



*“The short-term mission team needs to understand how it fits within the overall strategy of [a] local ministry and take care not to undermine this ministry’s effectiveness.”*

» Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts*

# Caring for Orphans and Vulnerable Children

A Study Guide for  
*Journeys of Faith*

## SESSION 5

Short-Term  
Missions



The Lord God has told us what is right and what he demands: 'See that justice is done, let mercy be your first concern, and humbly obey your God.'

Micah 6:8 CEV

**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.

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## WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER



2 minutes

Welcome to Session 5 of *Caring for Orphans and Vulnerable Children*. In this session, you will:

- Discuss what you read and watched in your individual study (see “On Your Own,” page 20, in Session 4, as well as any notes you may have taken on pages 22–23).
- Consider the impact short-term volunteers can have on vulnerable children.
- Explore the principles of effective partnership and the role of short-term mission trips.

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



10 minutes

1. As time permits, use one or more of the following questions to check in with each other about what you’ve learned and experienced since your last gathering.
  - In the last two sessions, you learned about 12 strategies for responding to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children. Overall, how would you summarize the influence these strategies have had on how your view of residential care vs. family-based care of vulnerable children?
  - In both Sessions 3 and 4, you explored several stories of partnership. Each story included a North American church as well as a local church or community organization in Africa. As you reflect on what you’ve learned, how would you describe the unique roles that each partner plays? For example, overall, what is it that only local churches and organizations can do well? How does the role of North American churches support and enhance those efforts?
  - “On Your Own” from Session 4 included the video “Helping without Hurting in Short-Term Missions: Haiti” (Session 4, page 20). On the video, Kurt Kandler, executive director of The 410 Bridge, acknowledges the complexities of short-term mission trips:

*One of the greatest risks that we have in the community development work that we do is bringing in American teams. There is no greater opportunity to undermine the participatory development work in a community. But at the end of the day, it's also the most rewarding opportunity for the Body of Christ to come together to encourage one another, to serve each other.*

How do you respond to the idea that short-term teams have equal potential to undermine and to encourage development work in a community? (If you've participated in a previous short-term trip, share any experiences or insights you might have related to this issue.)

## VIDEO

### *"Volunteering with Children: Dangers of Doing Good"*



Many short-term mission trips may include volunteering with children or visiting orphanages. This video produced by Volunteer Correct explores the impact short-term volunteers can have on children and promotes further reflection on how to support the protection of children and the role of caregivers. The video notes and discussion questions that follow are based on a three-minute clip beginning in the middle of the video at 5:20 and concluding at 8:25.

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>. As you watch, use the outline below to follow along or to take additional notes on anything that stands out to you.

#### Video Notes

*Lauren Wild, senior lecturer, psychology, University of Cape Town*

Some children form what we call insecure attachments to their caregivers, and these can take different forms. Some children respond by withdrawing or avoiding the caregiver when she comes back after having left them. Others are very anxious, they become clingy, overly dependent. If their caregiver leaves the room and then comes back they seem angry at her for having left them. Others show what we call a disorganized attachment, which is some combination of the two.

*Paul Hooper, director, The Homestead Project for Street Children*

The behavior that comes with attachment is quite serious. . . . They'll break a window when they're angry. . . . When you know an attachment disorder, you start to understand that for them, because they haven't got that emotional connection with anyone, material stuff is very important to them. And they think material things are very important to you as well.

*Lauren Wild, senior lecturer, psychology, University of Cape Town*

If the child has repeated experiences of volunteers coming, forming a close relationship, and then that person going and they never see them again, they may ultimately learn that it's not worth trying to love people because any time I love somebody, they abandon me, they go away.

*Naome Udavanhu, social worker, Masigcine Children's Home*

The babies . . . have certain volunteers that they really love. When they see them they actually cry. So it's a bit difficult. The good thing is . . . that specific someone is always cuddling them and doing whatever they want. But the bad thing is when they leave. What will happen to that child who will forever be sad?

