

GOD'S
HEART
for the **ORPHAN**

TAUGHT BY **RICK AND KAY WARREN**





God's HEART for the ORPHAN
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GETTING STARTED

Open Your Heart

This study could change your world, starting with your heart and extending through every dimension of your life. It will open your eyes to the unseen needs of orphans and vulnerable children that surround you. It will challenge you to act on what you learn, and in the process, it will redefine your faith. Like other studies, it will deepen your understanding of God's Word, heighten your love for God as your Father, and broaden your connection with your small group. Unlike other studies, the topic's unique focus may cause you to make decisions and changes that will ruin you in glorious ways, and make your life better—and harder—than you ever imagined.

Surprises

You may be surprised not only by what God has to say about the orphan, but also by the discovery that before you were rescued by God, you, too, were an orphan. You may also be surprised that others in your small group share your passion for caring for orphans, and you may be the one who leads others in figuring out what's next.

A "Full Service" DVD

"God's Heart for the Orphan" is designed as a **DVD-led, one-session Bible study** for you and your small group. It may require more group discussion and follow-up than most studies. In addition to this study guide, notice that **the DVD offers helps, testimonies, and other resources** not usually found in a simple Bible study. Explore the DVD and connect to the Websites. Your learning will be enhanced and your small group discussion will be more interesting.

Action Steps Required

This study is action-oriented, and is intended to be put into practice. As you begin:

- ∴ Be ready to **THINK** about things you may have never considered.
- ∴ Be ready to **DO** things in Jesus' name you've never dreamed of doing.
- ∴ Be ready to **DIVE INTO** the section, "*Putting it into Practice.*"
- ∴ Be ready to **RELY** on your small group and the church to help you get started.

Connection to the Orphan Care Initiative

Good News! This study puts you in relationship with the Saddleback Church Orphan Care Initiative. Count on the Orphan Care Initiative to come alongside and serve you in pursuing God's next steps for you. There are people at Saddleback praying for you. It is our prayer that what you learn about God's heart for the orphan will change your life forever. Better yet, it is our prayer that what you learn about God's heart for the orphan will change the life of an orphan or vulnerable child forever.

Elizabeth Styffe
Saddleback Church
Orphan Care Initiative



Looking Ahead

- ∴ Take a few minutes to introduce yourselves to each other.
- ∴ What comes to mind when you hear the word “orphan”?

Key Verse

*A father to the fatherless . . . is God in his holy dwelling.
God sets the lonely in families.*

Psalm 68:5-6 (NIV)



Watch the video now and fill in the blanks in the outline. Refer back to the outline during your discussion time.

GOD'S **HEART** for the **ORPHAN**

Rick and Kay Warren

^[8]Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves; ensure justice for those who are perishing. ^[9]Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice.

Proverbs 31:8-9 (NLT)

O _____ your heart to orphans.

^[14]The helpless put their trust in you. You are the defender of orphans . . . ^[17]Lord, you know the hopes of the helpless. Surely you will listen to their cries and comfort them. ^[18]You will bring justice to the orphans and the oppressed, so people can no longer terrify them.

Psalm 10:14, 17-18 (NLT)

Caring about orphans is a way to define your faith.

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.

James 1:27 (NIV)

It is the heart of God that we care for widows and orphans in their distress.

Caring for orphans is a reflection of what God has done for you and me.
We were vulnerable and helpless, and orphans are vulnerable and helpless.

R _____ your responsibility.

^[6]*If you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not follow other gods . . . ^[7]then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever.*

Jeremiah 7:6-7 (NIV)

“Freely you have received, freely give.”

Matthew 10:8b (NIV)

A father to the fatherless . . . is God in his holy dwelling.

Psalms 68:5 (NIV)

P _____ children from becoming orphans.

- ∴ 138 million children worldwide have lost one or both parents.
- ∴ Every fourteen seconds a child is orphaned by AIDS.
- ∴ 500,000 children are in foster care in the United States; 118,000 are eligible for adoption.

Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows.

Isaiah 1:17 (NLT)

H _____ them in practical ways.

