



ADOPTION + THE ORPHAN CRISIS



show
HOPE

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A Movement To Care For Orphans

ADOPTION + THE ORPHAN CRISIS





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UNDERSTANDING THE ORPHAN CRISIS:

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PLIGHT OF WAITING CHILDREN

Have you ever imagined growing up without a mom or dad? Or facing life alone on the streets just because you were the second child born into your family? These are the harsh realities that orphans are facing today, right now in 2014. The orphan crisis is a topic that many people talk about, but few truly understand. The truth is, this topic is more than just a pop-culture conversation: it is real, it is relevant for each of us, and it is filled with heartbreak. It is the international orphan crisis.

In order to make a difference, we have to stay informed. Continue reading as we discuss the top three things you should know about the orphan crisis: the “who, where, and why” of this devastating issue.



1. WHO

Each face looks different.

- + She is a beautiful two-year-old with Down syndrome, left alone on the streets as a result of her disability.
- + He is a shy 11-year-old boy who has been in and out of foster care, bottling up every frustration and fear of rejection; a family has yet to tell him, “We will love you forever, just as you are.”
- + She’s an eight-year-old girl who has waited and dreamt of her forever family for years, but her country just halted international adoptions. Based on statistics, she will die before she reaches her 9th birthday. Will her dream of a family ever come true?

If these children formed one country, it would be the 10th largest country in the world.

The international orphan crisis affects more than 140 million children. Of those children, 18 million have lost both parents. They range in age from infants to teenagers, all without a family to provide for their most basic needs.

Children are orphaned for a wide range of reasons, including war, poverty, and death. They live halfway across the world and they live just down the street. If these children formed one country, it would be the 10th largest country in the world – an entire nation of vulnerable children, left to fend for themselves.

2. WHERE

The orphan crisis exists worldwide. Asia is at the top of the list with the largest population of waiting children, reaching a total of 60 million orphans. In addition, Asia has the highest number of orphans with disabilities. Some children will have the opportunity to be cared for in great facilities like Show Hope's Special Care Centers, but the majority will not have access to such care.

Following Asia, the largest populations of waiting children exist in Africa, Latin America, and the United States (consecutively). Different factors have affected each country's statistics, but they all share one thing: a heartbreaking number of orphaned children.



3. WHY

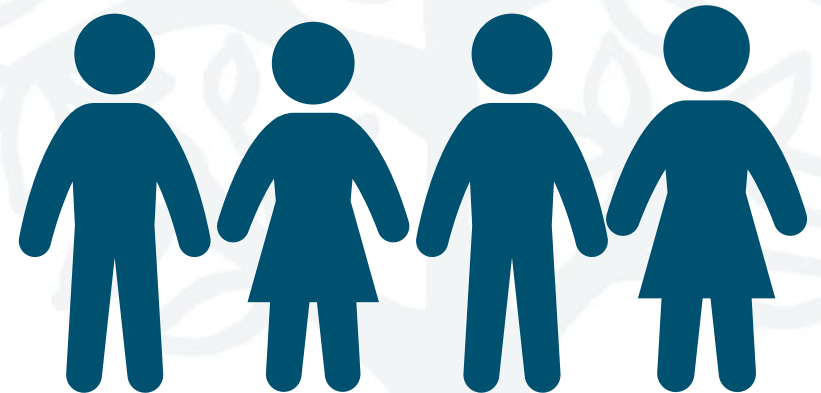
You may be thinking that you've seen multiple friends adopt and that adoption must be fairly easy. Unfortunately, this is generally not the case. **To address the "Why?" we must first address several major factors.**

1 First, **there are a staggering 140+ million orphans in the world today.** Second, there are a number of complicated rules and regulations that impact adoption such as the Hague Convention, an international agreement that works to safeguard children in the international adoption process.

2 In addition, **adoption regulations often differ from country to country.** This inevitably leads to longer waiting periods, increased paperwork, and greater financial expenses. Some countries that were formally open to international adoption have also now begun to close their doors to outside adoptions.

