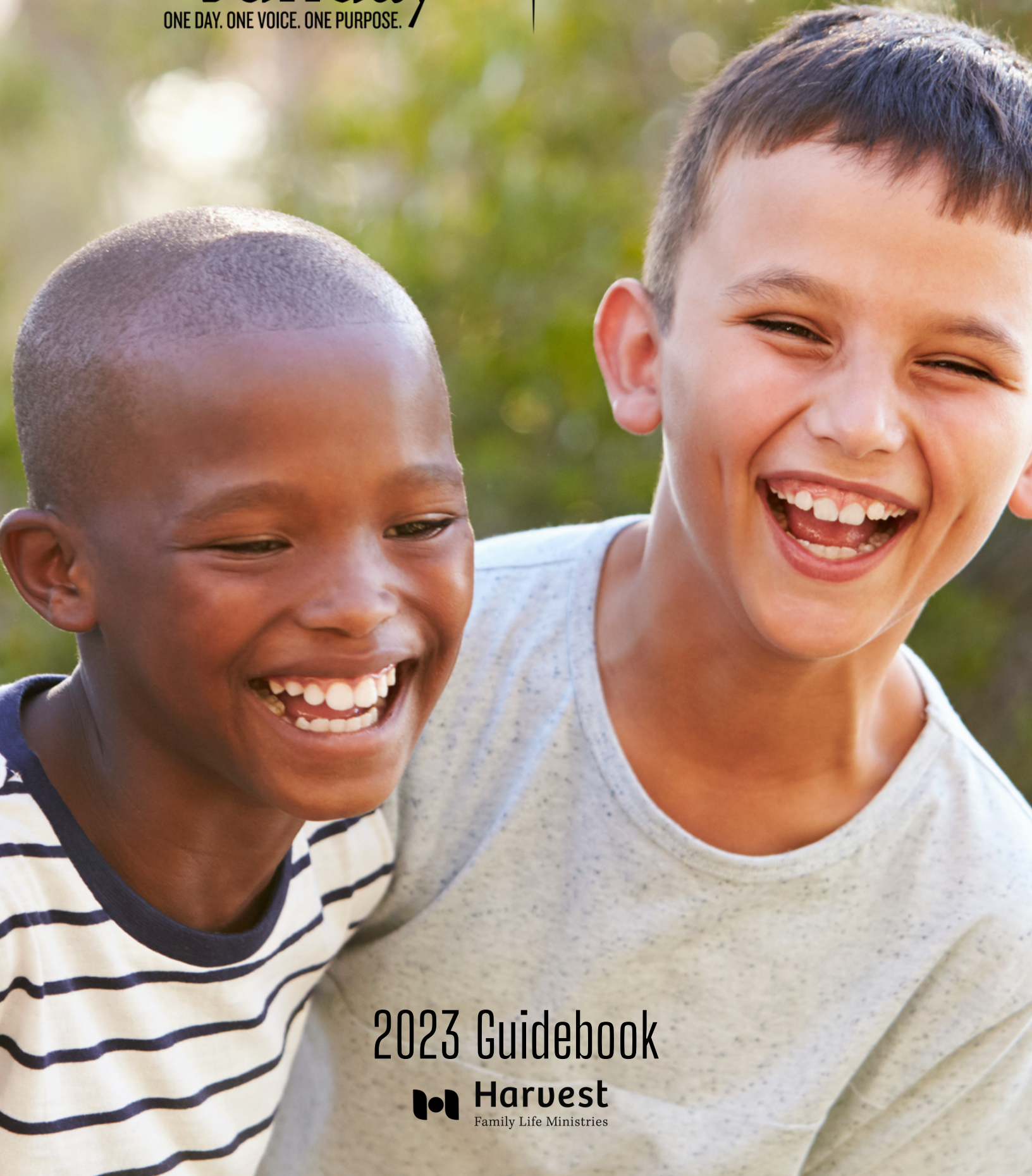


stand
sunday
ONE DAY. ONE VOICE. ONE PURPOSE.

November 12, 2023



2023 Guidebook



Harvest
Family Life Ministries

Dear Friends & Ministry Partners,

In 2004, we initiated the first “Stand Sunday” in the United States, calling the families at our home church in Brownwood, Texas to stand-up to care for children and families impacted by the child welfare system. That day birthed a movement and because of the Lord's work through many faithful churches, to this day in Brown County, there are more families available to care for children than there are children waiting.

