

30 DAYS *of* PRAYER FOR HOPE

PRAYERS FOR HOPE | PRAYERS OF HOPE



Day 1: Prayers of Hope and For Hope

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. 1 John 5:14

We start this season with a prayer of thanksgiving—a prayer of hope and for Hope. For 26 years now, Hope Unlimited for Children has been knee-deep in transforming the lives of children who—literally—have no hope. And we have seen the miraculous intervention of the God we serve in their lives. Over the next 30 days, you will read the stories of the years that Hope has intersected with the lives of these children, and of how that changed them—and their future generations—both now and eternally. So, pray with us, and ask God to continue to bless this ministry we call Hope Unlimited.

Father, call us to prayer. May our hearts break for the widow and orphan, for those on the periphery of our world, even as we know that your heart breaks for them. May we become the hands, the feet, the face of God for them.

Day 2: New Beginnings . . .

Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. Romans 15:7

This is a story I like to tell. When children arrive at a Hope campus, it is usually in the back of a squad car. They have been pulled by police from their homes, the streets, or perhaps a brothel, and brought to us. They have no idea where they are or what their future holds. They are terrified, caged in the back of a car. The last thing they need is an unknown adult pulling them out.

So, we have a Welcome Committee—a group of kids specially chosen to help a new child make the adjustment to campus. They greet her: “Welcome to your new home; you will be safe here. No one is going to hurt you anymore; you don’t have to fear the footsteps in the night.” For the first several hours, there may be no contact with an adult, only with other kids. There is even a place where the new child can see pictures of all the

staff: “This is Pastor Derli; he will be the best friend you will ever have. This is Tia Teresa; you are lucky to be in her house because she is the best cook.”

By the time one of the staff members meets the child for the first time, she is already adjusting to her new home, she has new friends, and the healing has begun.

Lift up prayers of thanksgiving with us for the remarkable ministry of our Welcome Committee, and ask God’s blessing on the new children who join us.

Father, we thank you that children so hurt by life can become a part of the healing of others. Bless them, and bless the children whose lives they touch.

Day 3: Instruments of Love

He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds. Psalm 147:3

Please hear these words from Amelia, a young lady new to our program, still uncertain, but willing to give being a child a chance. As you read, notice her words about her new friend, Pamela. One of the lessons we have learned is that kids are the very best healers of other kids, and we see Pamela playing that role in Amelia’s life:

Hi, my name is Amelia, and I am 14 years old. I arrived at the City of Youth yesterday.

I have been living on the streets for the past eight months. I had to run away from my home because there was so much fighting. On the streets, I was living in abandoned houses and eating out of the trash. Out there I felt vulnerable all the time. Every day I was involved in risky situations with people who didn’t want what was best for me. I have been afraid for a long time.

I’ve been here for only one day, but I’m not afraid anymore.

There’s another girl who lives in my house—Pamela—who has been telling me all about this place. She’s just like me. She told me this is a good place. The people here want the best for me. I can’t remember the last time someone cooked for me. Here my house mom cooks all of my meals. Pamela says I can trust her. I’m going to give it try, and I hope everything will be okay in the end.

Love,
Amelia

Father, bless this new beginning. May the hope of this place take deep root in Amelia’s life. May she come to know you and the sustaining love you have for her. And bless Pamela, as she becomes an instrument of your love.

Day 4: Challenging a Culture

Show me your ways, Lord, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long. Psalm 25:4-5

Our children come to us steeped in a culture that places values on all the wrong things: materialism, carnality, and disregard for those in need. Much of what the team at Hope does is help children listen for the quiet voice of our Sovereign Lord—calling them to a deeper faith in Him, to care for others, and to practice spiritual disciplines. Please pray with us that in the midst of the noise of culture, the voice of God will be heard.

Lord, the children—like all of us—are so barraged by sounds of a world that has turned its back on you that they sometimes miss your voice. May you speak clearly in their hearts, and may they know that you are God.

