



HELPING  
CHILDREN  
WORLDWIDE



# Breaking Bread from House to House:

A Conversation about Global Orphan Care

PARTNERSHIP EDITION



Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread from house to house, and ate their food with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

**(Acts 2:46-47)**

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Ackland, Margaret. *The Last Supper*. 1993.

Margaret Ackland (1954 - ) is an Australian artist who has been nominated for numerous art awards and prizes. Image used for this project with permission from the artist.

# Introduction

## Dear Conversation Facilitator,

Thank you for facilitating this Breaking Bread conversation! In this brief Guide, you will find conversation goals, logistics, and reference materials to print. We have designed the Guide for a table size of eight participants plus one Conversation Facilitator. If you have fewer or more participants, we include ways to make adjustments. Also, if you wish to facilitate this conversation remotely via Zoom or other platforms, feel free to adapt it to your needs. This is intended to be a ritual, rather than a workshop or a webinar.

Breaking Bread is a table fellowship designed to open the door to a conversation between Western supporters and the professional leadership staff at a given orphanage. You may wish to invite other stakeholders to the conversation as well. The conversation is designed to help introduce the idea of transition to community care, and give everyone at the table to imagine what that might look like, and to give voice to both concerns and opportunities. The foundation of this engagement is that the voice of each participant at the table has equal value.

Facilitating this conversation might not be easy, but we hope that it will be thought-provoking and positive for your community. Ever since the dawn of our faith, table fellowship has provided a sacred way for communities to come together, build trust, and prayerfully discern calls to action. Thus, the aim of this conversation is not to undermine the church's past work with orphans and vulnerable children, but rather, to celebrate what has been accomplished and explore how we can align our efforts with the current global movement for change. We make the case that such alignment is also in harmony with scriptural wisdom.

We have envisioned that participants in this conversation identify as Christians. If your group includes people from multiple faith traditions, please feel free to edit this document accordingly, or reach out to us for some suggestions.

## Questions?

Please contact Laura Horvath, Director of Programs and Global Engagement at Helping Children Worldwide (HCW): [laurahorvath@helpingchildrenworldwide.org](mailto:laurahorvath@helpingchildrenworldwide.org).

# Goals

- To introduce your partnership to the global church movement that is advocating transition of residential orphanages to family care models
- To introduce your partnership to the global movement advocating for all children to grow up in safe, loving and permanent family care
- To provide an opportunity for participants to revisit how their own faith and values inform their commitments to caring for kids
- To foster conversation within your partnership about the advantages and disadvantages that kids might experience in long-term residential orphanages
- To provide a safe and courageous space within your partnership to raise questions about the need to transition ethically
- To focus your partnership on the Biblical paradigm to care for the family as one (the “widow and fatherless orphan,” together), rather than separating family members from each other
- After this conversation concludes, to encourage participants
  - ◇ to continue to engage within the partnership on these topics,
  - ◇ to engage others in their respective communities and institutions on these questions, and
  - ◇ to continue to learn about contemporary best practices in global child welfare