Again this year, churches across the nation will unite on the second Sunday of November to declare war on inaction when it comes to children and families facing abuse, abandonment, and neglect. This second Sunday, also known as Stand Sunday, provides an opportunity for individuals, small groups, and churches to closely observe the Scriptures and consider their role in caring for the least of these. No one person can do everything, but everyone can do something.

November is National Adoption Month and we are encouraging all churches to join us and countless other churches to observe the Scriptures pertaining to caring for vulnerable children . We, along with our strategic partners at the Christian Alliance for Orphans, will equip, empower, and celebrate with you as you lead in your sphere of influence not only on this particular Sunday, but until the orphan crisis is eradicated. We would love to know you and your church, and it would be our joy to walk with you as we faithfully obey the commands of Jesus together.

May the Lord continue to break our hearts for what breaks His. May we continue to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before our God together. May we humbly serve the most vulnerable in our neighborhoods and communities so that they may know the Savior King we love, serve, and give all the glory.

For every child,

Bishop Aaron Blake

Founder, Stand Sunday &
Harvest Family Life Ministries

When Bishop Aaron Blake, a pastor and foster/adoptive father, left his breakfast table for church on the second Sunday in November of 2004, he had a sermon prepared - and it wasn't about foster care. "I had prepared a sermon to preach that morning that I had worked on all week. I stood up to bring the message, when the breakfast table image of our boys came back to my mind. The faces of our sons seemed to multiply in my emotions as I recalled the image from the breakfast table earlier. I knew then that God was prompting our church to answer the call to care for children and broken families," Bishop Blake recalls.

"Who will stand with me to defend, care, and support abused, abandoned, and neglected children in our community?"

Without explanation, Bishop Blake said to his congregation, "Brothers and sisters, there are about 30,000 children in the foster care system in Texas and nearly a half a million in the U.S." He then asked this one simple question (while not expecting a verbal answer), "Who will stand with me to defend, care, and support abused, abandoned, and neglected children in our community?" After a brief moment of silence, one lady in the back of the church stood up and simply replied, "Pastor...I will." And, Stand Sunday was born.

Like a tiny, smoldering ember dropped in a pile of thirsty pine needles, her voice began to multiply. To his amazement, Bishop Blake watched as one family after another stood up and joined their voices to hers. As a result of that day, this church and the surrounding community has cared for and adopted hundreds of children in foster care over the last 18 years. In fact, their county actually has more than enough foster families to meet the need there.

Each year since 2004, Bishop Blake's church has marked that very special second Sunday in November.

Today, Stand Sunday is still promoted by Bishop Blake and his non-profit, Harvest Family Life Ministries, that engages, equips, and empowers churches for effective foster prevention, intervention, and transition ministries. Bishop Blake travels all across the United States telling the story of that very first Stand Sunday and challenging churches to get involved in care for vulnerable children and families. In 2015, Stand Sunday was adopted by strategic partners at the Christian Alliance for Orphans, and in 2022, it became part of their More than Enough initiative. Harvest Family Life is thankful for CAFO and the work they do to support Stand Sunday.



WHAT COULD stand sunday

ONE DAY. ONE VOICE. ONE PURPOSE.

LOOK LIKE IN MY CHURCH?

Churches around the nation observe Stand Sunday in different ways. Some churches design the entire worship service emphasizing the call of James 1:27 by hosting a guest speaker, showing videos, interviewing foster families and children from within the church, leading in guided prayer, and even displaying a Heart Gallery (www.heartgallerytexas.com) in the church foyer. Other churches choose to simply include a hand out in the church bulletin and make an announcement for an upcoming follow up meeting to discuss ways church members can be involved in orphan care ministry both locally and internationally. **Each church, ministry structure, and community is unique, so therefore each Stand Sunday experience will be also.**

WHEN

Stand Sunday is traditionally observed the second Sunday of November, but it certainly can take place on any given Sunday.

PROMOTIONAL TOOLS

Our partners at the Christian Alliance for Orphans create customizable tools for churches wanting to observe Stand Sunday. Visit www.standsunday.com to build your toolkit complete with customizable graphics, order t-shirts, and download the Stand Sunday videos to show your congregation. Need help printing? Just let us know at info@hflm.org!

COULD WE GET A LITTLE HELP?

