**MINISTERING LIKE JESUS**

At the heart of the gospel is the love of God as demonstrated in the sacrifice of Christ who interjected Himself into our brokenness and redeemed us out of it by adopting us into His family (Galatians 4:5-7). This gospel of love should motivate us to love and care for orphans and vulnerable children.

**Everyone Can Do Something**

Edward Everett Hale, the distinguished poet and former Chaplain of the U.S. Senate, eloquently captured the essence of every American’s duty:

“I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do

something. What I can do, that I ought to do. And what I ought to do, by the grace of God, I shall do.”1

Yes, EVERYONE CAN DO SOMETHING!

**The Body of Christ**

Paul uses the human body to illustrate the function and activity of the Church. Some of us are hands and some are feet while others are fingers and toes. Still others are eyes or are ears. We’re a group of people coming together with different spiritual gifts, passions, personalities, experiences, to unite for the common good of others. Notice how Paul describes it in 1 Corinthians 12:14-20:

*For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should*

*say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not*

*make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.”*

According to Jason Johnson of Christian Alliance for Orphans, in the Body of Christ, *no one is called to do everything, but everyone is called to do something.* That is how our churches should work together with the gifts and talents God has given us for the common good of the whole body.

What is the Spirit of Prophecy’s counsel about “doing something” for these orphans and vulnerable children? Listen to what Ellen White writes:

*“Brethren and sisters, I ask you to consider this matter carefully. Think*

*of the fatherless and motherless. Are not your hearts stirred as you*

*witness their sufferings? See if something cannot be done for the care*

*of these helpless ones. As far as lies in your power, make a home for*

*the homeless. Let everyone stand ready to act a part in helping*

*forward this work. The Lord said to Peter, “Feed My Lambs.” This*

*command is to us and by opening our homes for the orphans we are*

*in aid in its fulfillment. Let not Jesus be disappointed in you.”*2

If both Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy mandate the Body of Christ to care for the orphans, are we really getting involved with them? Research revealed some interesting results.

Recently, Barna Group worked with the *Faith to Action Initiative* and *Changing the Way We Care* to conduct a survey of 3,000 U.S. Christians in order to better understand their perceptions and support of orphanages. The study shows that 1 out of 5 respondents reports donating to orphanages, children’s homes or other forms of residential care for children. It was estimated that $3.3 billion dollars were donated, and an estimated 4 million from this group have visited orphanages on mission trips to show their support. The overall study highlights the fact that the vast majority of U.S. Christians (86%) believe orphanages are a positive response to the needs of vulnerable children.3

Praise the Lord that many Christians are doing something to support orphanages financially. What about those who don’t have a whole lot to donate? Can they do something too? If we believe that we are called to do something in serving orphans and vulnerable children and their families, then we would joyfully look for something to do.

Jason Johnson, National Director of Church Ministry Initiatives at the Christian Alliance for Orphans told an inspiring story that illustrates this philosophy. In his own words, he said:

“I recently met an older gentleman in Oklahoma. I had just

finished speaking at an event for a church and he was catering the

food for the night. Part of my message included an appeal to the

church to empower every individual member to “find their

something” – to understand that we’re not all called to do the same

things, but that we’re all capable of doing something. Afterwards,

he wanted to tell me what his “something” was.

He told me he makes the best BBQ in the state (a bold claim!) and

LOVES to cater any orphan care ministry related event at their

church including respite nights for couples, info meetings for those

considering getting involved and even taking meals over to families

who have had a new child placed with them. He said that while he

may not be in a position to bring a child into his home, he can certainly

do his best to serve those who are. For him, it meant making sure these families in his church had the best BBQ in Oklahoma. What a gift!”

Notice, he was clear about 2 things:

1. He knew what he couldn’t do.

2. He knew what he could do.

He resolved to do what he could do with excellence and passion for these families. That is what it means to “find your something.” 4

Yes, every church, everyone can work together to do something for orphans and vulnerable children. Again, Paul reminds us about how our body parts function as one in Romans 12:4-5:

“*For as in one body we have many members, and the members do*

*not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body*

*in Christ, and individually members one of another.”*

So, the message we are sounding this year in 2021 is this: Everyone can

do something. . .So, FIND YOUR SOMETHING!

