



## CARING FOR MODERN DAY ORPHANS

Page 1 of 13

### (A Bible Study on Caring for Orphans and the Fatherless)

By Wayne D. Stocks

11/XX/2011

#### The Bible and Children of Divorce



The Bible is fairly clear on the issue of the divorce, and we have already dealt with that issue here on DivorceMinistry4Kids.com pretty extensively. However, when it comes to the issue of the children of divorce, the Bible is silent. Trust me! I looked. The question then becomes, why? Of course, there are any number of things not specifically addressed in the Bible, and the failure to specifically mention a certain subject does not, of course, mean one thing or another. Yet, the question remains, why doesn't the

Bible say anything specific about children of divorce? As those who are committed to ministering to these kids, that question is of the utmost importance.

Here is how I would respond to that question. As I've already stated, the lack of specific mention should not be interpreted as any sort of indication that God does not care about these kids. The remainder of scripture would certainly refute that notion. The Bible, for example, never mentions the word Trinity, but that does not make the fact of the Trinity any less true. We can see the truth of the trinity in other verses of scripture without God specifically including the word. Likewise, when we turn to the totality of scripture, we can see God's heart for suffering and lonely children despite the fact that the phrase "children of divorce" cannot be found in the Bible.

Take, for example, the words of Malachi:

*But you say, "Why does he not?" Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. [Malachi 2:14-15 ESV]*

God does not come right out in this verse and say, "Look parents! If you divorce, your children of divorce are going to face an uphill battle!" Implicitly though, we see that God says He created marriage for a reason. What was God seeking in creating the institution of marriage ("making them one")? He was seeking "Godly" offspring. He goes on to warn men to be faithful to their wives and not leave them for this reason. What is the clear implication? Outside of marriage, there is a risk of loss of godly offspring. Did God say, "Don't get divorced



## CARING FOR MODERN DAY ORPHANS

Page 2 of 13

### (A Bible Study on Caring for Orphans and the Fatherless)

By Wayne D. Stocks

11/XX/2011

because you'll mess up your kids?" No. Is it implied? I think so. Children of divorce face an uphill battle at best. We know from studies that many struggle in their relationship with God following the divorce because, among other things, they fear that if their parent(s) can leave them, then God can. Indeed, divorce does threaten that ability of couples to produce Godly offspring. I should take a few words here to clarify. A divorce does not always lead to children walking away from God, but it certainly does make their journey more difficult in most cases.

The Bible also speaks to God's general affinity for children. In the story where Jesus' disciples are trying to keep the children from "bothering" Jesus, He replies:

*And they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them. [Mark 10:13-16 ESV]*

God has a special place in His heart for children, and we can conclude that He therefore has a special place in His heart for children of divorce. God also warns adults against harming children:

*"Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. [Mark 9:42 ESV]*

God abhors people who would lead children astray or harm them. Given His general affinity for children and disdain for those who would harm children, I think it is safe to conclude that God holds a special place in His heart for those children suffering through the divorce of their parents or who have never known one parent.

There are also what I would argue are the more overt references applicable to the children of divorce. Throughout the Bible, God refers to a group of children that are similar to, if not identical to, modern day children of divorce and children from single parent homes. That group is the orphans and the fatherless mentioned throughout scripture. Today's children of divorce and children from single-parent households are, in essence, modern day orphans, and I believe the biblical mandate to care for orphans extends to this group.

In this article, we will look at why today's children of divorce and children from single parents families likely fall under the same umbrella as the orphans of biblical times, we will explore what the Bible tells us about these orphans and fatherless, and will we look at what we can learn about ministering to children of divorce and children from single parent families from these verses.



## CARING FOR MODERN DAY ORPHANS

Page 3 of 13

### (A Bible Study on Caring for Orphans and the Fatherless)

By Wayne D. Stocks

11/XX/2011

#### What do orphans and widows have to do with the child of divorce?

In Deuteronomy 6, and throughout scripture, God sets forth His plan to use the family as His primary vessel for raising and nurturing children and passing along spiritual truth. There were, of course, those who fell outside the confines of the traditional family, and the Bible is not silent on the standard of care which should be afforded to those in such circumstances. In Deuteronomy 14:29, God commanded His people:

*And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do. [Deuteronomy 14:29 ESV]*

God ordained the family as the primary source for the nurture and raising of children. When that family falls apart however, for example upon the death of parents, the Bible calls on God's people to meet the needs of the orphans and widows. Accordingly, the Bible pictures orphans and widows as those outside the care of the traditional definition of a family. These verses are certainly attributable to actual orphans who have lost both parents due to tragedy or abandonment. However, the divorce culture that we live in today has bred a new type of orphan and widow in our society which is unprecedented in human history.

