



“Let us reach out to the children’s home communities, enabling these little ones to grow up among friends and relatives who . . . speak their language, know their history, and already love them. Isn’t this what we would wish for our own children?”

» Melissa Fay Greene, author of *There Is No Me without You*

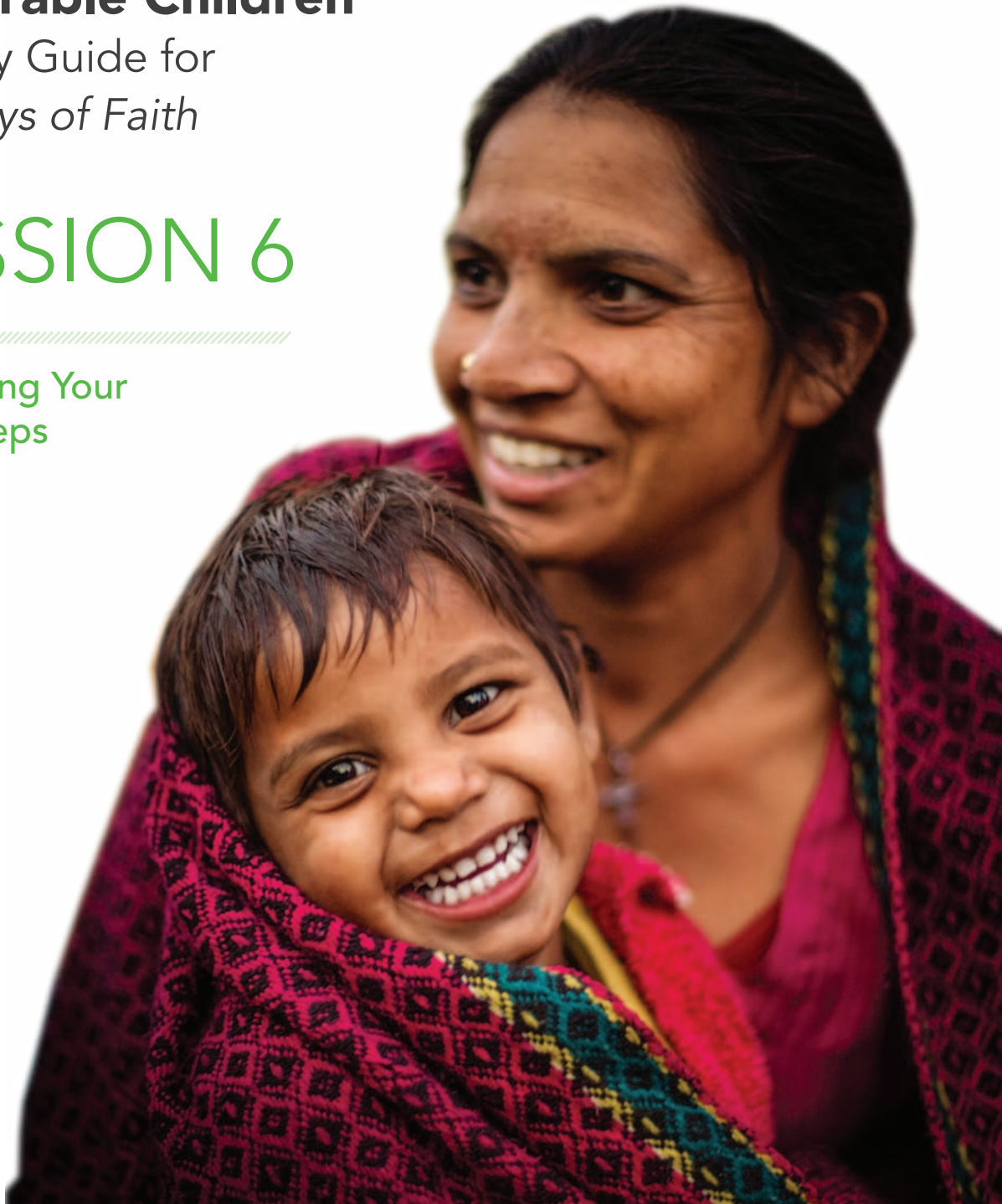
Caring for Orphans and Vulnerable Children

A Study Guide for
Journeys of Faith

SESSION 6



Identifying Your
Next Steps



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

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 6 of *Caring for Orphans and Vulnerable Children*. In this session, you will:

- Discuss what you learned in your individual study (see “On Your Own,” page 12, in Session 5, as well as any notes you may have taken on pages 16–17).
- Explore four approaches to engagement and eight principles of partnership on behalf of orphans, vulnerable children, and families.
- Reflect on what you’ve learned throughout this study and identify the next steps you want to take in response.