Day 5: More Than Just Donors

Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. “If you do away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, 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 58:9-10

Sometimes it is a five-dollar bill stuck inside an envelope; sometimes it is a check; sometimes it is stock or securities transfer. But whatever form it takes and whatever amount it is, we know it's from the heart. Hope's donors give because we believe God has called us—all of us—to this work. And God blesses, richly blesses, that commitment. Perhaps *donors* is the wrong word here. You are our co-laborers as the apostle Paul might say. You stand beside us and make the difference in the lives of children who so desperately need to see tangible evidence that God loves them, and that his people will care for them. So, from the depths of our hearts, thank you.

Father, we thank you for the wonderful co-laborers you have given Hope. Bless them, bless their investments in the lives of our children, and call others to walk alongside them.

Day 6: Transformation

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here. 2 Corinthians 5:17

I met Graziella on her second night at Hope. She was 12 years old and more than a bit lost, trying to find a way to fit in at a pizza party with a big group of girls. She did not know how to be happy like the other girls obviously

were. And there was a good reason for her pain: after her mother died, her older sister began prostituting Graziella, turning the little girl's life into a living hell.

But at Hope, she found people who loved her, who let her be a little girl again. Most important, Graziella began to heal from the inside, as she learned that God loved her and only wanted the best for her. I stood beside Graziella about a year later as she asked Christ into her life, and took that next step in a journey of transformation and healing. Please pray with us that all the Graziellas who come into our care will come to know the Father who truly loves them and brings healing into their lives..

Father, thank you for the healing you have brought to Graziella. We pray for her, even as we pray for all those who are still trying to find their way. Use us to introduce them to your healing and saving love.

Day 7: A Path Out

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed... Luke 4:18

The shiny Hope bus seems almost incongruously out of place in the *favela*, but dozens of teenagers line up to take the short ride up to Hope Mountain. The trip is repeated over and over throughout the day as hundreds of kids come to Hope Mountain for vocational courses: auto-body repair, culinary, diesel-engine, cosmetology, and half a dozen other course offerings. These are not just fill-in-the-time classes, but the way out of poverty. As one mother said to us, "Finally, my children have the chance to escape the poverty that my family has always known." Please pray with us that our courses will truly be life-changers for these kids.

Father, we have seen the hopelessness of the slums. Let these vocational courses be a light of Hope for each child who comes to our campus. Bless the efforts of these kids in their studies, open doors of employment, and break cycles of dependency.

Day 8: A Pervasive Evil

In his arrogance the wicked man hunts down the weak, who are caught in the schemes he devises... He lies in wait to catch the helpless; he catches the helpless and drags them off in his net. His victims are crushed, they collapse; they fall under his strength... But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; you consider their grief and take it in hand. The victims commit themselves to you; you are the helper of the fatherless... You, Lord, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, so that mere earthly mortals will never again strike terror. Psalm 10

We do not know an exact number, but we do know it is at least in the hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions. That's the estimate of the children forced into the sex trades each year. There just seems to be a pervasive evil in Brazil and so many other countries that accepts—and encourages—the exploitation of girls and boys by sex traffickers, by local brothels, or even by their own parents. But we do know God has a better future for these children, and that his love for them is so much stronger than the evil that pervades the world. Pray with us that Hope can be the hands and feet of our Savior to help exploited children reclaim their innocence.

Our Lord, we know that you are greater than the evil one, and that through your grace that which was broken can be made new. We pray for every child exploited by the evil of this world, and ask that you make us instruments of that grace.

Day 9: Wisdom for Leadership

For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. Proverbs 2:6

Today the Hope Unlimited Board of Directors meets for its annual fall meeting. They will review the budget for next year and look at every aspect of the Hope program. But more than anything else, they will pray.