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

Deuteronomy 10:18 (NIV)

• **Relieve** _____

^[35]*“For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home.*

^[36]*I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.”*

Matthew 25:35-36 (NLT)

• **Defend** _____

^[17]*Do not deprive . . . the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. ^[18]Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there. That is why I command you to do this.*

Deuteronomy 24:17-18 (NIV)

• **Provide** _____

A _____ orphans into families.

^[5]*A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. ^[6]God sets the lonely in families . . .*

Psalms 68:5-6 (NIV)

The most vital thing you can do is not only open your heart, not only open your eyes, and not only open your mind, but probably the most radical thing that you and I can do is to open our homes.

At the heart of this idea of putting children into families is this incredibly audacious idea that God has adopted us.



^[4]For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ^[5]he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—^[6]to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Ephesians 1:4–6 (NIV)

How will orphan children know there's a God who loves them unless somebody actually brings them into their family? How will they know God wants to give them a spiritual home unless somebody gives them a physical home?

N_____ forget the church.

Every orphan needs three things:

- **They need a _____ .**
- **They need a _____ .**
- **They need _____ .**

Whoever gets to orphans first, shapes their destiny. Will we show them the love and grace of Jesus Christ? Will we show them what it means to be a part of a family?

Once our eyes are opened we can't pretend we don't know what to do. God who weighs our hearts and keeps our souls knows that we know and holds us responsible to act.

Proverbs 24:12

To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.

James 4:17 (NKJV)

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

1. The essence of the gospel is the good news that you are adopted. Ephesians 1:5 (NLT) says, "God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure." Have you ever thought about the idea that you are adopted by God? What does it mean to you?

2. Explore these verses about God's heart for the orphan:

Give justice to the poor and the orphan; uphold the rights of the oppressed and the destitute.

Psalms 82:3 (NLT)

Every third year you must offer a special tithe of your crops. In this year of the special tithe you must give your tithes to the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows, so that they will have enough to eat in your towns.

Deuteronomy 26:12 (NLT)

Cursed is anyone who denies justice to foreigners, orphans, or widows.

Deuteronomy 27:19 (NLT)



GOD'S **HEART** for the **ORPHAN**

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.

James 1:27 (NLT)

What do these passages tell you about God's heart?

3. Adoption is missional. God wants us to love orphans the way he has loved us, and to help them discover the love of Christ. What would it take for you to align your heart with God's heart for orphans and vulnerable children?

4. Our key verse says, "God sets the lonely in families" (Psalm 68:6 NIV). How does he do that? What might your role be in his plan?

Living on Purpose: Ministry and Mission



LIVING ON PURPOSE: Ministry and Mission

Local

How can your small group reach out to orphans in your community through the PEACE Plan? Your group could:

- ∴ Host an "adoption shower" for a newly foster/adoptive family.
- ∴ Give back packs to vulnerable children starting school.
- ∴ Visit children at a local group home or county-run temporary residence.
- ∴ Go to www.saddleback.com/orphancare to find more ideas for how your small group can work together to care for orphans and vulnerable children in your own neighborhood.

Global

Most of the world's orphans live outside of the United States. How can your small group connect with a local church in another country to help them serve the orphans in their care? Here are some suggestions:

- ∴ Go on an orphan-care PEACE trip.
- ∴ Give to the Saddleback Orphan Care Initiative.
- ∴ Sponsor a Rwandan adoptive family.
- ∴ Learn more ways to be involved in the Rwanda Orphan Care Initiative by going to www.saddleback.com/orphancare.



PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

It all comes down to you. The Bible says, *“Don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves”* (James 1:22 NLT). You are the hands and feet of Jesus. What can you and your family do to reach out to an orphan or vulnerable child? Pastor Rick gave the following suggestions for crawl, walk, and run steps you can take. **Visit www.saddleback.com/orphancare to find more information about each of these options.**

CRAWL:

- ∴ Pray for the plight of orphans. In the back of this study guide you will find a 40-Day Prayer Guide for Orphan Care.
- ∴ Sponsor a Rwandan child, either with a one-time gift or monthly donation.