Harvest Family Life Ministries is specifically called to engage, equip, and empower churches to care for abused, neglected, and abandoned children and their families first through prevention, and also through intervention and transition. Stand Sunday is merely a catalyst event focused on building awareness and prayer. The Monday after Stand Sunday is when awareness can move to action. We'd love to help you not only lead your church in observing Stand Sunday, but also in planning that key Stand Sunday follow up meeting/event where awareness can move to action. Check out the planning timeline to follow and our ***27 Ways to Engage in Foster Care Prevention, Intervention, and Transition Ministry.***

Stand Sunday Planning Timeline

August

Do you know any foster or adoptive families in your church or area? Have you ever heard their story? If not, now is the time to do so. Ask God to show you His heart for the vulnerable on display in the Scriptures. Begin asking God what role your church is to play in actively serving families at risk of separation and children in foster care. Consider taking the church assessment and scheduling an Explore meeting with Harvest Family Life to learn more about child welfare concerns specific to your community and those nearby. Consider how Gospel-centered foster care prevention, intervention, and transition ministries can be integrated into what your church is already doing. Make sure "Stand Sunday" is listed on your church's fall calendar for Sunday, November 12, 2023.

October

Promote and spread the word about your observance of Stand Sunday within the community. Wear your shirts, utilize the customizable graphics, and make connections with local like-minded agencies. Create and print marketing materials such as banners, announcement slides, prayer bracelets, etc. Plan your follow up meeting/event so families have a next step through their local church. Harvest would love to facilitate connections, equip and empower a Care Team to utilize CarePortal and discuss hosting a *Brave* foster/adoption recruitment event with your church.

September

Identify some individuals in your church who are already interested in foster care and adoption, evangelism, and missions. Introduce Stand Sunday to the team and share what you have learned so far. Begin meeting regularly to plan toward Stand Sunday and add your follow up meeting (described below) to your church calendar. Would you like for a faith-based specialist from Child Protective Services to come share in your service or be available after? Would you like to see photos or videos of children available for adoption displayed in your church? Would you like for your church to have opportunity for a tangible response on Stand Sunday? Would you like to have a dedicated time to pray for children by name? These are just a few ideas!

Let us know you plan to stand on our website, order t-Shirts, adapt the graphics provided by our partners at CAFO (or create your own!), and begin promoting to your church!

November 12



Today, churches and individuals worldwide are sharing about God's heart for the vulnerable. What does your church need to hear? What are some action steps your church can take to care for vulnerable children and families? Share what God has been teaching you and lead in guided prayer. Announce your church's decided next steps.

After Stand Sunday

December

December is a great time to begin making meaningful connections through events such as Shop with a Cop or by contacting your nearby schools to provide winter coats or Christmas gifts for children in need. The answer to the child welfare crisis is not a program, but a person. And His name is Jesus. Use the month of December to shout His name loudly and show your love and concern for those who society has deemed as the "lowly." Yes, invite your community into your Church, but also go and serve where lasting relationships can begin and people can be introduced to the Savior King born in a manger.