Each session begins and ends with times of prayer—and often discussion is set aside for more prayer and seeking of God's direction. Board members do this because they believe in prayer, they believe wisdom comes from God, and they believe He loves our kids more than we ever could. Will you pray with us?

Father, as Hope's Board meets today, give them wisdom, give them strength, and always, always keep love for your children in the very center of every decision they make.

Day 10: DeAnna

I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. John 14:18

DeAnna's story is one we hear far too often. At 15, she was living alone on the streets of Campinas where she was extremely vulnerable to abuse. We know where the story goes from there: statistics tell us that, without intervention, she would almost certainly have been trafficked.

DeAnna is part of a growing worldwide demographic. She is what we call a "social orphan," abandoned by both parents. She lived with a grandmother for a short time, but the elderly woman was not equipped to take care of the needs of an abused teenager. Some might believe she is her parents' responsibility—that they need to step up and take care of her. And they should, but that is beside the point for DeAnna. All she knows is that she was abandoned and hurting.

And that is where Hope entered the picture. Today DeAnna is thriving, a part of a bigger and more caring family than she could ever have imagined.

Father, for the millions of DeAnnas in our world, we ask your love and grace. It is not their fault they were abandoned, but it is our divine commission to love them as you have loved us.

Day 11: Moms and Dads

But those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. Isaiah 40:31

Who would ever sign a 10-year employment contract? Hope house parents, that's who. This is such a critical part of who we are. "Mom" or "Dad" is an important figure in anyone's life—but that's especially true for Hope's kids. Many have not known the love, limits, and encouragement that come from this special relationship. And more often than not, "Dad" was a series of figures that came in and out of our kids' lives before they came to Hope.

But at Hope, these children find a stable family for the first time in their lives, a family who loves them and will be there for them. The last thing these kids need is to feel like they have been abandoned again, so our house parents make these long-term commitments and become the family our kids have never known.

Father, bless the commitments of Hope's house parents. May you be their source of stability, of permanence, even as they are the anchors for our kids' lives.

Day 12: Investments

One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts. Psalm 145:4

Enrique may just be the story of what Hope is all about. In prison twice before he reached age 14, he came to Hope because no one else would take him. And we not only took him; he took us. In a very, very deep way, he took Hope to heart. He became a model student, graduated, found a good job, married a wonderful Christian woman, and started a family of his own.

Somewhere along the way, Hope leadership discovered that we needed Enrique back on campus because he has a unique ability to mentor young men. He understands them, and they understand that he has lived their lives and knows the challenges they face and the pain they have endured. So he and his wife became house parents. This former street child, this kid who spent many of his teenage years in prison, is now a shaper of young men. Please pray for wisdom for Enrique, as he is the only father so many of these boys will ever know.

Father, we ask that you bless Enrique. May his words lay upon the hearts of the young men in his care. We ask that you give strength and wisdom to each of our house fathers. Let them be the dads these boys never knew.

Day 13: Childhood Regained

You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have loosed my sackcloth and girded me with gladness... Psalm 30:11

I wish you could all meet Natalia. She is about as “typical” a child as you will ever see. She attends school, receives encouragement from her house mom, plays sports, and goes to church. But her normalcy belies a dark past when she was hungry, when she was fearful, when she was abused.

Today, Natalia and her six siblings have found new life at our City of Youth. The dark past has been replaced with the simple mundane of getting to be a child. So, today, celebrate the new normal of her life with us, a life where a child gets to be a child.

Gracious Lord, we thank you for the gift of childhood, for innocence regained, for infectious laughter, and for memories that sustain. Father, bless this new beginning. May the hope of this place take root—deeply—in Natalia’s life. May she come to know you and the sustaining love you have for her.