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



6 minutes

1. As time permits, use one or more of the following questions to check in with each other about your thoughts and reflections since your last gathering.
 - In any partnership undertaken on behalf of vulnerable children, at least three parties might be positively or negatively impacted: the two partners and the children themselves. What have you learned that has helped you to be more aware of the potential impact your advocacy and efforts might have? In what ways, if any, are you more aware now than you were at the beginning of the study?
 - How did what you learned in Session 5 about healthy and unhealthy attachment in children help you to understand the potential impact a “revolving door” of caregivers might have on children?
 - Session 5 explored guiding principles for short-term mission trips as well as the complexities and challenges of partnership. Overall, how did learning more about these topics impact either your understanding of previous mission trips you’ve participated in or your expectations of a mission trip you hope to take in the future?

VIDEO

“From Stuck to Thriving: Graduation with Food for the Hungry”



5 minutes

This video celebrates the achievements and conclusion of a nine-year collaboration among Food for the Hungry, Capilano Christian Community Church (CapChurch), and the community of Bufukhula (*boo-foo-koolah*) in Uganda. Told through interviews with CapChurch members and members of the Bufukhula community, this is a story about how a healthy partnership enabled the churches and families of this community to achieve great things in agriculture, education, savings groups, and more. Now the community is paying it forward by using what they’ve learned to help a neighboring village break the cycle of poverty and strengthen families. As you watch the video, the key thing to consider is how all these achievements improve the lives of children—without resorting to institutional care.

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

Member of CapChurch

I have always known that Food for the Hungry was going to be leaving Bufukhula, and I have always celebrated that because if you’re leaving, it means you’ve done your job.

Bufukhula community leader

Food for the Hungry taught us about holistic development. They said that a human being needs to grow in four areas of life. They need to grow physically. They need to grow spiritually. They need to grow mentally, and they need to grow relationally.

Bufukhula community leader

Before Food for the Hungry, many of our children were very malnourished. Food for the Hungry taught us how to care for our children. They introduced the Dairy Cow Project to help improve the nutritional levels of the children.

Bufukhula community member

As a farmer, my wish is to see the calves from this cow go to others so they can benefit from what I have started. This is good news because we are fighting poverty. I no longer cry because of poverty.

Bufukhula community member

Savings has helped me as an individual. I can get money from my savings group and then I can hire people to work my land. From the proceeds of the produce, I receive more than what I initially invested. Because of the savings group, domestic violence has been reduced in our community. The women no longer have to wait on the man for money. They can make money themselves.

Member of CapChurch

Teams come year after year after year. They bring letters, they bring messages, they want to know how the kids are doing. It's changed lives in Uganda but it has [also] changed lives for our community in North Vancouver.

Member of CapChurch

People's ideas about poverty have been changed. It's not about money. That's not what poverty is. Poverty is not knowing that you can do anything. Poverty is not knowing that God has given you all these abilities and you have all these resources. Poverty is thinking that you *can't* do it, and what FH does is say, 'No, you *can*. Look at what you have.'

Bufukhula community leader

FH also introduced the idea of sharing. They told us they would help us so that in the future we would also help another community. We are now working together with the community of Nashisa to help them in the same way that FH has helped Bufukhula become what it is today.

GROUP DISCUSSION

A Vision for Engagement



17 minutes

Use the questions that follow to discuss the video "From Stuck to Thriving: Graduation with Food for the Hungry."

2. At the beginning of the video, a member of CapChurch says she knew Food for the Hungry would eventually leave Bufukhula and that she celebrated that because "If you're leaving, it means you've done your job."
 - What does her perspective reveal about how Food for the Hungry and the members of CapChurch view their role and their goals in the partnership?
 - How might it impact your vision of a potential partnership your group might undertake if your goals included both long-term relationship and an expectation of "graduation"? What kind of initiatives might it lead you to pursue—and to avoid? Share the reasons for your response.