## Prepare to Facilitate

- Visit [https://www.helpingchildrenworldwide.org/bb\\_partnership.html](https://www.helpingchildrenworldwide.org/bb_partnership.html) for Breaking Bread resources listed on this page and more.
- View the training [video](#) that outlines how this table fellowship was designed and its components
  - ◇ Note especially at 10:50 - 17:36 as Sandy Whittle from [Red Meets Green](#) shares how they used the tool in Liberia
- Review and edit the script included in this Guide to fit your needs
- Take some time for yourself to review key issues in the global movement to transition residential orphanages to family care models.
  - ◇ One way to do this is to hear from other church and nonprofit leaders who have shepherded communities through this change process; we have compiled for you some video clips on these topics:
    - » [The case for transitioning to family-based care](#) (Dr. Laura Horvath, Mohamed “Nabs” Nabieu, Helping Children Worldwide; Rev. Tom Berlin, Floris United Methodist Church).
    - » [Care Leader Panel](#) (Rosa Saffa, Dr. Aruna Stevens, and Jennifer “Suma” Tharmu, who grew up in orphanages, share their experiences; please be patient, some audio is weak due to Sierra Leone internet connectivity).
  - ◇ Watch the videos you’ll be sharing at the Table Fellowship Conversation:
    - » [Family Reunification Discovery](#) (Francis Chan shares how he learned about the need for family reunification).
    - » [How Family Reunification Works](#) (how one program in Kenya transformed their model of care from residential to a program that reintegrates street-connected children back to families)
    - » [World Without Orphans](#) shares how family-based care of orphans and children is possible.
  - ◇ For brief information about financial costs of care or community giving data, see:
    - » [Lumos article on the cost of changing the model of care](#) from orphanages to family-based care.
    - » Barna Study 2021 [infographic](#) highlights trends among American Christians regarding global orphan care, including financial support.
- Remember, every transition to family-based care is different. Sometimes, the orphanage staff will request that Western supporters provide assistance with transitioning the model of care. In others, Western supporters might be raising the idea with orphanage staff.
- Your role as the facilitator is to hold a safe and courageous space for people to wrestle with these issues. You won’t get change by demanding it or assuming it is self-evident from the data. In humility, you sit alongside people and foster conversation at a rate that works for them. You support them to move in the general direction for change, without assuming that you know exactly how that change should occur. It is a spiritual practice to stay rooted in your own convictions as the facilitator, while being open to the legitimate questions and concerns that will likely arise around the table.
  - ◇ If the conversation starts veering in a direction that may hinder the group’s progress, you can say something like, “These are important concerns and we probably won’t get to them fully in this conversation, but let’s revisit them in future conversations after today.”
  - ◇ Ambivalence to change is natural; silence or moments of confusion are fine.
  - ◇ Table fellowship in Christian tradition is inclusive, welcoming all across difference within the body of Christ. Encourage participants to listen deeply to one another and express themselves authentically. These are complex issues; differences of opinions are welcome!

## What You'll Need:

- This Guide (1 copy for the Conversation Facilitator)
- A pen for taking notes during closing group brainstorm on action items
- The tech setup to show the three brief videos to the group
  - ◇ [Family Reunification Discovery](#)
  - ◇ [How Family Reunification Works](#)
  - ◇ [World Without Orphans](#)
- Room setup for a shared meal
- We suggest confirming ahead of time who exactly will be at the table so that you can plan the event, and ensure you have enough materials (and food)
- Participant Handout (see Appendix A of this Guide, page 14). The Bible quote should face toward the individual, and the table fellowship artwork should face outward toward the group.
- Place Cards (see Appendix B of this Guide, page 16):
  - ◇ The Place Cards are used to anchor the conversation. As the conversation unfolds, each person who has a Place Card at his/her table setting will pose the question written on the Place Card to the group, for group discussion.
  - ◇ To prepare: print the Place Card .pdf file associated with this Guide as double-sided documents. Fold each document in half. After everyone is seated for the meal (if possible, so that no one reads the Place Cards ahead of time), set the Place Cards on the table at each person's place setting. The Bible quote should face toward the individual, and the table fellowship artwork should face outward. The conversation questions will be found inside the folded place card.
    - » Put the Place Card for Question #1 at the Facilitator's place setting at the table
    - » The other eight Place Cards are placed one at each person's place setting at the table
    - » If you have fewer participants: you can double-up on the Place Cards
    - » If you have more participants: you can distribute the Place Cards to selected participants for an all-group conversation, or break up into smaller tables for smaller group conversations. (Make sure, however, that every group has all the Place Cards, so that all Conversation Questions will be posed and there is a Leader at each table.)

