

DJ Jordan Video-1

Dr. Rick: [00:00:00] All right, welcome again to the Think Orphan Podcast. This is Rick Morton, along with my cohost Phil Darke. Phil, how's it going today, buddy?

Phil: [00:00:09] It's going well. You know, we were talking about before recording this is probably the best part of my day. Well, that's actually not true because I was able to watch a Manchester United victory this morning. But it's definitely better than the COVID test that I was able to to have recently.

It was not a fun event in my life. One that I hope to forget. Folks out there, you will know that yourselves. So next time we record you'll know the results of that. So you're going to be in suspense until then. So I, you know, I hope that it's a negative because I'm feeling really well.

So I'm hoping that's the case. So Rick, your day had to be better than that, I hope.

Dr. Rick: [00:00:49] Well, and like I'm properly socially distanced from you all the way across the country. And so, so I felt really good about your COVID test when we were in the studio together. But yeah, man, we're good.

You know, it's been a fun day getting ready to go teach a seminary class. So I'm getting to do something I don't get to do. you know, as often these days, and so exercising that part of the brain and, life is good. And really excited today about our guest and about who we're going to get to talk to.

So folks, today are going to be talking to, Darryl DJ Jordan. Darrell, DJ has been a friend for a long time. And he's someone who is a passionate advocate in the world of caring for orphaned and vulnerable children. His experience is vast. He's served as a contributor to Fox News and CNN, has worked on congressional staffs.

Most recently was the press secretary for James Lankford, Senator from Oklahoma, who is a good mutual friend of ours. And now that he has left public life, he is working as an executive in a public relations firm in Northern Virginia. But DJ has extensive experience with foster care and adoption and public policy and all of those kinds of things.

And so we're just really, really excited to have him on the show and to get an opportunity to be able to chat with him. So I'm going to bring DJ in and we will get right to our conversation.

Fantastic DJ. Welcome.

DJ Jordan: [00:02:25] Hey, how you doing guys? Glad to be on.

Dr. Rick: [00:02:27] I'm really, really excited to have you. So I've already made your introduction, you know, wound you up. So this is like this, the folks are excited to see you now, and we're just really glad you're here.

And so I'm just going to jump right in and want to have opportunity for you to be able to just tell a little bit of your story. And I'd love for you just to introduce yourself to the folks a little bit with a little bit of your personal story, and then really just kind of weave in there, if you can, how, really how you were led to engage, with vulnerable children and how that became a part of your life.

DJ Jordan: [00:03:03] Sure. I'm really happy to be on the podcast. This is great what you guys are doing. I love listening to some of the audio versions and now it's cool to get to see a video version. But, I'm born and raised in the Virginia Beach, Virginia area. For those who would know, the area Chesapeake Bay specifically.

And born and raised by two wonderful parents. And my testimony is pretty unique in that my mother actually, she got pregnant with me and gave birth to me when she was 17 years old. She herself grew up in a very poor family. She was in a vulnerable situation when she got pregnant with me and, you know, she dropped out of high school to give birth to me.

And I tell people all the time, most people who you would hear that story as the way they start out in life, you would just assume they would probably repeat the same cycle of poverty and end up as a statistic. But the remarkable thing, the miracle is that God had a different plan for me. And, I really, really credit, you know, my father with so much in my life and the start that we got, and my father at the time when I was born was actually on an academic scholarship in college. And that was really unique for him because he grew up in a pretty poor situation as well. But he made the decision when he went off to college before I was born that he was going to change his life and generations to come after him.

And so when I was born, they both made the decision to start the family, got married, and my dad committed even more to stay in college and to really change his life. So after college, he got a successful job in information technology, graduated with an electrical engineering degree.

And just to tell you a little bit about his background, not only, you know, was he the first person in his neighborhood and family to go to college, he's probably the only one in his neighborhood who even knew what electrical engineering was. But, pretty remarkable. And you know, the rest is history. My dad also got saved, became a Christian, around the same time that I was born. And so, I had the great privilege of growing up in a Christian home as the oldest of six kids.

My parents continued to have children and ended up having a big family. And so, I was basically raised in a great godly home and, you know, got involved in sports and everything early on. I ended up playing college football at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia, and met the the love of my life there as well. Got married my senior year while I was there.

