



Answering God's Call to Care for Orphans & Vulnerable Children

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Tragically, millions of children all over the globe have become orphaned for many reasons: war, famine, displacement, disease, and poverty. Of the more than 155 million children classified as orphans, 15.1 million have lost both parents. Each day, 39,000 children are forced from their homes because of the death of a parent, family illness or abuse, and abandonment.

Throughout Scripture, God has expressed his concern by asking that His people show concern and care for orphans. He pictures Himself as “A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy dwelling, God sets the lonely in families. . .” (Psalms 68:5). Adoption is one of the metaphors used in the Bible to explain how Christians are brought into the family of God. Jesus came “that we might receive adoption to sonship” ([Galatians 4:5](#)), and He was successful: “You received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children” ([Romans 8:15, NLT](#)).

Outside of Scripture, the first people to officially care for orphaned children were the Romans. They were the first in history to open an orphanage which they did around 400 AD. Long before then, however, both Jewish and Athenian law required that orphans be supported until age 18. The philosopher Plato once said, of adopted orphans, “A man should love the unfortunate orphan of whom he is guardian as if he were his child. He should be as careful and as diligent in the management of the orphan’s property as of his own or even more careful still.”

Generations later Seventh-day Adventists were reminded of their responsibility to care for orphaned children. The way they cared for these children along with others who have “special needs” was presented as a test of their character. Note the following:

*I saw that it is in the providence of God that widows and **orphans**, the blind, the deaf, the lame, and persons afflicted in a variety of ways, have been placed in close Christian relationship to His church; it is to prove His people and develop their true character. Angels of God are watching to see how we treat these persons who need our sympathy, love, and disinterested benevolence. **This is God’s test of our character.***

*It is strange that professed Christian men should disregard the plain, positive teachings of the word of God and feel no compunctions of conscience. **God places upon them the responsibility of caring for the unfortunate, the blind, the lame, the widow, and the fatherless;** but many make no effort to regard it. —Ellen White in Testimonies for the Church 3:511,517*

Adventist Possibility Ministries supports the many approaches of care provided for orphans, but all members need to show concern and care. The ultimate goal is to provide for a loving, caring home in which these children will grow up to love and serve Christ as their Friend. The following counsel given by Ellen White is indeed noteworthy,

Let those who have the love of God open their hearts and homes to take in these children. It is not the best plan to care for the orphans in large institutions. If they have no relatives able to provide for them, the members of our churches should either adopt these little ones into their families or find suitable homes for them in other households. – Ellen White in Counsels for the Church, p. 286.

Adventist Possibility Ministries is appreciative of the several Adventist organizations working for orphans and vulnerable children. Please see our website for various resource articles:

<https://www.possibilityministries.org/orphans>

Actions You Can Take Now to Help Orphans and Vulnerable Children

1. **Pray for These Children.** Consider adopting or becoming a foster care parent but even if this is not possible, pray that these children will find a home or care center that loves them.
2. **Send a Special Gift.** Children need to know that they are special. A thoughtful gift means much. So many children struggle to have the bare necessities of life. A personal gift given personally can say much to bring encouragement.
3. **Take Time to with These Children and Listen to Their Stories.** Not all vulnerable children are orphans. Become sensitive and with a caring “listening ear” and spend time with the children.
4. **Participate in the Do Fast to Defend Orphans Program.** This program brings recognition to the hunger and social challenges faced by millions of children around the world. The North American Division has already begun this program and other divisions may do the same. Check with your division, union, or conference Adventist Possibility Ministries (APM) leader to see about starting the program where you are.
5. **Consider Adopting a Child.** Adopting a child is an important decision and one that can bring hope, stability, and a bright future for a child and your own house.
6. **Consider Foster Care.** There are situations where parents are found negligent in the care of their children. In some areas of the world, the local government will step in and temporarily remove the children from their custody with the hope that changes can be made. During this time the foster family is given legal guardianship over the day-to-day care of those children. This is a tremendous opportunity for foster parents to make a lasting difference in the child’s life then and forever.
7. **Consider Saving a Family.** There are times when a crisis hits a family creating a stress that is especially difficult for the children. Providing a temporary home away from home can help relieve the immediate stress of both the parents and the children.
8. **Give Your Financial Support.** The Church is blessed with many supportive organizations dedicated to providing an array of services for orphans and vulnerable children. Some of these organizations are listed on our Adventist Possibility Ministries website, <https://www.possibilityministries.org/orphans>.