## After the Conversation:

- Participants might use this Guide to lead additional Breaking Bread Conversations in their respective communities
- We have similar Breaking Bread rituals specifically created for different groups. For example, we have an interfaith version for college students and young adults. We also have a version for church pastors and leaders. If you'd like to help us reach such groups, you are welcome to connect them to us to receive materials for their own Breaking Bread rituals.
- Your partnership could sign the Global Church Pledge
- We would appreciate receiving any event photos or attendee summaries, so we can track how this Guide finds life in the broader community. Please send these to Laura Horvath at [laurahorvath@helpingchildrenworldwide.org](mailto:laurahorvath@helpingchildrenworldwide.org).



Turay, Ali Karim. Village Meeting. 2022.

# Suggested Script

## Introduction

Welcome! We're here to talk about our partnership's support for orphans and vulnerable children. Christians have been on the forefront of caring for children worldwide for generations. We also have a profound tradition of table fellowship for grappling with big ideas and questions. Over the past few years, new research and best practices in childcare have come to light. It's important for us to educate ourselves about this. We want to support kids in ways that are ethical, wise, and Biblically-grounded.

## Distribute the Place Cards and Explain

I will be the general facilitator, but hope we will all participate! This conversation is meant to be sacred and challenging. If you have a Place Card in front of you, you'll see that there is a piece of art on the side facing the group, and a Bible quote written on the side facing you. Inside the place card, you'd find a conversation question.

To begin our conversation, I'll read aloud the Scripture on my Place Card, and then I'll pose Question #1 to the group. We'll all discuss the question, and then I'll call for us to move on to Question #2. If you have the Place Card for Question #2, you'll read aloud the Scripture on your Place Card, and then you'll pose the second question to the group for discussion. And then we'll move on to whoever has Question #3, and so forth. So the pattern is: Scripture verse, then question to discuss. Ready to begin?

All voices here are welcome. The foundation of this conversation is that the voice of each participant at the table has equal value.

Any questions?

## Opening Prayer and Blessing

## Begin Conversation: Questions #1-#5

**Facilitation Note:** Questions #1-4 will likely proceed fairly smoothly. If participants struggle to generate ideas for Question #5, you can begin with one of these answers:

- Kids who grow up in orphanages are separated from their home villages and kin, so they don't develop family attachments or personal history.
- Kids might get loving attention from orphanage staff, but it's not the same as individualized attention/attachment from a parent or family. This can also be

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- problematic later in life, because as adults they will lack models for family living.
- Staff work on shifts, or staff leave behind their own families to get paid to care for the orphanage's kids.
  - Visitors (often from abroad) come in and out of the orphanage, which can be confusing for kids, and can disrupt their ability to form healthy attachments.
  - Kids are on a set schedule based on the needs of the group or that benefits the efficient running of the orphanage. This quashes individuality and teaches the kid not to be assertive about his/her own needs. This can lead to emotional and behavioral problems.
  - When kids age out of the orphanage, where do they go? They are often alone or strangers to family.

## Introduce the First Video

**Explain:** This video can help us get a better understanding of the growing global church movement to rethink how we're serving kids. [Play video: [Family Reunification Discovery](#)].

## Questions #6-#7

**Facilitation Note:** Question #6 will likely proceed fairly smoothly. If participants struggle to generate ideas for Question #7, you could begin by asking any teachers, social workers, clergy, or healthcare professionals at the table to tap into their professional backgrounds. Or, you can begin with one of these answers:

- Financial literacy training, financial support and/or small loans
- Psychological/emotional support
- Parenting classes
- Regular check-ins from case managers to make sure the family is still safe for the child
- If a child or family member has a disability or HIV/AIDS, training about caregiving and medical support
- Programs to address any domestic violence or addiction issues in the family
- Nutrition and hygiene education
- Deliberate engagement to connect the family with local school or pastoral staff
- Providing clothing, hygiene and school supplies
- Job training programs
- Offer scholarships or other types of educational support
- Counseling for families

# Suggested

## Introduce the Next Videos

**Explain:** If an orphanage that houses kids long-term decides to transition to a family care model, that can take many forms. Sometimes, the orphanage will start slowly, integrating a few children back into families, and then more and more. The orphanage can then evolve its work to become a short-term emergency residence for street children awaiting family care, and a community center that offers family support programs to families at-risk of breaking up. Here are two examples of what this looks like. The first video tells the story of an orphanage in Kenya called Agape that transitioned to family reunification work. [Play video: [How Family Reunification Works](#)]. The second video emphasizes to us that keeping children within families, even very impoverished families, is an indigenous tradition worthy of our support. [Play video: [World Without Orphans](#)].