And we moved up to the Washington D C area and have been in this DC area ever since. And I've worked in communications, primarily, most of my life, and worked on Capitol Hill as well for 10 years, working for several members of Congress. But during that time, my wife and I have grown our family as well, and probably about 10 years ago, around 2010 is when God really placed vulnerable children and foster care on our hearts.

At the time we were volunteering at a crisis pregnancy center and we were helping other people who were dealing with the crisis of an unplanned pregnancy. And, you know, oftentimes we would encourage them to consider alternatives like adoption. We've introduced these ideas to them and, you know, one day as my wife and I were talking, we were like, we're telling all these other people about adoption, maybe we should look into this adoption or foster care thing. And so we did. We did some research and, you guys know, Christian Alliance for Orphans has an Orphan Sunday every year in November. And we went to one at the church that we were attending. It was a Sunday night event. And it was remarkable.

It changed our life, quite frankly. We sat there and learned so much just about the crisis of foster care in America. And we also heard, basically the Word of God speaking directly to us as part of the body of Christ and the role that we all should be playing to serve the widow and to be near the brokenhearted.

And the more information we got, the more the question for us transitioned from should we, to how can we not be a part of this solution? And we got into the statistics of our community and yes, there are a lot of orphans all over the world. But, just the statistics about the foster care crisis in our own backyard really, really spoke to us and really stood out to us.

And that's when we got involved. So we started our training to become a foster parents in July of 2011. And, it's interesting, God has a sense of humor. The child that we would one day adopt from foster care was actually born the same month that we started our training in July of 2011.

That's pretty cool. Isn't it? Yeah, our youngest daughter was born in July of 2011. But, we did our training a few months later. You know, we had children in our home that we were fostering. And so we fostered children short term. And then, like I said, we've also adopted. We adopted in 2013 our youngest daughter.

We have four kids total, three boys and a little princess. But, that's basically us man. Since then, we've continued to be engaged in the foster care community in a number of ways. We have spoken at a lot of churches. We've come alongside other families who are going through the same process.

I, myself, you know, served in various community service positions, including the Virginia State Board of Social Services, which was a gubernatorial appointment for four years, from 2013 to 2017. In Virginia, they kind of have oversight over the department of social services in our state, which includes foster care.

And right now I'm on the board of the Virginia Kids Belong organization. Janet Kelly is our Executive Director. Many of you listening may know who she is. She's also involved with America Kids Belong, which is a nationwide group. And we are working very, very hard to bring together all sectors, you know, of society, business, government, faith, community to basically address this crisis that we have and all of our States, all of our regions, all over America.

Phil: [00:09:29] Yeah, that's so much good stuff there. I, you know, was able to have Brian, Brian is a good friend, Brian Mavis of America's Kids Belong on the recent video conference. And got to spend some time with Janet when I was in Richmond a couple, a few months ago. So that was actually saw her in person before all this time where we can't see people in person anymore. So some great stuff. There's some great work you're doing. And I just loved the story. Growing up, you grew up in Tidewater, if I'm not mistaken, is that how you said Chesapeake, but, is that a, is that correct on your, on your bio?

DJ Jordan: [00:10:00] Yeah, man, you know your stuff, Tidewater is a name that we call that area. Most people outside of Virginia don't know what that is.

Phil: [00:10:07] Well, I've been a Mets fan since I was about 4, when my first coach was, he played for the 69 Mets. And so, so that's, you know, the AAA, the AAA team. So that's something. So the only reason probably, I don't think I've ever been there, but you know, I'm California boy, but whatever reason I'm a Mets fan.

But anyway, that has nothing to do today.

DJ Jordan: [00:10:28] We need to get you back to Virginia, bro. You were in Richmond. We gotta take you down to a game.

Phil: [00:10:33] Let's do it. Let's do it next time. I will, I will definitely be in touch and we'll do that. That'll be a lot of fun. That'd be a lot of fun. So, you know, as a, as a foster adoptive parent, I imagine going into it, you know, there were probably some misconceptions, just some kind of myths that you may have heard, or that were out there.

