



Orphans & Widows

SUNDAY

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keep oneself unstained from the world.”

JAMES 1:27, CSB

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How Can Your Church Help Orphans?

BY KRISTEN LOWRY

Does your church support an orphanage? Have you ever taken a short-term mission trip to serve at an orphanage? Does your family sponsor an orphan? If not, have you ever wondered how you or your church could help orphans?

There is a clear biblical mandate for churches and believers to care for widows and orphans. James 1:27 says, “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” However, our generous and sacrificial efforts to support children through orphanages and children’s homes is not producing the kind of results we have hoped for.

Families are vital for the development of children. They need the connection, belonging, and identity of a family to thrive into adulthood. Research shows significant improved outcomes for children who are cared for in their families, foster families, or adoptive families, compared to orphanages and children’s homes.

For these reasons, many countries and organizations are moving away from traditional institutional care (orphanages) to family and community-based care.

Organizations are working to strengthen families so they never need to consider an orphanage as a solution to their challenges. When a child is unable to be cared for in their own families, a foster or adoptive family allows children the opportunity to stay in the community and receive the individualized support of a family.

Psalm 68 tells us that “God sets the lonely in families.” Orphans don’t just need food, shelter and education. Orphans need a safe, loving family.

As part of my work as the International Orphan Care Consultant for Send Relief, one of my primary objectives is to help advise local churches in the U.S. on how to best care for orphans and vulnerable children based on biblical principles and emerging research in the field. We want to provide Southern Baptist churches with the tools, training, and advice needed to help you care for orphans in their affliction. Together, we can labor to see more orphans and vulnerable children know Christ’s love through placement in safe, loving families.

Kristen Lowry is the International Orphan Care Consultant for Send Relief and co-executive director of Shelter Yetu in Naivasha, Kenya.

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This bulletin insert is a publication of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, 901 Commerce Street Suite 550, Nashville, TN 37203

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