Bob: Most of the time, in a marriage, if somebody starts talking about adoption, who do you think it is—the husband or the wife? Dr. Russell Moore says, “There is more we can be doing to encourage men to take the lead in this important area of their marriage and family, as well.”

Russell: We know that people are scared of the risks of being involved with orphans. What we want to do is have testimonies that try to take that risk out or to minimize that risk. It’s really a joyful experience. It’s, “Look at these happy families,” and whatever. When, in reality, if we are calling them into this, we have to call them into the risk. We’re not saying you’re necessarily going to have a happy, sweet, sentimental ending to this. This may cost you your life, but it’s worth it.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Tuesday, September 25th. Our host is the President of FamilyLife®, Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. Men, let me just warn you, you ought to listen to today’s program at your own risk because God may have something to say to you. Stay tuned.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us on the Tuesday edition.

Dennis: I love the Proverbs. Proverbs 27:17—a familiar Proverb for both men and women—but, in the case today, it’s for men. “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.” You’re about to have four rods of iron—

Bob: Yes.

Dennis: —sharpen you on FamilyLife Today. Don’t miss this broadcast.

Bob: Here’s why I’m chuckling—because I was in the room when—

Dennis: Sure you were.

Bob: —when the four of you—this was you, Russell Moore, Jedd Medefind, and Rick Warren. All of you drew your sabers, and the sparks started to fly. Really, it was friendly sword play; but—
**Dennis:** Saddleback became a blacksmith's—[Laughter] I don't know. What do you call a blacksmith office?

**Bob:** A shop.

**Dennis:** A shop.

**Bob:** A blacksmith shop. This was back in the spring—we were at Saddleback for the National Orphans Summit. It was the eighth annual Orphans Summit. By the way, folks who have a heart for the orphan, if you've never been to one of these orphan summits—

**Dennis:** —you ought to go.

**Bob:** There'll be one coming up this spring. We'll give you more information about it, but you really should come out and be a part of the National Orphans Summit event that is hosted by the Christian Alliance for Orphans. They put it on every year. It is a powerful event. You and I have had the opportunity to be there for the last couple of years. You've been at every one of these since they started eight years ago; right?

**Dennis:** Right; because it started, right here, at FamilyLife. Also, at the same time, a ministry called Hope for Orphans—which is a part—that FamilyLife started. We're giving voice to those who have no voice.

**Bob:** At this year's Orphans Summit, we put together a panel of guys, whom I've mentioned. We asked them to address how men, as men, ought to engage around this issue. That's what you're going to hear us talking about here today.

[Recorded audio]

**Bob:** I think you know all four of our panelists here; right? We've got Rick Warren. We've got Jedd Medefind. We've got Russell Moore and Dennis Rainey. I want to start—

**Rick:** I just want to say, up front, Russell's the smartest of all of us.

**Russell:** Yes, right.

**Rick:** I just wanted everybody to know that.

**Bob:** Yes, if you have a theological question, Russell will—

**Russell:** We're about to prove that's not true. [Laughter]
Bob: I’d like each of you to take two minutes and tell us how you got from no heart for the orphan and adoption to a personal heart for that. I’ll start with you. Put you on the spot first; alright?

Dennis: I married a woman who dreamed of being a mother of an orphan, when she was in her teenage years. On the other hand, on my end of the scale, I do not remember having a conscious thought, as a teenager, about an orphan, about an orphanage, about adoption, about foster care. I don’t remember ever contemplating the needs of that segment of society until I married her.

I really, honestly, didn’t even like kids all that much. Bit by bit, I began to believe what the psalmist said that, “The fruit of the womb is a reward. Blessed is he whose quiver is full of them.” From really not thinking a lot about any child, let alone an orphan, to having six children—God really has brought me a long way, but He did it through my wife’s heart—and not by her nagging—but by us dialoguing and praying together. I think, honestly, God performed heart surgery on me.

Bob: You—one of your six is adopted.

