a resource for

orphan

sunday

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An Initiative of
The Christian Alliance for Orphans
& The Cry of the Orphan
Orphan Simulation—“Orphanage Life”

This simulation is a part of the Orphan lesson for the Red Card Curriculum. For more information on Red Card, please visit www.redcardkids.org.

Objective: Help children “enter into” what life is like for orphaned children that live in institutions by comparing orphanage life with their own. Our hope is that children who have done this simulation are better equipped to know how to pray for orphans. Our suggestion is to end this simulation with a time of prayer.

Time: 45 minutes

Simulation Materials

- “Simulation: Orphanage Life” Script (pages 3-4)
- five 22 x 28-inch poster boards, any color
- “Orphanage Life” photos (pages 13-31)
- copy of “Station 1” through “Station 5” signs (pages 5-9)
- five pieces of 9 x 12-inch construction paper, any color
- copy of “My Life Compared to an Orphan’s” (pages 10-12)
- pens and pencils
- tape or Sticky Tack® (options 1, 4 – see Preparing to Teach, step #5)
- five desks or small tables (option 2)
- five easels (option 3)
- five freestanding chart stands or white boards (option 4)
- chart rings or clips (option 4)

Preparing to Teach

1. Read through Teacher Background notes on orphans (pages 33-35).
2. The Simulation Script (pages 3-4), is written for two speakers creating a more interactive setting for participants. If you only have one leader, adjust the script accordingly.
3. To prepare the displays for the “Orphanage Life” simulation, print out the “Orphanage Life” photos in color (pages 13-31). Print out the five station signs (pages 5-9).
4. Mount the “Orphanage Life” posters for each station on a colored poster board. Mount the corresponding station sign on a piece of colored construction paper. You will have five displays in all.
Station 1 Photos: pages 13, 14, 15, 16
Station 2 Photos: pages 17, 18, 19, 20
Station 3 Photos: pages 21, 22, 23, 24
Station 4 Photos: pages 25, 26, 27
Station 5 Photos: pages 28, 29, 30, 31

5. Create five stations where small groups will view the poster board displays. If possible, leave at least 10 feet between each station. It is best if participants sit on the floor to view the displays. Here are a few ways to set up the displays:

- Option 1: Tape the poster boards and signs on the walls in five different areas of the room. Put the poster boards at a child’s eye level.
- Option 2: Push small tables or desks against the wall in five different areas of the room. Stand the poster board displays on the tables and lean them against the wall.
- Option 3: Place easels in five different areas of the room. Place the poster board displays on the easels.
- Option 4: Place freestanding chart holders or white boards in five different areas of the room. Clip or tape the poster board displays to the chart holders or white boards.

** A sample photo of simulation set-up can be found on page 32.

6. Make copies of “My Life Compared to an Orphan’s” (pages 10-12) for every child you anticipate. Parents will share with their children. Make copies for participants without children as well.

7. Think of a signal you will use to help simulation participants know when to move to a new station such as flicking the lights, ringing a bell, or playing music.
Simulation: Orphanage Life

Simulation Script (Part 1)

Speaker 1: Let’s do a simulation to see what life is like for children who live in an orphanage. Not all orphanages are alike, but many are similar to the ones you will learn about.

Speaker 2: Each child is going to receive some pages called, “My Life Compared to an Orphan’s.” Parents, you can help your children fill out the information on their sheets. If you do not have children in the class, you will receive the same pages to fill out based on your own childhood.

[Pass out the “My Life Compared to an Orphan’s” pages to each child. Participants who do not have children in the class should receive pages as well.]

Speaker 1: Let’s look through the pages together. The simulation will have five stations that match the categories on your sheets: bedrooms and bedtime, closets and clothing, mealtime, bathrooms and hygiene, and playtime. Each category on your sheets has Part A and Part B. Part A is about your life. Part B is about life in an orphanage.

Speaker 2: Before we participate in the simulation, we’d like to give you about 5 minutes to read through and answer the Part A sections in all five categories.

[Allow about 5 minutes for participants to complete Part A.]

