

God's concern for orphans and widows is not confined to the Old Testament. It is also found in James' definition of pure and genuine religion.

Open Arms Childcare Ministries explains the situation they are addressing in Mexico in this way *"In many families the father is absent, which leaves mothers vulnerable as they try to raise their children while working and without support. Many mothers and families are forced to leave their children home alone or on the streets while they work long and tiring hours. These children are left to fend for themselves....Many families are faced with the heart-wrenching decision to voluntarily drop off their children at an orphanage because there are no daycare options available to help keep families together. This is where we come in. God has called us to open our arms to these families and to fight to keep them together."*

The mission of Open Arms Ministries is aligned with God's heart to care for widows (women with absent husbands) and orphans (children left to fend for themselves). Please pause now to pray together for this ministry, for the children and their parents and for the workers.

WRAP-UP

God created us to do good. And doing good includes care for those who are weak, oppressed, outcast and vulnerable. Our God is compassionate and loving and He calls His people to care for the widows and orphans. The founders of Open Arms Ministries generously devote their lives in service to this calling. We are partnering with them through our Flourish Campaign. Ten percent of the Flourish Funds are used in mission work including Open Arms. Our prayer is that through this partnership many New Lifers will be able to visit Open Arms Ministry in person. We want to see New Life families and individuals experience the joy of breaking down barriers of nationality and language to experience the richness of God's global Kingdom together.

MEMORY VERSE

27 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

Challenge- Ask God how He is calling you to respond. That might be by donating to the Flourish Fund or directly to Open Arms, by signing up for a future mission trip or by committing to pray for this ministry.

Mission-Fueled Generosity **The Way of Generosity - Week 2**

INTRODUCTION

This weekend we were visited by the founders of our mission partners Open Arms. Their story is an example of Mission-Fueled generosity. This couple followed the calling of God to battle a global poverty-driven orphan crisis. They are proclaiming the goodness of God until they see His plan of hope, for what many have called hopeless, come to pass. Along the way they have generously dedicated their lives to this work, and many have supported their mission in practical and financial contributions. As we follow the mission of Jesus, to bring His Good News to the world, our hearts are shaped to be generous to those in need, even as He was.

Ice Breaker

Have you ever been part of a missions team? If so, describe your experiences. If not, share any visits you've made to Mexico.

Key Passage

17 Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows. - Isaiah 1:17 NLT

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Are We Missing the Obvious?

10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. - Ephesians 2:10 NLT

God created all of us, even the most ordinary, to be on mission in this world. Ephesians 2:10 reminds us that God has a purpose for each of us. Let's consider where we can look for those opportunities to do the good things God has planned for us, beginning locally.

Sometimes we are spiritually blind to the opportunities that lie at our doorstep. In Luke 16 Jesus tells the story of the rich man and Lazarus.

It appears that even though Lazarus was in plain sight, the rich man did nothing to help him.

19 Jesus said, "There was a certain rich man who was splendidly clothed in purple and fine linen and who lived each day in luxury. 20 At his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus who was covered with sores. 21 As Lazarus lay there longing for scraps from the rich man's table, the dogs would come and lick his open sores. 22 "Finally, the poor man died and was carried by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried, 23 and his soul went to the place of the dead. There, in torment, he saw Abraham in the far distance with Lazarus at his side. 24 "The rich man shouted, 'Father Abraham, have some pity! Send Lazarus over here to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue. I am in anguish in these flames.' 25 "But Abraham said to him, 'Son, remember that during your lifetime you had everything you wanted, and Lazarus had nothing. So now he is here being comforted, and you are in anguish. - Luke 16:19-25 NLT

It is easy to vilify the rich man, but if we were to review our week, how many times did we fail to see the needy at our own doorstep? God knows the names of the needy and the destitute, the “Lazaruses”, but we more likely label them as “the homeless” or “illegal aliens” or some other broad term. Our guest speakers this weekend saw the needy around them. They were moved with God’s heart of compassion and responded to His call to care for their needs.

If you were to approach someone in obvious need and ask them their name, even before you offered them money or food, how would that affect the way you view them? And what would it do for them to be seen and listened to? Imagine a worst-case and best-case scenario if you were to engage in conversation and get to know the story of someone in deep need.

2. Time, Talent, and Treasures

If we see ourselves on mission to do good works, and our eyes are open to the people in need around us, both locally and globally, we will be ready to put God-fueled mercy and compassion into action.

Can you identify the attitudes, the actions and the results of believers who lived like this in Acts 4:32-35?

32 All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. 33 The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all. 34 There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them 35 and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need. - Acts 4:32-35 NLT

In the church, God has assembled people with a variety of resources. We can think of these as the three “T’s”, time, talent and treasure.

Some of us have more time than money to give. Others are happy to contribute funds, while still others may have the skills and abilities that will meet the needs of the hurting.

Which of the three T's would you say you are best able to provide?

3. Caring for Widows and Orphans

17 Learn to do good. Seek justice. Help the oppressed. Defend the cause of orphans. Fight for the rights of widows. - Isaiah 1:17 NLT

3 "Give justice to the poor and the orphan; uphold the rights of the oppressed and the destitute. 4 Rescue the poor and helpless; deliver them from the grasp of evil people. - Psalm 82:3-4 NLT

3 This is what the LORD says: Be fair-minded and just. Do what is right! Help those who have been robbed; rescue them from their oppressors. Quit your evil deeds! Do not mistreat foreigners, orphans, and widows. Stop murdering the innocent!

- Jeremiah 22:3 NLT

God’s heart is tender towards those who are weak, oppressed, outcast and vulnerable. When He addressed Judah in its rebellion through Isaiah, He rejected their sacrifices, prayers and offerings as meaningless, but He told them to give up their evil ways and learn to do good.

What did Isaiah include in God’s instructions for doing good? How is that echoed in Psalm 82 and Jeremiah 22:3?

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