## Questions #8-#9

Please share your thoughts about the videos. While transition is often initially more expensive, family care models over time are less expensive to operate compared to long-term residential orphanages; through proper stewardship of finances, we have the potential to impact many more children! If this orphanage were to transition from a long-term residence to a family care model, how might our partnership change? how might it stay the same?

**Facilitation Note:** If participants struggle to generate ideas for Question #8, you can begin with one of these answers:

- Continued financial support, now focused on family as unit of care vs. just the child
- Mission trip projects might change to focus more on building the skills and capacity of the adults that do the work daily to support the children and families, including the local staff, or even the caregivers themselves
- Western supporters may offer capacity building support on topics or services such as financial transparency, institutional change processes, and social work
- Orphanage staff could offer more education and guidance on their needs, solutions and cultural norms, and field knowledge to help Western supporters better understand the realities of the work on the ground
- Western supporters can help link orphanage staff to a community of practice at the national, regional and global levels, further training opportunities and research in current best practices as well as grant opportunities
- Orphanage staff can help link Westerners to other local nonprofit and government leaders

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It's perfectly ok if the table group concludes something like, "We don't know what our role could look like, and let's do some searching after this conversation to learn more about possibilities, especially from other communities who have been down this road ahead of us." We here at HCW can assist!

## Close

**Explain:** This has been an extraordinary conversation. It's a lot to wrestle with. It is important for us to celebrate all that we have done with our ministry to serve kids, and also to look with anticipation about what we might do in the future. We don't have to have all of the answers now. Let's brainstorm: What are a few specific next steps we could take, to plan for our partnership to grow in new directions?

**Note:** If participants struggle to answer, you can begin with one of these ideas:

- learn more about ethical conduct of mission trips to orphanages
- learn more about best practices in the care of orphans and vulnerable children
- review how our partnership finances are currently being used to support vulnerable children
- connect to other partnerships and organizations working on this
- sign the Global Church Pledge
- commit to continuing the conversation on a specific date
- identify other stakeholders to bring into the conversation
- host additional Breaking Bread Conversations using this Guide or other Guides in HCW's table fellowship series

**Explain:** COVID-19 has made our global ministry with kids even more urgent; 5.2 million children have lost one or both caregivers, and 33 million more global kids are expected to fall into poverty due to the economic impact of the virus. They are at risk for family separation. As I have been listening to these Scripture verses, I am amazed how God frequently speaks of the orphan and the widow in the very same breath. Over and over we have heard the refrain: the fatherless child and the widow, a broken family, whom we are called to support, as a unit. Not just the child, not just the widow, but: both, together. There is great wisdom in this. At the very least, Scripture gives us the courage to take up the challenges of whole-family care, even if it isn't easy. The way of Christ is to live out our values, so I'm thankful that we have begun this conversation about ways we might take action.

## Closing Blessing

# The UN Guidelines and Global Church Pledge

## United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children

(Ratified in 2010, Excerpt)

The family being the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth, well-being and protection of children, efforts should primarily be directed to enabling the child to remain in or return to the care of his/her parents, or when appropriate, other close family members...

Removal of a child from the care of the family should be seen as a measure of last resort and should, whenever possible, be temporary and for the shortest possible duration...

Financial and material poverty... should never be the only justification for the removal of a child from parental care, for receiving a child into alternative care, or for preventing his/her reintegration, but should be seen as a signal for the need to provide appropriate support for the family...

## Global Church Pledge

We believe God designed families as the best environment for children and young people to receive the love, belonging, and protection they need in order to flourish.

Therefore, on behalf of vulnerable children around the world, we commit to support efforts which strengthen families, invest in family-based solutions, and combat the root causes of their vulnerability.

