

## The Father's Heart for the Fatherless

### Introduction:

So, we heard the numbers, we have listened to the stories of disease, we have seen the faces of children in China and India and Nepal and Laos and Myanmar and Ethiopia and Panama and Jamaica and Mexico and here at home, and we have come to believe some things about the father's heart for the fatherless. That is what I want to talk with you about today.

### Prayer:

5 reasons to care about orphans:

#### 1. Because God commands it.

James 1:22-27 (Scripture reading)

**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".**

We are not usually comfortable with the word, "religion". It is our conviction that Christianity is not just one religion among many. Our outward expression of our inward belief is not an attempt to secure salvation, but a thank-offering for salvation.

James is saying that there is a sweet spot where what you believe finds expression in what you do. He calls it "pure and faultless religion" and describes it as having two parts:

1. Look after widows and orphans in their distress.
2. keep yourself pure from the world's defilement.

To not care about orphans and widows is to fall short of God's design for our lives. If we understand the heart of Abba, we recognize that we cannot retreat with no concern for the most vulnerable. We are to visit. i.e. "to care for or look after, with the implication of continuous responsibility".

The face of western Christianity is shifting from a religion of beliefs to one that finds expression in action. It is a good shift. It was needed.

**Isaiah 1.17; Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow.**

**Prov. 31.8 - "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.**

There are 60 references to the fatherless in the Bible. We are to defend, help, care for, speak up for, protect, insure justice for orphans. These are not options. We do not ever delegate it away or outsource it to someone else to do it for us so we can do more strategically important things.

#### 2. Because Christ's love compels us.

It is Christ's love from within that moves us forward. We've been loved to love others.

If you want God's blessing, you must care about what God cares about most.

We know John 3:16 but not I John 3:16-18

**"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers". If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth".**

There are 2000 verses on the poor (that includes the orphan). God's love ...

- a. To the orphan

- b. To the birthmother in her shame
- c. To divided families whose wrong choices are obvious
- d. We have had 113,000 adoptions on an annual basis up against 143,000,000. It is going to take a revolution of love.

**3. Because human need demands it.**

143 million orphans in the world and 115,000 children in America waiting for adoption.

There is an onslaught of homes without fathers:

Afro- American culture- 75% grow up without a father

Hispanics - 50%

Anglo - 25%

Sixty times the Bible mentions the importance of this group. God defines who He is by His promises to them.

**Psalm 68:5,6 "A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families."**

Orphanages are not God's best. We are helping to build an orphanage in India. But, it is not God's best. He sets them in families.

How?

**A. Give them a family.** The church ought to be helping with this. The governments of this world are not best suited for this. God's people are. God sets the lonely in families, not in welfare systems. He sets them in homes where there is emotional, spiritual and social support as well as financial.

**B. Treat them with dignity.**

They are no less a person than you are. Consider the words of Job, a righteous man, and hear how he lived.

**Job 31:16-23**

"If I have denied the desires of the poor  
or let the eyes of the widow grow weary,

17 if I have kept my bread to myself,  
not sharing it with the fatherless—

18 but from my youth I reared him as would a father,  
and from my birth I guided the widow—

19 if I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing,  
or a needy man without a garment,

20 and his heart did not bless me

for warming him with the fleece from my sheep,

21 if I have raised my hand against the fatherless,  
knowing that I had influence in court,

22 then let my arm fall from the shoulder,  
let it be broken off at the joint.

23 For I dreaded destruction from God,  
and for fear of his splendor I could not do such things.

Here is where I began to hear God saying, "Rex, you care about the fatherless, but you are not seeing them as your own flesh. See them as you see your own children. That is the heart of the father for the fatherless".

**C. Offer them an opportunity.** Most (not all) of the world will help themselves out of poverty; they just need an opportunity.

(Os Guinness - "Doing Well and Doing Good) America is the largest welfare nation in the history of the world. We have written more checks and given more money than the rest of

the world combined. I believe it came out of compassionate hearts. It usually has not worked to alleviate the grinding burden of real poverty.

III. - Look at Africa as an example. In the last 50 years, 500 billion dollars have gone into Africa and the standard of living is worse now than it was 50 years ago. It is not about money. It is about relationships and opportunity. You assist the poor. You don't underwrite them.

Compare the welfare system of America to Israel's social process.

III. In Deut. 24:19-21

When you are harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf, do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless and the widow, so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. 20 When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow. 21 When you harvest the grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines again. Leave what remains for the alien, the fatherless and the widow.

