

TOGETHERFORADOPTION

What's Adoption have to do with the Orphan Crisis in Haiti?

By Dan Cruver

When Christians see the word *adoption* in Scripture, they tend to think primarily, if not exclusively, about God's work *to bring us into his family*. While child-placement is an essential facet of Scripture's teaching on *adoption*, it certainly is not the only facet.

Scripture's multifaceted presentation of adoption has serious implications for how the church addresses the current orphan crisis in Haiti over the coming months and years. If our understanding of adoption is limited to God's work of child-placement, it's highly likely that our proposed solutions will be terribly inadequate.

For example, there is so much talk about adopting Haiti's orphans right now that it *almost* appears as if we see adoption as the primary solution to Haiti's orphan crisis. This is not to say that I'm not very encouraged by the desire of so many Christians to bring Haitian orphans into their homes. This desire alone is a beautiful reflection of the child-placement aspect of God's work of adoption. So, I am very encouraged by all this talk about adopting Haitian children. Christians need to be talking this way. But we must be clear: given the complexities of the situation in Haiti, adoption is not *the* answer to Haiti's orphan crisis — it's *an* answer, but not *the* answer.

There is another facet of Scripture's presentation of adoption that should inform how we approach the orphan crisis in Haiti. One of the places where God's work of adoption shows up is in a section of Scripture that confronts us with the way things are this side of the Fall. According to Romans 8, life in this post-Fall world is characterized by human suffering, often horrific suffering (v. 18), like the suffering children endure when their parents are killed in an earthquake.

In Scripture, adoption is about more than just child-placement. It's also about the elimination of suffering and the renewal of creation.

Romans 8:19 says that "creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God," which, according to verse 23, is our "adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." When God brings our

adoption to its consummation, "creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (v. 21).

God's work of adoption is moving history toward the renewal of all creation, which includes the renewal of human society. When that day comes and God visits us with redemption, there will no longer be any malnourished children. No longer will there be any children wandering the streets in search of food, shelter, and protection. When God reveals his children, human society will flourish in every conceivable way.

If the renewal of human society is where God is moving history through his work of adoption, certainly his people, who groan inwardly as they wait eagerly for their future redemption, will work to give those who are currently suffering a foretaste of that renewal, especially if those who are suffering are children in crisis.

I'm convinced that God's future adoptive work to deliver us from "the sufferings of this present time" is what, in part, sits behind the mandate "to visit orphans and widows in their affliction" (James 1:27). God has called us to visit orphans in their affliction in a way that reflects how he will one day visit us in ours. I believe it is this facet of God's work of adoption that should inform how the church addresses the current orphan crisis in Haiti. Our efforts in Haiti should *primarily* focus on providing humanitarian relief and support for Haiti's orphans in ways that contribute to the long-term flourishing of Haitian society.

What's adoption have to do with Haiti's orphan crisis? It has everything to do with it—just not entirely in the way we might initially think it does.

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