## GROUP DISCUSSION

### *Understanding the Impact of Short-Term Volunteers on Children*



15 minutes

2. As time permits, use one or more of the following questions to discuss the video "Volunteering with Children: Dangers of Doing Good."
- How does learning more about the developmental needs of children—especially their needs for healthy connection and attachment—shift your understanding of what it means to truly care for orphans and vulnerable children?
- How do you imagine you might respond if the situation were reversed—that instead of being a volunteer, you are in the position of caring for vulnerable children and that well-intentioned teams from other countries are routinely traveling to play and interact with the

children for a short period of time? How does it shift your perspective on the visit? What concerns might you have?

- One way to avoid the “revolving door” of caregivers in the lives of vulnerable children is to focus on supporting local caregivers—church and community members—so they can better provide the love and affection their children need. How would you feel about participating in a short-term trip if your efforts were focused more on supporting and equipping caregivers and less on interacting directly with children?
3. A pediatrician named Geoff Foster had these observations after visiting an orphanage in Zimbabwe that received frequent visits from American and British churches:

*Throughout my stay, children of all ages were seeking emotional and physical attention from outsiders such as myself—holding our hands and sometimes clinging to us. I was concerned because children who have formed healthy attachments are usually more cautious of strangers. I also worried about how easily children that have grown up with a succession of temporary caregivers might be exploited.<sup>1</sup>*

- If you weren’t aware of the difference between healthy and unhealthy attachment in children, how might you interpret the children’s behaviors? How would you most likely respond?
- In what ways might children with a succession of temporary caregivers be more vulnerable to exploitation?

## Twelve Guiding Principles for Short-Term Missions Trips



4. As we seek to help without unintentionally harming, our actions must be guided by principles and strategies that ensure our responses will contribute to real and lasting change. On page 7 is a brief summary of the article from last week’s reading “Guiding Principles for Short-Term Missions Trips” (for the complete article, see *Journeys of Faith*, pages 50–52). Go around the group and have a different person read aloud each of the 12 statements on page 7.
- Overall, how well do these principles fit with the mission or values of your church or group?
  - Which of them, if any, might require a shift in thinking for you or your church/group?

<sup>1</sup>*Faith to Action: Strengthening Family and Community Care for Orphans and Vulnerable Children in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Second Edition, Faith to Action, page 23.



## Twelve Guiding Principles for Short-Term Missions Trips

Drawing on principles of partnership and key resources, here are 12 guidelines and considerations for churches and other groups engaging in short-term missions:

1. Consider where your resources can make the greatest difference.
  2. Examine your motivation.
  3. Do not go unless invited.
  4. Keep numbers small.
  5. Don't overstay your welcome.
  6. Avoid project hopping.
  7. Prepare properly for mission trips and debrief afterward.
  8. Invest throughout the year.
  9. Help your partner create visitor guidelines.
  10. The local partner should be the "hero."
  11. Emphasize the assets of the community.
  12. Consider your impact on children.
5. When Mission Community Church—featured in one of the partnership stories from Session 4—takes a mission team to Malawi, team members interact with children and community members, but only in the context of work that has already been started by the community, preapproved by village councils, and organized by their intermediary partner, Somebody Cares. Teams are not allowed to take photographs or pose with villagers unless doing so is preapproved. All of this is to uphold the value that the mission trip must honor the will of its host and that a mission trip is not a project, but a tool to empower and encourage their partners while also being witnesses to God's transformative work in the world (*Journeys of Faith*, pages 28–29).

- Which of the 12 guiding principles are most evident in Mission Community Church's approach?
  - How would you describe the differences between a mission trip as a project and a mission trip as a tool to empower and encourage a ministry partner? Consider how these differences might be evident in such things as team member preparation and training, trip activities and objectives, interactions with local community, and what constitutes "success."
  - How is Mission Community Church's approach similar to or different from mission trips you know about or have experienced?
6. Principle 2, "Examine your motivation," helps us explore the positive and negative motivations we may have in participating in short-term missions. It acknowledges that although our efforts may be well-intentioned, our motives might be self-serving rather than supportive of the partner ministry or in the best interests of children. For example, we might want to make a difference with a building project and end up depriving local construction workers or youth of employment. We might want to help vulnerable children to feel loved, but end up leaving them with a sense of loss and abandonment when we return home, despite our best intentions. Or we might be motivated by desires to have an "experience," to visit an exotic or remote location, or even to feel good about ourselves by providing a quick fix to a community problem.
- Consider the range of motives people might have for participating in a mission trip. What are some of the positive motivations? What are some of the negative or mixed motivations?
  - If you were planning a mission trip or preparing to participate in one, how might you avoid the pitfall of well-intentioned but self-serving motives?
  - One way to reflect on personal motives is to identify some of the reasons you might want to go on a mission trip, and then ask yourself, "Would I still want to go on this trip if I couldn't do these things?" For example, *Would I still want to go on this trip . . . if I couldn't take photographs? If I couldn't interact with children directly? If I couldn't be sure I was making a difference?*  
What comes to mind when you consider this question for yourself? How would you complete the question, *Would I still want to go on this trip if I couldn't . . . ?*  
How would you answer your question? How do both the question and your answer help you to understand something about your motives?
  - Because our motives may always be mixed, it might be easy to feel discouraged from engaging in anything global, especially a short-term trip. But perhaps the most important thing about motives is awareness—if you know what's driving you, you're in a much better position to avoid making well-intentioned but self-serving choices.