You know, what have you learned that's really helped to dispel some of those myths? What were those myths, you know, as an adoptive father that you've learned over the years?

DJ Jordan: [00:11:04] A lot of what we were told before we got into it, I believe it was somewhat accurate. And I think that was just a reflection of the community that we were in at the time. Our church had a really good adoptive and foster care community, so we got a lot of great advice. Probably the only myth that we dealt with was, the issue of, probably connecting and bonding. You'll never be able to connect and bond with your, this child, or, it'll be difficult for you to do that. And then possibly have to say goodbye if that child reunified with their parents.

But thankfully, I got a lot of great training beforehand that prepared both me and my wife for that. And as you guys know, the number one focus of the foster care system is reunification. And that's a good thing. That's a good thing that the church and everybody who's getting involved should be fully behind, but if

reunification is not possible for one reason or another, then adoption. We need to get that child in a loving, stable home. And so, we believe that myth, you know, was really, it never really materialized in our situation. We had a lot of great resources and books, you know, that made a lot of difference and it's important to understand a lot of child development and psychology and things like that when you're going into becoming a foster parent. And you don't have to be an expert, but there's a lot of great resources and books out there

where people can learn just about the importance of that. And we know now the science backs up that, you know, especially young children, you know, age six, seven, and younger, there's so much that happens with the neurodevelopment in regards to healthy development that impacts them later on in life.

And once you know that we actually think it causes you to parent in a whole new, different way, which is something that is quite amazing and it's all part of God's plan.

Phil: [00:12:59] Absolutely. One of the other things that it doesn't take long, to do, you know, if you do any research on DJ Jordan, it doesn't take long to find that you are a passionate advocate for the importance of fathers in children's lives.

And as am I. It's one of the things that drives me is to help men understand the role as men in particular, the role as fathers and husbands and, you know, it's a, it's been a big part of your ministry. I mean, in a world that's that seems to unfortunately be either minimizing or not necessarily appreciating the importance of the role of a father.

At least that's the way it seemed to me. Why do you believe, why is it something that God's captured your heart with that you believe that a healthy fathers are essential to our work with orphaned and vulnerable children and for work with our biological children as we raise them?

DJ Jordan: [00:13:48] Yeah, it's something that God has put on my heart.

I think in large part because I had the blessing of having a wonderful father and I credit a lot of the blessing, the protection. A lot of things that occurred in my life, was because of my father being engaged from the very, very beginning. I didn't realize it until I was gone out of the house as a college student, the older I got, the more and more I appreciated.

But, I mean, I, I thought that growing up everybody had an engaged father like that. And then I got into high school and got into college and really saw a lot of other people who are my age, my peers who may have not had an engaged father and many times you saw the heartache that they've gone through, and then the data really shows it, you know, I don't even have to talk about this all day long.

You can just look at the data about the impact of fathers in their child's life. I mean, from a public policy perspective when I was on Capitol Hill, this is something that will be talked about all the time. A child with an engaged father is four times less likely to live in poverty. A child with an engaged father is less likely to commit crime as a teenager.

For girls they have better self esteem. The list goes on and on about the impact of fathers in the home. And so I think that's really, really important for everybody in our society to really understand it at the time when, you know, people try to minimize the role of men and communities and things like that.

I think we've got to push against that harder than ever before.

Phil: [00:15:23] I agree. I definitely agree.

Dr. Rick: [00:15:25] You know, DJ, I'm curious, just because, in the current climate, you know, we sort of found ourselves in many of the things we see happening around us. I think one of the things that we're kind of all aware of is within the community, within the Christian community that are responding to the needs of orphaned and vulnerable children, we like, we seem to be struggling to have a connection with the black community. And I'm just man, I'm curious, just from your perspective about, thoughts you might have about what can we do. How can we, how can we better engage and better foster that conversation in order to bring a hugely important part of the body of Christ, to the table in, in that, in that conversation.

DJ Jordan: [00:16:15] Yeah, I'm glad you brought this up. This is a passion of mine. I know you guys, as well. Your organizations have really been engaged on that as well as the Christian Alliance for Orphans has a African-American advisory council that I serve on on that. And one of our purposes and objectives is engaging the African American church.

