



“When my father had an accident and couldn’t work anymore, things got worse for us. Then my mom told me I couldn’t go back to school because we couldn’t afford it. I cried. I had dreamt of so much more. We were trapped.”

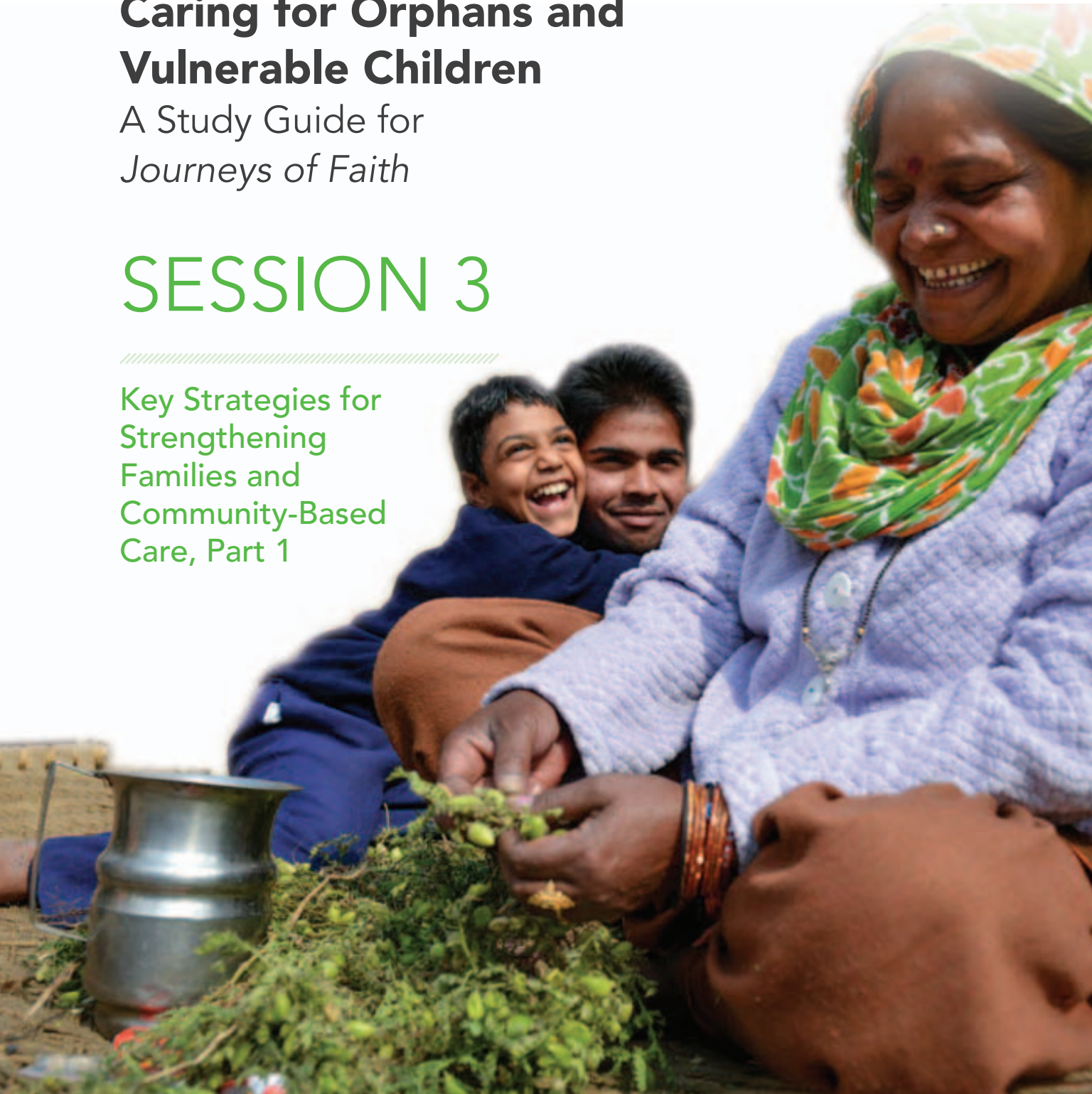
» Genevieve, a vulnerable child in the Philippines

Caring for Orphans and Vulnerable Children

A Study Guide for
Journeys of Faith

SESSION 3

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Key Strategies for
Strengthening
Families and
Community-Based
Care, Part 1



If you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.

