

a resource for
orphan
sunday

WWW.orphansunday.org

An Initiative of
**The Christian Alliance for Orphans
& The Cry of the Orphan**

“Fields of the Fatherless was a moving and inspirational experience for me...”

—KAY WARREN, president, Acts of Mercy and author, *Dangerous Surrender*

F I E L D S
of the
F A T H E R L E S S

☞ *Discover the Joy of Compassionate Living* ☞

T o m D a v i s

FOREWORD BY STEVEN CURTIS CHAPMAN



A Guide to Walking in the *Fields of the Fatherless*

Want to go deeper into the fields of the fatherless? This guide will help. Use it as a personal study or invite members of a small group to join you as you explore the ideas and questions below.

Chapter One: The Fields

Why do you think God is so concerned about what happens to the stranger, the widow, and the orphan?

Who are these people today?

How can you apply the Fields of the Fatherless principle to other aspects of your life?

What specific things can you do to bless the fatherless?

Is it easier to minister to those who are like us or to those who are different from us? Why do you think this is true?

In what ways may God bring blessing to your life because you help those in need?

Chapter Two: The Fatherless

Guiding Question: How can you be more present in the lives of the fatherless in your community and around the world?

1. Justice is an issue God raises over and over in the Bible. Martin Luther King Jr. understood the absolute necessity that God's people fight for justice. In fact, he gave his life for it. From a jail cell in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, he wrote, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly." None of us can afford to let injustice slide by and hope it goes away. We are all in this together.

Do a biblical word study or topical search on justice and injustice. A great place to start is www.biblegateway.com. Using the concordance in your Bible works too. Then think about what you discover, and

spend time in prayer asking God to help you know how you can be a champion of justice.

2. Pastor Rick Warren of SaddleBack Church in California believes that the whole business of Christianity is going into “the sores of life,” helping those who are helpless, hopeless, and hurting. “If we don’t do that,” he says, “I doubt our Christianity.” Watch the one-and-a-half-minute clip called “Why the Church Must Care” at http://www.saddlebackfamily.com/peace/hiv__aids__initiative. Make a list right now of what the “sores of life” are in your hometown or state. Then write down what you’re going to do about it. Design a plan and execute it.

3. If you have a story of fatherlessness in your own life, write it down. Perhaps you’re a single parent. Maybe one or both of your parents was emotionally absent from your life. Telling and then seeking understanding of your story is the best road to healing.

4. Spend time with someone you know who has been affected by fatherlessness or tragedy. Have them share their story. Ask them questions about how they would have liked someone to reach out to them. Then pray a prayer of blessing over their lives.

According to Scripture, gratitude is the key to having a compassionate heart. Our hearts get dry and callused when we are unthankful, and that spills over into other areas of our life. Take a few minutes and tell God what exactly you are thankful for.

5. Use these questions for personal reflection or small-group discussion:

Who are some of the fatherless you know today?

What are some ways you’ve reached out to the fatherless? Have you felt God’s blessing for doing that? What was that like?

In what ways can you help bring justice to the fatherless?

What are some of the ways you can offer one of your “two tunics” (see Luke 3:11) to help those in need?

Chapter Three: What Does God Look Like?

Guiding Question: If Jesus identifies Himself as actually being “the poor,” how can you find Him?

1. Mother Teresa once said, “The dying, the crippled, the mentally ill, the unwanted, the unloved—they are Jesus in disguise.... [Through the] poor people I have an opportunity to be 24 hours a day with Jesus.... Every AIDS victim is Jesus in a pitiful disguise; Jesus is in everyone.... [AIDS sufferers are] children of God [who] have been created for greater things.”

What is your immediate reaction to this quote? How does it impact the way you see those who are suffering? What does it do to your heart?

2. Write about an event in your life where you saw God. Maybe it was like the one I had when I helped the woman who had fallen out of her wheelchair. Did you sacrifice financially to help someone else? Did you go on a mission trip that changed your life? Describe in detail what happened.

3. After you’ve finished describing your “God encounter,” write down exactly how you felt while it happened and after it happened. Get in touch with how powerfully this event changed your life.