And, so I'll say a couple of things, to that. Okay. First of all, you guys know there is a large disproportionality within the foster care system, of children of color who are in the system. For example, African Americans, you know, and the normal child population is maybe 15% of all children, but in the foster care system, it's about double it's about 27 to 30% of all children in foster care system are African American and children of color.

If you add in Hispanics and other minorities in there, you're talking about 60 to 65% of the overall foster care system in America, even though the child population of minority is much smaller. And so this is a crisis. This is an issue that the body of Christ really has to get ahead of and engage a little that better, our African American churches and communities across the nation.

And, I do want to acknowledge that I believe one of the root problems behind the disparity is, is, the higher rates of poverty that are within African women. African American community. there's also a lack of distrust when it comes to government systems like child protective services and social services.

Our nation is having a conversation about race right now and policing. In a similar way that there was a lack of distrust for police, there's also a lack of distrust when it comes to social services and child protective services. And that's why you really look historically at the black community.

Believe it or not, we've been doing foster care for decades.

We just haven't been doing it with the social services system. We haven't been doing it with the government. My grandmother actually took in a child when he was two years old and raised him until he was 18. But the government never knew. I mean, a lot of black communities have a grandma or a Nay Nay or a Big Mama or some, some figure like that, that has taken care of, children.

We just haven't gotten the government involved. And so there's, there's a little bit of a distrust there that I think, many social services departments across America are doing a better job to work with the system there. And then, lastly, there are some, oftentimes some

stereotypes that lead to more placements of low income and minority children in the system.

For example, if a police officer is aware of a domestic abuse situation, and maybe it's in more of a suburban, upper class neighborhood, the police officer, you know, if we know that that particular household may be a more established, you know, professional in the community, they may not call child protective services as quickly as they would if there's a domestic consistent situation in a lower income minority community where there are often a lot of issues with crime and things like that. And, and so sometimes we might be really, really quick to get child protective services involved. But, it's a complicated issue and I applaud you guys for praying about it and being engaged about it.

Dr. Rick: [00:19:45] And I'm, I'm really, and I'm just thankful to even have the opportunity to have this conversation and for you to, you know, to articulate that, because I think there is, you know, the truth is there's a disconnect in our conversation. There's not a disconnect in the activity and the work that's going on.

I mean, it's a different way of accomplishing the same goal. And I think, you know, maybe one of the things we'll see that'll come out of, you know, what's a very difficult conversation that our whole nation is involved in right now is bringing people together to think about how we bring resources to bear for impoverished families for orphaned and vulnerable children that are in our midst.

You know, kids that are at the margins. And, but, but I, man, I'm so appreciative. And just as you know, as I've continued to connect with African American churches and, and try, and we're trying to find ways to, how do we serve and how do we bring the same resources to bear that, that we, that we know how to bring to bear in the traditional foster care system?

How do we bring those to bear in communities where there's a skepticism, you know, to that system? And, so I, it's important that, and I hope our listeners are paying attention and motivated to action as a result of, you know, what they just heard from you. I think, you know, part of it would be, it would be remiss on our part not to kind of jump in and talk a little bit about, because of the vast experience that the Lord's given you in, in legislative affairs and working around the legislature to delve in a little bit to, you know, kind of how that runs in intersection with your identity as a foster parent, and as you know, as an adoptive parent, And so, I mean, I'd be curious just about, how your personal experience as a foster parent, as an adoptive parent, as an advocate, really shaped your thoughts about public policy for orphaned and vulnerable children. In America.

DJ Jordan: [00:21:59] Yeah. like I said before, I've worked on Capitol Hill for 10 years and I've been involved with the Virginia State Board of Social Services where I live.

And so, I've been privy to a lot of policy conversations about these issues. And, you know, I have a couple of thoughts. First of all, I think, we, especially those who are Christians, really need to stand with social workers because of the policies and the regulations that they have to abide by are getting harder and harder by the day. They have so much riding on them, on top of the fact that they deal with some really hard situations and social services used to be

the type of profession where they were really trusted to spend a little bit more time with families, with vulnerable children, with the situation to devise strategies to help lift people out of poverty or whatever vulnerable situation they're in. And now a lot of the work that they do, man, is paperwork. They do a lot of, you know, they have a lot of responsibilities on them. And so, I normally like to recommend and lean more towards less regulations on our social workers than more.