Dennis: One of the six—do not know which one.

Bob: Beyond that initial adoption, then, your heart for the orphan grew kind of out of that. Is that right?

Dennis: That’s right, and not through a traditional means did God bring our hearts to be enlarged for the orphan. He did it through, really, some errors that our daughter made—that she made in her own life. We walked through some very difficult days with her, but God has done a great work in our hearts—but really through the drama with our daughter. Some of what you see, here, at the Summit occurred really out of God doing a work in our hearts for both birth mothers, the orphan, and adoption.

Bob: How about for you, Russell?

Russell: Well, it came out of a cage fight that I was involved in with God, and I lost. [Laughter]

Rick: We’re going to do that later, right? That’s why we have this right here.

Russell: That’s right, with bear grills. [Laughter] No, I had a life plan that I expected—get married, have children. Things would happen according to the script that I had set for myself, and it didn’t happen that way. We went through a time of infertility and miscarriage; and I was at a very dangerous place, spiritually, because I found myself really bitter toward God—just grappling and struggling with why God wasn’t doing things the way I had instructed Him to do.
In the middle of all of that, my wife came in and said, “You know, I think maybe what God is calling us to do is adopt.” My response—I said these words—and they now sound so small and hellish to me. I said, “I’m all about adoption. I want to adopt, but I’d rather have our own children first.” What my wife did was to realize, “If we’re going to do this, God’s going to lead him to lead us in this.” So, she didn’t nag. She didn’t berate. She didn’t put little pictures of cute orphans on my breakfast table—that kind of thing. She just stepped back and she prayed for God to change my heart, and He did.

What He did was to break my heart and to show me that the answer to my prayers for children—He had an answer for it that was better than what my life script would have been. I would have been a miserable father if I had had children come along the way that I expected them to come along. I would have seen them just as extensions of myself—expected things to be there. Instead, God broke my heart and showed me children as gifts. So, out of that experience of our children, He changed my heart in a broader way.

**Bob:** So, the makeup of your family today is?

**Russell:** We have five boys, ages 10 and under.

**Bob:** How many biological? How many—

**Russell:** We adopted the first two. Then, the others came along the more typical way.

**Bob:** Yes, including a newborn baby three months ago?

**Russell:** A newborn baby, three months old. Yes.

**Bob:** Jedd, how about you?

**Jedd:** Yes; well, I feel like, for a lot of folks, especially, if you grew up in the church, the idea is there. This goes for a lot of different issues—but that movement from the head to the heart. It often takes pain for that. I hear elements of that in both of these, and that was the case for me.

My wife and I had actually decided to adopt after two biological kids. Obviously, we were already, in a sense, headed in that direction. It wasn’t all obedience. It was almost kind of logic, just thinking, “Hey, we could either have one biologically, or there’s a child growing up without a family. We could give them one.” That made sense. I was really happy with that, but—it’s a longer story.

As we went through the adoption process, we were matched with a precious little girl from Ethiopia. She had been abandoned and brought in. She was about six months old, and we were mapped with her. We named her after my wife—named her Rachel—Ionia Rachel—after my wife, and made plans to go and be with her. Just shortly before
we were going to travel, they called us and said, “Jedd, please go home from work. We need to tell your wife and you something together.”

I headed home, right in the middle of the day, and called the adoption agency back. They said, “Little Ionia died. We didn’t even have time to tell you she was sick because it took her life so quickly. Her body was so frail.” That was—it was so remarkable just to realize how much you can grieve over a child you’ve never even met face-to-face yet. A lot like a miscarriage—we’ve also had a miscarriage. Similar experience of a late-term miscarriage—just grieving over that precious little one you had not even held. But I think that was one of those moments that took a lot of things from here and moved it down to my heart.

Bob: Rick, the heart for the orphan—where did it come from?