April

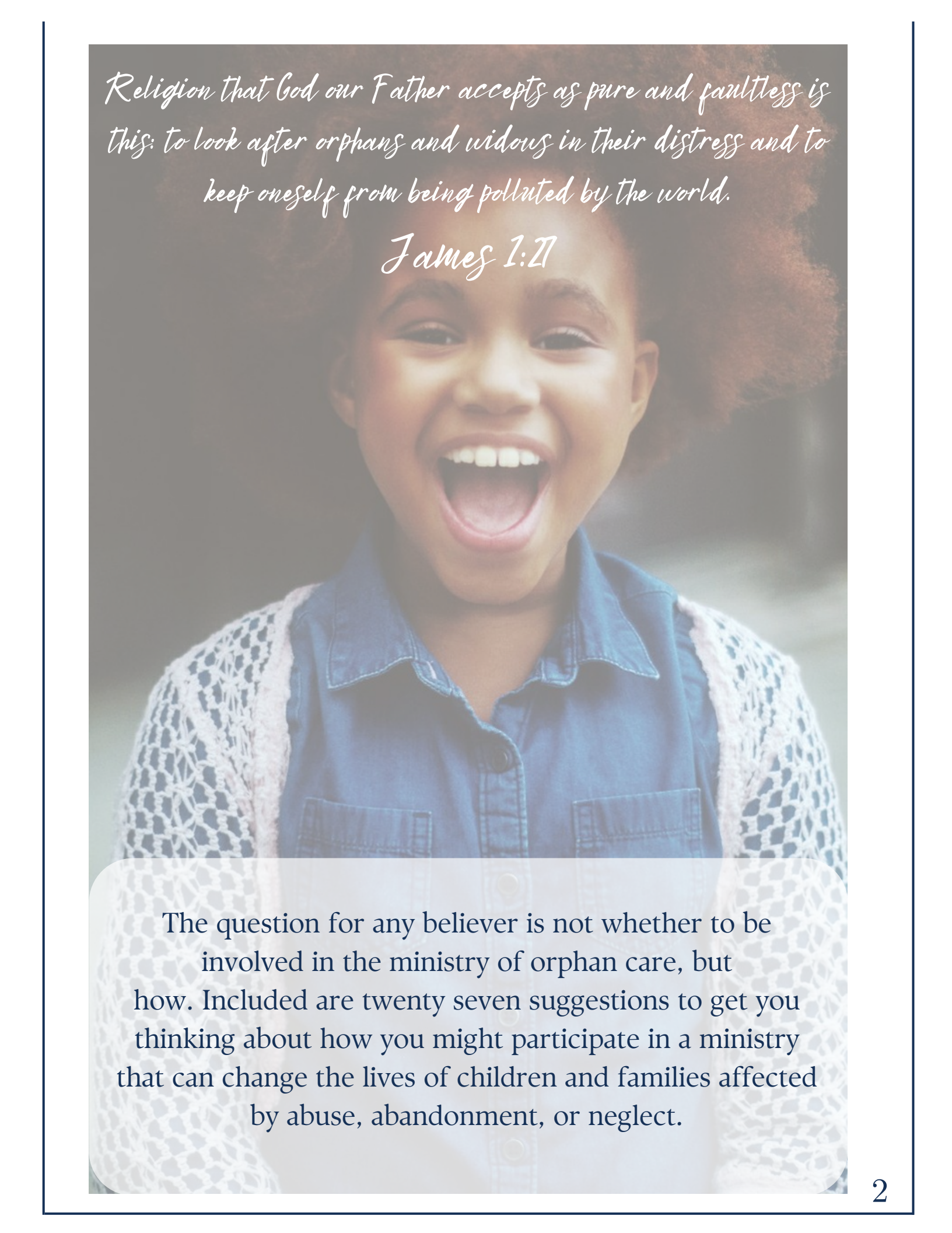
April is Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Month. The 4th Sunday of April is traditionally known as *Blue Sunday* and is a day for churches to remember children lost to abuse and neglect and consider how they can engage in their defense. Consider observing Blue Sunday in your church and reminding your congregation how you as a church express your concern and love. Visit www.bluesunday.org and follow Harvest Family Life Ministries for more information.

January

Research collaborative efforts in your community that seek to meet the needs of vulnerable children and families. Check out our 27 Ways to Engage in Foster Care Prevention, Intervention, and Transition ministries and put any prospective event or emphasis dates on your church calendar. If you have not done so yet, schedule an Explore Meeting with Harvest Family Life (or your local Bridge Ministry for vulnerable children and families), consider utilizing the CarePortal technology to connect directly with families in need, and consider hosting or co-hosting a *Brave* foster/adoption recruitment event.

May

May is Foster Care Awareness and Appreciation month. This is a wonderful time to acknowledge the foster parents in your congregation with gifts, a free Parents Night Out, or a group CPR night so more can be qualified to babysit on an ongoing basis. May is also a time to consider those aging out of care in need of jobs, ongoing mentoring, financial support, and forever families.



Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

James 1:27

The question for any believer is not whether to be involved in the ministry of orphan care, but how. Included are twenty seven suggestions to get you thinking about how you might participate in a ministry that can change the lives of children and families affected by abuse, abandonment, or neglect.

JOIN CAREPORTAL

Churches, groups, individuals, and businesses can support families involved in or at risk for involvement in the child welfare system through CarePortal.

Visit www.hflm.org/careportal to learn more.

LEAD A TEAM

Volunteer to be your church's CarePortal and Orphan Care ministry leader. Work with Harvest Family Life to develop infrastructure and relationships with strategic community partners.