Isaiah 58:10 NIV

Caring for Orphans and Vulnerable Children
A Study Guide for *Journeys of Faith* (Sessions 1 – 6)
The Faith to Action Initiative, 2015.
Photo credits: Firelight Foundation and World Vision

This series is designed to support small group study accompanying *Journeys of Faith: A Resource Guide for Orphan Care Ministries Helping Children in Africa & Beyond*. The series includes six downloadable sessions and a facilitator guide, which together equip small groups with the tools, resources, and information needed to engage participants through discussion, readings, videos, group activities, and prayer.

The Faith to Action Initiative serves as a resource for Christian groups, churches, and individuals seeking to respond to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children. Through our publications, website, and workshops, we offer practical tools and resources and up-to-date information on key strategies and research to help guide action.

www.faithtoaction.org

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER

 2 minutes

Welcome to Session 3 of *Caring for Orphans and Vulnerable Children*. In this session, you will:

- Discuss what you read and watched in your individual study about key strategies for strengthening families (see “On Your Own,” page 13 in Session 2, as well as any notes you may have taken on pages 20–21).
- Begin the first of a two-part study on 12 key strategies for strengthening family- and community-based care of vulnerable children.

Before starting your discussion, begin your time together with prayer, inviting God to open your hearts and minds as you seek to learn more about caring for orphans and vulnerable children.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Checking In

 8 minutes

Check in with each other about what you’ve read, watched, and experienced since your last gathering.

1. What did you discover in your additional reading, study, and reflection about causes of separation from family care and the importance of strengthening families? (See “On Your Own,” page 13 in Session 2, as well as any notes you may have taken on pages 20–21).

VIDEO

“Genevieve’s Story”



4 minutes

Produced by VisionFund, the financial empowerment arm of World Vision, this brief video tells the story of how a small loan changed the life of a young girl named Genevieve. It highlights the key role that families and communities play in ensuring the wellbeing of vulnerable children, and why it’s so important that we strengthen their capacity to do so. Use an Internet-connected device such as a laptop, tablet, or smartphone to access this video at the Faith to Action website: <http://faithtoaction.org/videos>. You’ve watched this video on your own, but as you watch the video again as a group, use the outline below to follow along or to take additional notes on anything that stands out to you.

Video Notes

When my father had an accident and couldn’t work anymore, things got worse for us. Then my mom told me I couldn’t go back to school because we couldn’t afford it.

My mom got a small loan and started a business.

As soon as she could, she sent me back to school.

Over the years, my mom gained the skills and confidence to grow her business. I’m so proud of her. Our lives changed for the better because someone believed in us.

My mother inspired me. Now it’s my turn to inspire others.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Strengthening Families

 8 minutes

2. Use the questions that follow to discuss the video “Genevieve’s Story.”
 - When Genevieve’s father had an accident and could no longer work, Genevieve and her siblings weren’t orphaned but they became vulnerable. In what ways did the loan Genevieve’s mother received not only help her start a business but also strengthen the family?
 - If the family had simply been given food or clothing—a “handout” instead of a “hand up”—how might it have impacted the family’s ability to provide for themselves and remain together, both in the short term and in the long term?

PARTNER ACTIVITY AND GROUP DISCUSSION

Twelve Strategies for Responding to the Needs of Orphans and Vulnerable Children

 30 minutes

3. As we seek to help without unintentionally hurting, our actions must be guided by evidence-based principles and strategies that ensure that our responses will contribute to real and lasting change. Page 7 briefly summarizes the article from last week’s reading “Twelve Strategies for Churches Responding to the Needs of Orphans and Vulnerable Children” (for the complete article, see Session 2, pages 17–19). Go around the group and have a different person read aloud each of the 12 statements on page 7.