4. Think of specific ways you can minister to “the least of these” (Matt. 25:40, 45). Don’t just think of giving money to a beggar or helping at the local homeless shelter. These are good things to do; just don’t stop there. What about starting a ministry to single parents at your church? What if you helped mobilize families in your church to partner with the local Human Services agencies that place foster-care children in foster families? Consider recruiting a team from your church to minister to orphans in Russia or China. Or lead a team to Africa to help AIDS orphans. Anything is possible with God! Once you have a vision for making a difference, write it down. Make it as clear and concise as possible. Now create a strategy to make this vision a reality. How will you do it? What pastor would you recruit to help? What families need to be on this team? How will you print a brochure? Who will you recruit? Don’t worry if you don’t have all the answers. Take a leap of faith, and God will meet you to make up the difference!

Chapter Four: The Blessing of Adoption

Guiding Question: How does God’s adoption of us as recorded in Scripture impact your personal understanding of adoption?

1. Interview someone who has adopted a child. Seek to learn as much as you can about the adoption process and the realities of raising an adopted child. Then spend lots of time in prayer with that person (or entire family) thanking God for all He has done and asking for blessing and wisdom in the years to come.

2. Use these questions for personal reflection or small-group discussion:

Why do you think God chose the path of adoption to welcome us into His kingdom?

What does it feel like to know you've been adopted by God? Is it something that you resonate with, or is it a foreign concept to you? Explain.

What does it mean that adoption is "the visible gospel"? Describe your answer in detail.

If you're not called to adopt a child, what are other ways you can be involved in the adoption process or to help others in their pursuit of a son or daughter?

Chapter Five: Seeds of Hope

Guiding Question: We've all been impacted by the "seeds" others have planted in our lives. After reflecting on those seeds, how can we continue to be seed planters in the lives of others, particularly the fatherless?

1. Planting a seed, even a small one, is a powerful way to change the world. Jean Giono changed the world. If you watched the movie *Emmanuel's Gift* suggested in the study questions for chapter 1, you realize how any person, can change the world. What story or stories can you think of about people who have made a huge impact on society? List these people and briefly describe their stories. Consider doing research to find out more about the seeds they planted and how those seeds made a difference in the world.
2. One of the best ways we can positively impact the fields of the fatherless is by using our influence. Make a list of all of the people you know you can recruit to join you in this fight for the fatherless. I know widows in their seventies who have recruited their entire churches to sponsor an orphanage; teenagers who have recruited and led thirty people to conduct an inner-city children's camp for three days; and children who have rallied entire Sunday school classes to supply a retirement center with flowers and the Jesus film! Use your influence to make a difference. What can you do?
3. What other ideas do you have? Perhaps you or someone you know has done something we haven't yet thought of to try. Please log on to www.fieldsofthefatherless.com, and tell us your story about what seeds you have planted and how they have grown into greater things!
4. Use these questions for personal reflection or small-group discussion:

Who, in your life, has sown seeds that have made a tremendous impact on you?

What did they say or do? What gifts did they bring? How did they treat you?

What are the seeds that have been planted in your life and how are they bearing fruit?

What are some seeds you've planted in others' lives?

How can you go about planting seeds in the lives of the fatherless?

Chapter Six: The Old Enemy, Fear

Guiding Question: How can you overcome the barriers of fear in your life and act on what God is calling you to do?

1. The key to defeating fear is action and involvement. Keep in mind that even Jesus didn't minister to every single need that crossed His path. He listened to the voice of His Father, and He acted on what He heard. Ask the Father what He's calling you to do in this area of ministry. Take a moment and unlock your heart. What's that inner voice saying your responsibility is in these fields. Is it to write a book? To go back to school and get a degree in cross-cultural missions? Adopt a child in need? The question isn't if we should be involved in the fields of the fatherless, it's how.
2. Make a list of people who will support you in your new endeavor. Who comes to your mind? Who will be supportive? Who will love you through the difficult times and the great times?
3. Invite these people to your home or meet them at a coffee shop to share your vision. Let them see your heart and passion. Then ask them if they will join you and support you with their influence, their prayers, their time, or whatever it takes to launch what God is asking of you.
4. Be honest about the areas in your life that could prevent you from accomplishing your goals. What fears and apprehensions do you have? What obstacles tend to stand in your way? What character traits do you need to exhibit in order for this to succeed? Now take some time to go over each of these areas in prayer and turn them over to God. Ask Him to help you defeat these fears. Break their power in the name and authority of Jesus! Once you expose them, you have power over them. Fears love to hide in darkness; they can't stand the light!
5. What can you sacrifice right now as a tool to defeat fear, as an offering to God as it says in Romans 12? Read that chapter, specifically verses 1 and 2. Should you sacrifice food for a period of time and fast?