**Find Your Something**

God has given each of us different gifts and talents, experiences, and unique personalities to serve others. So, do a quick self-check to identify what you can do and what you cannot do in serving this special group of children. Some of you can bring children into your homes through adoption, but the rest of you can find other ways to serve and support them.

What does “everyone can do something” looks like in your church? Would it be like this diagram? 5



If some families adopt orphans into their homes, the rest of the members can help to support those families by providing a variety of services as in the diagram.

**Develop a Core Ministry**

Love and care for orphans and vulnerable children should not be just a peripheral ministry of the church. It should be a CORE ministry! James 1:27 strongly urges us that: **“**Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

Isaiah 61:1-3 clearly states that the Messiah came to “bring good news to the poor, bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim release for captives, and liberate the prisoners.” In the same way, the church is asked to minister like Christ in reaching out to the brokenhearted and the poor.

Hence, it is important that the church develop a strategy that consistently communicate God’s heart for the orphaned and vulnerable and seek to provide opportunities for members to get involved throughout the year.

Annual events like World Orphans & Vulnerable Children’s Day or World Day of Prayer for Children at Risk are powerful in touching the hearts of many, thus motivating them to reach out to these children. However, when it is over, we wait for another year before we get members stirred up again for action. In reality, we are communicating a message that our church cares about this ministry just a couple of times a year.

We must move from the peripherals to the Core. Talk about this ministry in the overall church ministries rather than just a “special” event once a year. Throughout the year include smaller steps to serve these children. Maybe you could have something like the following:

* Back-to-school Drive for Orphans.
* Orphan and Street Children Picnic.
* Vulnerable Children Sunday Treat
* Orphan Foster Care Awareness Week.
* Sermon series on Orphan Emphasis Week.
* Mission project for orphans/vulnerable children.

**Expand Your Space of Service**

The church can develop a strategy to expand its space for getting members involved in diverse ministries for orphans and vulnerable children. The church could be involved in issues of homelessness, child sponsorship programs, children’s ministry, counseling, mentorship, prison ministry which also include caring for vulnerable and orphaned children. Collaborate with the other ministries of the church to include many more members involved as they work with children, Adventurers, Pathfinders, Youth groups, community services, and others. Let’s break away from our “silo” mentality and work together to reach these unfortunate children.

The church can acquaint members with international child sponsorship programs and organizations that help orphans, such as Restore a Child, and International Children’s Care, both of which are operated by Seventh-day Adventists. Invite representatives from these organizations to come and speak to the church, thus providing opportunities for those who are passionate about these children to play a more active role in it.

Are you ready to take up this challenge? Are you ready to do something for orphans and vulnerable children? Take time to “find your something” that you can do to serve them. Look for that “something” you can do and commit to do it. God will give you power to move forward.

Yes, Ellen White reminds us of God’s promise to help us and encourages every one of us to get involved with these children:6

*“The Word of God abounds with instruction as to how we should*

*treat the widow, the fatherless, and the needy, suffering poor. If*

*all would obey this instruction, the widow’s heart would sing for*

*joy; hungry little children would be fed; the destitute would be*

*clothed; and those ready to perish would be revived. Heavenly*

*intelligences are looking on, and when, imbued with zeal for*

*Christ’s honor, we place ourselves in the channel of God’s*

*Providence, these heavenly messengers will impart to us a*

*new spiritual power, so that we shall be able to combat difficulties*

*and triumph over obstacles.”*

So, Brothers and Sister, let’s go for it! Let’s do something for orphans and vulnerable children! May God bless you all as you seek to make this commitment to help orphans and vulnerable children. Remember:

***No one is called to do everything, but everyone is called to do something.***

**REFERENCES**

1Statement published in *A Year of Beautiful Thoughts‎* (1902) by Jeanie Ashley Bates Greenough,

p. 172,

2Ellen White, *Welfare Ministry*, p. 222.

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6Ellen White, *Welfare Ministry,* p. 231.