To better understand what the 12 strategies entail, we’ll examine each one individually by breaking the group into pairs or groups of three. Divide the 12 strategies evenly among the pairs, assigning two or three to each so that all 12 strategies are assigned. (For example, if you have four pairs, each pair would discuss three of the 12 strategies.)

Partner Activity

- a. Pair up in groups of two or three.
- b. Turn to the chart on pages 8–9. In the first column, circle the strategies assigned to you.
- c. For each assigned strategy, discuss the question listed below, noting your responses in the column on the chart. (For additional clarification on what each of the strategies entails, you may find it helpful to refer to the complete article in Session 2, pages 17–19.)
 - How does this strategy strengthen families and help to prevent unnecessary separation of children from family care?
 - How does this strategy benefit children?
- d. Choose which one of you will briefly summarize your findings during the group discussion.

Group Discussion

Go around the group and have the spokesperson for each pair briefly summarize what they wrote on the chart for their assigned strategies. As each person presents, complete your chart by taking additional notes. After all the strategies have been presented, choose two to three of the following questions to continue your discussion.

- What's your response to the 12 strategies overall? In what ways do they expand your understanding of what it means to care for orphans and vulnerable children?
- In what ways do the strategies support transformational change and empowerment rather than temporary relief that might lead to dependency or disempowerment?
- How do the 12 strategies help you to better understand what worked or did not work in any previous ministry experiences you may have had?
- What challenges might the 12 strategies pose for North Americans seeking to address the needs of vulnerable families overseas? How would these challenges impact your own ministry efforts?
- If your group were to take action to respond to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children, which of the strategies would you want to be most influential in guiding your efforts?



Twelve Strategies for Responding to the Needs of Orphans and Vulnerable Children*

The 12 strategies that follow are endorsed by a broad range of faith-based and international agencies serving children. They affirm that efforts to support families and children should consider all aspects of a child's wellbeing, including the importance of family-based care.

1. Focus on the most vulnerable children, not only orphans.
2. Strengthen the capacity of families and communities to care for children.
3. Reduce stigma and discrimination.
4. Support HIV and AIDS awareness and prevention strategies, particularly among youth.
5. Strengthen the ability of caregivers and youth to earn livelihoods.
6. Provide material assistance to those who are too old or ill to work.
7. Ensure access to health care, life-saving medications, and home-based care.
8. Provide daycare and other support services that ease the burden on caregivers.
9. Support schools and ensure access to education, for girls as well as boys.
10. Support the psychosocial as well as material needs of children.
11. Engage children and youth in the decisions that affect their lives.
12. Protect children from abuse, gender discrimination, and labor exploitation.

* For examples of these strategies in action, see "Twelve Strategies for Supporting Orphans and Vulnerable Children," in *From Faith to Action* (pages 18–23), accessible at <http://faithtoaction.org/resources>.

Twelve Strategies	How strategy strengthens families, prevents separation and benefits children
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Two Stories of Partnership*



30 minutes

4. Go around the group and have a different person read aloud one or two paragraphs at a time on pages 11–12, which summarize the first partnership story from last week’s reading, “Rockland Community Church and Ngaramtoni Church-Parish” (for the complete story, see *Journeys of Faith*, pages 18–22).
 - Which of the 12 strategies are most evident in the partnership between Rockland and Ngaramtoni Church-Parish?
 - What strengths or resources did the Ngaramtoni community already possess? How did Rockland honor and support those strengths?
 - Although Rockland donated considerable financial, material, and human resources, they were careful to minimize their “donor imprint”—the degree to which project ownership and recognition were attributed to Rockland rather than to the partnership. What kinds of things did Rockland do to minimize their donor imprint?
 - What insights or lessons from this partnership story stand out most to you? How would you use these insights to inform the efforts you, your church, or your group might take?

