where our church or you can support orphans.

How can the church support you, as you follow God's leading in working with orphans?
How can you support others?



Appendix A

Sample Discussion Questions for Fields of the Fatherless Book Review

Fields of the Fatherless - Chapter 1

Discussion questions:

Who are the stranger, widow and orphan today? Will anyone share a time, when they have felt the love of Christ through His body?
Imagine yourself in the shoes of an orphan child.

Fields of the Fatherless – Chapter 2

Discussion questions:

- 1) ? Jesus said...? You will always have the poor?
- 2) How can I see the world differently than I have before?

Fields of the Fatherless - Chapter 3 and 4

Discussion questions:

Fields of the Fatherless - Chapter 5 and 6

Discussion questions:

What stood out to you from reading Chapters 5 and 6 of *Fields of the Fatherless*?
What does God look like?

Fields of the Fatherless - Chapter 7 and 8

Discussion questions:



Appendix B

Memory Verses

(NIV)

Week Two

James 1:27

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

Week Three

Deuteronomy 10:18

He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing.

Week Four

Psalms 10:16 - 18

The Lord is King for ever and ever; the nations will perish from the land. You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more.

Week Five

Proverbs 31:8 - 9

Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Week Six

Psalms 68:5 - 6

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.



Appendix C

Case Studies

In week 3 we discuss the several basic needs of orphans. Those needs were physical, emotional, educational and Spiritual needs. Below are modern stories of orphans. See the different needs of orphans in each of the categories (physical, emotional, educational and spiritual) and how the church met those needs.

Katie:

"I was put in the foster care system when I was three. Everyone loved me when I was small. I took joy in life. Then the years started going faster and faster. I am now a big girl. Good days are always over at some point. Everyone left me, my brothers, my sisters. I am alone and life has stopped. I don't see my relatives in my dreams anymore. I don't feeling anything, I don't play the guitar anymore, and I don't do anything I used to like."

Lister from Zambia:

"Lister lost both parents as an infant. She lives with her grandparents. Her grandfather is terminally ill, thus the burden for providing for the family falls on her grandmother who grumbles and complains about keeping dependents."

Dang Xiao Le (Avenel):

"She was abandoned at the doorsteps of [the Orphan Care Center] in November of 2004 only a month after her October 17 birth. When the staff found her at the gate, Avenel had huge lump on her head and inflamed rashes from irritation. The ayis (nannies) that first saw her cried at the poor condition of the very thin, dark-skinned little girl. Later, the medical staff discovered that Avenel also had heart problems. Avenel has dextrocardia or a right-sided heart rather than the normal position on the left."

The Rest of the Story

Katie (from *Fields of the Fatherless*)

"But then you came into my life. It always puts a smile on my face to think of the days when I met you. Most of all I remember the moment when you told us about the Lord, I know if He helped you, He'll help me too. When you told me about Jesus I came back to life... I think God will help me find my sister. I pray He'll help me to get to know Him better."

Lister Hamajele (from the *Zambian Orphan Choir*)

*"[As part of the *Zambian Orphan Choir*] much healing from the pain of the past has happened...Much of this has occurred as a result of their relationship with choir director, Richman Symbbamba, who has helped them face their situations with wisdom and empathy...Lister enjoys school and is often first in her class. She is in 6th grade. Her dream is to become a nurse and help those who are sick."*



Dang Xiao Le, English name Avenal (from the Philip Hayden Foundation):

"We would all hope to earn a nickname like Avenal, who has been dubbed Le Le, or Happy, by her ayis because of her cheerful disposition. She greets visitors with a huge smile and is brimming with energy. She shouts loudly and almost bounces off the walls as she runs around the room in hope of receiving the spotlight of attention."

[Her heart problem] is position often is associated with congenital heart disease but in her case the tests have been normal. She does have a lung abnormality that causes her to have a chronic respiratory problem. Her ayi is happy for Avenal's complete adaptation into a normal life in the House of Peace, although she often has problems with breathing."



"She is now two years old, and so independent as to even refuse the ayis' attempts to feed her. Avenal bounces up and down in her high chair, kicking her feet wildly, happy when people have come to her dining hall. Her upturned face widened by her smile meets the glance of visitors every time."