3. Consider the various strategies Food for the Hungry used to help the Bufukhula community. For example, constructing school buildings, initiating the dairy cow project, and starting savings and loan associations. How do each of these strategies support the welfare and best interests of children?
4. At the end of the video, a leader of the Bufukhula community describes how they are now helping a neighboring community in the same way that they were helped. How does this outcome differ from the outcomes you might expect from historical practices, such as building an orphanage or donating material goods?

Four Approaches to Engagement



20 minutes

Throughout this study, you've explored several key principles and how those principles have been lived out in five church-to-church partnerships. Now, as you begin to discern the actions you want to take, it's important to understand that church-to-church partnerships are just one of many ways to engage and support orphans, vulnerable children, and families. The 12 strategies (discussed in sessions 3–5) provide a foundation for responding to the needs of vulnerable children and families in a variety of ways. This means that while there are key principles that should guide your approach, there is no one-size-fits-all or one best way to take action. Your next steps—individually and as a group—can be as unique as you are and as simple or complex as your goals, strengths, and resources allow.

5. Page 9 provides a starting point for considering what your next steps might be. It briefly summarizes an article from the last session's reading about four approaches for engagement (for the complete article, see "Engaging the Church" in *Journeys of Faith*, pages 8–13). For each approach, there is also an example of how a church or group used that approach to take action. Go around the group and have a different person read aloud each of the four approaches and examples.
 - Which of the four approaches would you say is the best match for you and your group right now?
 - Take a moment to dream a little about what you might accomplish within the approach you just identified. For example, within the raising awareness and funds approach, you might make a statement like one of these:
 - *I want everyone in our church to understand that strengthening families—not building orphanages—is the best way to care for vulnerable children.*

- *I'd like us to find ways to raise \$5,000 in the next year to support ministries that work directly with vulnerable children and help them to remain in family care.*
- *I'd like to learn more about vulnerable children in my city or state and explore how I can support vulnerable families or foster families.*

Use the space below to write down your dreams and ideas. For each item you list, briefly identify the way(s) in which this action serves the needs and best interests of vulnerable children.

What We'd Like to Accomplish



Four Approaches to Engagement

1. **Raise awareness and raise funds.** Raising awareness about the needs of orphans and vulnerable children and the importance of strengthening family-based care is a powerful form of engagement. This may take the form of anything from informational posts on social media to awareness and fundraising events, special weekend services (on World AIDS Day, Orphan Sunday, etc.), and community-wide campaigns.

Example: The Journey Church hosts an annual event called Celebrate Hope to raise awareness and funds for children in Limpopo, Zimbabwe. They also build supply kits for caregivers ministering to people living with AIDS and other illnesses (*Journeys of Faith*, page 12).

2. **Build on existing global relationships.** Before pursuing a new partnership, explore the possibility for expanding or reshaping any existing partnerships to address the needs of orphans and vulnerable children. For example, a global partner your church has worked with in food relief or pastoral training may also be a potential partner for strengthening families.

Example: Burke Presbyterian Church built on a 20-year relationship with churches in Kibwezi, Kenya, to address the increased vulnerability of children through such initiatives as building and staffing a primary school, a vocational school, and a health clinic (*Journeys of Faith*, page 11).

3. **Partner with a trusted intermediary.** An international intermediary can build a bridge and ease the burdens on both sides of a partnership, providing financial oversight, cultural translation, and logistical support to help ensure that resources go where they are most needed.

Example: Walnut Hill Community Church partnered with World Relief to respond to the needs of orphans and vulnerable children in Rwanda as well as at-risk children within their own community. They raised awareness and funds throughout the year with their “Little White Box” campaign (*Journeys of Faith*, page 9).

4. **Develop a direct partnership.** Many churches and organizations work through their own networks or denominational structures to engage and support overseas partners.

Example: Bright Hope links North American churches with local indigenous churches in such places as Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, South America, the Caribbean, and Central America (*Journeys of Faith*, page 44). Working in partnership, they collaborate on projects designed to encourage individuals, empower the local church, build sustainability into the community, and provide hope for children and families.