There is a beautiful picture of this redemptive caring played out in the book of Ruth. Ruth's mother in law Naomi and Ruth were both widows and had become desparate. Ruth was from the land of Moab, one of Israel's enemies. They decide to travel to the land of Naomi's ancestors. Naomi recognizes that their hope lie in one of the "fields of the fatherless".

And Ruth the Moabitess said to Naomi, "Let me go to the fields and pick up the leftover grain behind anyone in whose eyes I find favor."

Boaz, the owner of the field notices Ruth.

v. 12 May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge."

Boaz protects and provides

v. 8,9 So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with my servant girls. Watch the field where the men are harvesting, and follow along after the girls. I have told the men not to touch you. And whenever you are thirsty, go and get a drink from the water jars the men have filled."

As she got up to glean, Boaz gave orders to his men, "Even if she gathers among the sheaves, don't embarrass her. 16 Rather, pull out some stalks for her from the bundles and leave them for her to pick up, and don't rebuke her."

D. Defend them from inequity.

Proverbs 23:10,11

Do not move an ancient boundary stone  
or encroach on the *fields of the fatherless*,  
for their Defender is strong;  
he will take up their case against you.

E. Share with generosity.

Israel was an agrarian society. They were to provide in their harvests for the poor, the widow, the fatherless, and the strangers. It demanded faith for them to give away a portion of what they raised. What is the equivalent today?

You are the church. Don't wait for a program. You are all officially released to feed the hungry and clothe the poor.

#### 4. Because God has a purpose for every life.

##### Psalm 139:13-17

13 For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.

14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful,  
I know that full well.

15 My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place.  
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,

16 your eyes saw my unformed body.  
All the days ordained for me  
were written in your book  
before one of them came to be.

17 How precious to me are your thoughts, O God!  
How vast is the sum of them!

There are accidental parents. There are no accidental kids. God takes the DNA of two who may have been illegitimate as parents and creates a child that is not illegitimate, but fearfully and wonderfully made.

Famous orphans: If there were no orphans, we would not have...  
Moses, Esther, Alexander Hamilton, Eleanor Roosevelt,  
President of US Herbert Hoover,  
Poetry of Edgar Allan Poe,  
Athletic achievements of Babe Ruth,  
movies of Ingrid Bergman, Dean Cain or Ted Danson  
humor of Carol Burnett,  
Genius of George Washington Carver, Jean Jacques Rousseau  
Writings of J.R.R. Tolkien (no "Lord of the Rings"),  
Leo Tolstoy, Michener  
Music of Sebastian Bach, Ella Fitzgerald, Faith Hill, John Lennon  
Wendy's founder, Dave Thomas

#### 5. Only the church is large enough to handle the problem.

380,000 churches in America 115,000 children waiting to be adopted or placed. (three times the number of churches as children)

There are millions of villages without clinics, post offices, grocery store, a business, but they have a church. In most of the world the only civil service organization is the church. Nothing comes close to the distribution capability of the church.

The church is in more languages than any other organization.

The church is in more nations than the UN.

The church is in more people groups than the UN.

The church has the greatest volunteer manpower.

2.3 billion claim to be Christians. They may not be following him closely. But, one in three claim to be Christians. The church is bigger than China. The church is bigger than India. The church is bigger than China and India combined. One in three in the world. The church is the largest number of people, most powerful distribution network, the greatest network of resources in the world. We have the moral authority to do it. We have the moral responsibility to do it. We have the power and promises of God. We have the inevitability of history. The last chapter says we win. The church outlasts every organization on the globe. The church is the hope of the world. It is.

Dan. 11:32 - "the people who know their God exhibit strength and take action"

It is an adventure to be part of a crisis that is taking place around the world.

Expect him to use the church

Expect him to use laymen

Expect him to create ways to help orphans that don't exist today

40/400 vision

In ten years, could it be that our God would raise up 40,000 churches that would have orphan ministries taking place. 400 thousand lay people who will take this on as the focus of their ministry passion.

Caring for orphans is God's spiritual antidote for superficial, self-indulgent, and shallow Christianity.

-Dennis Rainey

Orphans redeem us from ourselves. They redeem us from the stain of the world. They call us to live outside ourselves.

The "signature of God". Joseph Stowell

God moments when he creates something great to reflect his image. This has the signature of God all over it. This is a God moment. Could it be that the very revival we have been sensing our need of will come as we reach out to the orphan. We mistakenly think that the orphan needs the church. Could it be that the church needs the orphan and the poor and the widow and the stranger to help us find the father's heart again?

"We have all of eternity to celebrate the victories, but only a few hours before sunset to win them." - Amy Carmichael