Day 14: Prayers and Prayers

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you... Matthew 5:14

Even as we pray, our children pray with us. Prayers of thanksgiving for new life at Hope, prayers of petition that God will deliver them from the destructive habits they used to survive on the streets, and always, *always*, prayers of petition for their families. At each chapel service at the City of Youth and Hope Mountain, our children place their written prayer requests in a large bowl at the front of the auditorium—a kind of offering to God—not of money, but of their hearts. These are deep and meaningful prayers, as children broken by the world find restoration in a Father who loves them.

What is most amazing about these prayer requests, though, is how these children seek God’s love and grace for the families that have abused, abandoned, or exploited them. So many times, their written words to God begin, “Father, give me the chance to tell my family about you so they can be healed like I have been.”

Perhaps a lesson about forgiveness is here, too . . .

Father, even as we pray, we thank you for the gift of prayer, for the the healing it brings, for the way it moves you to bless. Lord, hear these prayers of your children, embrace each request, and be faithful to your own.

Day 15: Derli

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Galatians 6:9

He seems to be ever-present: leading a staff meeting at the City of Youth, preparing a grant request for a new recreation court, discipling a group of Conquerors, preaching at the Graduate Church. It is so clear that this is more than a job for Pastor Derli; this is a heart calling. When he speaks of the time he first came to Hope, he says, “God confirmed in my heart that this is where I was to be.”

He is an accomplished author, a teacher, a leader, and a humble follower of Christ. Hope is blessed to have his hand on the helm.

Father, we thank you for Derli, and for Denise. Bless them and their ministry. Sustain them, and give them wisdom and patience.

Day 16: I Can Accomplish Anything

Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. Psalm 139:16

Childhood should be a time of ultimate confidence. Kids should believe in themselves because they see that same belief in the way others look at them. For kids coming from the streets, what they have seen in adult eyes is too often more along the lines of disgust and loathing; “You are a street child. You are worth nothing.”

But that is not how it is at our City of Youth or Hope Mountain.

Kids are valued, childhood is celebrated, and a “good job” or a pat on the back is the order of the day. I think you will enjoy this letter from a young man named Warren:

I live at the City of Youth with my brother and sister. When we were little, my parents decided they didn't want us. They left us out on the streets to ask for food. When a policeman found us, I was scared to go with him, but he took us to live at the City of Youth.

I remember thinking it was such a pretty place, but I still felt scared. My house dad, Tio Ismael, told me I didn't have to worry anymore because here he would take care of me. Tio Ismael taught me and the other boys jiu-jitsu, which I grew to love. Tio Ismael says I have talent. Last week he took me on a trip to participate in a jiu-jitsu tournament. I earned second place and won a silver medal! When I brought the medal back to the City of Youth, everyone cheered and gave me hugs.

I feel at home here. I feel like I can accomplish anything.

Yes, Warren, we think you can.

Father thank you for the courage of youth. May every child in our care step confidently into their future. Lead the Hope staff to encourage and bless these children who have never heard a "well done!"

Day 17: Leading by Example

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. 1 Timothy 4:12

Before coming to Hope Unlimited, the children we serve are often swept into destructive lifestyles by a cultural current pulling them towards drugs, crime, sexual exploitation, and poverty. A central part of our philosophy is maintaining a campus culture that, instead, directs the children in a positive trajectory. We count on older children, whose lives have already been transformed, to help us establish a positive, productive campus culture that encourages children to thrive. These living, breathing, positive examples really make an impact on our kids. We want our campuses to always be places where children can see the promise of their futures.

Lord, thank you for places where the lives of children are molded and shaped into godly vessels. Bless the student leaders at Hope Unlimited as they change the lives of their brothers, sisters, and friends by example.

Day 18: Learning . . . First Steps

Apply your heart to instruction and your ear to words of knowledge. Proverbs 23:12

Some time ago, I stood with a friend in a *favela* near the federal prison in Campinas. We struck up a conversation with two children, a boy perhaps 10 and a girl a few years younger. We asked them what they wanted to be when they grew up. The boy did not hesitate: "a lawyer." The girl, a bit more shyly, "A teacher." We could see the elementary school just a hundred yards or so away. "How are you doing in school?" The boy shrugged, "We've

never been, but Mom says we maybe can go next year.”