Principles of Partnership



6. Below is a brief summary from the article from last week's reading, "Principles of Partnership" (for the complete article, see *Journeys of Faith*, pages 46–49). The eight principles summarize much of what you've studied and discussed in the last three sessions about strategies and values that strengthen families and support healthy partnerships. Go around the group and have a different person read aloud each of the eight statements below.

Although these principles were initially developed to guide direct partnerships (the fourth level in the four approaches to engagement), they can also be applied to the first three levels of engagement. For example, if you chose to raise awareness and funds, your events and communications could stress the value of partnering in the best interests of children (principle 2), and you could donate the funds you raise to an organization committed to long-term and sustainable solutions (principle 8).

- Using the engagement approach you identified as the best match for you and your group in question 5, briefly talk through each of the eight principles. How might you use each principle to inform and guide your efforts?
- Which of the principles would be most important to you?



Principles of Partnership

1. Seek the right match for your church or group.
2. Partner in the best interests of children.
3. Prioritize relationship building and listening.
4. Respect and honor local leadership.
5. Protect local ownership and build on the assets of the community.
6. Start small, build over time.
7. Practice good communication and build trust.
8. Partner for the long term and invest in sustainable solutions.

Identifying Your Next Steps



20 minutes

7. A key principle of partnership is that everyone has something to contribute. As you consider the actions you want to take, it's important to identify the unique strengths and resources you and your group can use on behalf of orphans and vulnerable children.

- Using the examples listed below as a reference, what strengths and resources can you identify? Consider your personal strengths and resources as well as those of your group, and your church or organization. Brainstorm ideas and use the space below to take notes on what you come up with.

Examples of strengths: spiritual gifts, talents, character qualities, experience, knowledge, influence, leadership roles, etc.

Examples of resources: social media platforms, existing relationships/partnerships, financial/material resources, technical expertise, availability, etc.

- Are there any weaknesses or obstacles you might need to address? If so, note them below.

8. Now it's time to bring together everything you've learned and discussed so you can identify the action(s) you want to take, and then what your next steps might be. Given what you've learned about the needs of orphans and vulnerable children, the approach that's best for you, and the strengths and resources you've identified, what do you feel led, inspired, and equipped to do on behalf of orphans and vulnerable children? Note your ideas in the space provided below.

- As individuals and as a group, what next steps might you take to pursue the action(s) you identified?
- What remaining questions do you have that need to be addressed as part of moving forward?

Making a Personal Connection: Loving Action



9. The purpose of this study is to help people of faith as they seek to respond to the call of James 1:27—to express their faith in loving action on behalf of the orphans and vulnerable children of the world.
- As you reflect on what you've learned and experienced throughout this study, how would you describe your own journey of faith? For example, what shifts or changes have you experienced since the first session?
 - Over the course of the study, when have you been most aware of God's presence or leading? What did you sense God's invitation to you might be in those moments?
 - What do you feel you need from God to say yes to the invitation? How can the group continue to pray with you in discerning next steps?

CLOSING PRAYER

Close your time together with prayer.

