



Adoption

The Story of Scripture – Part 36

If you have a Bible—and I hope you do—let me invite you to open with me to Ephesians 1. It's good to be together around God's Word. Before we dive into the Word, I want to pause on this Veterans Day weekend and say something to the many women and men across this church who have served in our armed forces, as well as those who serve now.

We as a church, and for those who are members here as your church family, are thankful for the many sacrifices you have made and are making on a daily basis to defend and promote the freedoms we enjoy. For that reason, I want to ask all of those who have served and those who are currently serving in our armed forces, please stand up where you are. We thank God for you. [Lengthy applause] We honor you and do not take our freedoms for granted, especially in light of praying for the persecuted church last week.

Over the last two weeks, we've found ourselves in some pretty weighty topics. Before we move on today, I want to mention one thing as a follow-up to last week. That sermon on the gospel and sexuality was just the tip of the iceberg for so many things we as a church need to unpack together in the days ahead. I say that because out in the lobby last Sunday I was talking with all kinds of people who struggle with this or that, or whose child or family member struggles with this or that. They haven't felt like they could share that with anyone, even in the church. That should not be so.

The point last week was that we should all be understanding and a source of encouragement to each other in this area of our lives, because none of us is without struggle. This means none of us are strange or alone. I think about followers of Christ in our church who have same sex attraction. God has called us to be a community where people feel open to share that and where people receive love and encouragement as they work out how to glorify God in their lives. I think about followers of Christ in our church who struggle in all kinds of different ways with identity, orientation or some secret sin that we don't want to talk about. We need to be a place of encouragement and love, as we all work out how to glorify God in our lives.

All this to say, this topic is so pervasive for each of us—for our life together as a church—that it deserves far more than just one week thinking about it. So that will not be the only time we address that. I want to lead us as a church to be loving and serving toward one another along these lines on a continual

basis, with openness, honesty, understanding and grace. There's so much more we could say there and, Lord willing, we will in the days ahead.

That all brings us to today—Orphan Sunday. It's a day we set aside as a church to consider how God has called us as His church to care for children in need. One of the many things I pray for MBC is that we would have a culture of care for children in need; that adoption, foster care, caring for women and families in crisis pregnancies would be commonplace among us. I pray that all kinds of people of all ages would play all kinds of parts across our church in showing the love of our Father to the fatherless, here in Metro DC and around the world.

Here's the deal. In just a moment I'm going to lead us to say a prayer together, out loud, all at the same time. It's the same prayer I led us to pray a year ago on this Sunday. The prayer is this: "O God, my Father, I will do whatever You call me to do to care for orphans and vulnerable children." But before we pray that, I want to warn you of what might happen.

Last year, we said that prayer together and at that point Heather and I would have said—and had been saying for six years, ever since our fourth child Isaiah was born—that we are joyfully content when it comes to the number of children in our family. That was our phrase—joyfully content—for six years. But we said this prayer honestly before the Lord that year. Nothing much came of it over the next week or month or two. Until one night, Heather and I were on a date, sitting there at dinner. I was coming off some extended time in prayer and adoption had come up on a couple of random occasions. It came up again at that dinner.

Over the next hour, the only way I can describe it is God met us there at the dinner table in a way we did not see coming. All of a sudden Heather was in tears and I was thinking, "Everybody around me right now thinks I'm a horrible husband. My wife is on a date with me and I'm making her cry." We were just overwhelmed with the reality that we know there's a lot of need and believe our family has a lot of love to give. So why would we not care for one of these children in need?

We walked away from dinner that night, hand in hand, saying, "Let's do this." We started the paperwork the next morning. We began praying for a child that, as I've told you, we eventually named Wonderfully Made, until we were matched last week. I said last Sunday that I was hesitant to show a picture, but I can't help it. So I want to introduce you to Jeremiah Daniel Platt, whom we're planning to call J.D. Here he is. I have pictures and videos of him on my computer. Throughout my days, I just keep looking at them, so I am far less productive right now. Lord willing, we hope to travel a couple months from now, right after the first of the year, to adopt him into our family.

All this to say, you never know what God will do when you pray what we're about to pray together. Now, before any of you looks at your spouse and



says, “Don’t pray it,” I encourage you that this prayer is not committing in this moment to adopt a child or to foster a child specifically for a child or children in need.

By the way, there are so many ways to care for children in need here and around the world. People say, “Do I need to adopt or foster? Domestically or internationally? Why do this or that?” The Lord leads us to do all kinds of things in all kinds of different ways. I would say God is not calling everybody to adopt or to foster. But this prayer is simply us saying as a church, “God, we want to do whatever You want us to do to reflect Your love for children in need.” We don’t need to be afraid to pray that.