Rick: Yes; I shared earlier in the session—those of you guys who were in that—about my crisis ten years ago where God kind of beat me up and said, “You are totally missing this issue.” God got my attention. You can’t travel the world as much as I have and not care about orphans because, if you go to all the places I’ve been, it’s the primary issue! Whoever gets to these kids first is going to win their hearts and minds.

Now, Kay and I have not adopted—simply, the fact—we would absolutely love to—but our lifestyle. I’m on the road all the time, and she’s on the road all the time. However, I’m in the lives of literally, maybe, 50 kids in this church. I genuinely love children. I’m in their lives all the time; and a lot of kids whose dad is not in the picture, I’m there. I’m there for those kids. I love kids.

This weekend—I do this every weekend that I’m not preaching. When I’m not preaching, I walk the Sunday school classes. I want my kids in this church to know me. Papa Rick, or Pastor Rick—there’ll be 3,000 kids on this campus this weekend. I will hug maybe a fourth of them; okay? When I hug a kid, I go, “I wonder how long that hug has got to last that kid.”

Dennis: Yes.

Rick: I’ve had people tell me—grownups say, “You know, Rick, the only physical affection I get is at church.” I’ve thought about going into full-time Christian hugging. [Laughter] But the truth is—if I was not a senior pastor, I’d been a children’s pastor because I genuinely learn so much from kids. I love being around them. They are the single greatest thing to teach you humility and unselfishness. They keep you real.

Bob: Rick, I’ve got a hypothesis that I want to try out on you and see if you agree. It seems to me, that within the church, if somebody is going to have a heart for the orphan, it’s more likely to be a woman than a man. You think that’s right?

Rick: Only because we haven’t gotten the message to men. I think if men understood
this simple fact: Right, now, in America, 25 percent of all white kids grow up without the presence of the dad in their home—25 percent. Fifty percent of all Hispanic kids grow up in America without the presence of the dad in their home. Seventy-five percent of all African American kids grow up in America without the presence of the dad in the home.

That is a disaster waiting to happen—the identity crisis of kids because they don’t have a male figure. I will say this, too. Studies have shown that the number one predictor for whether a kid makes it in life is the presence of a caring adult in that child’s life. It doesn’t have to be a parent, but it has to be somebody who cares. So, I think we have to rally men—not just for adoption—but for every kind of thing to involve them in the lives of kids who don’t have a male model in their lives.

Bob: Jedd, you and I were talking about this earlier. There is, in the heart of a woman, a nurturing instinct that’s—I remember when we had our first baby, it took a while for the bonding to happen with me and the baby. Mary Ann—it was instant. With me, they’ve got to be able to do something before I’m going to bond with them; right? Do you think God’s wired women to have a heart for this more than men?

Jedd: I think He’s wired women to have a special role in the life of children, and He’s wired men to have a special role in the lives of children. That’s going to be different. It’s complimentary. There are times when it overlaps. Men need to be nurturing, too, of course; but there’s something in us that yearns to protect, yearns to do strong things, yearns to do those things that often we don’t associate with caring for orphans—caring for children.

When we can connect some of these biblical themes of when it says in Isaiah, “Defend the cause of the fatherless...” —that feels manly, and it is. We can associate it—not only with things like bringing out a sword and fighting bad guys—but standing between a child and a dark future because every one of these kids who’s growing up without a mom and a dad—even ones who theoretically have moms and dads in their homes—as you’re saying, Rick, but their dad is not engaged with their life—their future is statistically very dark. It is a defensive, protective, strong act to stand in between that boy and that future—that girl and that future—and say, “I will protect you from that.”

Dennis: This afternoon, I was interviewed on a radio show. In the green room, where I was interviewed, there was a Bible opened. It was opened to this passage. I kept looking at it and kept thinking about orphans and how this appeals to something within a man who’s called to be a warrior on behalf of all people—but especially, the helpless. Proverbs 3, verse 1, “My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments. For length of days and years of life and peace, they will add to you.”

