



# LEADER'S GUIDE

## READY OR NOT | 6-WEEK STUDY

This is a guide to assist you in leading a study group in dynamic discussion of Pam Parish's, *Ready or Not / 30 Days of Discovery for Foster & Adoptive Parents*. Please feel free to mold it to fit your group and their specific needs and desires. Pertinent questions have been chosen for group discussion, but it will be most helpful if couples also discuss some of these challenging questions between the two of them at home. *(90+ minute groups answer all discussion questions; shorter groups may omit the italicized questions.)*

In leading a small group, consistency is important. These elements should be included each meeting:

- Opening in prayer
- Response and discussion to selected questions
- Assignment of homework for the next meeting

Supplemental elements to consider in addition to those listed above:

- Discussion Guide Handout - Print weekly corresponding page from the Leader's Guide
- Ice Breaker - A list of ideas is provided in the Resource Appendix
- Scripture Reading - Print the daily Bible verse references on index cards in advance, shuffle, and pass around. Depending on group size, ask each person (or every other person) to take a card, look for the verse in their Bible or smartphone, and read aloud to the group.
- Short Video Clip or Reading - Choose a brief vignette relevant to the week's topic.
- Resource to Share - Share a hard copy of the recommended resource from the Resource Appendix, share an electronic resource, or hand out a list of references.
- Guest Speaker - Consider asking a guest speaker to join your meeting. Ask them to share from their foster/adoptive experience for 5 minutes at the end of the meeting and then answer questions for 10 minutes.

## First Meeting Introductions

### Homework

If books are being distributed during the first meeting: None

If participants obtain their own books in advance: Read Introduction (pages 1-4)

*Optional: Bring a wedding photo to share. (Appropriate only if all attendees are married couples.)*

### Icebreaker

First, go around and introduce yourself and briefly tell why you have chosen to attend.

*Optional: Go around the group a second time showing your wedding photo and telling something funny or memorable from your wedding day. Ask each spouse to share something different.*

### Read Introduction

Go around the group with each person reading a paragraph until the entire Introduction has been read aloud. *(If people would rather not read, allow them to “pass.” Or, if everyone read the Introduction for homework reading aloud is unnecessary.)*

### Discussion Questions

INTRODUCTION: Page 4, Questions 1-4

1. Have you watched a friend or family member go through adoption or foster care? What are your impressions of their experience?
2. As this study begins, you're encouraged to take at least thirty days to prayerfully consider your decision. Why do you think the author says it's wise to take this time? What do you expect to discover?
3. Read Jeremiah 29:11. How does God's promise make you feel? What do you think it means in the context of being the parent who is promising a "hope and a future" to a child?
4. What are you currently asking God to do as He prepares your heart for becoming a foster or adoptive parent? How can this group pray for you?

Homework for Week 2 | Devotional - Days 1-6



## 2<sup>nd</sup> MEETING | DEVOTIONAL -DAYS 1-6

Scripture Reading: James 1:27; John 15:13; Mark 14:35-36; Psalm 139:23; 1 Timothy 1:5; James 1:5

THE CALL: Day 1, Page 13, Question 2

2. Today's devotion says, "Caring for children who've experience the trauma of abuse and neglect is no small task; it takes boldness and courage." Talk about what you think this would mean to you and your family.

LAY DOWN YOUR LIFE: Day 2, Page 18, Question 3

3. *How does the idea that God has plans and hopes for each foster or adoptive child change the way you view parents' responsibilities?*

NOT MY WILL, BUT YOURS BE DONE: Day 3, Page 23, Question 2

2. What is one thing you'll have to give up as a result of your involvement in foster care and adoption? Why does this sacrifice seem worthwhile to you?

SEARCH MY HEART: Day 4, Page 29, Questions 2 & 4

2. *Respond to Heather's story. What thoughts and emotions did it stir in you?*
4. What are some personal fears you need to hand over to God in prayer?

PURE MOTIVES: Day 5, Page 34, Questions 1 & 4

1. *What are your reasons for entering foster care or adoption? How was God involved in your decision?*
4. If unexamined motives set us up for failure, what is one thing you can do this week to examine or re-examine your motives for getting involved in foster care or adoption? What can *this* group do to support you or hold you accountable?

WISDOM: Day 6, Page 39, Questions 2 & 4

2. Today's devotion says, "Knowledge truly is power. If you spend time before your placement learning about common disorders and how others have successfully dealt with them, you'll be more at ease when facing similar issues in your child." How does having knowledge result in wisdom in dealing with foster and adopted children? What role does application play in gaining wisdom?
4. Who are some people that can give you wise counsel regarding foster care or adoption? What is one thing you can do this week to begin to engage those people? What can this group do to help you?