Speaker 1: You will go through the five stations of the simulation with a small group. Take your pages, pencils, and pens with you. Each station has a photo display and printed description of orphanage life. When your group arrives at the station, sit down. Then select an adult to read the short description aloud. As you look at the photos, imagine yourself as a baby or child living in this orphanage. Complete the Part B section on your pages for that station. You will spend about 5 minutes at each station. When it is time for your group to move to the next station, I will give this signal. [Demonstrate the signal you have chosen such as flicking the lights, ringing a bell, or playing music.]

[Divide the class into 5 groups, keeping families together. Move to the simulation area. Assign each group to a different station. Show the groups how you want them to rotate through the remaining stations. Make sure to use the signal every five minutes to move groups to their next station. After 25 minutes, begin moving participants back to the teaching area.]
Orphans Script (Part 2)

Speaker 2: Let’s spend a little time talking about orphanage life. This question is for the children. If you lived in an orphanage, what part of your current daily life would you miss the most? [Allow three responses.]

Speaker 1: Adults, this question is for you. What are children in orphanages missing out on relationally at bedtime, meals, and bath time? [Allow responses.]

Speaker 2: Hopefully this simulation gave you have a better understanding of what orphans lack. God wants his family, the Church, to be involved in caring for orphans and meeting their needs. Here is God’s view on what following him should look like.

[Read James 1:27a.]

For your reference:

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress…” James 1:27a

Speaker 2: Looking after orphans is not just acceptable to God. It’s putting our worship to work.

Speaker 1: Caring for millions of orphans seems like a daunting task, but remember, we are not working alone. We are partnering with the same God who is a father and defender of orphans. He does not forget about kids growing up in institutions. He knows each boy and girl personally, just like a parent knows their own children, and God acts on their behalf.

Speaker 2: One thing we can do for orphans right now is to pray for them. Let’s take some time right now to bring to God orphaned children
Station 1: Bedrooms and Bedtime

During the first few years at the orphanage, babies sleep in a room that contains 18-20 cribs and possibly a changing table. Usually the nursery walls are painted white or a pale color. The children are rarely rocked to sleep or comforted when they cry during the night.

When orphaned children get older, they sleep in a bedroom with up to 20 other children. The room is filled with rows of beds and contains no other furniture. Each child has his/her own bed, but they do not have any special blanket, toy, or stuffed animal that they take to bed with them.

At bedtime, the children climb into bed and a worker shuts off the light. No one tucks them in or hugs them good night. When the boys and girls have nightmares, no one comes into their room to console them. Many orphaned children are afraid of nighttime.
Station 2: Closets and Clothing

Children who are five and older may have a small closet of their own in a special room. Most children have only one or two sets of clothes – possibly dresses for the girls, and pants and shirts for the boys. The children will wear the same clothes for many days at a time. Orphans may have a special outfit to wear for a holiday program, but that is stored elsewhere.

Many orphans own one pair of “street shoes” and another pair to wear indoors. They wear the shoes until the soles are coming off. If children receive a new pair of shoes, their name is written on both the shoes and the shoebox with a permanent marker. This is to keep workers or other children from stealing them.
Station 3: Mealtime

Mealtime can be a stressful experience for orphaned children. While still in the hospital, abandoned newborns eat from bottles propped up on towels in their cribs. Babies are not held and snuggled during their feedings. At the orphanage, mealtime is often rushed. With only two workers and 30 hungry babies, adults must feed many children at the same time. Workers shovel food into toddlers’ mouths, hardly giving the children time to chew. Notice the adult-sized spoon used by the child in the photo.

Older orphaned children eat together at tables with up to 10 children. They do not have a variety of foods at their meals or a choice about what they eat. Breakfast usually consists of porridge. Soup and bread are served for both lunch and dinner. Because they are hungry, some children steal food from the table and then hide it to eat between meals. Boys and girls hurry to eat their meal so that the other children won’t steal food off their plates.
Station 4: Bathrooms and Hygiene

Bath time can be very traumatic for orphaned children. Instead of taking baths, children generally take very quick showers. The younger children are put into a bathtub or shower with other children. As they stand up, workers quickly wash them and spray them off with a hose. In some orphanages, the water can be very cold. Most children cry during bath time.

Older children take showers two times a week, at most. They have a central place where their toothbrush and towel is stored. Many bathrooms for older children do not have indoor plumbing. Children go to an outhouse to use the restroom.