The modern day orphan is the child of divorce whose parents have effectively or actually abandoned him. The modern day "fatherless" includes children born to a single mother and those who have never known their fathers. The modern day orphan may live in the home of one parent but effectively be all alone as that parent is absorbed in the chaos of their own post-divorce life. The modern day widow includes women abandoned and divorced by their husbands. I think that it also includes husbands struggling to raise kids on their own with no support after being abandoned by their wives.

If we read the Bible's verses on orphans and widows too narrowly, we risk missing God's heart for these hurting children. God's admonition to care for the orphan and widow most assuredly applies to children of divorce and single parent families as well.

One word of caution is warranted before we move on. I would be among the first to caution people about reading "into" scripture to try to make a particular verse fit a given situation. We must also be extremely careful about extrapolating God's commands and promises from their original context. However, given what God has to say about orphans, combined with His special affinity for children reflected throughout the Scriptures, I do not believe that it is a stretch to apply these verses to what we define in this article as "modern day orphans." Even where the circumstance may not be directly applicable to modern day life, we can still learn something about God's heart for these hurting kids. Furthermore, I believe that a detailed review of scripture on this topic is instructive in terms of ministering to these kids.



## CARING FOR MODERN DAY ORPHANS

Page 4 of 13

### (A Bible Study on Caring for Orphans and the Fatherless)

By Wayne D. Stocks

11/XX/2011

So, let's journey through the scriptures together looking at selected passages related to orphans and the fatherless and discern what we can about ministering to children of divorce from those verses.

#### God Cares for Orphans and the Fatherless

As Christians, our hope and prayer is that God would continue to sanctify us and make us more like Him. It makes sense then to first examine God's own view of orphans and the fatherless. What is God's attitude and actions towards orphans and the fatherless? What can we learn from that when it comes to ministering to children of divorce? Later, we will examine how God instructs His people to care for orphans and the fatherless.

#### ***God is Father to the Fatherless***

When we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are adopted into God's family and He becomes our Heavenly Father. The father image of God is something found through scripture. It is no surprise, then, that God is also a father to the fatherless. Consider the following words from Psalm 68:

*Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. [Psalms 68:5 ESV]*

God protects those who are in need. He looks out for their well being. If you are a child of divorce, God is the father you may no longer have. He is perfect in every way and will not disappoint us or forsake us. So many children of divorce struggle with the image of God because of the mistakes of their earthly fathers. We should not judge God based on the action of earthly fathers. Rather, we should judge our earthly fathers by the standard of our perfect Heavenly father. As those who work with children of divorce, we must encourage kids to not equate the actions of their earthly fathers with the love of their Heavenly Father. Earthly fathers are fallen, sinful and oftentimes selfish human beings. Our Heavenly Father loves us with a perfect and unfailing love and offers the hope of ultimate healing.

#### ***God is Helper to the Fatherless***

God is not a distant father either. He does not merely accept the title of "father to the fatherless." He helps them in their struggles and in their troubles. Psalm 10 tells us:

*...to you the helpless commits himself; you have been the helper of the fatherless. [Psalms 10:14b ESV]*

Because He has a special place in His heart for the fatherless, God provides for their needs. He helps them physically, mentally and spiritually. He helps them when they might not even realize they need help. He helps them like a father should help his children. Children of Divorce must be encouraged to go to God in prayer to ask that He would meet their physical, emotional and spiritual needs. As Jesus explained:

## CARING FOR MODERN DAY ORPHANS (A Bible Study on Caring for Orphans and the Fatherless)

By Wayne D. Stocks

11/XX/2011

Page 5 of 13

*What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" [Luke 11:11-13 ESV]*

As those who work with children and minister to children of divorce, we long to do all that we can to help hurting children, and we should make every effort to do just that. In the end though, it is only when we point them to their Heavenly Father that their needs can be met fully and completely.

