

Young orphans are one of the most powerless people groups on earth. We are grieved when we see images of children scavenging in garbage for food, dodging bullets in war zones or exploited in a trafficking ring. Our hearts break. That is the Spirit of God in us connecting us to how our Father feels. Throughout Scripture, we see God's heart for the oppressed as He displays His concern for all His precious creations, especially the most vulnerable. *"...and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday."* Isaiah 58:10.

We know that regardless of our own earthly family history, we also were orphans, spiritually, totally alone and lost, powerless to save ourselves apart from God's mercy and grace. We see this powerful adoption in Romans, *"For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory."* God has restored us unto Himself.

This ministry of restoration resounds in our hearts. In Isaiah 58:6-12, we see that God emphasizes wholeness, permanent change and bringing people back into complete health - mind, body and spirit. Changing the lives of those devastated by poverty, illness and other issues mean more than offering temporary solutions, as helpful as they may be. It means ministering in both word and deed. It means looking at deeper issues, that when addressed, bring lasting changes. This type of change demands much time, prayer and resources versus the quick fix that brings instant gratification for our efforts. In Isaiah, God tells us we should spend ourselves on behalf of the poor. Just as Jesus spent Himself on our behalf, may our response be to join in His suffering by doing likewise for the most vulnerable and lost.

Every single man, woman and child was born with a unique gift that can be used to build His Kingdom and bring glory to God. As Christians, it is our calling to help empower and restore those around us. Jesus came to give each of us *abundant life*. May we be His instruments of restoration in our communities, nations and world!

*Loving Lord, thank You for the wonderful example of Your life, which was lived in spirit and truth – a life that demonstrated love as well as justice – a life that cared for all humanity, especially those that are weak or hurting or vulnerable.*

*Be close to all who are living in scarcity and uphold them with the warming breath of Your love and grace. Give us a wider perspective on life and a heart of compassion and kindness, especially on those that feel alone, unloved or uncared for.*

*May we become Your eyes and ears and may Your heart of love and grace flow through us to those that are in need. Look down in pity on all who are suffering loss, poverty or unjust discrimination at this time - and we pray that in Your best time Your justice will prevail in each of their lives. Thank You Lord – we ask this in the name of Jesus.*

*Amen*

*Linda Kurtz, Director of Missions, Faith Community, Las Vegas*