The laughing boys in the photo are eight years old. This bath, taken on a visit away from the orphanage, was their first enjoyable bath time experience.
Station 5: Playtime

Most orphanages cannot afford to buy quality playground equipment for their children. Playground equipment is very simple. There may be a swing, a slide, and a sand box.

Toys in the orphanage are kept neatly on shelves and only taken out at certain times of the day. Getting many children to share a few toys can become a problem, so workers feel it is easier to leave the toys on the shelf.

Children learn music, drama, and poetry in an organized class time during the week. Their rooms do not have televisions or radios.
My Life Compared to an Orphan’s

Station 1: Bedrooms and Bedtime

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. With your parents’ help, circle the items that were in your baby nursery:  
  - crib  
  - changing table  
  - diaper pail  
  - crib mobile/toys  
  - lamp  
  - rocking chair  
  - dresser/chest  
  - wallpaper/painted walls  
| 2. How many people share the bedroom you have now? _____ |
| 3. Circle the items you have in your current bedroom:  
  - stuffed animals  
  - special blanket  
  - books  
  - toys  
  - posters/pictures  
  - awards/trophies  
  - games  
  - music  
| 4. Circle the items that describe your bedtime routine:  
  - drink water  
  - family devotions  
  - pray with parents  
  - turn on quiet music  
  - read a story  
  - tucked in  
  - hugged good night  
  - turn on a night light  

Part B
Look at the photos and read the text at Station 1. Then answer the following questions:

- What things are in the baby nursery? ________________________________________
- Are babies rocked to sleep at night? yes no
- How many orphaned children share a bedroom? ______
- What things do they have in their bedroom? ___________________________________
- Do orphaned children have anyone to tuck them in and hug them goodnight? yes no
- Are they afraid of nighttime? yes no

Station 2: Closets and Clothing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Circle the items you have in your bedroom closet:  
  - belts  
  - shirts  
  - shoes  
  - slippers  
  - sweatshirt/sweater  
  - skirts  
  - dresses  
  - pants  
  - bathrobe  
  - jacket/coat  
| 2. How many sets of clothes do you wear in one week? ______ |
| 3. How many pairs of shoes do you own? ______ |
4. Are you ever afraid that someone might steal your shoes?  yes  no

Part B
Look at the photos and read the text at Station 2. Then answer the following questions:

- What do you see in the orphans’ closets?  
- How many sets of clothes and shoes do the children have?  
- Why is the lady in the photo writing on the shoebox?  

Station 3: Mealtime

Part A
1. How many people share your table at meals?  
2. Circle items served at your dinner table:  bread  vegetables  meat  fruit  desserts  drinks

Part B
Look at the photos and read the text at Station 3. Then answer the following questions:

- How many children eat at one table?  
- What are the children eating for dinner?  
- Why do orphaned children steal food from other children?  

Station 4: Bathrooms and Hygiene

Part A
1. Circle the items your bathroom has:  bathtub  shower  sink  toilet  medicine cabinet  
2. How many times a week do you take a shower or a bath?  
3. What do you enjoy most about bath time?  

Part B
Look at the photos and read the text at Station 4. Then answer the following questions:

- Does the orphanage bathroom have a medicine cabinet for toothbrushes?  yes  no
• Do you see a toilet in the bathroom? yes no

• How old are the two boys taking a bath? ______

Station 5: Playtime

Part A
1. Circle the items you have in your yard or at a nearby park:
   toys  swings  swimming pool  sports equipment
   slide  trampoline  monkey bars  other playground equipment

2. Are you free to play with your toys when you would like to? yes no

3. Are your toys kept in a place where you can get them easily? yes no

Part B
Look at the photos and read the text at Station 5. Then answer the following questions:

• What items do you see on the playground at the orphanage? __________________________
  ____________________________________________________________________

• Where are most of the toys located in the room of the orphanage? ______________
  ____________________________________________________________________

• Do orphaned children get to play with the toys whenever they like? yes no
Teacher Background: Introduction to Orphans
(Tami Snowden, Red Card Team)

Definition of an Orphan
The classic definition of an orphan is a child who has lost both parents. The World Health Organization and the United Nations now include children who have lost only one parent. The reason for broadening the definition is because of the AIDS pandemic. If children have lost one parent to AIDS, it is only a matter of time before they lose the other parent.