Think of the boy and the girl who don’t have a daddy to teach and instruct around morality, around a relationship with God, around what danger is, and what it looks like for a young lady or for a young man. To me—I think I agree with you, Rick—I think one of the reasons why more men have not engaged in the plight of the orphans is we
haven’t brought men near where the orphan is—sex slavery and trade—horrific things done to children who don’t have a daddy to protect them.

When men see that, I think there is something within our chest that calls us, as men, “We must initiate. We must protect.” I’ve heard the stories here from you. You guys are all here because there’s something within your chest that says, “This movement needs men;” and I commend you for that. Really do.

**Bob:** Russell, a lot of guys—if they go out and play a game; and they’re not any good at it, they’ll find another game—

**Russell:** Right.

**Bob:** —because we like to play games we can win.

**Russell:** Right.

**Bob:** In this area of life, the issue is so big it seems unwinnable. The amount of effort it takes to win with one child is significant. I can see where a guy goes, “Given the odds, I’ll watch ESPN.”

**Russell:** Right, but that’s, of course—that’s part of everything in the Christian life. That’s what discipleship is like. That’s what doing spiritual warfare is like. When you look at the depth of how wrong the world has gone, in so many ways, there is a sense in which—if that’s all you see, then, there is a tendency to despair—but if you have an understanding of the Holy Spirit and of the power of God that’s involved in that—that ought to give a sense of understanding the depth of the problem; but also, a sense of hope and of optimism that is present there.

I think that’s one of the reasons why a lot of men are distant from this issue is because we tend to, in our churches, often, present this issue in terms of cute, little orphans. We’re trying to say, “Look at these cute, little orphans. They need a home. Welcome them into your home.” That’s true. That’s part of it. But what we see going on with the orphan crisis is not just a material problem. This is a spiritual warfare issue where something has gone badly wrong in the universe—where you have some beings out there who hate children because children represent newness of life and represent a threat that was made to their power many, many years ago.

Yes, so, I think if men understand and see this—that what we’re really calling them to do is what God called Joseph of Nazareth to do when He says, “Take this woman in. Take this child in, as your son.” He names Jesus. He takes Jesus into Egypt—which doesn’t just mean moving the way we might move from Orange County to Minnesota for awhile. This meant abandoning everything—your whole economic future—in order to care for this woman and this child. What Joseph is doing is demon-wrestling.
That’s what we’re calling men to do. When we’re taking in children and defending children, we are taking on principalities and powers that want to destroy the image of Christ and to say, “No, these children are worth it.”

When we take a Down syndrome child into our home—that the rest of the world says, “Why would you bother with this child who’s not going to have a successful future?” When you take that child with AIDS into your arms and you’re not scared of her, when you’re ministering to those people—what you’re doing is not just something nurturing and loving—although that’s true—you’re also declaring war on everything that would say, “This isn’t worth it.”

Rick: That’s worth applause. [Applause] That was worth coming for. You know, he wrote a great book. What’s the name of your book?

Russell: Adopted for Life.

Rick: Adopted for Life. If you haven’t read Adopted for Life, that is a phenomenal book by Russell on adoption.

Dennis: There are four left in the bookstore. [Laughter]

Bob: Rick, if you were going to—let’s say it is Sunday morning at Saddleback—and you’re going to say, “This evening, we want to rally folks who really want to engage in this orphan issue,” —and you want men to be there. How would you plead the case in a way that would call out the men? —as opposed—because if you just said, “Hey, we’re going to do a thing on orphans—anybody who has an interest, come.”

Rick: Right.

Bob: I think you’d have 90 percent women and 10 percent guys. So, how would you call the men?

Rick: Always, the way you frame it—because fathering, and adopting, and parenting—as Dennis just pointed—is more than nurturing. There’s more to it. So, frame it as leadership training.

Dennis: Yes.