### ***God Protects the Fatherless***

We've have already see that God is father to the fatherless and that He helps the fatherless. He also serves the role of protector to the fatherless. In Proverbs 23, the Bible warns against transgressing against the fatherless reminding the reader that their protector is strong:

*Do not move an ancient landmark or enter the fields of the fatherless, for their Redeemer is strong; he will plead their cause against you. [Proverbs 23:10-11 ESV]*

In the Heavenly Father, the fatherless have someone to turn to who will protect them in their day of trouble. Like children who run to their earthly fathers when something goes bump in the night, God tells the fatherless that He will protect them. There is no safer place than in the arms of our Heavenly Father.

For the child of divorce (the modern day orphan), their lives are replete with changes that they did not ask for. They experience new houses, new neighborhoods, new friends, new schools, new men and women coming into and out of their parents' live. The list goes on and on. All of these changes, piled on top of an already stressful divorce, very often lead to feelings of fear, anxiety and apprehension. In these times, children of divorce can take comfort in the knowledge that God is there to protect them.

### ***God Upholds the Fatherless***

So, we've learned that God is father to the fatherless and He helps and protects the fatherless. The Bible also tells us that he upholds the fatherless:

*The LORD watches over the sojourners; he upholds the widow and the fatherless, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. [Psalms 146:9 ESV]*

God doesn't merely help the fatherless, He upholds them. He doesn't simply hand them a plate of food or a place to live and say, "There you go. Good luck." He constantly upholds and supports them throughout their journey. The same is true for the child of divorce. When everything else is falling apart, and the world



## CARING FOR MODERN DAY ORPHANS

Page 6 of 13

### (A Bible Study on Caring for Orphans and the Fatherless)

By Wayne D. Stocks

11/XX/2011

around them seems to be crumbling, the loving hand of God can lift them up. When there seems to be nothing in this world but problems and despair, the comforting arms of God hold them tight. When they feel all alone and face battle after battle just to get by, God's nail-scarred hands offer healing and hope. Yes, He does not merely provide, He upholds and strengthens the fatherless.

#### ***God Provides Justice for the Fatherless***

So far, we have seen that God is father to the fatherless. He helps them, upholds them and protects them. We have those specific things God does for the fatherless. He also provides for them, and one of the things He provides is justice. For those who would ignore or take advantage of the child of divorce, God would remind them that He executes justice on their behalf. Consider this verse from Deuteronomy 10:

*He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. [Deuteronomy 10:18 ESV]*

There are also a number of prayers in the Bible where people pray that God would provide justice to the fatherless, amongst others. Consider the following prayer from Psalm 10:

*O LORD, you hear the desire of the afflicted; you will strengthen their heart; you will incline your ear to do justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, so that man who is of the earth may strike terror no more. [Psalms 10:17-18 ESV]*

The fatherless, the modern-day orphans, the child of divorce has nothing to fear from man. Our Heavenly Father seeks justice for the oppressed.

What has happened to the child of divorce is in no way fair. It is not something that they asked for, yet they are left to suffer all of the consequences. When things in this life do not seem "fair," we can rest comfortable knowing that it is God who executes justice. In God, the child of divorce can find solace. In God they have an eternal Heavenly Father who loves them perfectly and will never leave them. The preceding verses make it clear that there is a special place in God's heart and God's will for the fatherless.

#### **God's Instructions to His People When It Comes to Orphans and the Fatherless**

As a result of God's feelings about, and actions towards the fatherless, there are a number of references and commands in scripture directly related to how God intends His people to treat orphans. I believe these verses merit significant consideration when it comes to how the modern day church should respond to children of divorce and children from single parent families.