Drawing on both the question and answer you identified in the previous question, describe how awareness of your motives might help you to make choices that support a partner ministry and serve the best interests of children. For example, *Before the trip, our team would ask our hosts how we can best support the efforts of the local caregivers and families who are providing care for children on a day-to-day basis.*

7. Principle 11, “Emphasize the assets of the community,” is a reminder that every community has resources it can draw on to meet its own needs. Focusing on assets is important because it keeps partners from unintentionally disempowering communities by doing things for them that they can do for themselves. Coming alongside communities so they can better utilize their assets helps to strengthen and equip local families to better care for their children.
  - Imagine that you are preparing for a short-term mission trip. The community you’ll be visiting has many challenges, including lack of material resources for everything from growing food and providing clean water to paying school fees for children. Now consider the purpose of your trip from two perspectives: one focused on the community’s needs and what it lacks, the other focused on the community’s assets and strengths. How might each perspective shape the activities your team chooses to engage in? How might it influence the way team members relate to community members? (If you’ve participated in previous short-term mission trips, share any experiences you had that illustrate either perspective.)
  - How might you and your team be intentional about building on the community’s assets so that communities and families—rather than your team—are the “heroes”?

## The Complexities of Partnership



16 minutes

8. Addressing the need to do missions and partnership wisely, missions expert Miriam Adeney relates a vivid parable told to her by an African Christian friend:

*Elephant and Mouse were best friends. One day Elephant said, “Mouse, let’s have a party!” Animals gathered from far and near. They ate. They drank. They sang. And they danced. And nobody celebrated more and danced harder than Elephant. After the party was over, Elephant exclaimed, “Mouse, did you ever go to a better party? What a blast!” But Mouse did not answer. “Mouse, where are you?” Elephant called. He looked around for his friend, and then shrank back in horror. There at Elephant’s feet lay Mouse. His little body was ground into the dirt. He had been smashed by the big feet of his exuberant friend, Elephant. “Sometimes, that is what it is like to do mission with you Americans,” the African storyteller commented. “It is like dancing with an Elephant.”<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>2</sup> Miriam Adeney, quoted in Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2009, 2012), 151.

- Sticking with the characters in the parable for a moment, how would you describe Elephant's fundamental failure?
  - How does this same fundamental failure take place in short-term missions or partnership?
  - How would you guard against being "Elephant" in the context of short-term missions or partnership?
9. Establishing and building a meaningful partnership often requires navigating complex relationships and challenges. The following scenario from *Journeys of Faith* (page 52) demonstrates one example of how this might happen:

*A U.S. church with a long-standing and well-established orphan care partnership with an African church recently learned that an overseas donor plans to build a large orphanage in their African partner's community. The African church has been asked to participate with the donor and to recommend children for orphanage care. They have come to the U.S. church asking for its support of this endeavor. This partnership has always been based on shared values and a mutual agreement that its resources support family-based services.*

Given that a key principle of partnership is respecting local leadership and allowing the partner to lead family-based programming, how might you handle this complex situation?

## Making a Personal Connection: A Humble Heart



10. The complexities of short-term mission trips and long-term ministry partnerships require wisdom and discernment. They also require a humble, servant heart. In his letter to the church at Philippi, the apostle Paul describes such a heart when he urges his readers to imitate Christ in an attitude of true humility.