3 As a result, **international adoptions have dropped by 50% since 2004,** due in large part to these factors. While these changes in practices and rules are intended to protect the child, they have also unfortunately discouraged many people from pursuing adoption.

140+
MILLION



Every 18 seconds, a child becomes an orphan.

COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT FOSTER CARE AND ADOPTION

Every 18 seconds, a child becomes an orphan. Consequently, these children are forced to face frightening questions like, "Who will take care of me? Where will I sleep? What will I eat?" In the US, this situation is often in play when forces outside a child's control like abuse or neglect bring them into the custody of the state.

While the best solution to this problem would be to alleviate the factors that break down a child's family of origin, offering a foster care solution that is reliably safe and nurturing is vital to addressing the needs of some of our nation's most vulnerable children.

To better understand the world of foster care and adoption, here are answers to a few of the most common questions.





HOW DOES FOSTER CARE WORK?

The foster care system is designed to provide a safe, temporary residence for children who have been subjected to abuse, neglect, or other factors in their family of origin that place them at high risk of harm. When a child enters foster care, they are immediately placed with a licensed foster family, a biological relative, or in a group care facility.

Most often, this transition is quick and unexpected by the child. Each child is assigned to a specific social worker who creates a permanency goal and a reunification plan, working with the court and the birth family if possible to establish a safe living environment. If the situation does not permit reunification with the birth family, the social worker sets up a plan of long-term fostering with the hope of adoption.

WHY IS FOSTER CARE NEEDED?

In the United States, there are roughly 400,000 children in foster care at any given time. When the state is able to provide the children with a safe family unit through a loving foster care placement, the children are given the space to find healing in the nurture and safety of a family.

Without great foster families, law enforcement officials, social workers, and volunteers, the outcome for children in foster care would be fearfully uncertain. A safe haven is an incredibly important resource to children as their reunification and/or a permanency plan is created.

It often costs tens of thousands of dollars to help bring waiting children into a forever family.

WHY IS ADOPTION SO EXPENSIVE?

If there are millions of waiting children in the world, why must it often cost tens of thousands of dollars to help bring them into the love and protection of a family? In an attempt to shed some light as to why adoption can be such a costly endeavor, we will focus on five main areas of financial expense that relate to adoption.

1. LEGAL: One of the major steps in the adoption process is to choose an adoption agency and/or attorney who will help to facilitate your adoption. Depending upon what type of adoptive placement you are seeking (private, international, domestic, etc.), your agency or attorney will be involved in navigating the referral process and will help you process your legal documents. Agencies and attorneys often have fees that vary based on the program you are pursuing and how much legal help is needed to move through the process.



Additionally, in the case of international adoptions, an attorney's services are often needed in order to file "re-adoption" paperwork once your child is home. In all cases, your agency and/or attorney should be your best advocate as they guide you through extensive paperwork and necessary legal steps. The fees for this service can range broadly.

2. HOME STUDY: Every adoptive family is required to complete a home study. Home studies consist of multiple stages, starting with an orientation period. Initial information is recorded about the family and interviews are conducted to retrieve specific background information. Preparation training for adoptive parents is required along with home visits that ensure the home is safe and suitable for children.

In addition, health, income, and autobiographical information are required, as well as thorough background checks and fingerprinting. Lastly, personal references must be submitted in order to provide the most complete picture of the family.

After each stage of the home study, a report is created by the home study agency. These reports are combined to create the family's portfolio which prospective agencies and birth parents can review based on the type of adoption program.

After placement, a home study agency will also complete post-placement visits. These visits focus on making sure the child is doing well and thriving within their new family. The entire home study/ post-placement process can span many months to years (depending on how quickly a waiting child is placed into the family) and the cost is often impacted accordingly.



3. COUNTRY: The Hague Convention was enacted by the United Nations in an attempt to thwart corruption/trafficking and preserve the right of orphaned children to experience the love and protection of a family through adoption. Under the convention, each country has its own program to place children internationally and determines its own adoption fees. For families living in the US and adopting abroad, they can expect to pay fees for processing federal forms and paperwork as well as adoption fees for the specific country they are adopting through. With each country determining different fees and program costs, this area of expense can vary widely.

4. DOCUMENTATION: Documentation is required for each step of the adoption process. These documents make up the dossier that most international programs require, including proof of eligibility. Each document is processed locally, then by the agency, state and federal government, and finally by the international government of the child's country of origin.

Many adoption agencies require the documents to be sealed and notarized, which authenticates the application and dossier. If a family decides to adopt internationally, they will also have to submit paperwork to the USCIS (U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services) in order to receive citizenship for their child. This element is vital to the adoption process but can also add thousands of dollars to the overall cost.

5. TRAVEL: Whether the adoption is domestic or international, travel expense can usually be expected. Undoubtedly, travel for an international adoption can be quite expensive. In most international adoption cases, the family will visit the country and the child first. Then, once that country's waiting period is over and the process is complete, the family will return to their child's country of origin to complete the process and travel home with their child. The cost for this element of adoption varies widely based on time of travel and country of origin.



Show Hope was founded out of a desire to reduce the financial barrier to adoption...

IS THERE HELP FOR THE ADOPTION EXPENSES?

Although adoption expenses can often seem insurmountable at first, many families find comfort in discovering that there are many fundraising options available to assist them.

Show Hope was founded out of a desire to reduce the financial barrier to adoption and to see more waiting children have the opportunity to find their way into loving families through adoption. Through Show Hope's adoption aid program, thousands of waiting children have been able to come into the love and permanency of a family over the first ten years of Show Hope's work.

It is an incredible blessing to have a small part in a child's home and for that privilege we are deeply thankful! These miracles are not possible without the continued partnership and generous support of our sponsors and donors.



HOW YOU CAN HELP

The best place to start is simple: prayer. Ask God, "What's next? How can I help end this crisis? How can I show hope to these vulnerable children?"



Consider signing up for Show Hope's prayer updates. Next, consider whether you are called to impact the movement through adopting, giving financially, raising awareness, or through a short-term trip. There are lots of different ways to get involved. We hope that you will join us on this life-changing journey! Together, we can restore the hope of a family to orphans in distress.

And nothing can replace education. **Learn, read, and ask questions about the current US foster care system and the children who find themselves there.** By learning more about the foster care system, the legalities, the challenges, and even how to become a foster parent, you will be able to more clearly discern how you can be a positive and active voice for children.

Understanding the needs of a child who has come into foster care takes great time and commitment.

If you feel called to adoption or foster care, know that this is a decision that requires a great deal of commitment, patience, grace, prayer and support, but is also a huge need.

Children who come into families through adoption have already experienced varying degrees of trauma. Understanding these needs and being able to enter into them meaningfully with the child takes great time and commitment.

Show Hope offers Empowered to Connect conferences and pre- and post-placement resources that offer great insight into how to best serve and engage children who come from difficult beginnings.

Empowered to Connect conferences seek to equip families, churches, and professionals to bring hope and healing to adopted and foster children. This conference is a great opportunity to gain a fuller understanding of adoption and the foster care system.

For more information on Empowered to Connect and registration, please visit: showhope.org/etc



ABOUT SHOW HOPE

When Steven Curtis Chapman and his wife Mary Beth adopted their daughter Shaohannah, they grieved to leave behind so many orphans without families. Though more families desired to adopt and love a waiting child, the cost of adoption was too high. When no organization was found to address this need, Show Hope was born. The work of Show Hope is to restore the hope of a family to orphans in distress. **Show-Hope is a non-profit organization that mobilizes individuals and communities to meet the most pressing needs of orphans in distress** by providing:

1. Homes for waiting children through adoption aid grants, and
2. Life-saving medical care for orphans with special needs

Whether it is through adoption or by facilitating a child's support to reflect the care of a permanent family, Show Hope exists because every child should know the love of a family. God is on the move, and it is his plan for his people to be the ones who care for orphans.

To learn more, visit Show Hope online at showhope.org.

BE HOPE. Get Involved.

Show Hope exists to empower each person to fulfill their calling to care for orphans. Everyone can do something!