## CARING FOR MODERN DAY ORPHANS

Page 7 of 13

### (A Bible Study on Caring for Orphans and the Fatherless)

By Wayne D. Stocks

11/XX/2011

#### ***God Commands His People Not to Mistreat Orphans***

The Bible is clear that God calls His people to care for orphans and widows. Following the flight of the Israelites from Egypt, and on their journey to the Promised Land, God lays out the mandate to care for orphans and widows from the very beginning. Exodus 22:22 tells us:

*You shall not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. [Exodus 22:22 ESV]*

God calls on his people to provide for the needs of the widow and the orphan throughout scripture. How does this apply to children of divorce? Well, when we actively harm a child of divorce or a child from a single parent home (as in cases of abuse or neglect), that would clearly violate this command. I would argue though that the church often violates this command in much more subtle ways.

When we do nothing to minister specifically to these hurt and broken children, I believe that rises to the level of mistreatment. When we refuse to admit the problem and take steps in our churches to correct it that constitutes mistreatment. When we subtly drive these children away from church by making them feel unwelcome or that their families are not real families at all, that is a form of mistreatment. When we discourage their involvement in certain programs by promoting father-son activities or mother-daughter activity without regard to their particular circumstances that is a subtle form of mistreatment. When we fail to be intentional about ministering to the specific needs and circumstances of children of divorce, we are doing them a disservice.

Lest you think this command is an isolated example in scripture, consider the following verses as well:

*Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place. [Jeremiah 22:3 ESV]*

And,

*"Thus says the LORD of hosts, Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another, do not oppress the widow, the fatherless, the sojourner, or the poor, and let none of you devise evil against another in your heart." But they refused to pay attention and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears that they might not hear. [Zechariah 7:9-11 ESV]*

God does not suggest that His people be kind to the orphans, He commands it! As the church, we would do well to understand that command as applying to modern-day orphans, including children of divorce and children living in single parent families, as well!

## CARING FOR MODERN DAY ORPHANS (A Bible Study on Caring for Orphans and the Fatherless)

By Wayne D. Stocks

11/XX/2011

Page 8 of 13

### ***Strong Words for those who Oppress the Fatherless***

The Bible is also clear that God's judgment will be swift against those who oppress the fatherless. Listen to these sobering words from the book of Malachi:

*"Then I will draw near to you for judgment. I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired worker in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, against those who thrust aside the sojourner, and do not fear me, says the LORD of hosts. [Malachi 3:5 ESV]*

Take a second to reflect and notice who the oppressors of the fatherless are grouped with in this passage. They are included in a list that includes sorcerers, adulterers and liars. These people are called those who do not fear the Lord. God clearly commands the protection of orphans and the fatherless, amongst others, and a failure or refusal to do that constitutes a lack of fearing the Lord! As the church, our fear of the Lord and desire for His heart should mandate that we do something for these lost and hurting children.

### ***Mistreatment of Orphans is Consistently Reflected as Evil in Scripture***

Further evidence of God's high view of orphans and the fatherless is evident in how the Bible portrays the mistreatment of this group. The Bible is full of passages which include oppression of orphans amongst the evilest of deeds. Here are some examples,

*"Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.' [Deuteronomy 27:19 ESV]*

*"Why are not times of judgment kept by the Almighty, and why do those who know him never see his days? Some move landmarks; they seize flocks and pasture them. **They drive away the donkey of the fatherless;** they take the widow's ox for a pledge. [Job 24:1-3 ESV]*

*They crush your people, O LORD, and afflict your heritage. They kill the widow and the sojourner, and **murder the fatherless;** and they say, "The LORD does not see; the God of Jacob does not perceive." [Psalms 94:5-7 ESV]*

*Like a cage full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; therefore they have become great and rich; they have grown fat and sleek. They know no bounds in deeds of evil; **they judge not with justice the cause of the fatherless,** to make it prosper, and they do not defend the rights of the needy. Shall I not punish them for these things? declares the LORD, and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?" [Jeremiah 5:27-29 ESV]*



## CARING FOR MODERN DAY ORPHANS

Page 9 of 13

### (A Bible Study on Caring for Orphans and the Fatherless)

By Wayne D. Stocks

11/XX/2011

*Your princes are rebels and companions of thieves. Everyone loves a bribe and runs after gifts. They do not bring justice to the fatherless, and the widow's cause does not come to them. [Isaiah 1:23 ESV]*

*Woe to those who decree iniquitous decrees, and the writers who keep writing oppression, to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right, that widows may be their spoil, and that they may make the fatherless their prey! What will you do on the day of punishment, in the ruin that will come from afar? To whom will you flee for help, and where will you leave your wealth? [Isaiah 10:1-3 ESV]*