After all, this is what it means to be a Christian in the first place—to be willing to do whatever God calls you to do, leaving nominal spectator Christianity behind. Gone are the days that being a Christian means going to church and living life according to your plan. That’s not what it means to follow Christ. Following Christ means living your life according to God’s plan. We trust that His plan is better than our plans. That’s the whole point of being a Christian.

So today we’re going to think specifically about His plan to use His church—you and me—to show His love for children in need. We’re going to say, “God, use my life, my family, this church family, however You want to do that.” I want to ask you to bow your heads with me. I’m going to start by praying, then I’m going to ask you to repeat after me, if you would be willing to pray that prayer. Let me start.

O God, we are asking You to speak to us right now and in the days ahead. Make clear to us how You want us individually, in our families and as a church family to care for children in need right around us and all around the world. We pray together right now, “O God, my Father, I will do whatever You call me to do to care for orphans and vulnerable children. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”

All right. So with that prayer on the table, I thought, “How do we approach this time?” I could spend the bulk of our time sharing a bunch of statistics and stories about children in need and ways we can meet that need through adoption, foster care, support for families who are adopting or fostering, support for unwed mothers at pregnancy care centers, plus orphan initiatives around the world like we have in Ethiopia right now. But I don’t think that’s the key to producing a culture of care for children in need in our church. I think the key to producing this kind of culture among us is seeing how the gospel uniquely compels those who believe the gospel to care for children in need. We can’t help it; this is a no-brainer for us.

We’re going to go to a passage we’ve read recently in our Bible reading that talks about God’s adoption of us. Then I’ll share a quick glimpse at statistics at the end. But by then, I hope we’ll have seen how God has uniquely called and designed us as the church to be the solution for orphans and children in need. That’s a bold statement, but let me show you why I make it. Look with me in Ephesians 1:3. We’re going to read all the way down to verse 14.

I'll go ahead and tell you that in the Greek—the original language of the New Testament—these verses are all one sentence. It's broken up into different sentences in English, but as we read it imagine this is the run-on sentence of all run-on sentences. It's like a snowball tumbling down a hill. It starts small, then it just grows and grows and grows. As we read, I want you to notice every time you see the phrase “in Christ” or pronouns for Christ, like “him” or “whom.” Just try to count how many times you see that phrase in this one sentence.

All right, here we go—Ephesians 1:3-14:

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

That is quite a sentence! And it's quite a picture of what it means to be adopted by God. If you notice, in that one sentence over 12 verses, ten different times you see the phrase “in Christ” or a pronoun referring to Christ. So the picture here is clear. To be “in Christ” means that you've been adopted by God. That phrase “in Christ” is so important. I think it's a better term than even Christian, because Christian is used in so many different ways today. It can be a cultural reference, even a political identifier. All kinds of people, things, movements and ideologies are labeled Christian, many of which are totally contrary to Christ.

The real question for any and every person in this room or on other campuses right now is not whether or not you call yourself a Christian. The real question is are you in Christ? Are you in a living relationship with Jesus? As the Bible says in Philippians 1:21, “*For me to live is Christ...*”

I'm going to list 12 things God says to every single person who is adopted in Christ. There are more than 12 in this passage, but I had to cut it off at some point; otherwise this would become a run-on sermon that never ends. For all those who are in Christ right now, as we fly through these in the next few minutes, I want to bombard you with a massive snowball of what God says to you and about you in His Word. So for all who are in Christ, I trust you will see here how being in Christ compels us to care for children in need.

Then, for any of you who are not in Christ right now—you're not now a follower of Jesus—I am really glad you're here. I believe God has brought you here today to show you how He desires to adopt you into His family, to make you His child. Sometimes the world talks about how we're all God's children, and that's true in the sense that we're all created by Him. But it's not true in the sense that every one of us has sinned against God and our sin has separated us from God. This is true not just for now, but if we die in this state of separation from God, we will spend eternity experiencing the judgment due our sin away from God. But God has made a way for that to change, for us to be reconciled to a relationship with Him and brought into His family forever.

So today, at the end of our time together, I want to invite you to place your faith in Christ. All these things we're about to see can be said of you by God starting today. Then I'm going to invite many of you to do what many people have done every week over recent months across our church. I want to invite you to put on this shirt and be baptized today as a celebration of the reality that you are a child of God in Christ.