And, I know people are saying, you know, but the safety of children. I'm with you. The safety of children are absolute paramount. But right now we have the worst turnover of social workers that we have had in our lifetime. We were having a hard time keeping social workers, especially the good ones, 'cause they're getting burned out.

And they're going on to consulting or, you know, sometimes a whole 'nother field. In regards to policy, I think that's really important to know at the local level. Also I think is really important to respect nonprofits who are religious and faith based. There's a movement in some of our States to really push out faith-based nonprofits.

I think that's a humongous mistake. I think we need to have an all hands on deck approach. We need people who may disagree on a variety of issues to all come together and dive in on this problem 'cause it is a crisis. So that's important. And if you're listening and you're wondering, you know, what about your community or state?

I would encourage you to get involved, you know, learn who your state rep is. You know, a lot of us know who our governor is. We know who our president is. We know who our U S Senator. But oftentimes there's policies being made at the local level that impact foster care and vulnerable children and child welfare, oftentimes more than what's being impacted here in Washington, D C. So, I would just encourage people find out who your city council, people are, find out who your County leaders are, executive supervisors, whatever they call it in your area. Because oftentimes they're making a lot of regulations and rules and policies and laws for child welfare, and they're making decisions on funding as well.

Dr. Rick: [00:24:49] Yeah, I love that. And I, you know, there are kind of two things you said there that really kind of jumped out to me. One is, is I think, you know, as we're thinking about in the church, how, you know, how we respond to this, that realizing the gospel opportunities that are there within the child welfare system for the people that are working in the system. And, you know, and it's, and it's either, it's either that we find brothers and sisters that are, that are working in the system and need encouragement and, and stand in need of our, you know, of our advocacy for them and our help for them, or it's people that are, that are working in those circumstances and in, in very difficult places and they're doing it without the Lord. You know, and so in either way, you know, I think there's such a rich opportunity and we're just not talking about that,

I think, enough in in the church. We're, you know, we're enlarging the conversation now in talking about, you know, ministering to birth families and, what we do and helping to seek reconciliation. And that's, that's been, that's an incredible thing. We, you know, we've had a pretty robust conversation about how to, you know, how to, how to care for children and

about how to, how to wrap around families that are caring for children and to make sure that we're doing that well.

But, but it's, it's really, you know, one of those things that there's not nearly enough, I think intentionality about, about how we're ministering to, you know, the people that, that are the system and our making those things, you know, making those things happen. And, and so I really, I, you know, I love that, that, that is a, you know, that's a concern.

I think, you know, the other thing that you, that you say is it just, there, there is very little conversation, I think in our midst in, you know, in the orphan care community in America about how we're using our public voice about how we're, you know, how we're getting involved and, and tracking with legislation and tracking with local decisions and in relationship, you know, with those people that are in positions to make policy. And I think until you're in the midst of, you know, sort of working in this world, it's, maybe it's not obvious, but there's a huge opportunity. But there's, there's also a huge need there. And, and that, you know, I, I love the fact that, I mean, that's, you know, that's something that we've been able to collaborate on, you know, very directly over, you know, over the years of moving forward important aspects of legislation and, you know, working on rulemaking and those kinds of things.

I think, you know, maybe one of them, because I'd love for you just to talk about a little bit because of the experience that the Lord has given you, just even kind of enlarge this a little bit, is about like ways that you've seen that they've been good public/private partnerships with the faith based community and where the body of Christ has been able to be involved and to work alongside government in situations that have really worked well.

DJ Jordan: [00:28:04] Yeah, sure. I can think of so many opportunities and examples. One is kind of recent with the COVID pandemic. Virginia Kids Belong, the organization that I'm on the board for and our state, when it first hit, we really, really had a crisis within our child welfare system, as many States did. And there was a tremendous drop and available resources from entities that normally would be giving things like clothing, you know, like toiletries, like, like, things like that. And so, we actually did a supply drive for two weeks in April, you know, right when COVID hit.