PRAY

Pray Regularly for a specific foster/adopt family or for the children available for adoption in your county by name. Send a note of encouragement each month from the prayer team to the families you are praying for.

MAKE A MEAL

Provide meals for foster and adopt families with new placements or when foster and adoptive families are under particular stressors. Create a team by using a platform such as takethemameal.com.

FOSTER/ADOPT MENTORING

Have you fostered or adopted in the past? Offer your time to walk alongside prospective foster/adoptive families as they enter their new world.

HOST A PLAY DATE

Offer to host a playdate for foster families at your home or a community space to provide relational and emotional support to both the children and caregivers.

*Most child placement agencies do not have special requirements for play dates.

FOSTER AND/OR ADOPT

Accept one or more of the 140 million orphans worldwide by providing them with the love of God and a place to call home.

HOME MAINTENANCE

Serve single parents, widows, foster/adopt families and bio families, who are in need of yard work, repairs around their home, and small construction projects.

HOST A FOSTER/ADOPT PARENT FELLOWSHIP

Host or volunteer to help at a fellowship (banquet, picnic, dessert bar, etc.) for foster/adopt parents to give them an emotional boost through relational connections.

BABYSIT FOR FOSTER FAMILIES

Offer to babysit for foster families. Most child placement agencies require an approved federal background check for babysitting over a certain number of hours.

HOST A GRADUATION SHOWER

Contact a local Child Placement Agency or DFPS and offer to host a graduation shower for youth transitioning out of care.

PARTY IN A BAG

Provide all the supplies for a birthday or "just cause" party to celebrate foster children birthdays, adoption finalizations, or any other reason to celebrate.

ATTEND CAFO SUMMIT

Participate in an international conference that draws thousands of orphan care advocates from over 30 countries.
(CAFO.org/summit)

PARTICIPATE IN STAND SUNDAY

Check out www.standsunday.com to learn more about this special emphasis every November. Encourage your small group or church to participate with you.

BACKPACKS

Supply a child in foster care with all the back-to-school essentials beginning with a fresh back pack. Check in for additional needs like uniforms, shoes, and fun items.

IDENTIFY HIDDEN FOSTERS

Many children are cared for by family members but are not supported by CPS or a child placement agency. Reach out to these families for ways you can support them.

BE A HOSTING CHURCH

Open the church to be used by child welfare or the child placing agency for trainings, meetings, or family visits.

TAKE KIDS TO CAMP

Create a scholarship fund for foster youth to attend camp with your church. If your church does not participate in camp, consider sponsoring for Royal Family Kids Camp. (RFK.org)

ADOPT A CHILD PLACING AGENCY

Offer prayer by providing request cards to be picked up weekly for employees and the families they serve. Provide a quarterly or yearly meal celebrating their work.

ADOPT A CHILD WELFARE OFFICE

Offer prayer by providing request cards to be picked up weekly for employees and the families they serve. Provide snacks for the office and appreciate their work.

OBSERVE BLUE SUNDAY

Blue Sunday is observed in April to build awareness regarding child abuse prevention. Encourage your church to wear blue and spend time in guided prayer.

GO ON MISSION

Talk to Harvest Family Life or a church in a community where children are at high risk for child welfare involvement. Serve selflessly in that community for a week or weekend.

BECOME A CASA

Be a voice for children by walking alongside them, from the beginning through permanency, as they navigate the foster care system. (CASAForChildren.org)

GO TO COURT

Join Clergy in Court with Harvest Family Life to hear the stories of children and families involved in the child welfare system. Ask questions and learn how you can help vulnerable children and families.

HOST THE HEART GALLERY

Display a portrait exhibit of children from the area who dream of finding a "forever family through adoption. Contact Harvest Family Life to make the connection.

GIVE

Many organizations, like Harvest Family Life, minister directly to vulnerable children and families. Your donation of a little or a lot could change a child's entire life trajectory.

ADOPT AN ADULT

When children age out of foster care, they are often left without any lasting support. Adopt a foster youth who has aged out through an organization like foreverfamily.org

ENGAGE WITH HARVEST

Want help finding your right next step? Contact the team at Harvest Family Life. We'd love to stand with you for vulnerable children and support you in this ongoing, beautiful journey.



This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

1 John 3:16-18

Thank you for Standing!

— stand —
— sunday —

November 12, 2023

www.standsunday.com



Church to Child



Harvest

Family Life Ministries