Homework for Week 3 | Devotional - Days 7-12



## 3<sup>rd</sup> MEETING | DEVOTIONAL DAYS 7-12

Scripture Reading: Hebrews 11:8; James 1:27; Psalm 10:14; Isaiah 54:2; Numbers 30:1-2;  
2 Corinthians 12:10

OBEDIENCE: Day 7, Page 44, Questions 1, 3, & 4

1. *Talk about a time when obedience to God caused you discomfort. What happened?*
3. Has anyone in your life had a negative reaction to your desire to be involved in foster care or adoption? How did that affect your desire?
4. What is the one thing that scares you about foster care or adoption? How has it influenced your obedience to God's call?

PURE & FAULTLESS RELIGION: Day 8, Page 49, Questions 2, 3 & 4

2. *Talk about a time that you left your comfort zone to do something for someone else. How did your effort impact the relationship?*
3. Read James 1:27 again. How does it apply to children in care since they are not legally orphans?
4. What is the biggest sacrifice you've made for someone else? What did it cost you? Do you regret it?

THE FATHERLESS: Day 9, Page 54, Questions 2 & 4

2. *Read Exodus 22:22-24. Why do you think God holds a special place in His heart for widows and orphans?*
4. What scares or worries you about the idea of putting the needs of a foster or adopted child ahead of your own?

ENLARGE YOUR TENTS: Day 10, Page 59, Questions 2 & 4

2. *Read Psalm 119:32. What does it mean to pursue God's commands? What is the relationship between pursuing His commands and gaining understanding or wisdom?*
4. Talk about a time when you had to win someone's trust. What did you do? If you could do it all again, would you do anything differently?

'TIL DEATH DO US PART: Day 11, Page 65, Questions 2 & 4

2. Have you thought and prayed about the fact that adoption is a lifetime commitment and a covenant before God, like marriage? Have you thought and prayed about foster care being a covenant relationship before God? Talk about how you feel God is dealing with your heart in this area.
4. *Today's devotion says, "Kids are not meant to be 'tried out' and 'sent back' if they don't meet your needs; it's about being the right parent to meet theirs." Respond to that statement. What emotions does it stir in you?*

CONTENTMENT: Day 12, Page 71, Questions 1 & 3



1. *Describe the last time you were embarrassed by a child's behavior in public.*
3. What have you done to prepare for the possibility that family or friends may distance themselves from you because of your choice to take in children with histories of abuse? What, if anything, can this group do to help or support you?

Homework for Week 4 | Devotional - Days 13-18



## 4<sup>th</sup> MEETING | DEVOTIONALS – DAYS 13-18

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:7; I Corinthians 4:1-2; Colossians 3:12-14; Psalm 27:10; Galatians 1:10; Mark 10:45

THE GIFT OF PEACE: Day 13, Page 76, Questions 2, 3 & 4

2. Do you tend to feel closer to God when your circumstances are good or when they are challenging? Whatever your answer, why do you think that's the case?
3. Read *Philippians 4:7*. Have you experienced this peace from God that “surpasses all comprehension?” If so, talk about what it was like.
4. What practical things do you do on a regular basis to seek peace?

TRUSTWORTHY: Day 14, Page 81, Question 4

4. Today's devotion says, “If a child can't trust you to keep your word, why would she trust Jesus, the One you said brought her to you?” How does it challenge you?

ACCEPTANCE: Day 15, Page 86, Questions 3 & 4

3. Today's devotion says, “A child living in your family who wasn't born to you will struggle with natural feelings of being unwanted and unloved. For them, the journey of acceptance – truly understanding that they are adequate and received just as they are – can be long.” Respond to that statement. Do you tend to want to run toward or away from the challenge described?
4. Take time to share any concerns that you have about your ability to accept a child who wasn't born to you.

DEALING WITH REJECTION: Day 16, Page 91, Questions 3 & 4

3. Have you asked God to reveal any areas in your life where bitterness, resentment, or loss has a grip? If so, what steps have you taken to begin to loosen that grip? If not, why?
4. What is one thing you can do to begin to prepare your heart for the possibility that a child you bring into your home may reject you? How can this group help you?

THE PRAISE OF MEN: Day 17, Page 96, Questions 3 & 4

3. Imagine your child is acting out or having a public meltdown. How much would you be concerned with how others view you because of your child's behavior? How do you think that concern would affect your ability to parent effectively?
4. Read *Galatians 1:10*. What is one thing you can do to focus your attention on God's approval and away from other people's? What can this group do to support you?