WALK:

- ∴ Join the Orphan Care Initiative at Saddleback Church. You will receive monthly e-mails with practical ways to get involved locally and globally.
- ∴ Attend a Saddleback Church “I’m Thinking About *‘Thinking About’* Adoption/Foster Care” workshop, or a regional Hope for Orphans “If You Were Mine” workshop in your area. You will find dates and locations on the Website.

RUN:

- ∴ Help support a family who is adopting/fostering.
- ∴ Start an Orphan Care ministry in your church.
- ∴ Adopt or foster a child. Saddleback’s Orphan Care Initiative can come alongside you with help and information.



PRAYER DIRECTION

- ∴ Thank God for adopting us as his children.
- ∴ Pray that God will align your hearts with his heart for orphans.
- ∴ Pray that God will bring orphans and vulnerable children into families, provide for their needs, and draw them to himself.
- ∴ Ask God to direct you to your next step, individually and as a group. Ask him to protect your heart so that any response to this lesson will not come out of misguided guilt, but from an overflow of God’s love for you.

DIVING DEEPER

Explore the testimonies and additional resources on the DVD and in the back of this study guide.

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ANSWER KEY

Open your heart to orphans.

Recognize your responsibility.

Prevent children from becoming orphans.

Help them in practical ways.

- Relieve their hurts
- Defend their rights
- Provide long-term solutions

Accept orphans into families.

Never forget the church.

- They need a family.
- They need a church.
- They need resources.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Did You Know?

THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD . . . DID YOU KNOW?

- ∴ In the world today there are 143 million children who have lost one or both parents. That is almost one half of the population of the United States.
- ∴ Every 14 seconds an AIDS death leaves another child orphaned.
- ∴ Every year 12 million children become orphans.
- ∴ 87.6 million orphans live in Asia.
- ∴ 43.4 million orphans live in Sub-Saharan Africa.
- ∴ 12.4 million orphans live in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- ∴ In Ukraine and Russia 10%–15% of children who age out of an orphanage commit suicide before age 18.

THE CHILDREN OF THE UNITED STATES . . . DID YOU KNOW?

- ∴ There are currently 500,000 children in foster care in the United States. Approximately 118,000 of these children are available for adoption.
- ∴ Every year in the U.S. alone, over 25,000 children age out of the foster system with no family to belong to and no place to call home.
- ∴ More than one-third of Americans have seriously considered adopting, but no more than 2% have actually adopted.
- ∴ In Orange County there are 3,059 children in the foster care system. 300–400 of these children age out of the foster care system per year.

THE CHILDREN OF RWANDA . . . DID YOU KNOW?

- ∴ **Number of Orphans and Vulnerable Children:** In Rwanda, over 800,000 children have lost at least one parent; 210,000 children have been orphaned due to HIV/AIDS.
- ∴ **Orphans and Gender:** In Rwanda, 45% of all girls have lost at least one parent.
- ∴ **Child-Headed Households:** Over 100,000 children are the head of their households in Rwanda, one of the greatest populations of child-headed households in the world.
- ∴ **Orphan Interventions:** Orphans are cared for primarily through the assimilation of a child into the community. With 1,000,000 orphans, Rwanda has begun to open its doors to intercountry adoption. Only 11 Rwandan children were adapted to the United States in the last 5 years.
- ∴ **Orphans on the Streets:** There are 4,000 children living on the streets in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda.
- ∴ **Rwanda Orphan Care Initiative:** The PEACE Plan, led by a partnership of Saddleback and Rwandan churches, has 6 strategic projects. They include:
 - A new church-initiated model of sponsorship for children and families;
 - Building a technical school for skills training;
 - Church-based foster care and drop-in programs;
 - Care for mothers and children living with HIV;
 - Training of orphanage workers to improve care;
 - The emptying of orphanages into waiting families through in-country and intercountry adoption.

40 Day Prayer Guide for Orphan Care

A prayer guide to be used by a prayer team or individuals for prayer.

This is only a suggested guide. You can add, change, or take out parts to have it better meet the needs of your church and community. Use the simple suggestion as it is or expand upon it as you feel led. The most important part is to commit to 40 days of praying!