*Father and mother are treated with contempt in you; the sojourner suffers extortion in your midst; the fatherless and the widow are wronged in you. You have despised my holy things and profaned my Sabbaths. [Ezekiel 22:7-8 ESV]*

The people of the Old Testament clearly understood God's protection of the orphans and fatherless and invoked it frequently in prayers asking God to judge such evil. God himself, in rebuking His people, points to their failure to care for orphans. Will we be judged similarly for failing to take care of, and protect, the modern day orphans in our society? It is time that we, as the hands and feet of Jesus, found specific ways to care for this often overlooked segment of our congregations.

#### ***Helping Orphans Is Consistently Viewed Favorably in Scripture***

On the flip side, fair treatment and support of orphans and widows is consistently viewed favorably in scripture. Consider the following two verses from the book of Job.

*When the ear heard, it called me blessed, and when the eye saw, it approved, because I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had none to help him. [Job 29:11-12 ESV]*

In asserting his righteous acts, Job is quick to include taking care of the fatherless. In this next verse, we find out a little bit more about Job's care of the fatherless.

*"If I have withheld anything that the poor desired, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, or have eaten my morsel alone, and the fatherless has not eaten of it (for from my youth the fatherless grew up with me as with a father, and from my mother's womb I guided the widow), [Job 31:16-18 ESV]*

There is a valuable lesson in this last verse for those of us with children. Job states that the fatherless grew up with him as a father "from my youth." Job's care for the fatherless started early in his life. As parents,

## CARING FOR MODERN DAY ORPHANS (A Bible Study on Caring for Orphans and the Fatherless)

By Wayne D. Stocks

11/XX/2011

Page 10 of 13

we would do well to let our children see us ministering to today's modern day orphans. Allow them to see you pour out your hearts and give your time to these kids. Particularly for fathers, let your children see the grace of God in the fact that they have an involved earthly father by exposing them to these children who do not. Use your ministry to children of divorce and single parent families as an opportunity for your kids to minister as well.

### ***God Called His People to Provide for the Physical Needs of Orphans***

The Bible is very specific about taking care of the physical needs of children in those cases where a person's own family could not meet them.

*"You shall not pervert the justice due to the sojourner or to the fatherless, or take a widow's garment in pledge, but you shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you from there; therefore I command you to do this. "When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over them again. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not strip it afterward. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt; therefore I command you to do this.*  
*[Deuteronomy 24:17-22 ESV]*

God reminds the people of Israel that they too once had no home. God provides the harvest, and the Israelites were not to even try to squeeze every last ounce out of that harvest. Instead, they were to leave the excess for those who could not provide for themselves. But, God was not solely calling His people to leave the leftovers. Consider,

*"When you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year, which is the year of tithing, giving it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your towns and be filled, then you shall say before the LORD your God, 'I have removed the sacred portion out of my house, and moreover, I have given it to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all your commandment that you have commanded me. I have not transgressed any of your commandments, nor have I forgotten them.*  
*[Deuteronomy 26:12-13 ESV]*

God puts the care of orphans and widows on the same level as the tithe – the giving directly back to Him. When we give to the “least of these,” we are giving directly to God. God clearly puts a very high priority on providing for this segment of the population. The other significant part of this verse, I believe, is the phrase, “then you shall say before the LORD your God.” We will be called to give an account for our actions. This

## CARING FOR MODERN DAY ORPHANS (A Bible Study on Caring for Orphans and the Fatherless)

By Wayne D. Stocks

11/XX/2011

Page 11 of 13

will surely include our actions towards those who need us the most. In today's society, the children of divorce and children from single parent families certainly fall into that group. It is not enough to leave the "leftovers" for children of divorce, we must actively seek to minister to and serve them.

### ***Protecting the Fatherless is Named as a Condition of God's Provision***

Lest there be any doubt about how our failure to take care of orphans and widows will affect our own walk with God, please carefully examine the following verses from the book of Jeremiah:

*"For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the sojourner, the fatherless, or the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own harm, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers forever. [Jeremiah 7:5-7 ESV]*

God gave the Israelites certain conditions precedent to giving them back their land. Those conditions included:

- Changing their path
- Showing justice to one another
- Not oppressing foreigners
- Not oppressing widows
- Not oppressing orphans
- Not shedding innocent blood
- Not worshipping other Gods.