Should you make a financial sacrifice (perhaps a gift to a ministry that helps the poor)? Should you approach your pastor about starting a ministry even if you're feeling inadequate? Make a sacrifice to the Lord and make it now!

Chapter Seven: We Are All Cosmic Orphans

Guiding Question: What practical difference does it make in your approach to ministry when you think about the fact that we're all "cosmic orphans"?

1. Henri Nouwen wrote a book called *The Wounded Healer*. In it, he discusses how we've all been wounded by people and circumstances. The key to healing is to turn our wounds into agents of healing in the lives of others. Take a close look at your past wounds by writing them down or discussing them in a loving community. Then be proactive by creating a plan of how you can share your wounds with others in order to bring healing to their lives and to yours.
2. Many of us spend the majority of our time living for earthly things. Some of these things are necessary, and others are simply distractions. Make a list of things that are time wasters in your life. How many hours a week do you spend on those activities? Now make a plan to turn those hours into hours that count for eternity. How can you reapportion those hours for the kingdom?
3. One of our primary struggles as Christians is sorting through the worldly voices that whisper in our ears. These voices try to tell us who we are, what we're supposed to do, and what to fear. Expose these lying voices by verbalizing what they're saying and praying against the authority you've given them over your life. What does the voice of your true Father say about you? Listen to that voice and write down what you hear Him saying about your future, your gifts, and your calling. Set aside a time of meditative reflection to listen to God's voice through Scripture. You will discover emerging patterns in these two experiences. Make this a part of your normal prayer time.
4. Take time to think about what your inheritance in the kingdom of God will be. Matthew 25 reveals that all of us will be standing in heaven receiving that reward. "I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat; thirsty, and you gave me something to drink ..." Who will be there to say thank you to you for feeding them, clothing them, and giving them something to drink? Process the gravity of this truth and discuss how to keep ministry to the poor at the forefront of everything you say and do.

For Further Action

Guiding Question: How can you incorporate the Fields of the Fatherless principle into everyday life?

1. As a family or group of friends, make a decision to be the church in action. Here are a few simple suggestions to assist you:

Celebrate a birthday party as a party in honor of orphans. When my son, Hayden, turned seven, all of his friends brought presents for a group of orphans. We notified the parents we were doing this and explained why and provided clear instructions. The presents were sent to a needy child overseas, and we received pictures of them being delivered. It was a tangible expression of how to love the fatherless. Take a mission trip together. Sign up to feed the homeless on a weekend or holiday. Or, instead of Disneyland this year, find a great mission organization and take your whole group on a trip to serve widows, orphans, and the poor.

On a night you would normally go out to dinner, do something different. Send the money you would have spent at a nice restaurant to a worthy cause along with a note explaining why you are doing this. Exercise the spiritual discipline of fasting on this night if that's appropriate for your family. Here's a fact to help you as you consider this idea: We think little of spending \$5 on a fancy coffee: a hazelnut latte, cappuccino, or something similar. In many African countries \$5 will pay for 100 meals. A little sacrifice on our part can go a long way.

Connect with a local organization that works with the fatherless domestically or internationally. Ask them for a project you could take on that will make a significant difference in the lives of people in need.

2. Edmund Burke, the British philosopher and statesman, once expressed the idea, The definition of evil in the world is when good men and women see injustice and do nothing. Good and loving people hear about the cry of the orphan, the plight of the widow, the hunger of the poor, and they shut their hearts. They pretend it isn't happening and it doesn't affect them.

Where have you heard of evil winning the battle and done nothing? Examine your heart and ask for forgiveness. Now make a commitment to never let it happen again. The strategy to win over inaction is action!

What needs do you know of that you could meet? Think of someone in your community who's in need, then reach out and be a catalyst of change.

3. God loves and cares for those who are suffering. Rent or purchase one of the following movies to

align your heart with the people who are on God's heart. Watch it, then spend time thinking about what it meant to you. Many of these are available at your local video store. (This activity is perfect for small groups. Watch one or more of the videos together, then spend time discussing them. Use this as a springboard to action!)

Emmanuel's Gift—www.emmanuelsgift.com

Dear Francis—www.chronicleproject.org/dearfrancis/film.html

The Invisible Children (not appropriate for young children)—www.invisiblechildren.com/themovie

Children of Leningradsky—www.childrenofleningradsky.com

God Grew Tired of Us—www.godgrewtiredofus.com

The Orphans of Nkandla—(You can purchase this video and other documentaries at www.truevisiontv.com.)