



# *gospel & culture*

GOSPEL & CULTURE: WIDOWS & ORPHANS  
WEEK 5 | PASTOR TODD AUGUSTINE

# Gospel & Culture: Widows & Orphans

On Sunday, July 24, Pastor Todd Augustine guided us through a discussion on widows and orphans.

*When people ask me, “How do you want to be introduced?” I usually propose they say, “This is Tim Keller, minister at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City.” Of course, I am many other things, but that is the main thing I spend my time doing in public life.*

*Realize, then, how significant it is that the biblical writers introduce God as “a father to the fatherless, a defender of widows” (Psalm 68:4-5). This is one of the main things He does in the world. He identifies with the powerless. He takes up their cause.*

Tim Keller, *Generous Justice*

## Is this an issue for all Christians or only a select few?

As Christians we have a responsibility to care for the weak and helpless in our society, particularly the fatherless and the needy widow. We must recognize that God has placed in us a call to go to the orphan to ease his or her suffering.

As believers we are called to engage people in a certain manner. We are called to be compassionate, merciful, generous, kind, patient, loving, wise and forgiving. We are called to do good to others, show honor, comfort, serve and show hospitality.

God specifically highlights three groups of people that he is concerned for and acts on behalf of: the orphan, the widow and the sojourner/alien/foreigner. Each of these groups was particularly vulnerable in ancient near-eastern society. The sojourner was vulnerable because he was an outsider susceptible to the oppression of others.

The widow and orphan were also particularly vulnerable because they were left without protection in a society where the clan, made up of families, was the basic social unit. The husband/father was the representative of his wife and children. Without a husband or father, the widow and children were left without protection, security, provision for basic material needs and someone to represent their interests in court (Job 31:21). Life was harsh which meant that the widow and the fatherless were helpless, vulnerable and without rights or protection or anyone to stand up for them.

Hence, the orphan, the widow, the sojourner were objects of special concern to a merciful God. We fully understand the logic, don't we? In a corrupt society, the weak are in harm's way. It was true in the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and it is true today. A society will inevitably extort the sojourner, wrong the widow and exploit the fatherless. These were the injustices of ancient culture as well as modern societies. So God acts on behalf of the weak, the helpless, the vulnerable.

I'm going to focus primarily on orphans but most of this applies principally to widows and sojourners. Orphans are representative in a sense, of the helpless, vulnerable of our society. I want to do three things: one, look at the Biblical rationale; two, examine the current state of affairs; and three, answer the question “What can I do?”

## God's Attitude Toward the Orphan—How Does God Respond to the Orphan?

1. Paternal care as a loving father
  - a. God cares for orphans
    - i. Psalm 68:5—father of the fatherless
    - ii. Hosea 14:3—in you the orphan finds mercy
  - b. God helps orphans
    - i. Psalm 10:14—help for the fatherless
2. Provides
  - a. God provides for orphans
    - i. Deuteronomy 14:28-29; 26:12-13 every three years/tithe goes to the orphan, widows and sojourners—charitable fund (first DAF) for the fatherless
  - b. God sustains orphans
    - i. Psalm 146:9—upholds the widow and the fatherless
3. Protects
  - a. God defends orphans
    - i. Deuteronomy 10:17-18—executes justice for the fatherless and widow
    - ii. Psalm 10:17-18—you incline your ear to do justice for the fatherless
  - b. God protects orphans
    - i. Jeremiah 49:11—“leave your fatherless children, I will keep them alive”
4. Prohibits oppression
  - a. God prohibits the oppression of orphans—treat justly

- i. Jeremiah 22:3—do no wrong to the resident alien, widow, orphan
- ii. Zechariah 7:8, 10—do not oppress the widow, foreigner, sojourner
- b. God consider the oppression of orphans a serious offense
  - i. Jeremiah 7:2-7 – if you do not oppress the sojourner, foreigner, widow then I will dwell among you
- c. God promises to punish the oppressors of orphans
  - 1. Exodus 22:22-24
  - 2. Isaiah 1:23-25
  - 3. Isaiah 10:1-2
  - 4. Jeremiah 5:27-29
  - 5. Ezekiel 22:7,13
  - 6. Malachi 3:5

- oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow’s cause
- ii. Deuteronomy 27:19—Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. And all the people shall say, “Amen.”
- iii. Deuteronomy 24:17-18—You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow’s garment in pledge, but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there...