So here we go. Let the snowball start rolling. To all who are adopted in Christ, God says to you:

1. I have blessed you with every spiritual blessing.

Ephesians 1:3 (NIV) says, *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”* In a sense, all the verses that follow explain what those spiritual blessings are. But before we even go there, just pause and feel the wonder of this. This is talking about the one and only true God of the universe against Whom you and I have rebelled. We've all said, “Our way is better than Your way. Our plans are better than Your plans.” We've all turned against God. But now in Christ, God—the God of the universe—blesses you with every spiritual blessing. That word “blessing” means benefit. Every spiritual benefit you could possibly have is yours in Christ. God blesses you.

How do we use that term, “God bless you”? We say that when somebody sneezes. That means so little to us, right? I did a little research this week on why we say “God bless you” when somebody sneezes. There are all kinds of ideas out there. Some have believed that our hearts stop when we sneeze, so that's why we say, “God bless you”—like we're thanking God we made it through that one. “That was quite a sneeze, Bro. Glad you're still alive. Bless you.”

Others believe it goes all the way back to the sixth century when there was a plague spreading and the pope decreed that any time somebody sneezed, anybody close to them should say, “God bless you.” Maybe that meant, “Stay away from me.”

I don't know where it came from, but let's just put that aside. The reality for all who are in Christ is that you live every single moment of every single day with access to every spiritual blessing and benefit from God at your disposal. You don't even have to sneeze to get it.

2. I have chosen you before the foundation of the world.

God says to all who are adopted in Christ, “I have chosen you before the foundation of the world.” We’re diving into the theological deep end here and we don’t have a lot of time to swim around today. So this might bring up all kinds of questions in your mind. I just want to encourage you to believe and receive this reality at face value. For all who are in Christ, God says in His Word, “I chose you in Christ before the foundation of the world.” Not just before you were born, but before the world was created, God planned your adoption. This makes sense when you think about adoption. An adoption begins with a parent’s initiative, not a child’s idea.

I think about when Heather and I first sat down years ago and basically put a map of the world on the table and prayed, “God, where might You be leading us to adopt from?” He led us to the country of Kazakhstan. We barely knew Kazakhstan existed before that day. But after months of praying, we started the process of adopting a child from there.

Here’s the deal. We started that process before our first son, Caleb from Kazakhstan, was even born. When he was born and being cared for in a baby house in Kazakhstan—that’s what they call orphanages—he had a mom and a dad who, unbeknownst to him, were working to adopt him. One day when we met him and held him in our arms, he had no idea of all that had been done before he was even born, completely apart from any initiative by him to bring him into a family. Even now this little guy in China has no idea that there are two parents and four kids who cannot wait to pour out our love on him as a family.

This is the picture the Bible is giving us here. All of you who are in Christ, feel this—especially if you are struggling in any way right now. I obviously don’t know what’s going on in everybody’s life, but if you’re facing challenges right now in your life, in your family, in your work—if you’re in one of those seasons when you just don’t know if you can go on some days, if some days honestly you want to quit—amidst your hurting or pain or loneliness or suffering, whatever it is, just stop and realize this. Before the sun was ever formed, before mountains were ever laid upon the earth, before oceans were ever poured upon the land, God Almighty set His sights on your soul.

You have nothing to fear about the future, because God called your name before time even began. It just blows you away to try to think about that, doesn’t it? You were adopted by God before a star was ever set in the sky. You are immeasurably valuable in the eyes of God.

3. I have destined you for awesome.

If you are adopted into Christ, God says, “I have destined you for awesome.” I’m combining here God’s gracious choosing with the word “predestined” in Ephesians 1:5. Again, there are all kinds of theological discussions and debates we could have here, but I don’t think this passage was written to

cause division in the church. I think it was written to encourage us that before the foundation of the world, God destined all who are in Christ to be like Him: holy, whole and blameless, in love.

Think about it. One of the saddest feelings in the world is the feeling that your life is not going anywhere, that each day is just a meaningless venture devoid of destiny. You get up, you go to work, do this or that, and go to bed. You rinse and repeat. And you wonder if there's any purpose in it at all. God says, "Absolutely there is."

In Christ, you are destined for beauty and glory in a way that surpasses anything and everything this world could offer you. You are destined to know God, walk with God, be loved by God and work with God to make His love, care, compassion and justice known in a world that needs all of the above. God says, "I have destined you for awesome and I infuse meaning into every single day of your life with that destiny in mind."