Rick: Frame it as mentoring. Frame it as leaving a legacy. Frame it as, “This may be the most significant thing you do with your life because a life changed by—one life changed is going to far outlast your career. Sorry, but it’s going to outlast your career because that human being is going to live on for eternity.” If I knew a more important thing to do with my life than bring people to Jesus, build them up to maturity, train them for their ministry, and send them out on their mission, I’d do it. Now, I don’t just do it on a grand level. I do it on a one-on-one level.
So, I would simply reframe it. It’s not simply nurturing—we need to reframe the orphan—to as, not simply a victim, but as God’s special child. The Bible says, “I will be a Father to the fatherless.” He does not say that about everybody else. I learned this from a guy, one time in one of the countries in Africa I was in, where he—I said, “How do you look at your orphans?” He goes, “I look at them as the leaders of the nation in 15 years.”

**Dennis:** Yes.

**Rick:** I’m going, “This guy just taught me something.” I’m not looking at all these poor kids. I’m looking at—I’m going to train the leaders of the nation. I loved that.

[Studio]

**Bob:** Well, again, we’ve been listening to Rick Warren, Russell Moore, Jedd Medefind, and Dennis Rainey all talking about the needs of orphans and men getting engaged.

**Dennis:** And Bob, in listening to this again, I’m sharpened afresh. [Laughter] I mean, I don’t know if it’s a razor-edge; but this is the day, folks, as a man—if you haven’t stepped up and engaged in the spiritual battle that’s coming at you and your family, your community—then, you need to do it. We’ve got a couple of ways you can do it. One, we’ve mentioned here today—get involved in the orphan movement. Attend the Summit next year in Nashville. We’ll give you more information on that a bit later.

Or, as a man, maybe it’s time for you to order our new *Stepping Up™* video series, which is designed for you to lead with a group of other men—maybe fathers and sons getting together. I’m going to tell you, Bob, it’s time for iron to sharpen iron at the grassroots level and to see a mobilization of an army that says, “We, as men, are not going to let evil overtake our homes, our communities, or our nation. We’re going to do something about it.”

**Bob:** Let me point you to our website, where we’ve got a number of different ways for folks to get involved in caring for the needs of orphans.

First of all, if you’re a pastor, there is a national pastor’s conference that is being hosted by Together for Adoption and our friends at Hope for Orphans—taking place on the campus at Southern Seminary, the first weekend in October. We’ve got a link on our website at FamilyLifeToday.com where you can get more information about the National Pastor’s Summit.

Also, Orphan Sunday is Sunday, November 4th. That weekend, our team at Hope for Orphans is hoping to mobilize hundreds of churches around the country to host workshops for families who want to consider adoption. We have a video workshop that we’ve put together called *If You Were Mine®*. The first 500 people who get in touch with
us and let us know, “We can host one of these at our church”—we are making the video workshop available at no cost to the first 500 of you who get in touch with us.

Again, this is something that any family that’s got a heart for the needs of orphans could host in your community, in your local church. All you have to do is get a date and a location put together—and contact us. First 500 people who get in touch with us, we’ll send you the If You Were Mine video workshop, at no cost; so you can host it in your community.

Then, keep in mind, May 2nd and 3rd in Nashville—that’s in 2013—the Christian Alliance for Orphans Summit will take place that week. I hope to see you there. It’s an outstanding event where hundreds of people from all around the world get together to talk about how we can care for the needs of orphans in our day. Again, there is information about all of this on our website. FamilyLifeToday.com is the place to go. The website, again, FamilyLifeToday.com; or if you have any questions, contact us, 1-800-358-6329. That’s 1-800- “F” as in family, “L” as in life, and then, the word, “TODAY”.

Now, tomorrow, we are going to continue to hear from Rick Warren, Jedd Medefind, Russell Moore, and Dennis Rainey about how men can engage in the needs of orphans all around the world. Hope you can tune in for Part Two of that conversation tomorrow.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, and our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our host, Dennis Rainey, I'm Bob Lepine. We will see you back next time for another edition of FamilyLife Today.

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