SERVANTHOOD: Day 18, Page 101, Question 4



4<sup>th</sup> Day

4. Read 1 Peter 4:10. What gifts has God given you that make you uniquely qualified to serve adopted children or children in care?

Homework for Week 5 | Devotional - Days 19-24



## 5<sup>th</sup> MEETING | DEVOTIONAL – DAYS 19-24

Scripture Reading: Luke 1:43; I Peter 5:10; Ephesians 6:10-12; Psalm 139:13-16; Romans 12:1-3; John 13: 4-5

HUMILITY: Day 19, Page 106, Question 3

3. You probably entered into adoption or foster care because God has gifted you in ways that make you a natural fit for this ministry and mission. What are some things you can do to be intentional about depending on God even in areas where you're most tempted to try doing it on your own?

INNER HEALING: Day 20, Page 112, Questions 3 & 4

3. Read Psalm 34:18. What do you think it means for God to be close to the brokenhearted? What comfort does that provide in your own circumstances?

4. Do you need to deal with unresolved loss? If so, what is your best next step? How can this group help you take that step?

RELEASING CONTROL: Day 21, Page 117, Questions 2 & 3

2. Today's devotion says, "Allowing your child to win sometimes in an atmosphere of peace and trust is a win for you too." What are some ways you can tell when a battle with your child isn't worth fighting?

3. Read Romans 8:28. How do you think this applies to your call to help orphans or vulnerable children?

THE VALUE OF LIFE: Day 22, Page 122, Questions 3 & 4

3. Read the NIV version of John 10:10. What do you think Jesus means when He says that He came that we may "have life and have it to the full?" What implications does that statement have for your daily life?

4. What practical things can you do to remind yourself on a daily basis that the children in your care are image-bearers of God? How can this group support you?

A LIVING SACRIFICE: Day, 23, Page 127, Questions 2 & 4

2. Think about a time when God called you to do something difficult. How did you respond? How did your response influence your relationship with your Heavenly Father?

4. Today's devotion says, "...being a living sacrifice before God means being humble, loving completely, having patience, using the gifts God gave you to the best of your ability, and reaching out to those in need with genuine compassion." Which of these areas is most difficult for you? What is one thing you can do to focus on that area?

WASHING FEET: Day 24, Page 133, Questions 2 & 4

2. What messy parts of raising kids really challenge you? What do you do to move past those things?

4. What does it mean to you that God's mercies are new every morning? How can that understanding





help you as a parent?

## Homework for Week 6 | Devotional - Days 25-30



## 6<sup>th</sup> MEETING | DEVOTIONAL DAYS 25-30

**Scripture Reading:** Galatians 6:2; Proverbs 22:6; Matthew 18:19; 2 Chronicles 20:15,17; Ephesians 1:4-5; Esther 4:14b

**BEARING BURDENS:** Day 25, Page 139, Questions 1 & 4

1. Is your first instinct to be gentle in the restoration of those caught in sin? Why or why not?
4. What are some of the challenges to parenting a child who lies? Are there ways you can better understand the survival behavior of lying?

**THE PROMISE:** Day 26, Page 144, Questions 2 & 4

2. *Read Proverbs 22:6. As you reflect on this verse, how well does it apply to the way you were raised and to your adult life?*
4. In what ways are you tempted to think that God's plan for your children's lives depend on their behavior? What practical things can you do to remind yourself that's incorrect?

**IN AGREEMENT:** Day 27, Page 149, Questions 3 & 4

3. Who do you turn to for wise counsel? If you don't currently rely on anyone, what are the names of two or three people you can reach out to?
4. What steps do you need to take to ensure that you are united when it comes to caring for children? What can this group do to support you?

**FAITH'S STAND:** Day 28, Page 154, Questions 2 & 4

2. To what extent have you considered the inevitable exhaustion that comes with parenting as you commit to adoption or foster care? What strategies have you put in place to combat that exhaustion?
4. *Today's devotion says, "Let's continually remind ourselves that He is the beginning and the end, going before us to pave the way and coming behind us to protect us." What are some practical ways you can remind yourself of this on a daily basis? How can this group help you?*

**YOU ARE ADOPTED:** Day 29, Page 159, Questions 2 & 4

2. Read Ephesians 1:4-5. How does it strike you that God chose you before the creation of the world? How does it affect the way you view Him?
4. What are some practical ways you can cultivate a sense of belonging in the lives of your children?

**FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS:** Day 30, Page 164, Questions 1 & 3

1. Read Proverbs 19:21. In what ways has God surprised you with the plans He's had for your life? In general, how have his plans for you compared with your plans?



3. *Today's devotion says, "God doesn't need us, He chose us. What a privilege and honor that is. I hold the gift of being the healing hands of Jesus in my children's life with open hands. Honoring God and acknowledging that He could use anyone, yet He selected me." How does knowing that God handpicked you for this journey make you feel? What are some things you can do to remind yourself of this truth, especially when things get tough?*



This meeting can be a shared meal or dessert and coffee to celebrate completion of the study. It is vital to present the options laid out in the study and have participants consider (privately) their responses; adopting, fostering, waiting and praying, or volunteering in some capacity. Also, identify concrete steps forward - whether it is speaking to another adoptive family, attending a Foster Care Info Session or a Volunteer Orientation. It is helpful to compile, print and hand out a hard copy of resources and/or events being held in the near term, encouraging participants to act on their thoughts and prayers about God's leading toward vulnerable children.

A few weeks after this last session, call and check in with the group participants. Most importantly, in the months following the study, continue to inquire about how to pray for and support these group members. Becoming a foster or adoptive parent takes a lot of time and prayer and your on-going interest in the group's alumni and their journey will be reassuring.



## RESOURCE APPENDIX | ICE BREAKERS

These activities can be used at the beginning of any or all of your sessions. Ice breakers help people feel more comfortable and learn about each other. They also help you get to know your attendees well and guide them as they pray about fostering or adopting.

### Activities

- Share about your name and how your name was selected by your parent(s).
- Share one word that comes to mind when you think about foster care or adoption. Write them on a piece of paper or white board like a collage.
- Share a high and low from the last week.
- Share about a favorite toy or pet you had as a child and what it would have meant if you had to leave that toy or animal behind.
- Two truths and a lie: each attendee tells two truths and one lie. The rest try to guess which one is the lie.
- Share two items on your “bucketlist.”

### Video Clips

- Promise686 | 02:16 – an overview of Promise686  
<https://vimeo.com/110811853>
- Live the Promise | 02:22 – an overview of how Live the Promise works  
<https://vimeo.com/113419218>
- Foster Care Awareness | 04:15 - a look at foster care through statistics  
<https://vimeo.com/141287371>



## RESOURCE APPENDIX | RESOURCES TO SHARE

### Books

*The Connected Child: Bring Hope and Healing to Your Adoptive Family*

By Karen B. Purvis, David R. Cross, and Wendy Sunshine

For parents who have welcomed children:

- From other countries and cultures
- From troubled backgrounds
- With special behavioral or emotional needs

*The Whole Brained Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind*

*No Drama Discipline: The Whole Brain Way to Calm the Chaos and Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind*

Both books by Daniel J. Siegel, M.D., Tina Payne Bryson, Ph.D.

*Another Place at the Table: The startling and ultimately uplifting narrative of one woman's thirteen-year experience as a foster parent*

By Kathy Harrison

### Movies

*ReMoved* | 13 minutes

By Nathanael Matanick

- This "short" follows the emotional journey of a nine-year old girl who is taken from her abusive birth home and placed into the tumultuous foster care system.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IOeQUwdAjE0>

*Remember My Story – ReMoved Part 2* | 23 minutes

By Nathanael Matanick

- A 10-year old girl navigates her way through the foster care system, after being removed from her home and separated from her brother.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1fGmEa6WnY>

### Websites & Blogs

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



This website provides a variety of resources on parenting “children from hard places” including articles, video clips and book recommendations.



<http://jasonjohnsonblog.com/#theblog>

This renown blogger writes poignantly about how churches and Christians can find their place in foster care and adoption.

<http://www.promise686.org>

The comprehensive website on Promise686 including our blog, upcoming events and information on adoption and foster care.

<http://livethepromise.org>

The foster care initiative from Promise686 which explains how we help train and empower churches to launch and grow foster care ministries.

<http://www.AdoptUSKids.org>

AdoptUSKids provides tools and technical assistance to support states, tribes, and territories in their efforts to connect children in foster care with families interested in adopting them. Mission: (1) To raise public awareness about the need for foster and adoptive families for children in the public child welfare system; and (2) to assist US states, territories, and tribes to recruit and retain foster and adoptive families.

## Interesting Links

<http://www.adoptuskids.org/for-the-media/help-raise-public-awareness/20K-children-placed-infographic>

<http://www.cnn.com/2014/04/16/opinion/soronen-foster-children>

<http://trinitykids.org/portals/0/Images/graphic-foster%20stats.png>