- Go around the group and have a different person read each paragraph from the passage below. As the passage is read, underline any words or phrases that stand out to you.

*Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.*

*Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.*

*You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.*

*Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.*

*When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.*

*Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:1–11 NLT)*

- What words or phrases stand out to you as having particular relevance for ministry partnerships? For your own group or team?
- What words or phrases stand out to you in connection with your own desires and efforts to help vulnerable children?

## 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.

Lord Jesus Christ, in all we say and do, we desire to follow you in being “humble of heart” (Matthew 11:29). We acknowledge that in our own power, we can do nothing—we cannot fix the brokenness in the world, and we cannot fix the brokenness in ourselves. We surrender ourselves fully to you, asking that you heal us and use us to heal the world you love. We ask that you unite us in love with one mind and purpose. Help us to be both humble and wise in the ways we love and serve vulnerable children, families, and communities.  
Amen.



## On Your Own

Between now and the next group meeting, set aside 30 minutes to read and then reflect on the resources listed below. You'll discuss what you learn at the beginning of your group meeting for Session 6.

- "Engaging the Church," *Journeys of Faith*, pages 10–13 (accessible and downloadable at <http://faithtoaction.org/resources/journeys-of-faith/>).
- "Principles of Partnership," *Journeys of Faith*, pages 46–49 (accessible and downloadable at <http://faithtoaction.org/resources/journeys-of-faith/>).

Note any insights or questions in the space provided on pages 14–15 . You'll discuss what you've read and watched at the beginning of your next meeting.

## Get a Head Start on the Discussion For Session 6

As part of the group discussion for Session 6, you'll have an opportunity to talk about what you've learned and experienced together throughout the study. Between now and your next meeting, take a few moments to review each previous session and identify the teaching, discussions, or insights that stand out most to you. Use the worksheet on the following pages to briefly summarize the highlights of what you've learned and experienced in each session.



## SESSION 6 HEAD START WORKSHEET

Take a few moments to reflect on what you've learned and experienced throughout this study series. Here are some questions you might consider as part of your review of each session:

- What was the most important thing I learned in this session?
- How did what I learned impact me? (Consider emotions, attitudes, behaviors, relationships, etc.)
- How did our group discussion challenge or encourage me in this session?
- How did I experience God's presence or leading related to this session?

Use the spaces provided below and on the next page to briefly summarize what you've learned and experienced.

*Session 1: Who Are Orphans and Vulnerable Children?*

*Session 2: The Impact of Poverty and Separation from Family Care*

### *Session 3: Key Strategies for Strengthening Families and Community-Based Care, Part 1*

### *Session 4: Key Strategies for Strengthening Families and Community-Based Care, Part 2*

### *Session 5: Short-Term Missions*

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Online

- “How Can Faith-Based Groups Best Help Vulnerable Children in Africa?” *The Journal of Family and Community Ministries*, Baylor University School of Social Work (accessible online at <http://faithtoaction.org/resources/more-resources/engaging-the-church-raising-awareness/>).
- “The Seven Standards,” Standards of Excellence in Short-Term Mission (accessible online at <http://www.soe.org/explore/the-7-standards/>).
- “An Introduction to Better Volunteering on Behalf of Orphans and Vulnerable Children” (accessible online at <http://faithtoaction.org/category/news-updates/>).
- “Better Volunteering, Better Care: Executive Summary,” Better Care Network and Save the Children (2014) (accessible online at <http://faithtoaction.org/resources/more-resources/engaging-the-church-raising-awareness/>).

### Video

- “A World without Orphans,” 30 minutes, produced by Missions Dilemma, (accessible online at <http://www.missionsdilemma.com/a-world-without-orphans/>).

### Books

- *Serving with Eyes Wide Open: Doing Short-Term Missions with Cultural Intelligence*, David Livermore (Baker Books, 2012).
- *Charity Detox: What Charity Would Look Like If We Cared about Results*, Robert D. Lupton (HarperOne, 2015).
- *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (And How to Reverse It)*, Robert D. Lupton (HarperOne, 2012).
- *Effective Engagement in Short-Term Missions: Doing It Right!*, Robert J. Priest, ed. (William Carey Library, 2012).
- *When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself*, Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, chapter 7 (Moody Publishers, 2009).

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS

