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REFLECTIONS by Scott Rosenow

The following is the text of a talk I gave recently at our home church. The topic seemed relevant, so we just decided to use it for this newsletter's column.

I would like to begin by quoting some numbers for you. One hundred and fourteen thousand; two point one million; one hundred and forty-three million. What do all of these numbers mean?

- One hundred and fourteen thousand is the population of Provo, Utah; it is also the number of children in the United States currently living in the foster care system.
- Two point one million: that's the population of Houston, Texas—the fourth largest city in the United States; it is also the number of children who become orphans in Africa alone each year.
- One hundred and forty-three million: that's the population of Russia; it is also the current U.N. estimate of the number of orphans world-wide.

Every year, approximately three million children become orphans worldwide. And it is estimated that every year worldwide, somewhere in the neighborhood of fourteen million children age out of the orphanage/foster care system, becoming too old to be adopted according to the laws of their countries. Most of these children face bleak futures: in Russia, for example, 60% of girls who age out of the system end up in prostitution, and 70% of boys who age out become hardened criminals. It is true that about two hundred fifty thousand adoptions are completed each year, but that, unfortunately, is less than zero point two percent (0.2%) of the number of orphans in the world.

These numbers are sobering, even overwhelming. Let me repeat that big one: one hundred and forty-three million orphans worldwide. That's nearly half the population of the United States. That is huge! But realistically, what does all of this have to do with us? We know that we can't save all of these children, and we even know that Jesus has not called us to save all of them. So, what is our responsibility, as Believers?

When Kathy and I do these talks, we usually like to include one or more actual stories of kids whose lives have been dramatically changed through the miracle of adoption. We do this because the stories tend to be compelling, they tend to get people's attention and help focus a bright light on both the need for and the results of adoption. This approach is justified by what we see in Scripture, where we find Jesus Himself often telling stories to explain and illustrate an important point for His listeners. In fact, all through the Bible we find stories God has given us to teach us the things He wants us to know. Stories can take abstract or difficult concepts and make them comprehensible, and they can engage listeners in a way that bare facts and figures usually cannot. In putting together my talk for today, I considered a couple of stories we've been a part of since founding The Shepherd's Crook.

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WHAT WAS LOST – “I will seek **what was lost** and bring back what was driven away.”

The following children have come home since our last issue:

ERIN



Before: In China.

After: In her Cincinnati, OH home.

KATHERINE



Before: In China.

After: In her Ann Arbor, MI home.

ASHLEY



Before: In China.

After: In her Colorado Springs, CO home.

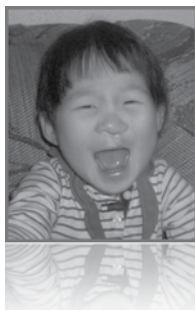
RUBEA



Before: In China.

After: In her San Antonio, TX home.

SARAH RENYI



Before: In China.

After: In her Deer Lodge, MT home.

JORDIS



Before: In China.

After: In her Lindsbarg, KS home.

BENJAMIN



Before: In China.

After: In his Ballwin, MO home.

COOPER



Before: In China.

After: In his Cincinnati, OH home.

JONATHAN



Before: In China.

After: In his East Hardwick, VT home.

BENJAMIN



Before: In China.

After: In his Franklin, TN home.

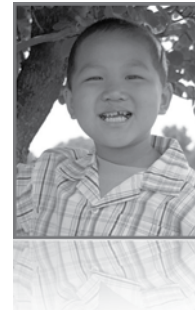
CARSON



Before: In China.

After: In his Hamilton, OH home.

IAN



Before: In China.

After: In his Hamilton, OH home.

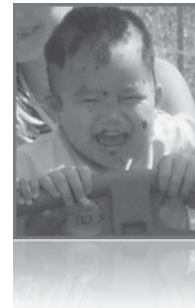
JONATHAN



Before: In China.

After: In Hudson, OH home.

SAWYER



Before: In China.

After: In his Leesburg, OH home.

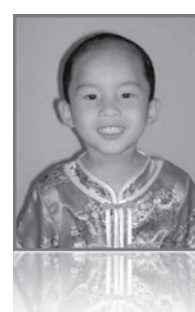
JOHN THOMAS



Before: In China.

After: In his Odon, IN home.

ALEXANDER



Before: In China.

After: In his Richfield, MN home.

DILLON



Before: In China.

After: In his Staunton, VA home (No after photo).

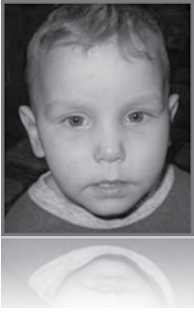
JOSHUA



Before: In China.

After: In his Troy, OH home.

IVAN



Before: In Eastern Europe.

After: In his Batavia, OH home.

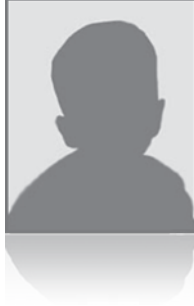
CARLOS



Before: In Guatemala.

After: In his Dayton, OH home .

NICHOLAS



Before: In Guatemala.

After: In his Evandale, TX home (No After Photo).

JONATHAN



Before: In Guatemala.

After: In his Hamil, NY home.

ETHAN



Before: In Guatemala.

After: In his Hamilton, OH home.

JAMES



Before: In Guatemala.

After: In his Land o'Lakes, FL home.

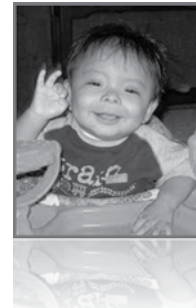
KENNETT



Before: In Guatemala.

After: In his Springdale, AR home.

JACOB



Before: In Guatemala.

After: In his Tecumseh, MI home.

LUDWING AND ANNA



Before: In Guatemala.

After: In their Hudson, OH home.

LILLIAN



Before: In Liberia.

After: In her Arlington, TX home .

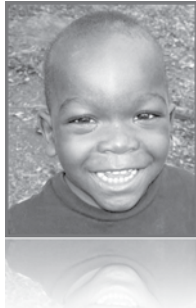
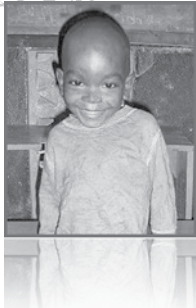
HECTOR, JUDITH, CAMILO, AND ISMAEL



Before: In Guatemala.

After: In their Scott, LA home (No After Photo).

MICAH



Before: In Liberia.

After: In his Arlington, TX home.

BRUNO



Before: In Mexico.

After: In his Snohomish, WA home.

LEIGHANNA



Before: In Taiwan.

After: In her Cabot, AR home .

JESSE



Before: In Vietnam.


After: In his Batavia, OH home.

MADDISON



Before: In America.

After: In her Sullivan, IN home.



OUT FROM THE NATIONS “I will bring them **out from the nations** and into their own land.”

The following adoptions have been started since our last issue:



AMY

Waiting: In China.

Coming home: To
Collinsville, OK.



JIANG HUI

Waiting: In China.

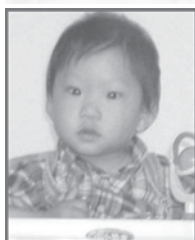
Coming home: To
Lawndale, NC.



GONG ER

Waiting: In China.

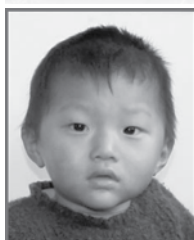
Coming home: To
Medford, NJ.



JAMIE

Waiting: In China.

Coming home: To Cin-
cinnati, OH.



HUDSON

Waiting: In China.

Coming home: To
Waxahachie, TX.



JAXSON

Waiting: In China.

Coming home: To
Lynn, IN.



AIDEN

Waiting: In China.

Coming home: To San
Diego, CA.



ADRIANA

Waiting: In Guatemala.

Coming home: To
Gurley, AL



ARTURO

Waiting: In Guatemala.

Coming home: To
Coralville, IA.



ANNIE

Waiting: In China.

Coming home: To
Slinger, WI.



JOSHUA

Waiting: In Korea.

Coming home: To
Washougal, WA.



EDGARS

Waiting: In Latvia.

Coming home: To
West Point, GA.



KRISTIN

Waiting: In Liberia.

Coming home: To
Sidell, FL.



VANESSA

Waiting: In Liberia.

Coming home: To
Sidell, FL.



KRISTINA

Waiting: In Russia.

Coming home: To
Zanesville, OH.



ANAH

Waiting: In Vietnam.

Coming home: To
Hamil, NY.



MADDIE

Waiting: In India.

Coming home: To
Bellefontaine, OH.



News Item UPDATE

We thought it would be a good idea to let you all know where things stand with the ministry and how we're doing financially. Our newsletter looks a bit different this month than it usually does, and it is in fact several months late in coming. We normally include a Family Spotlight article, which provides an introduction and brief biographical sketch of one of TSC's many families. That article is missing this month, and our lists of children, both those now home with their families and those whose adoptions have been begun, are much longer than usual. We were supposed to send out a newsletter back in October, but financial difficulties with the ministry led us to the decision to postpone the newsletter until we were in a better financial position. We are now able to produce and send out our newsletter, but the long delay in its coming necessitated this temporary change in format.

Many of you may remember our reporting in the spring that we were in a difficult financial position and that Providential intervention would be required for us to continue operating. This ministry considers itself to be an active extension of God's purposes, and we depend on Him for our continued existence. We have two full-time paid employees and roughly forty volunteer staff members. There have been at least two times during the past six to eight months when we wrote the monthly paychecks for our paid employees and, sadly, let them know that there was no money for the next paycheck. And yet, when the next month rolled around, we found sufficient funds to write those checks. God has stretched and strengthened our faith during this time, and one of the things He has impressed upon our Board members is that He is not yet through with this ministry. Our Lord has provided some large and well-timed gifts during those tough times, gifts which allowed us to recover temporarily from our difficulties and continue operating. However, the events of this past year have reinforced our conviction that the support of God's people is essential for us to do the work God has called us to do. We are praying for an increased base of support—regular monthly support—to enable us to continue this work and to plan for operations and program budgets. There is no escaping the fact that money is required to run a ministry like this one. We know there are those out there who contribute happily toward the adoption expenses of a child but who feel uncomfortable contributing toward the operating expenses of the ministry. The simple fact, however, is that if we do not have sufficient operating expenses each month to keep this ministry running, we will no longer be able to help in any way with the adoptions of any children: we will cease to exist. We have consistently resisted the impulse to exact a small portion from all contributions, to be applied toward the ongoing expenses associated with running the ministry. We've done so because we do not want to dilute any donation made in the interests of a particular child or project, and because we are certain that there are enough supporters out there to sustain this ministry, should the Holy Spirit move them to act. And so we pray, and we exhort, and we pray, and we wait, and we pray.

We ask you, all of you who read this, to join us in praying for the continued operation and vitality of The Shepherd's Crook Ministries. We ask you to join us in praying for a broad base of monthly financial support, both large gifts and small, to enable us to budget the im-

portant ongoing work of this ministry. And we ask all of you to consider whether you might be able to participate in this support. Not only would you be playing an active role in the rescue of needy children, but you would also be answering God's call to minister to the fatherless. This is a recurrent theme for this ministry, and we urge all who bear the name of Christ to examine, and examine again, the extent to which you are heeding God's call to be His hands and voice in reaching out to the helpless ones.

If you are interested in participating in the ongoing work of this ministry, please e-mail us at info@theshepherdscriook.org, or write to us at:

The Shepherd's Crook Ministries
P.O. Box 773
West Chester, OH 45071.

PUBLIC SPEAKING

We want to remind all of you—or let you know, if you don't already know—about our full-time Communications Director and the work he does. Daryl Fulp joined our team about a year and a half ago as our Communications Director, an inadequate title but the best we could come up with. Daryl's passion is spreading the word about adoption, both what God has to say about it and what Christians can and should be doing about it. Daryl and his family travel throughout the eastern United States—and even into eastern Canada—to speak to churches and other interested organizations about this important subject. Daryl has proved to be a valuable addition to our team, and we continue to be excited about this ministry extension. If you would be interested in having Daryl speak to your group or in learning more about this ministry, send an e-mail to communications@theshepherdscriook.org. You can view Daryl's speaking schedule on the Events page of our Web site, at www.theshepherdscriook.org/events.

2008 CELEBRATION BANQUET

Our 2008 Celebration Banquet is scheduled for June 28, 2008, at Receptions Banquet Facility in Fairfield, OH. That may sound like a long way off, but if you are like most Americans, June will be here almost before you know it. We will again have a wonderful and inspiring talk given by one of our TSC families, and it will be a joy and a delight to see and hear about God's working in the lives of His children. Please mark your calendars and make preliminary plans to be able to join us for this evening of celebration and worship. We will update you as plans become more definite, so stay tuned... and check your newsletters and e-mail updates as they come out.

E-MAIL UPDATES

In addition to these newsletters, we maintain a list of e-mail addresses to receive our ministry updates via e-mail. These updates, which go out every one to two weeks, include information on TSC kids and their adoptions, medical news on TSC kids who've already come home, and general information about the ministry and our various projects and programs. If you would like to be included in these updates, send an e-mail to e-mail-add@theshepherdscriook.org and we'll get you put on the list.

Instead of stories, though, I want to address this topic from God's word. I did a bit of this last year, as those of you who were here then may remember. I talked about what God has to say about adoption, God's heart for adoption, and the Christian's responsibility in this area. This time I want to look at what God has to say about serving Him in more general terms. First of all, we find in the book of James that "pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world." This is a classic and specific application of Paul's admonition to be "in the world but not of the world." We need to roll up our sleeves and see to the needs of the widow and the orphan—the helpless, the needy—but at the same time we are to remain unspotted or unpolluted by what the world will bring to us in the process. Earlier in his epistle, James said to us, "but prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." This is one of the most incisive and incriminating verses in the Bible. We are so prone to being hearers only, without allowing the things we hear to penetrate into our hearts and move us to action. James tells us that one who is a hearer only and not a doer is like a man who looks at his face in the mirror and then, as soon as he turns away, forgets what he looks like. The things we hear from God's word, like the image of the man's face in the mirror, make no real or lasting impression. How childish. I have a fifteen-month-old baby, named Ethan. Ethan makes us laugh. One of the things that surprise us about him is the fact that every night, when I take him upstairs to his room to put him to bed, we go through virtually the same ritual. Once I lay him down, he begins to cry and kick and thrash. He really doesn't like to go to bed at night. But every night it is like a completely new experience for him. I carry him upstairs; I walk into the darkened room, with the fan going for background noise; I take him over to the crib; I kiss him and tell him goodnight—and all the while he's laughing and having a good time, utterly oblivious of the fact that he is about to be placed in bed, again. And then I lay him down, and his face does a, "hey wait a minute; what's going on here?" sort of thing. And then the full realization hits him, and he begins to cry, as if all of this had never happened before. It's amazing. In an infant, it's cute and endearing; in a Believer, this sort of forgetfulness or childishness is incriminating. The writer to the Hebrews chastises his readers for this sort of thing, saying, "though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food." Similarly, Paul says to the members of the church at Corinth, "I gave you milk to drink, and not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it. Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly." The context of these reproofs is that the believers are stuck squabbling over elementary teachings of God's word when they should be moving on to the deeper things. It is not natural, in either the physical world or the spiritual realm, to remain in a state of infancy despite the passage of time. So the principle seems to be, as we grow in our relationship with God, our hearts and our actions ought to reflect that growth in ways that are visible, at least to others on the same path. I don't want to gloss over the point that acceptable service to God begins in a right orientation of the heart; it flows out from there into the actions that are pleasing to God. James makes this point clearly. But James also gives us the complimentary truth that the absence of practical works—that is, visible acts of service consistent with God's word—calls into question one's profession of faith. Jesus said, "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil." But the measure of "good" and "evil" in this context is not what appears to be good by the world's standards, but rather what God defines as "good." Good works are only good when they proceed from a good heart, a heart given in whole to God. And a good heart is validated or "proved" good only when it produces good works.

So, I want to leave you with a closing thought and a few images. The thought is this: God gave us the concept of adoption when He adopted us into His eternal family; He did so without our help, without our consent, and without our awareness, even before we were formed in the womb. And this gift He has given us—this eternal life through the death and resurrection of His son, Jesus Christ—is literally new life. There is no gift that can compare. But God has invited us, commanded us, to have a taste of what this means by giving a similar gift, on a smaller and more limited scale, to a needy child in this temporal sphere. We can demonstrate true religion that is pure and undefiled by meeting the needs of an orphan through adopting him or her into our earthly family. There is nothing that can describe what a change this makes in the life of the adopted child and in the life of the family that adopts him. I praise God that He has given us this opportunity, and I invite all Believers to taste this heavenly fruit.

In the beginning of my talk I cited a few numbers for you, numbers that outline in bold relief the magnitude of the need out there, the need for Christian families to step forward and provide a family and a new life for a needy child. Take a look at the faces on the screen behind me. (Sorry; during my talk, I was able to show some slides of waiting children. Feel free to take a look at the faces in the waiting children section of our Web site.) These are the faces of need, but they are also the faces of opportunity. Christian, will you look at these faces and the, like the man with the mirror, turn away and forget? Or will you look and remember, remember the call of God to minister to the needy; remember that God's expectation for His followers is not that they will seek comfort and the status quo, but that they will seek to serve Him in ways that defy explanation, ways that appear foolish to the perishing. As you look at these faces, remember that there are roughly one hundred and forty-three million other children out there waiting for their families. You can't help one hundred and forty-three million children any more than I can, but you can help one or two. I urge you, I implore you, to bring this before the Lord and ask Him to lead you as you consider this. I can promise that your life will never be the same, and your walk will be strengthened and challenged and rewarded. Thank you, Father. Amen



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THE Shepherd's Crook
MINISTRIES



We would love to hear your
IDEAS OR SUGGESTIONS
for our newsletter.



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