Their story is so typical of the children who come to Hope. It is not at all unusual for us to receive a 12-year-old who is completely illiterate. But we also know that, without an education, they have no hope of breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty. Our staff, teachers, and house parents all invest the time and effort to help these kids catch up for all the years of school they have missed. Not an easy task, but one that is absolutely foundational for their futures. Pray with us that God will bring a love of learning to these children, and that they will persevere to overcome the years their education was neglected.

Lord, we ask a special blessing on the teachers, the tutors, and the house parents who walk our children through the doors of learning. Bless them, and help these kids to invest in the hard work of getting an education.

Day 19: A New Normal

But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Psalm 86:15

When children arrive at the City of Youth, they usually do not understand why they were taken from their homes. To them, the abuse and exploitation is just a normal part of life; they do not know life can be any different. Hear these words from a young man named Dion:

When I came to the City of Youth, I had a problem with anger. I would explode and start cursing at people and breaking stuff. I couldn't control myself. I think it was because I was so angry that my sister and I couldn't live with our family.

Today, though, I understand why we couldn't live with them. Our stepfather fed us dog food and locked us in a room. And we experienced other terrible things that I don't want to remember. After being at the City of Youth, I don't get so angry anymore, and I'm learning how to cope with it when I do. I'm excited about my future.

Today Dion is learning what it should be like to be a teenager. He still deals with anger, but he also understands that this new family is there to support him and love him.

Gracious Lord, we pray for the children of our world like Dion who do not know that abuse and neglect should not be a part of everyday life. Put us in a place where we can be your light and life for them.

Day 20: Tough Cases

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

The profile of our kids has changed over the years. There was a time when a child or adolescent coming to us with a drug problem was the exception rather than the rule, but no longer. Drug use has become the ever-present reality for the kids of the slum. Drug use is the false-promise escape for the pain of life these kids face, and now, when a 12- or 14-year-old comes to us, he will usually bring heavy chemical dependency with him.

Bad choices? Yes. Dangerous kids? That, too. But—and this is really important—God loves these hurting kids every bit as much as he loves you and me, and our divine commission is to see their lives transformed.

And through God's grace we do. We get to see the light turn back on in eyes once darkened by despair. We get to see the tremors go away. And we get to see hope born where before there was only despair.

It is not easy, but it is our calling.

Father, bless the children trapped by drug use. Call us to love them as you do. Deliver them from the clutches of sin and dependency, and bring them new freedom in your light.

Day 21: A Family Affair

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

You might see Philip sitting on a curb deep in conversation with a child of the streets. Or Corenne with her arms around a day student who is struggling. Or perhaps the whole family in the home of a Hope graduate. But one thing of which you can be certain: the Smith family will be up to their elbows in caring for the children of Hope. This is not a job, nor a pastime; it is the very heart of who they are as a family, living out their calling to love children the world has cast aside.

And God has blessed their faithfulness. Thousands of children and adolescents have seen their lives transformed because of the Smiths' faithfulness to that calling.

Pray for them, not just today, but daily. Pray that God will protect their family, strengthen them, and bless their ministry.

Father, we know that there is no Hope Unlimited for Children without Philip and Corenne. Bless them, Marc, and Isabella as they live out this life of ministry. Sustain them in times of challenge, and bring their vision to reality.

Day 22: Upstream

But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one. 1 Thessalonians 3:30

We do not understand this one except to say that our battle is against the unseen realm of evil; that what we have here is, in essence, a spiritual war. It seems every day there is a new challenge from the state or the city: they want us to change our model; we should not take our children to chapel; they want to terminate a lease on the property we have spent millions of dollars to improve. It is, literally, a daily struggle.

But every day, we also see the lives of children transformed. And in the big picture, we can put up with all the constant pressure, because God is doing something extraordinary.