5. Go around the group and have a different person read aloud one or two paragraphs at a time from pages 13–14, which summarize the second partnership story from last week’s reading, “Wheaton Bible Church and Nakuru AIDS Initiative” (for the complete story, see *Journeys of Faith*, pages 23–27).
 - What inspires you about this partnership story?
 - Which of the 12 strategies are most evident in the partnership between Wheaton Bible Church and the Nakuru AIDS initiative?
 - How was local leadership and initiative essential in creating sustainable responses to the needs in Ngaramtoni? How did WBC honor these strengths while simultaneously identifying where they could best support and serve?
 - What do you understand “empire building” to mean? Why and how did Wheaton Bible Church guard against it?
 - What insights or lessons from this partnership story stand out most to you? How would you use these insights to inform the efforts you, your church, or your group might take?

*These partnership stories are based on *Journeys of Faith* (2011) as partnership examples that exemplify key strategies for strengthening family care. Statistics from *Journeys of Faith* have been updated for this series, but program details may not reflect current program operations for each partnership story.

PARTNERSHIP STORY 1

Rockland Community Church and Ngaramtoni Church-Parish

Rockland Community Church, a 1,000-member church in Colorado, and Ngaramtoni Parish in Tanzania partnered in building a church, a children's center, a secondary school, and community-based programs serving the needs of children and families.

A New Church

When a team from Rockland visited Ngaramtoni and learned that local leaders had been working for over seven years to build a new church, Rockland offered to help.

- Back in Colorado, they raised funds and then sent a team of 22 people to work side by side with Ngaramtoni to help complete the church.
- They committed to continuing the partnership to address the needs of children and families living in difficult circumstances.
- They created the Tanzania Action Committee to build the partnership with leaders in Ngaramtoni and to raise awareness and support within Rockland.

The Children's Center

When Ngaramtoni wanted to meet the needs of a growing number of children orphaned by AIDS, they raised funds locally, purchased a vacant building, and began renovations. Rockland raised additional funds and sent a team to help complete the project.

Ngaramtoni's nonresidential Children's Center is the foundation from which all the Ngaramtoni-sponsored programs benefiting children and families are run. It houses a daycare program and provides hot meals, clothing, educational support, Christian education, subsidized health care, counseling, and vocational training.

The Ebenezer Girl's Secondary School

Many of the young people served by the Children's Center, particularly girls, lacked access to quality education. In response, visionary local leaders in Ngaramtoni mobilized their own resources to start The Ebenezer Girl's Lutheran Secondary School. Rockland raised funds to build classrooms and provide scholarships. Annual Rockland mission teams helped to complete additional classrooms, offices, and science/computer labs.

Co-laborers in Christ

The leadership at Ngaramtoni and the will of the community to address its own needs created a foundation for partnership. According to Ngaramtoni's Pastor Abel, "The big decisions are always ours . . . [but] . . . Rockland Church . . . helped us to do things eight times faster."

The local church is a formidable presence in the Ngaramtoni community—educating children, strengthening families, and caring for the sick. Central to these efforts is a commitment to addressing the needs of the whole child within a family environment. The partnership between Ngaramtoni and Rockland results in multiple overlapping programs that strive toward wholeness in service to Christ.

Three Lessons Learned

1. **Prayerfully consider your "first response."** When Rockland learned about the orphans in Ngaramtoni, instead of immediately building an orphanage, they listened to Ngaramtoni leadership's request for support in building a Children's Center, which became a vital resource for helping children remain in family care.
2. **Prioritize relationship building.** Rockland's Tanzania Action Committee strengthened the partnership with Ngaramtoni by sending annual missions teams to Tanzania, by working collaboratively with African leadership to plan and implement programs, and by keeping their own church members informed and engaged.
3. **Trust in local leadership.** Although Rockland donated considerable resources to the development of Ngaramtoni's programs, the local church in Tanzania maintained its autonomy and its own governing structures. The efficacy of local leadership was enhanced, not undermined, by the partnership.