In its “Children on the Brink” 2004 report, UNICEF uses the following definitions for statistical purposes in estimating the orphan subpopulation:

- Maternal orphans are children under the age of 18 whose mothers have died.
- Paternal orphans are children under the age of 18 whose fathers have died.
- Double orphans are children under the age of 18 whose mothers and fathers have died.

Number of Orphans
There are more than 145 million orphaned children throughout the world. The majority of orphaned children under age 18 are found in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. In countries where HIV/AIDS has hit hardest, the number of orphans continues to rise. Death from AIDS is more likely to create double orphans than any other cause of death. (Children on the Brink, 2004)

Reasons Children Become Orphans
One major reason children become orphaned is the death of one or both parents, but there are other reasons as well. In a natural disaster or a war, children can become separated from their parents. If this separation is permanent, children become orphaned. Many parents abandon children who are born with a disability. The disability might be significant such as Down syndrome, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, or mental retardation. It could also be a slight deformity such as a cleft lip or a lazy eye. Parents living in extreme poverty will abandon or relinquish their children to institutions.

Orphans in Institutions
Future lessons will address other types of orphaned children (street kids, children of war, and children affected by HIV/AIDS). This lesson focuses on orphans that are being raised in institutions.

Accurate and reliable figures are difficult to obtain, but estimates show that more than 8 million children worldwide are in institutional care. Reported figures are most likely extremely low. Governments are often unaware of the number of children who do not live with their families, the number of children’s homes in their countries, how many children are in these homes, and the reasons why they are there.

Research shows that 85% of children in existing orphanages are not orphans by definition. They have identifiable, existing, and reachable relatives. In many parts of the world, impoverished families use orphanages as an economic coping mechanism to secure access to better services or material conditions for their children. (Save the Children, 2006)

Traditional residential institutions provide shelter, food, and clothing, but there are not enough caregivers. Many times there are only one or two workers to care for 20 children. Workers are often inexperienced and untrained in child development. These overworked caregivers are limited in their capacity to provide
children the affection, attention, personal identity, and social connections that families and communities can offer.

Because children in orphanages change groups often, they rarely have a consistent caregiver. This creates an environment that prevents a child from bonding with an adult. Strong attachments between a child and an adult are vital to the formation of an emotionally healthy personality.

Institutional care tends to segregate children and adolescents by age and sex, and isolate them from other young people and adults in their communities. Institutional life tends to promote dependency and discourage autonomy. Children receive substandard education while in the orphanage, and little to no technical training. Those who grow up in institutions are ill prepared for society once they leave “the system.”

Commenting on the Russian orphanage system, Alex Krutov says, “Life as an orphan is challenging. At the age of 17, Russian orphans are moved out of institutions. Forced to make a way for themselves, most orphans don’t succeed. 10,000 orphans ‘graduate’ from the state orphanage system per year. 8,500 of these fall into drug dealing, prostitution, other crime, and homelessness. 500 commit suicide.” (The Harbor, 2008)

Even in the very best institutions, with the best caregivers, institutional life is not meant to replace the life a family can offer a child. A family setting provides for adequate male/female role modeling, thus making it possible for the child to have a healthy family of his/her own in the future. (Children’s Hope Chest, 2006) Placement in an institution should always be a last resort where better care options have not been developed, or as a temporary measure pending placement in a family.

God’s Heart for Orphans

God is not silent about orphans. The protection and well-being of orphans is one of God’s greatest concerns. More than 60 passages of Scripture reveal God’s heart for these children.

In his book, *Fields of the Fatherless*, Tom Davis highlights several key passages of Scripture about orphans. Tom says, “God actually describes who he is by his promises to them.”

Consider God’s promise to provide:

> Psalm 68:5-6a “A father of the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy habitation. God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound into prosperity.” (NKJV)

Consider God’s promise to ensure justice:

> Deuteronomy 10:18 “He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing.” (NKJV)

Consider God’s promise to bless those who bless them:

> Deuteronomy 14:28-29 “At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.” (NKJV)
James told us that caring for the orphans is the very essence of our religion. James 1:27a says, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress.” The act of caring for the orphans is pure and you can do no wrong.

One of the reasons that God cares so much for the orphan is because the orphan has no parent/parents who can model love. It is through the model of our love relationship with our parents that we grow to understand God’s love relationship with us. If orphaned children don’t have parents, how will they learn about God’s love for them?