## Signing Organizations



and **438** more...

### Facts to Keep in Mind:

- Over 805 of children currently living in residential institutions have a living parent or caregiver who could care for them given sufficient support.
- An estimated 5.2 million children globally have lost a caregiver to COVID-19, and this number has been doubling every six months since the pandemic began. Of these caregivers, 3 or 4 are fathers - often the primary breadwinners for their families.
- Research indicates that the cost per child for care in residential facilities is 8-10 times higher than those supported in family-based programs.

## TEXTS FOR PLACE CARDS

**Note:** For reference, here are the texts for the Place Cards. The actual Place Cards (with graphic design) for you to print are available in a separate .pdf file. If you are missing that separate file, please contact Laura Horvath at [laurahorvath@helpingchildrenworldwide.org](mailto:laurahorvath@helpingchildrenworldwide.org).

### **Isaiah 1:17**

Learn to do right; seek justice.  
Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless child, plead the case of the widow.

### **Conversation Question #1**

Who is one person who inspired you to support orphans and vulnerable children? Why?

### **Jeremiah 22:3**

This is what the Lord says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless child or the widow.

### **Conversation Question #2**

From the stories you just heard, what Christian values are at the heart of our support for kids?

### **Psalms 146:5**

The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless child and the widow.

### **Conversation Question #3**

When you think about this orphanage, what is one thing you find to be most impressive?

### **Lamentations 5:1-3**

Remember, Lord, what has happened to us; see how we have been disgraced! Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our homes to foreigners. We are orphaned and fatherless; our mothers are widowed.

### **Conversation Question #4**

Think about a young child in your own family. It can be your own child or grandchild, a niece, a nephew...  
Now, imagine--God forbid!--that the child's parents suddenly died in a crash. What are all the things you would want for your own child?

### **Psalms 68:5-6**

A father to the fatherless child, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families.

### **Conversation Question #5**

Orphanages offer kids many advantages. We have already listed how kids get great opportunities with this orphanage. But orphanages also have disadvantages. Think back to what you just said you'd want for your own child. What might be some disadvantages of growing up in a long-term residential orphanage, compared to growing up in a family?

**James 1:27**

A religion that is pure and stainless according to God the Father is this: to take care of fatherless children and widows who are suffering, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

**Conversation Question #6**

What did you find surprising in the video?

**Deuteronomy 14:29**

And the Levite, because he has no portion or inheritance with you, and the sojourner, the fatherless child and the widow, who are within your towns, shall come and eat and be filled.

**Conversation Question #7:**

A global church movement has begun to rethink how we care for kids abroad. The #1 reason why kids end up in an orphanage is poverty. In fact, as we saw in the video, most kids do have a family member who could care for them, if given proper support.

Think about kids currently living long-term in this orphanage. Imagine if we could reunite kids with their living parents or kin. What types of support might we offer those kids and families so they could stay together?

**Exodus 22:21-23**

Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt. Do not take advantage of the widow or the fatherless child. If you do and they cry out to me, I will certainly hear their cry.

**Conversation Question #8:**

Please share your thoughts about the videos. If this orphanage were to transition from a long-term residence to a family care model, how might our partnership change? How might it stay the same?

**Isaiah 10:1-4**

Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless child.

**Conversation Question #9:**

Let's take a look at the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children and the Global Church Pledge. You can find a copy at your place setting. As our partnership continues to learn more about best practices and global policies to care for vulnerable children, we might consider adding our names to the Global Church Pledge in the future. [Read it aloud.] In these statements, what is significant to you? What aligns with your beliefs, as a Christian?

## Check out other table fellowship guides in the Breaking Bread Series:

- A conversation on the role of the US church to care for the global orphans in families: Church Leadership Edition
- A conversation for young adults on how to be a champion for children in families: Young Adults and Students Edition (coming soon)



### Table Fellowship Guide for Leaders

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[www.helpingchildrenworldwide.org](http://www.helpingchildrenworldwide.org)