Please pray for our staff, that they will not be overwhelmed by the constant drumbeat of those who will never understand or appreciate what we are or what we do.

Father, sometimes it seems like we are constantly swimming upstream, that every day there is a new battle that must be fought. Please sustain our staff; give them wisdom, give them courage, and bring fruit to their efforts.

Day 23: Dreams for the Future

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Jeremiah 29:11

Janet came to us as a child, and soon she will leave as a young woman. As proud parents, we have watched her grow from one stage of maturity to the next. In a few years, she will graduate and do exactly what we have raised her to do—help others. She is the future of Hope. Read her story in her own words:

I came to the City of Youth when I was seven years old, and now I'm 14! The City of Youth is home to me. My three older brothers and sisters graduated from the City of Youth, and I know I will follow in their footsteps. They all have gone on to do successful things and are happy. Without Hope, I don't want to think about where I would be. I'm going to do really big things with my life. I think it will be my turn soon to help someone else.

We thank God for Janet and the big dreams she has for her future.

Father, we pray every child on Hope's campuses will know what it means to be home, to be a part of a family, and to be loved. We pray you will guide us as we guide them to one day become independent and be agents of transformation in their communities.

Day 24: Family

God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land. Psalm 68:6

It is hard being family to kids who do not know what family is. But learning to be family is exactly what we ask our kids to do. And they embrace the task. Hear the words of Runa who has been part of the Hope family for 10 years.

I am 17 years old now, but I arrived with my five siblings when I was just seven years old. At first, being here was very hard because I missed my mom, and I couldn't sleep. My house mom, Tia Dalila, took such good care of me, though. When I was sad at night, she came to my room and sat with me while I cried. She made me feel like everything would be okay. She taught me so much.

The City of Youth is such an important place. Here, there is nothing I need that I do not get. When I was little, I loved to play on the playground. Now, I love to spend time reading. This year, I began the graduation process. We get to practice for the future by gaining experience in many different internships.

Runa has spent most of her lifetime with Hope. What she knows of family, she has learned from the loving family God brought into her life.

Father, for children who have never known what it is to be part of a family, we ask your blessings. Let these children of Hope grow up surrounded by family who love them and want the very best for them.

Day 25: The Big Picture

Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. James 1:27

One-hundred-fifty million. Let that number sink in for a minute. One-hundred-fifty-million *orphans*. Some are biological orphans, but the vast majority,—like the kids we serve at Hope—are social orphans; kids who have been abandoned, abuse, exploited. And for most of these kids, unless we as Christians step up to care for them, there is literally no hope.

For many years now, the Christian Alliance for Orphans has been the voice of the orphan movement, calling churches and believers to care for those the world has cast aside. The organization is a prophetic voice, reminding us that the heart of the gospel is found in James 1:27: “*Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress . . .*”

Pray with us today that God will bless all those called to minister to the least of these.

Father, for Jedd, for Elizabeth, for Nicole, for all the team at CAFO—for all those living out your love for orphans around the world—today we pray. Bless their hearts, their hands, and their work, and call more and more followers of Christ to faithfully serve the peripheral children of our world.

Day 26: Possessions

But as for me, I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer; Lord, do not delay. Psalm 70:5

What would it mean to you to have nothing? I mean, really, *nothing*? When kids come to us from the streets, or from a place where they have been abandoned or exploited, they often have nothing except the clothes on their backs—and more often than not, they have never had anything. They are not merely poor; they are destitute. At Hope, for the first time in their lives, they have a few things to call their own: a towel, a washcloth, a Bible, a book or two, and a stuffed animal. A bed of their own, and a closet where they can keep *their* things. Ella describes it this way:

I cried so much when I first got here because I was afraid and felt alone. Then, I met my house mother, Tia Tereza. She showed me my room and my own wardrobe. I never had a place to keep my own things before . . .