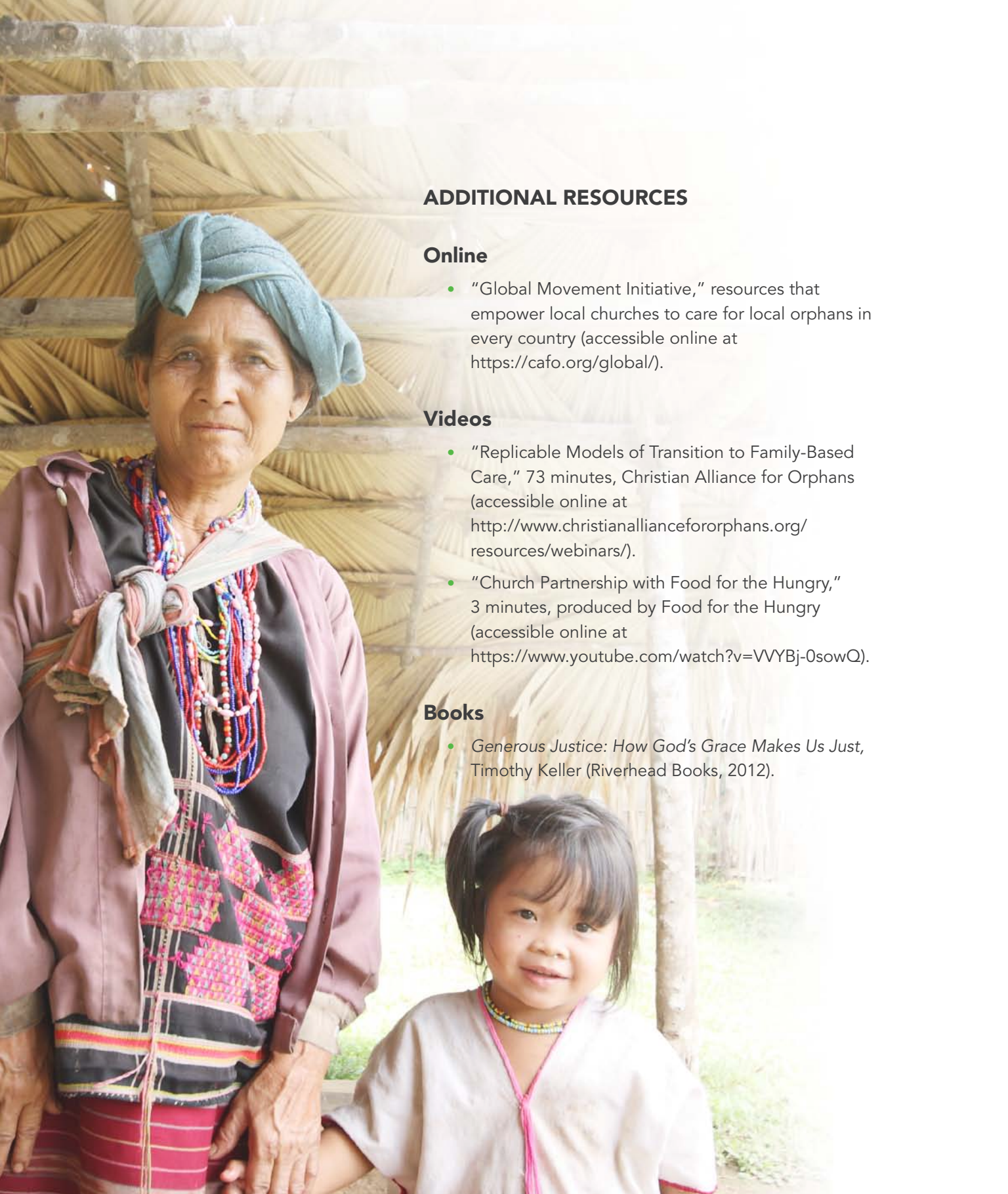
As an option, you might use the following prayer—the same prayer you prayed in Session 1—to close your meeting and this study. To quiet your hearts and center your focus on God, consider allowing a few minutes of silence before reading the prayer.

We thank you, Heavenly Father,
for your great and unending love
for each and every child.
In your perfect wisdom,
you have created us for family—
that every child may grow surrounded in love
and with a sense of belonging.
May your heart be our heart,
and your plan be our guide:
 For every child's heart, joy.
 For every child's soul, meaning.
 For every child's body, protection.
 For every child's mind, peace.
 For every child, family.
Amen.



On Your Own

The study is concluding but we hope your journey of learning and advocacy on behalf of orphans and vulnerable children is just beginning. Visit <http://faithtoaction.org/opportunities/> for more next-step and engagement ideas. We'd love to stay in touch! Sign up for our newsletter updates at <http://faithtoaction.org/category/news-updates/>. You'll also find a steady stream of inspiring stories, blogs, and a wealth of resources at www.faithtoaction.org.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Online

- "Global Movement Initiative," resources that empower local churches to care for local orphans in every country (accessible online at <https://cafo.org/global/>).

Videos

- "Replicable Models of Transition to Family-Based Care," 73 minutes, Christian Alliance for Orphans (accessible online at <http://www.christianalliancefororphans.org/resources/webinars/>).
- "Church Partnership with Food for the Hungry," 3 minutes, produced by Food for the Hungry (accessible online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYBj-0sowQ>).

Books

- *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*, Timothy Keller (Riverhead Books, 2012).