The Israelites are given two things that they must do and five that they must not. You will note that not oppressing the orphans is listed in the same company as worshipping the only One True God and not murdering people. Caring for the fatherless is given to the Israelites as a condition of God's blessing.

God presents a similar list of commands in the book of Isaiah:

*Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your deeds from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause. [Isaiah 1:16-17 ESV]*

It is time that we, as the church, stopped turning our back on families, and particularly children of divorce. We must provide for them physically and spiritually. We were all, at some point, estranged from our heavenly father, and it was only by His grace that we were adopted back into His family. Our natural



## CARING FOR MODERN DAY ORPHANS (A Bible Study on Caring for Orphans and the Fatherless)

By Wayne D. Stocks

11/XX/2011

Page 12 of 13

response should be to want to offer that same hand of love and caring to children who have been estranged from their earthly fathers and/or who are suffering through the divorce of their parents.

### ***The Orphan's Status Before God is No Different than Anyone Else***

God does not view the orphan and widow any differently than the rest of His people. We are all made in His image, and we are all valuable in His sight. Consider Deuteronomy 16:11 and 14.

*And you shall rejoice before the LORD your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place that the LORD your God will choose, to make his name dwell there... You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns. [Deuteronomy 16:11, 14 ESV]*

In this verse, God lays out everyone who is to come before Him and rejoice. In addition to traditional families, God includes the fatherless and widows in the list. The implication is clear, being an orphan or widow (child of divorce or single-parent in our modern parlance) does not in any way lessen a person's standing before God. God views them as part of our own families, and so should we. If they were to be included in all the rituals and celebrations of the Old Testament, surely we should make every effort to see that they are also included in our modern churches.

### ***Taking Care of Orphans is Called "Pure Religion"***

Many of the verses cited above come from the Old Testament, and you might find yourself thinking, that's "fine and dandy" for Israel, but perhaps God's views have changed. First, I would remind you that God never changes. He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. His attitudes, compassion and commands never change. I would also point you to James 1:27 wherein we are given a definition for "pure religion."

*Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world. [James 1:27 ESV]*

God is about relationship. He is not about a set of rules and regulations – that's religion. In one sentence, James tells us that real, true and undefiled religion in the eyes of God involves only two things: not being stained by this world and visiting orphans and widows in their affliction. When children of divorce and single-parent families are hurting, God wants us (His children) to step in, stand in the gap and minister to

## CARING FOR MODERN DAY ORPHANS (A Bible Study on Caring for Orphans and the Fatherless)

By Wayne D. Stocks

11/XX/2011

Page 13 of 13

these kids out of the overflow of His love that He has poured out on us. Anything less does not reflect the heart of God.

### A Quick Word on Widows

As people interested in ministering to children of divorce (defined herein as Modern Day Orphans), I think it is illuminating to note that many times in scripture the care for orphans is grouped along with caring for widows. While a simple reading of these scriptures would indicate that these are two distinct groups, it bears mentioning that ministering to children of divorce and children from single parent families (modern day orphans) also involves ministering to their families (widows). Likewise, as the church we cannot, and should not, minister to children of divorce without ministering to their families and vice versa.

### One Final Word for Children of Divorce and Children in Single Parent Homes

No matter how bad things may seem at times. No matter what “the world” seems to throw at you. In spite of the situation that you found yourself thrown into by no choice of your own, it is important to remember that God cares about you. The verses discussed above are a clear indication of that, but there was one final verse that really struck me as I was conducting this study. These are the very words of Jesus Himself,

*And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. [John 14:16-18 ESV]*

No matter how alone you might feel God will never leave you! He loves you with a love that will never diminish and never cease. When the whole world seems to have left you all alone, remember that the one who created this world will always be there for you – forever! “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” In God, we have an eternal Heavenly Father who wants only the best for us and always has our best interests at heart.

I leave you with one final passage:

*...be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" [Hebrews 13:5a-6 ESV]*