4. I have brought you into My family.

God says that we are predestined to adoption into Himself, brought into the family of God, so we can now call God, "Father." The holy Judge of the universe—against Whom we have all rebelled and before Whom we deserve eternal judgment—this God says, "Call Me Dad." That's what He says to you. I've used this quote before and I'll use it again. J.I. Packer said, "What is a Christian? The richest answer I know is that a Christian is one who has God as Father."

If you want to know how well people understand Christianity, find out how much they make of the thought of being God's child and having God as their Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls their worship and prayers, as well as their whole outlook on life, it means they do not understand Christianity very well at all. Too many professing Christians are missing this. It's so easy to miss it.

Let me tell you John Wesley's story. He was an honor graduate of Oxford University, an ordained clergyman in the Church of England, strong in theology, active in practical good works, regularly visited the inmates of prisons and workhouses in London, helped distribute food and clothing to slum children and orphans, studied the Bible diligently, attended numerous Sunday services as well as various other services during the week, generously gave offerings to the church and alms to the poor, prayed, fasted, lived an exemplary moral life and even spent several years as a missionary to American Indians in what was then the British colony of Georgia.

Yet upon returning to England after all of that, he wrote in his journal, "I, who went to America to convert others was never myself converted to God." He did all these things, but then he wrote, "I had the faith of a servant, though not that of a son." I'm guessing there are a lot of people who may even call themselves Christians who have the faith of a servant, who see God as someone you need to do this or that for. But you are totally missing the faith of a son or daughter, where you see God as your Father Who loves you and desires a close relationship with you. God says, "I've brought you into My family."

5. I have redeemed you.

Ephesians 1:7 says, “*In him we have redemption through his blood...*” That’s a reference to how your adoption was made possible. Adoptions cost, not just financially, but emotionally, in so many different ways. Anybody who’s been through adoption or foster care knows there’s a cost that’s real—and totally worth it. Ephesians 1 is saying that God’s adoption of you is costly. Christ paid the ultimate price. He died on a cross and shed His blood to cover over your sins and mine.

So don’t get a wrong picture here. We were not cute orphans waiting to be adopted. We were enemies of God, rebelling against Him. The only way we could become part of His family was through Jesus paying a price. Ephesians 1 is saying the price was real—and totally worth it. God says, “I have redeemed you with blood.”

6. I have forgiven you.

Because of this, God says in verse seven, “I have forgiven you of all your trespasses.” If you are in Christ, God says, “Hear, believe and rest in this: all your sins have been forgiven.” People say, “You have to be careful saying things like that, because then people will just sin all they want and claim forgiveness.” But not those who are in Christ. Those who are in Christ know that sin against God their Father is serious.

I think about my dad who loved me so much. Some of my greatest regrets in life are moments when I disobeyed or outright disregarded my dad. Those who are in Christ do not love disobeying or disregarding God, their Dad. Those who are in Christ trust God, their Dad, and want to honor Him.

7. I have lavished all My love upon you.

They want to honor God because He has lavished all of His love on them. That’s what God says to those who are in Christ. That’s the word in verse eight—God has “lavished” the riches of His grace and mercy and love upon you. God does not hold back from His children.

I think about when my family and I, Lord willing, meet this little boy in a couple months. We are going to lavish him with love. We need to have a pep talk with our kids so that we don't overwhelm this little guy. But Ephesians 1 is saying that God lavishes you with His love. He overwhelms His children with His love.

8. I have made you an heir of all that I have.

If you are in Christ, God says, “I’ve made you an heir of all that I have.” Verse 11, “*In him we have obtained an inheritance...*” That follows verse ten, which envisions a universe centered on and reunited in Christ. We’ll read about it in Revelation in a couple weeks, when God will usher in a new heaven and a new earth, with no more sin, sorrow, suffering or death, and with all eternity to enjoy His

delights. And it will all belong to you in Christ. This is no poor man saying, “You can have my inheritance.” This is the God of the universe saying, “You, right where you’re sitting, can have My inheritance.”

9. I have sealed you with My Spirit.

The end of verse 13 says those of you who have believed in Christ “*were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit.*” A seal is a mark that says, “You belong to me.” When we adopt this child and we bring him home, if somebody asks, “Whose child is that?” I’ll say, “Mine.” That means not just that he belongs to me, but I am proud of him and have taken responsibility for caring for him and loving him and providing for him.

Realize that this is what God says about you. When you wonder where you belong in the world, God shouts, “Mine! You’re Mine.” God says, “I am proud to call you Mine, I take responsibility for caring for you, loving you and providing everything you need. I have sealed you with My Spirit.”

