

Possibilities Ministries – Devotional for Nov 21, 2020
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John Bunyan was a 17th century Christian writer and preacher who is best known for the Christian allegory of “The Pilgrim’s Progress”. He made the following statement:

“You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.”

The world around us has changed drastically from the time of John Bunyan – but his words still resonate today. A lot has changed in the world since then, with many countries healthier, better fed, educated and far more advanced than it was 200 years ago, but some things do not change. According to the UN:

18,000 children die every day of hunger, 850 million people go to bed every night with empty stomachs. And there are more than 150 million orphans today, over 100,000 in the US alone.

We are living in a time where the COVID pandemic affects every corner of the world. Countries have locked down their borders and travel remain restricted today. This illness affects the most vulnerable in this world the hardest, with parents dying and leaving the children at the mercy of relatives or strangers. Not long before, it was the AIDS epidemic that scorched its deathly path through the developing world, leaving millions dead and a huge number of children orphaned or semi-orphaned. The need no longer seems as urgent – yet it remains. Government’s priorities to support developing countries change regularly and many of our members are worried about their own livelihood. Help to those in need no longer flows as readily as it did before. The statistics for orphans or semi-orphans look discouraging. There are over:

- 30 million in India
- 61 million in Asia, with China alone more than 20 million
- 52 million in Africa
- 10 million in Latin America and the Caribbean

The untold story behind the numbers is the personal toll related to conflict zones, refugee status, natural disasters and COVID. Regardless of country, culture or calamity, it is children who suffer the most. By many standards, addressing this need would be one of the most significant, humanitarian, political, or economic investment the world can make for its future.

Let me give you one example: Kaka was a ten year- old boy from Africa who was living with his six-year-old sister Doka alone in an empty hut. Both parents had died of HIV/AIDS and they were left to fend for themselves. Kaka was hobbling around in the village market leaning on a stick, because both feet were inflamed with an infection called *infungu* (caused by insects laying eggs under the skin which then cause an infection). He was begging for something to eat for his sister and himself. He was angry at the world, because people stole from him what little he had, with no one to care or help.

The UN's millennial goals of halving the number of people in poverty is far from being reached and ongoing world events make this goal even more difficult to meet. The poor are the ones who suffer the most in any disaster or catastrophe, because they are helpless, hopeless and powerless. People with money can always get by; the poor are the powerless. Poverty means illiteracy, inadequate medical care, disease and lack of education.

Let us add a more positive perspective – by looking at orphans (in the USA) who were taken in and taken care of in their lifetime:

Steve Jobs – of Apple Computers
Edgar Allan Poe – an American writer best known for his poetry and short stories
Eleanor Roosevelt – first lady
Marilyn Monroe – model and actress
John Lennon – musician
Babe Ruth – baseball player
Malcom X – African American leader in the civil rights movement and a minister

Regardless of the life they led, we should all be able to agree that they had a lasting impact on this world. Their childhood was certainly not ideal, but they were given the opportunity and support to rise despite their disadvantages. This serves as an encouragement to us what is **possible**.

There is hope and Jesus and the Bible remind us of the need to respond as Christians and Adventists:

1. We are to let the children come to Him (Matthew 19:14)
2. We are to defend their rights. (Psalm 82:3)
3. We are to speak up for them as advocates. (Proverbs 31:8)
4. We are to feed them. (Matthew 25)
5. We are to clothe them. (Matthew 25)
6. We are to protect them from those who mistreat them. (Isaiah 1:17)
7. We are to ensure justice for them. (Deuteronomy 24:17)
8. We are to share our resources with them. (Luke 3:11, Romans 12:13)

This Sabbath has been set aside to especially remind us of orphans who live in the shadows and we have the **possibility** to alleviate the suffering. Will you heed the call?

Let's remember that all of us were orphans once. You may have had a father and mother, but spiritually we were all orphans – until God adopted us. The Bible says in Ephesians 1:5, **“God predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will.”**

In my travel it amazes me, how helpless and poor people in this world seem at times to be more generous than we are in the more affluent countries - in sharing what little they have with the people around them - without thinking of the future. It breaks my heart to have street children offer me a drink or a piece of bread without thinking of their needs. They have so little, yet they are generous and willing to share.