## Our Attitude Toward the Orphan – How Are We Called to Respond to the Fatherless?

1. The believer’s duty to orphans
  - a. CARE for orphans—go to the orphan and ease their suffering
    - i. Job 31:16-19, 21-23
    - ii. James 1:27—visit orphans and widows in their affliction
  - b. PROTECT—Detest the oppression of orphans
    - i. Psalm 94:1-6—God of vengeance, shine forth...on those who murder the fatherless
    - ii. Proverb 23:10—do not enter the fields of the fatherless
  - c. PRAY FOR—Entreat God to deliver
    - i. Job 24:1-3—some who drive away the donkey of the fatherless, take the widow’s ox. Judge them, O God.
    - ii. Psalm 82:3—Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. Rescue the weak and the needy.
  - d. PROVIDE FOR—Give generously to orphans
    - i. Deuteronomy 24:19-21—give the remainder from your harvest, olive trees and vineyards to the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow
  - e. Involve orphans in the worshiping community
    - i. Deuteronomy 16:9-11—Feast of Weeks
    - ii. Deuteronomy 16:13-15—Feast of Booth
  - f. Treat orphans justly
    - i. Isaiah 1:17—learn to do good; seek justice, correct

## Why Are We Called to Respond This Way? What Is the Biblical Rationale? What is the Divine Logic of Orphan Care?

1. Because I have redeemed you – in other words, because of the Gospel! You were once enslaved and fatherless, unprotected, without rights or standing or privilege. With no one to represent you, no one to look out for you, ultimately in peril, in danger, in harm’s way. And yet God adopted you! Redeemed you! *“You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow’s garment in pledge, but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there; therefore, I command you to do this. “When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over them again. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not strip it afterward. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore, I command you to do this. Deuteronomy 24:17-24*
2. You are weak, vulnerable and helpless apart from God’s redeeming love through Christ.
3. God is merciful and if you have received his mercy, then you are to extend it to the vulnerable.
4. We are called to be like our Father in heaven, because we are his children.
5. The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.” Exodus 34:6

6. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. Luke 6:36
7. If you miss the biblical rationale, then you will only be about social justice.

## What is the Current State of Affairs Regarding the Fatherless?

### Global Orphan Statistics:

- Total estimated number of orphans worldwide: 130 million
- Estimated number that have lost only their mother: 34.5 million
- Estimated number that have lost only their father: 101 million
- Estimated number of “double orphans”: 17.6 million
- Estimated number of children on streets or in residential care: 2-8 million

**Number of caring adults it takes to make a life-long difference for an orphan: 1**

### How great is the need?

- There are an estimated 132 million orphans worldwide—children who have lost one or both parents. (according to UNICEF)
- According to UNICEF estimates, there are 13 million orphans who have lost both parents and are living in orphanages or on the streets and lack the care and attention required for healthy development.
- HIV/AIDS has orphaned 17.9 children, most in Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. A child loses a parent to AIDS every 14 seconds.
- The majority of these children are in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

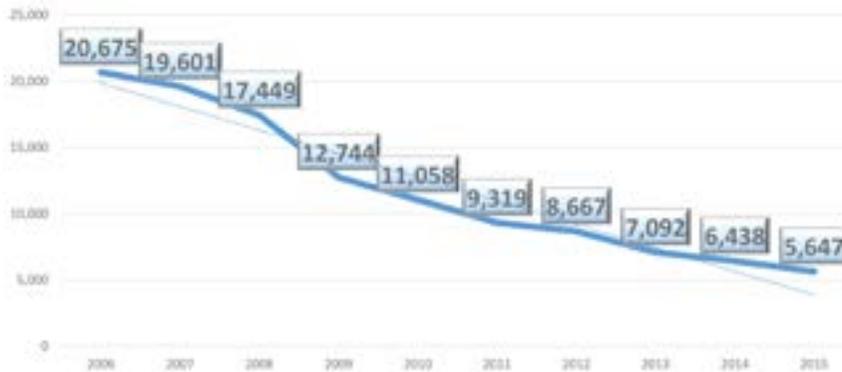
## Global Orphan Challenge



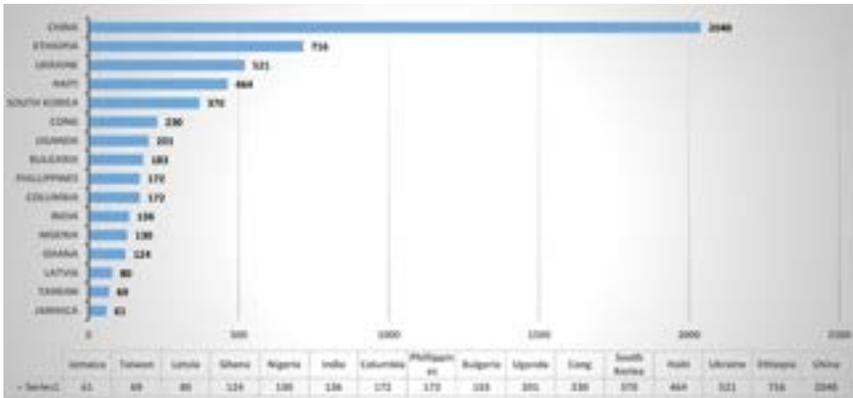
### Inter-Country Adoption Statistics:

- Over the past decade, 179,719 children from around the world were welcomed into families in the U.S. through inter-country adoption.
- 6441 inter-country adoptions took place in 2014.
- Top five sending countries in 2014 were China, Ethiopia, Ukraine, Haiti and South Korea.
- Inter-country adoption has decreased 72% from its high in 2004 primarily due to restrictions by sending countries.
- International adoption of orphans has been on a precipitous decline over the last decade.