10. I have guaranteed your eternity.

In verse 14, we see God’s Spirit is His guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it. Just this week I heard about a young woman in our church family who’s been fighting cancer and was just told she has six months to live. I’m reading this passage this week and I praise God that her future is not uncertain. No, she is in Christ and her future is certain. It is guaranteed. When you are in Christ, you have nothing to worry about for the future—whether it’s six months or 60 years—because your future for the next ten trillion years is guaranteed. If you are in Christ, even the worst thing that can happen to you in this world—death—opens the door to the best thing that will happen to you, which is eternal life with God your Father.

11. I have done all of this by My grace according to My will.

How is this possible? God says to all who are in Christ, “I have done all of this by My grace according to My will.” Did you see that over and over again in this passage? All this was “*according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace...making known to us the mystery of his will...according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will.*” It makes sense, doesn’t it? If God did all of this before the foundation of the world, that means all of this is because of His grace.

Charles Spurgeon, one of my favorite pastors in history, said this:

I am quite certain that if God had not chosen me, I should never have chosen Him. I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else He never would have chosen me afterwards. And He must have chosen me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why He should have looked upon me with special love.

On another occasion he wrote,

One weekend, when I was sitting in the house of God, I was not thinking about the preacher's sermon, for I did not believe it. The thought struck me: how did you come to be a Christian? I sought the Lord, I thought. But how did you come to seek the Lord? The truth flashed across my mind in a moment. I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to make me seek Him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, how came I to pray? I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. How came I to read the Scriptures? I did read them, but what led me to do so?

Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all and that He was the Author of my faith. So the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me and from this doctrine I have not departed to this day. I desire to make this my constant confession: I ascribe my change wholly to God.

That is the story for every single person who is in Christ, right? Who among us walks away from Ephesians 1 today saying, "Look at all I did to get adopted"? No, we walk away saying, "Praise God for adopting me!"

12. I have done all of this for your joy in My praise.

God says, "I have done all of this for your joy in My praise, in My glory." Did you see it—three different times in this passage? Verse six, all of this is "*to the praise of his glorious grace...*" Verse 12, "*...to the praise of his glory.*" Verse 14, at the very end, "*...to the praise of his glory.*" You might say, "Wait a minute. I thought this was all about what God says to me. It's about me. But in the end it's actually about Him?" Yes, it is—and this is really good for you and me.

Think about it. If God is the most beautiful, wonderful, glorious possible Being—if there's no one or nothing better or greater than God, if God is infinitely loving and infinitely satisfying, if all that is love and joy is found ultimately in God—then what is the greatest possible gift He could give you and me? Himself, right? And not just Himself, but the praise of Himself. When you enjoy something, that enjoyment overflows in praise and increases the enjoyment. When you enjoy something, you praise it—not because you have to, but because you love to, because you find joy in that.

Let me give you an example here in Washington, for you National fans. Let me ask you. When Juan Soto steps up in the fifth inning of a do-or-die game in the World Series, down a run with one man on, and he does this little-deal shuffle in the batter's box, then swings and cranks a 413 foot blast over the wall in right field, do you think, "Do I have to stand up and cheer?" No. You leap out of your chair. You high-five anybody and everybody around you, yelling, "Let's go!" You're going nuts. Why? Because you're loving what's happening, so your praise in that moment is not something you have to do. It's something you want to do. Praise in that moment is pure joy. And not only does it express joy—it is joy.

In a much, much greater way than a guy swinging a stick and hitting a ball, the God of the universe has adopted you, has blessed you, has chosen you, has destined you for awesome, has brought you into His family, has redeemed and forgiven you and He has lavished His love on you. Keep going. He's made you an heir, He has sealed you with His Spirit, He has guaranteed your eternity—all by His grace. You're like, "I'm loving this!"

The praise of God is pure joy. It's joy! Let's be finished and done with routine Sundays, gathering together to sing some songs, then just moving on. No. We are children of God, adopted by God. We love praising Him. That's what our lives are for. Children adopted by God love praising their Dad. What then does all of that mean for our lives?

To all who are not in Christ, I want to invite you to place your faith in Christ today. Some people might hear all this and think, "Well, if it's all by grace, then I don't do anything." No, you do something. Verse 13, "*To all who...believed in him...*"—in Jesus. So today, I want to invite people in this room to believe that Jesus died on a cross for your sins to make it possible for you to be part of God's family. You don't have to earn your way in, or go out and do this or that. You just have to believe, to trust in Jesus as your life, to say, "I want to be in Christ."