There are members in your midst who have a burden to help children, who should be given

the opportunity to do so – and we as a church should not only encourage them but support them to do so. What is keeping you from starting your own mission project in helping orphans. This may be in your own backyard, or overseas in the mission field. But don't expect 'someone else' to do something when you yourself can do it. I am appealing to you today to get involved and have some suggestions to do so to fulfill Jesus' admonition to bring the children to Him:

1. Identify members in your midst who have a special burden to help orphans
2. Encourage and support them in their efforts
3. Select a mission project that is focused on orphans – or start your own project
4. Work with an Adventist ministry that focuses on children and orphans – the website <https://www.possibilityministries.org/orphans> provides information and related resources
5. Get involved by volunteering, providing financial support or sponsoring a child
6. Get young people involved, by having a children's Sabbath School class sponsor a child
7. Don't wait for governments or the large on-profits to do it all – get involved yourself and act now

We all know that Christ identified with the poor – which includes the orphans - when He said “I was hungry, and you fed me.... In as much as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren you have done it unto me”. If not for the grace of God you and I could be one of the 850 million people who go to bed every night on an empty stomach. We could be like them, poor, in debt, hungry, homeless, sick, and desperate not knowing which way to turn.

God has spared us such agony. We have done nothing to deserve all that we have, much more than we need. **“To whom much is given much is required.”** Luke 12:48 We cannot touch divinity until we touch humanity. We live in extraordinary times; which requires us to do extraordinary things. Let us give more – much more to the point where it hurts – to help others who are hurting. God not only commands us to feed the hungry and clothe the naked but He promises us, that **“then thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health springs forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward”** (Isaiah 58:8). We need to do the one to claim the other. Jesus is coming soon and He will divide the sheep from the goats according to their deeds.

Extreme poverty, debt and hunger make people desperate. Desperate people do desperate things just to survive. For example, in India babies are either aborted or killed at birth, because it is one more unaffordable mouth to feed. Girls as young as 10 are sold as brides to old men, or given to the temple while other are forced to sell their bodies, beg or work long tedious hours under horrible conditions for a pittance, in order to eat just one meal a day and have a roof over their heads, or to pay off the debt collector who threatens their very existence. They have very little hope for a decent life.

I can give you my personal experience, volunteering with an organization called REACH International, that was organized 47 years ago to alleviate and reduce hunger and suffering especially among children primarily through feeding and education. We believe that “Education is Salvation for the poor.” Here are few short stories of children and orphans where Adventist sponsors have been able to make a difference:

1. An Indian child called Alex was one of the first children ever sponsored by REACH. Less than 10 years old, he and his sister were making matchsticks, as the family was unable to take care of their needs. The organization sponsored him to go to an Adventist school. Decades later, this provided him the **possibility** to work as a senior

VP of Finance of a bank.

2. A child named Haile came to our project in Wukro, Ethiopia, where he graduated. He eventually had the opportunity to further his studies in the USA to become a pharmacist, making medicines for peoples' health needs and is now a respected pharmacist in Texas.
3. Sebi was a street child that came to a project in Romania. He was a smart but troubled child who got himself into a lot of trouble over the years. But he stayed in school and was eventually able to go to medical school - and is now a doctor in the UK.
4. Prabhu was an Indian child whose mother could not support him and his siblings. He was raised at the REACH project, where he graduated from High School before pursuing other interest. Years later, he was reintroduced to REACH and wanted to give back to the organization that helped and supported him – quit his job and is now the project administrator in the same project where he was grew up.

There are many other examples of children given the chance of making their way through life – becoming teachers, workers, pastors, administrators, doctors and lawyers. Not all the children stay close to Adventism, but that exposure changed their life, which in turn touched many other lives. Sponsors are the ones that make it **possible** – in providing the means to give these children a chance.

Today, decide to make a difference in the world of the orphans! We know that the Bible specifically talks about this vulnerable part of society and you have heard about **possibilities** to address these needs. It is now up to you to involve yourself and support those that feel compelled to act. Today is a special day meant to remind us of this great need and how you can be a blessing to that group. Given that support, these children can grow up to earn a living, and help their family. We hope that they will choose to love and obey God. We want them to escape the cycle of poverty and have eternal life as well. Your involvement and support will give you the satisfaction of giving a Christian Education to the orphaned, abandoned, and destitute children of the world and answering God's call.

Christ's work is to be our example. His life was one of unselfish service, and it is to be our lesson book. His tender pitying love rebukes our selfishness and heartlessness.(9T31).

Jesus says: **Take my yoke upon you ...** (Mat 11:29). We are called to service for as long as life shall last. Give in sincerity and your efforts to bless others will result in blessings upon yourselves. God will bless your efforts and multiply – rather than diminish what is available for local needs.

“Give and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over shall men give into our bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it will be measured to you again.” (Luke 6:38).

Thank you and have a blessed Sabbath !