PARTNERSHIP STORY 2

Wheaton Bible Church and Nakuru AIDS Initiative

In 2004, members of Wheaton Bible Church (WBC) in suburban Chicago began to learn and pray about responding to the global HIV and AIDS pandemic. Their search ultimately led them to Kenya, where they joined with church partners in the village of Nakuru to create a safety net for the most vulnerable children and families.

Joining Hands with Nakuru Leaders

WBC launched the Heart for AIDS Ministry to organize their activities and raised nearly \$60,000 in one month. With funds in place, the ministry sent a team to Kenya in 2005 to assess the needs of the Nakuru community and to lay the groundwork for partnership.

They partnered with the Nakuru AIDS Initiative, which is composed of six local African churches and ministries. The Initiative provides a joint platform for ministry planning, coordination, and funding. The Initiative offers feeding and home-based care programs, community clinics, a shelter for girls, and outreach to families who have been displaced due to conflict. They also provide training programs for community members, equipping them to provide HIV and AIDS counseling and testing, set up agricultural programs, teach life skills, and run microfinance programs.

The Initiative provides the Heart for AIDS Ministry with regular updates on funding needs and on the activities supported by WBC. The Heart for AIDS Ministry responds to the priorities set by their African partners, making decisions about WBC's level of support and investment and keeping the wider congregation informed and engaged.

The Way Forward

The challenge of effective partnership is to balance the urgency of immediate needs with the long-term goal of fostering local leadership and sustainable community development. Rather than focusing on adopting one project or ministry, Wheaton Bible Church invested in an integrated, community-wide approach through the Nakuru AIDS Initiative. A good partnership at the community level can tackle multiple interrelated problems. Both partners affirm that if the U.S. church could no longer provide resources, the work of Nakuru AIDS Initiative would nevertheless continue, just more slowly. Both partners recognize that real sustainability means honoring the dignity and strength that community members themselves bring as stewards of what God has given them.

Three Lessons Learned

1. **Bring your congregation along.** WBC not only educated church members but also hosted cultural events and fundraisers to engage people. They now provide regular updates for their congregation and offer a “catalog” of opportunities to support the ministry financially.
2. **Increase the capacity of local ministries.** While recognizing and affirming the autonomy of their local partners, WBC supported the community’s response by offering resources and training. In turn, Nakuru-based partners focused on building capacity within the community, using local labor for construction of their facilities, and fostering leadership within their programs. WBC worked to strike a balance between building capacity and grassroots ownership, aware that providing more funding could result in “empire building” of the American church rather than equipping their African partner.
3. **Be strategic about mission trips.** WBC used mission trips sparingly, sending only two mission teams (in addition to an annual relationship building/planning team) to Nakuru in their first five years of partnership. While essential for building relationships, mission trips can consume time and resources best spent supporting the ongoing work of partners on the ground. They can also undermine community ownership if the local ministry is perceived as being driven or overseen by outside forces. When WBC does travel to Nakuru, they are clear that the focus of their work is not so much to “do,” but to build relationships and support what local leaders are already doing.

Making a Personal Connection: A Vision for Wholeness

 8 minutes

6. *Uzima* is a Swahili word meaning “wholeness.” It encompasses human vitality in all its expressions—physical, spiritual, emotional, and relational. The biblical concept that perhaps comes closest to capturing this kind of wholeness is *shalom*. *Shalom* is most often translated as “peace,” but, like *uzima*, it also has a much richer meaning. Theologian Cornelius Plantinga describes the expansive vision of biblical *shalom* this way:

*The webbing together of God, humans, and all creation in justice, fulfillment, and delight is what the Hebrew prophets call shalom. . . . In the Bible, shalom means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight—a rich state of affairs in which natural needs are satisfied and natural gifts fruitfully employed, a state of affairs that inspires joyful wonder as its Creator and Savior opens doors and welcomes the creatures in whom he delights. Shalom, in other words, is the way things ought to be.**

The prophet Isaiah offers a glimpse of *shalom* on earth—of things as they ought to be—when he writes:

The wilderness will become a fertile field, and the fertile field will yield bountiful crops. Justice will rule in the wilderness and righteousness in the fertile field. And this righteousness will bring peace [shalom]. Yes, it will bring quietness and confidence forever. My people will live in safety, quietly at home. They will be at rest.