### U.S. Trend in International Adoption:



### Incoming Adoptions by Country of Origin:



### Domestic Adoption Statistics

- Children in foster care in the U.S.: 402,378.
- Number of U.S. children awaiting adoption: 101,840, nearly one-third will wait over three years before being adopted.
- Every year more than 20,000 young people in the U.S. foster care system age out with no support or family.
- Average age of U.S. children awaiting adoption: 7 years, 7 months.

### Foster Care Statistics

- Children entering foster care in 2013: 254,904
- Children exiting foster care in 2013: 238,280
- Average time in care within the foster system: 21.8 months

- Children aging out of the foster system in 2012: 23,090
- Number of children in care whose parental rights were terminated in 2013: 58,887
- Approximate number of children adopted from foster care in 2013: 50,281
- **Number of caring adults it takes to make a life-long difference for a child in the foster system: 1**

### The Cost of Adoption

- The Child Welfare Information Gateway, a government-funded adoption information service, estimates the average U.S. adoption costs of various types of adoptions:
  - Intercountry Adoptions — \$15,000 - \$30,000
  - Independent Adoptions — \$8,000 - \$40,000+
  - Licensed Private Agency Adoptions — \$5,000 - \$40,000+
  - Facilitated/Unlicensed Adoptions — \$5,000 - \$40,000+
  - Public Agency (Foster Care) Adoptions — \$0 - \$2,500

### How Can I Care for the Fatherless? (from Hope for Orphans)

- Pray for them.
- Defend them, speak up for them.
- Provide for their needs.
- Support those who support them.
- Protect them.
- Visit them where they are.
- Give sacrificially to them.
- Encourage them.
- Foster them or be a Safe Family.
- Adopt them.

### Application: What Can I do?

Nine Ways Every Christian Can Care for the Orphan and Waiting Child (from Hope for Orphans)

1. PRAY for them.
  - a. Tape a waiting child's picture to your car's dashboard and pray for the child every time you're in a car. Visit AdoptUsKids.org or RainbowKids.com
  - b. Organize an evening prayer vigil at your church and pray for children in foster care or an orphanage overseas.

2. SPEAK UP for them.
  - a. Carry a waiting child's picture and show it to other believers. Ask if they, or someone they know, would give this child a home.
  - b. Become a court-appointed special advocate for a child in foster care. Visit [NationalCASA.org](http://NationalCASA.org) for details.
3. PROVIDE for their needs.
  - a. Give sacrificially to a reputable orphanage. Financial gifts can be designated for specific items and aid needed by orphans.
  - b. Organize a drive in your church to collect school supplies for children in foster care or shoes for orphans overseas. Visit [GainUSA.org](http://GainUSA.org) or [ShoesForOrphanSouls.org](http://ShoesForOrphanSouls.org).
4. SUPPORT those who support them.
  - a. Mow lawns, babysit or organize meals for a week for foster parents. Pray with them and tell them you appreciate what they do.
  - b. Encourage a family adopting an older child by hosting a shower for them.
5. PROTECT them from harm.
  - a. Become a foster parent or emergency foster parent. Visit the Safe Families website.
  - b. Raise money to build a children's home to help remove children from the streets. Visit [WorldOrphans.org](http://WorldOrphans.org) for details.
6. VISIT them where they are.
  - a. Go on a mission trip to an orphanage as an individual or family. Visit [GainUSA.org](http://GainUSA.org) for information.
  - b. Take dinner to a foster group home on a regular basis.
7. GIVE sacrificially to them.
  - a. Support reputable orphan care organizations on a regular basis.
  - b. Contribute generously to an adoptive family to help offset their costs. Visit [ShowHope.org](http://ShowHope.org) or [LifeSongForOrphans.org](http://LifeSongForOrphans.org)
8. ENCOURAGE them to press on.
  - a. Sponsor a child, support them financially and encourage them through your letters. Visit [VisionTrust.org](http://VisionTrust.org) to learn more.
  - b. Become a mentor or tutor to a teenager in a foster group home.
9. ADOPT them into your family.
  - a. Give a child a home through international, domestic or foster care adoption.
  - b. Adopt a young adult who has aged out of the system.

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## Helpful websites:

CAFO (Christian Alliance for Orphans): <https://cafo.org>

Together for Adoption: <http://www.togetherforadoption.org/>