If some faithful members can meet daily, so much the better, but if not, do not let that discourage you. Pray alone when necessary and meet whenever possible to join together in agreement in prayer. Gather two or three (or more) people in a home or a church or anywhere and the Lord will be with you and hear your prayers as it says in Matthew 18:20, *“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.”*

1) Today, pray that the Lord would give you a personal sense of responsibility for the next 40 days (and beyond) for praying for orphans, your pastor, your church, and your community. Ask Him to break your heart for the orphans. Ask that He would help you to see orphans with His eyes and His heart. Ask Him to use this 40 days of prayer to change you and your church.

2) Today, pray for your Pastor to have guidance and provision as he seeks to follow the Lord's commands to care for the orphans.

3) Today, ask God that of the 2 billion Christians in the world, 7% would show hope to a single orphan, looking after the child in their distress. Ask the Lord to convict the church around the world that if we did this, there would effectively be no more orphans. Ask the Lord to show each of His followers that we can each do something.

4) Today, ask the Lord to help your church congregation to feel His heart for the orphans as seen in 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 . . .”

5) Today, pray for the fatherless in your community. Ask the Lord to protect them and to care for them and to defend them and keep them safe.

6) Today, ask the Lord to help your church family to live out Proverbs 31:8: “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.”

7) Today, thank the Lord in advance for all that He is going to do to bring glory to His name in your church and community. Thank Him for the care He is going to provide for orphans through your church.

8) Today, pray for the Lord to raise up workers for the harvest from your church and community. Ask Him to call Christians to go to the “fields of the fatherless” to experience the joy of caring for orphans as we are commanded in Isaiah 1:16-17 “Give up your wicked ways. Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the orphan. Fight for the rights of widows.”

9) Today, pray that God would break the heart of your city's pastors with the plight of orphans. Ask that He would convict them to lead their churches to pray, go, and love in Jesus' name.

10) Today, ask the Father to set the lonely in families. Pray specifically for families in your community who may be in the process of adopting an orphan. Ask for God's provision for all of their needs: physical, emotional, and spiritual.

11) Today, pray specifically for any orphans you may know by name. Pray for their health and safety. Pray for their shelter. Pray that they will be brought into loving families who will provide for their education.



12) Today, pray that God, the Defender of the orphan, will rise up and secure justice for the oppressed.

13) Today, ask the Lord to lead the lawmakers in every nation to protect and provide for orphans.

14) Today, pray that your whole congregation will believe and be convicted by Proverbs 22:9: "A generous man will himself be blessed, for he shares his food with the poor." Ask for the Lord's blessings on those who share their food with orphans.

15) Today, pray for yourself as a church member. Ask the Lord to lead you on, that you might walk in obedience. Ask God to show you how to encourage your church family or youth to care for the needs of orphans.

16) Today, pray that because of God's mercy, He will provide caregivers and counselors for children who have been abused.

17) Today, ask for forgiveness for Christians around the world who forget the orphans and forget to heed 1 John 3:17: "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) Today, ask the Lord to raise up respite care providers to support and give relief to the caregivers caring for orphans who are waiting to have families adopt them.

19) Today, pray for your Pastor. Ask God to provide him with resources, encouragement, courage, and a strong prayer team to support him as he seeks to live out James 1:27: "Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles, and refuse to let the world corrupt us."



20) Today, pray that the Christians in your village, town, city, and country would believe and live out the truth of Proverbs 14:31: "He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God."

21) Today, pray for government leaders in your country. Ask the Lord to burden their hearts for the orphans. Ask that they would feel compelled to protect and provide for orphans.

22) Today, pray for families who have members living with HIV and AIDS. Pray for the children orphaned by this disease. Ask God to provide treatment, care, and support through the church.

23) Today, ask the Lord to strengthen the faith and resolve of Christians working in orphan ministries.

24) Today, pray for any church staff members and leaders. Ask for the Lord's hand of blessing on their lives. Lift up the health and safety of them and their families. Ask also that the Lord would break their hearts for the orphans in your community.