ISAIAH 32:16–17 NLT

In describing himself as the good shepherd and what he wants to give his sheep, Jesus echoes this vision of *shalom* when he says:

I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

JOHN 10:10B NIV

- How might it shape your efforts to support the work of strengthening families and helping orphans and vulnerable children if you thought of your goal as partnering to achieve *uzima* or *shalom*?
- Which word or phrase from the quotes above best describes your heart and your hopes for families and communities with vulnerable children?

* Cornelius Plantinga, *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 10.

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your time together with prayer.

As an option, you might use the following prayer to close your meeting. To quiet your hearts and center your focus on God, consider allowing a few minutes of silence before reading the prayer.

O God, our Creator and Counselor,
 help us to be your church—
 to listen and learn as we walk with you.

We pray for the courage to care.
 Show us how to connect with our global neighbors,
 to understand their needs.

In our desire to get things right,
 help us to recognize the need to be sensitive.
 Help us to see clearly your purpose.

Through the leading of your Spirit,
 may we enter into relationships of love—
 relationships that offer joy and encouragement
 and refresh the hearts of your people.

We ask that partnerships between churches
 deepen our understanding of every good thing you desire.

Instill within us an appreciation
 for the diversity and divinity of community.

We intercede for the local congregations all over the world
 who seek to transform and strengthen their communities.
 May they reflect your goodness as they love their neighbors,
 offer opportunity and possibility to individuals,
 provide hope and home to children,
 and support those seeking to thrive as family.

We pray the followers of Christ will work together in harmony
 to reveal your kingdom here on earth.

For the sake of the children, may your will be done.
Amen.



On Your Own

Between now and the next group meeting, set aside 60 minutes to read, watch, and then reflect on the following:

- “Connecting the Dots: A Child Protection Model from Malawi,” 7 minutes, produced by Catholic Relief Services (access the video online at <http://faithtoaction.org/videos>).
- Three stories of partnership: Mission Community Church, VisionLedd, and Somebody Cares, *Journeys of Faith*, pages 28–33; Watermark Community Church and African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries, *Journeys of Faith*, pages 34–38; Willow Creek Community Church, Bright Hope, and the Samfya Community of Care Providers, *Journeys of Faith*, pages 40–45 (accessible and downloadable at <http://faithtoaction.org/resources/journeys-of-faith/>).
- You may also find it helpful to reread “Twelve Strategies for Churches Responding to the Needs of Orphans and Vulnerable Children” (Session 2, pages 17–19).

Note any insights or questions in the space provided on pages 18–19. You’ll discuss what you’ve read and watched in your next meeting.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Online

- The Faith to Action website features a variety of ongoing stories from around the world that illustrate the 12 strategies discussed in this session. See especially “World Relief: Savings for Life,” “Children in Families: A Community Approach to Reintegration,” and “Bopoma Villages: Strengthening Rural Zimbabwean Communities” (accessible online at <http://faithtoaction.org/stories/>).

Video

- “Binta and the Great Idea,” 30 minutes (<http://faithtoaction.org/resources/more-resources/engaging-the-church-raising-awareness/>).
- “Webinar 3: Strategies to Strengthening Family Care,” 23 minutes (accessible and downloadable at <http://faithtoaction.org/videos/webinars/>).

Books

- *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help, and How to Reverse It*, Robert D. Lupton (HarperOne, 2012).