This is my home now, and I like it here.

Not a lot of possessions the way you or I might measure things, but for the first time in their lives, these kids have something that is theirs. A small thing, but such an important one.

Father, we thank you for the little blessings our kids receive. For a small closet of possessions, for having their own space. Help us to bless them in small things, knowing that you will multiply it in their hearts.

Day 27: And Their Future Generations. . .

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lamentations 3:21-23

There is no more beautiful sound than that of children laughing. And to hear—and see—the children laughing, playing, and worshipping at our graduate church is a special treat because these kids are the *grandchildren* of Hope—the children of our graduates. We see Maria walking through the crowd with her little notebook, carefully writing down requests so she can know how to pray for her friends; Eduardo leading a group of younger children in a worship song he has learned; and babies, lots of babies, everywhere—the next generation of Hope. We are

so thankful that Hope not only changes the lives of the children in our care, but also brings the promise of a good and stable life to their families for generations to come.

Father, we thank you for grandchildren of Hope, for the happy, stable families you have given them. We ask your protection for them and their parents as they live as witnesses to your goodness.

Day 28: Transitions . . .

The Lord makes firm the steps of the one who delights in him; though he may stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with his hand. Psalm 37:23

Every day, in every part of the world, children age out of orphan-care programs. And, overwhelmingly, these children fail. The numbers are staggering: 75% of women in sex trades come from the orphan care systems; 40% are homeless within three years of aging out; 75% of boys who age out of foster care will be incarcerated. And that is just the beginning of the problem: we know that the next generation—the children of the kids who grew up in orphan care—will almost certainly be trapped in the same cycles of poverty and dependency.

That is why what is happening at Hope is so important. Two years after graduation, 92% of our graduates are meaningfully employed, they are in church, and they are beginning families that are so very different from the ones where they grew up. Pray with us that God will sustain these young graduates.

Father, it is so humbling to see the way you have transformed the lives of children the world rejected. We are grateful that in you they are a new creation and are charting new paths for their families. Sustain them, and let us be a daily source of strength and encouragement for them.

Day 29: Leo

Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it. Proverbs 22:6

Leo's story stands out even among the kids at Hope. Just a couple of years ago, we began to hear stories of a family of children living by themselves in a nearby slum. Our team went with the juvenile authorities to investigate, and they found Leo and six siblings living in a shack by themselves and scavenging for food.

Some months later, Leo wrote his story:

I am 17 years old. I am the oldest of seven brothers and sisters. We came to the City of Youth one year ago

because our mother was in prison for drug trafficking. This has been very hard on our family, especially my youngest brothers. They ask about her all of the time.

Luckily for us, we live at the City of Youth. Here, even though we are separated from our mom, we have a chance to be kids. There are three pools, three soccer fields, and a volleyball court! Playing together helps us stay happy in difficult times. But the bigger thing is that there are people who care about us here.

This is my last year at the City of Youth. I'll come back to visit whenever I can, but I know my siblings all have good house mothers and fathers to take care of them. The adults keep telling me it's okay to focus on my future. I know they are right, and I hope to be successful and have my family come to live with me in a few years.

Please pray with us that this family will continue to heal, and that each child will come to know the Father who truly loves them.

Father, we pray for Leo and for every child in this family. Bless them, heal them, and help them to grow in your love. May the City of Youth be both home and refuge for them.

Day 30: Because He Adopted Us . . .

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

John 1:12-13

Have you ever thought about the *why* of this orphan thing? Why did God put this special call on his people? Perhaps, just perhaps, it is because we understand what it is to be adopted, to be called to relationship. Scripture is replete with the message that we were alienated from God by our sin, but that, in his great love, he has called us to be his own. Out of this great joy of adoption, we are called to care for those the world has rejected, to love even as God has loved us.

Lord, may the great love you have for us manifest itself in the love we have for those who have no father and no mother. Let us become their families.