Some of you have even called yourselves Christians, but the truth is the joy we were just talking about is totally foreign to you. You're not in Christ. But today that could change. Today you can say, "I want to be in Christ. I want to know God as Father." I invite you to place your faith in Christ today.

Then I invite you to proclaim your faith in Christ through baptism which is the first step followers of Christ take to publicly proclaim, "I am in Christ." We have shirts, shorts and towels for anybody to do that today. Some of you say you've been in Christ, but you've not been baptized. What are you waiting for? Today is the day to celebrate, "I'm a child of God." It's a joyful celebration. What are you waiting for?

Then to all who are in Christ, now I hope it makes sense. Let's reflect His love for children in need. If anyone in the world should care for children in need through adoption or foster care or other avenues, it should be those who've been adopted by God. Do you see it? Now, it's a no-brainer when you look around the world and see millions of children in need and thousands right around us. Of course, those who are adopted by God will want to care for children in need—or a family. Watch this video with me.

Video: Something happens to you when you don't belong. I can't explain it really. But if you've felt it, you know. There are over 400,000 of us in the U.S. foster care system; 100,000 are available for adoption and are waiting for our forever families. The rest of those kids are waiting to be reunited with their birth families and just need a loving foster family while we wait.

Without a family or a place to belong, it feels like no one knows your story, no one really sees you. You feel invisible. You probably don't know how much we need you, but we do. There aren't enough families to love us, to help us heal, to call us theirs. And the truth is, bad things happen when kids don't have a place to belong. Every year, 26,000 leave foster care when

they've grown up and still are without a family. Half never even got to graduate from high school. Others end up homeless, in trouble with the law, trafficked.

It's a big problem, but the solution is so easy, even us kids know it. The solution is you. So it's time you met us; time you really got to know us. You'll see. We are brave. We are beautiful. We are worthy of belonging. The solution is you. Will you see our faces? Will you tell our stories? Will you help us belong?

David: I would take that video a step farther and say, the solution is the church. With so many children in need and so many people adopted by God—even just right here at McLean Bible Church—there is no reason why hundreds of these kids should not be cared for in Virginia, Maryland, the District, and far beyond. So let's do this. It's a no-brainer. Let's care for children in need.

There are some exciting things happening at different campuses that you'll hear about. One general starting point is www.mcleanbible.org/orphans, where you can find out more or just ask questions you might have. Let's be a church where adoption, foster care and support for unwed mothers and orphan initiatives is commonplace among us. As we do this, let's do it for the glory of our Father. Let's dedicate our lives to the praise of His glory, that the world might know He is Father to the fatherless.

Will you bow your heads with me? As you bow your heads and close your eyes, I just want to give you a moment before we do anything else to reflect before God, right where you're sitting. I want to ask every single person in the sound of my voice, "Are you in Christ?" That's the most important question. Have you been adopted into God's family through faith in Christ? Do you know God as Father through Jesus? If the answer to that question is not a resounding yes, then I want to invite you to enter into His family today, right now.

God, before the foundation of the world, purposed to bring some of you to this moment. I want to give you an opportunity right where you're sitting to become part of His family through faith in Jesus by saying in your heart to God, "Dear God, I know I have sinned against You. God, I know I'm separated from You and deserve judgment before You. But I believe today that Jesus died on the cross for my sins. Today I am putting my faith in Him. Today I want to become part of Your family. Today I trust You with my life as my Father."

That is a prayer God promises to answer. So with our heads still bowed, I want to invite you, if you just prayed that to God, to lift your hand up before God as a picture of you saying, "Yes, today I'm entering into Your family." Praise God. All across this room. Amen.

God, You see these hands. You see their hearts. You knew them before the foundation of the world. You knew this moment before the foundation of the world. You arranged their lives even to be here at this moment, to hear the good news of Your love and to become part of Your family through faith in Christ. So we praise You for adoption that's happening right now—supernatural adoption that is happening today. All glory be to Your name.

Then we pray that You would give these new sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, the courage today to confess that publicly and be baptized. And for others who have not yet been baptized, that they will do that today, confessing their faith in Jesus publicly through baptism.

God, we pray for our church family, as children adopted by You in this church and in this region of our world, that You would help us be a reflection of you to children around us in need. God, we pray that You would cause a movement of adoption and foster care to rise at MBC that has a profound impact on our counties, our states and in other countries, for Your glory as Father to the fatherless and for the good of many kids who are made in Your image and loved by You. Help us be the church You have called and created us to be. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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