25) Today, pray for God's provision for your church's orphan care ministry. Ask Him to provide people and prayers and money and food and supplies to give the orphans all the care they need.

26) Today, pray for children who are not yet orphans but may only have one parent who may be sick or dying. Pray for the health and safety of their parent. Pray for God's provision. Pray for protection for the children in these households.

27) Today, ask God to care for child-headed households. Pray that the Lord will provide for their needs. Pray that an adult would come alongside them and adopt them. Ask the Lord to protect them from abuse.

28) Today, pray for families who are taking care of their grandchildren or nieces or nephews in addition to their own children. Ask the Lord to bless them for their sacrifice and to provide enough food, clothes, education, and shelter for all of their children.

29) Today, pray for mothers or fathers who might be having trouble caring for their children and feel they need to give them up or abandon them. Ask God to help them find support. Ask the Lord to meet their needs and give them the resources to be able to take care of their children.

30) Today, ask God to protect children affected by war and violent conflicts. Pray that the Lord will protect their vulnerable hearts and keep them safe. Pray that a church will reach out to them.

31) Today, pray for families in countries all over the world who have room in their homes and hearts for a fatherless child. Ask that the Lord would speak to them even now, leading them to consider adoption or foster care.

32) Today, pray that every member of your church would remember and acknowledge and praise the Lord that before the world was made, He loved us and chose us, and that His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ and that this gave Him great pleasure. (Ephesians 1:3-5)

33) Today, ask the Lord to help your church be an example of the Lord's love for orphans as written in Psalm 10:17-18: "The helpless put their trust in You. You are the defender of orphans 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."

34) Today, pray for yourself and the other prayer team members. Ask the Lord for strength. Ask Him to help you not grow weary in battling for the orphans on your knees.

35) Today, ask the Lord to encourage and strengthen your church. Caring for orphans and changing attitudes and beliefs and actions is tough work and the enemy is bound to attack. Ask for protection for your pastor, his family, their health, and their ministry. Ask for God's hand of blessing on their lives.

36) Today, ask the Lord to release and speed any care supplies to refugee camps where many orphans live and need even the most basic necessities. Ask Him to cut through any governmental regulations or corrupt leaders to miraculously get the supplies delivered to where they are needed most.

37) Today, pray for families who are in the adoption process. Pray that God will provide the funds and help them with all the necessary details.

38) Today, pray for street children. These children live under bushes and in dumps and sewage pipes. They may eat meals out of trash cans. Many people walk by them without seeing them or view them as pests. Ask God to open the churches' eyes to help them see the orphans all around them. Ask the Lord to provide food and shelter for the street children.

39) Today, pray for the health of orphans around the world. Ask the Lord to provide medications and treatment for the simple things that are unnecessarily killing children like unclean drinking water, malaria, dysentery, AIDS, and malnutrition.

40) Today, thank the Lord for the past 40 days of prayer for orphans. Ask Him to bring more prayer warriors into the battle. Ask Him to help you to continue praying diligently. Ask Him to continue to give you His love for the orphans. Ask Him to continue to challenge the hearts of your congregation that "He who is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and He will reward him for what he has done." Proverbs 19:17.

Dangerous Surrender: What Happens When You Say Yes to God

Surrender. It is not an inviting concept, is it? Yielding. Relinquishing. Our very nature resists these concepts.

Intimacy with God. Now that is far more appealing. Don't we all long for a deeper personal experience of God's presence?

Kay Warren takes us on a startling adventure, across the globe and over the backyard fence, bringing us face to face with the powerful and mysterious link between surrender and intimacy with God. This wasn't a journey she intended, but once she took the first step there was no turning back. Her world—your world—will never be the same again.

Now Kay invites you—compels you—to explore living a life fully surrendered to God. You will encounter the stories of men, women and children that will forever alter your understanding of God. You will come face to face with truths that will forever alter your understanding of yourself. You will be challenged to attempt the impossible and discover in the process that God is far deeper, far wider, far closer than you ever dared to dream.

If you've ever struggled with knowing and doing God's will, this three-session, video-based small group study is for you.



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Notes