And we connected with our churches all over this state and we were able to provide, you know, emergency supplies to about 600 foster kids,

across. And in Virginia, you know, we have about 6,000 kids. And then, so we were about to, we touched about 10% when there was really a crisis. And I see things like this all, all the time, whether it be the portal or, so many other great ministries, that are reaching out.

And I would just, you know, piggyback on the last comment that you made about the gospel opportunity of partnering with social workers. You would be surprised at how welcome they would be, for assistance and help from just your church or maybe a small group where you wanted to, you know, check in on your local social services. Just ask them, you know, what are some things that you guys need?

You know, if Christmas coming up or, you know, some special events and is coming up, you know, they'll, they'll take supplies. They'll take help in any way. Sometimes they put on events for the foster kids that are, you know, within their care and they would love to have outside assistance with that.

And so it's a great opportunity, I think for a lot of churches.

Phil: [00:30:02] There's so much. I'd want to mine on what those last few answers, but unfortunately we are running out of time. I mean, some of the, some of the things that I think about are, you know, 'cause it it's here in the US but it's also globally the way people view the government as illegitimate, or they just don't see it as legitimate 'cause there's corruption or they, whether it's perception or reality. And it's usually a mix of both, right? Where there's, you know, or it's just history or different things that are going on that, that cause a rift.

But also that people do things in violation of the law. And then if they're caught, they obviously get, you know, punished for that, which then potentially would deter people from doing these things that we're talking about to love these children. Right? And so I guess one of the things I, I would like you to, to just address, if you have you ideas on it, which I'm sure you do at some level, which is where do we go from here with that?

When, when people see this, as, you know, the system is illegitimate or not, Or, or corrupt, what's the next step to getting, you know, the, if we're going to engage the, you know, more foster kids, you said 30, about 30% of the children in the foster system are black children. and that in the, yet they're in the system already.

And yet the black families are seeing it as really not a legitimate system. Do you have any ideas of how we can bridge that?

DJ Jordan: [00:31:35] Yeah, I would say, relationships are really, really key. Oftentimes a lot of, African American churches are engaged in community service with entities that they already have relationships with and to be able to bring the, to the government entities and the church to be able to do connection, I think would be absolutely tremendous, no matter where you're at.

I've done that before. And doing Orphan Sunday events, they have also been called Stand Sunday events, where you would actually bring some of the social workers or the Director of Human Resources or whatever you call it, and then actually bring them to church. And so that people can see and build relationship that way.

And, I just think it's awareness piece and it's relationship. I mean, look, the Bible, in the Bible, God really blessed three institutions: the family, the church and the government. And I think, we sometimes as a church, you know, think that they're absolutely supposed to have no connection whatsoever.

That's not necessarily true. We get the government that we vote for, that we get the government that we pray for. We get the government that we're involved in. And so if you don't like your government, get involved with it and try to make some changes, try to make

some differences. And so I would just encourage, you know, anyone who really wants to lean in on that is to try to bridge the gap and bring the African American community and those social services, entities, or human resources, entities together for relationship building.

This is another, going back to the policing argument, this is the same thing that you're seeing across the nation now where a lot of police entities are realizing they need to spend a little bit more time on relationship building. And so you're seeing the videos of police officers who are participating in fun events and parties and neighborhood cookouts and get together.

That's because you're building trust. And until I think the same way works with, our social services and human resources and individuals.

Phil: [00:33:39] Absolutely. No, that's, it's all about relationships, right? I mean, the reconciliation is gonna start and continue and then, you know, all until the end of time will, will be the way that we actually can bridge bridge gaps.

DJ Jordan: [00:33:52] If I may, I just wanted to put a plug in for the Safe Families program as well, which I know you guys are fully aware of. For those that don't know Safe Families, it is really a ministry, a program where, a potential adoptive family, not adoptive family, but almost like a host family or mentor family connects with a vulnerable family that is at risk of losing their child to the foster care system. And oftentimes connecting the two families can prevent a displacement, and it could help with a host of other emergencies. And I've heard stories after stories about how that cross relational across, socioeconomical relationships really are exposing vulnerable families to a lot of other successful routines and practices and things that they weren't weren't exposed to before. You know, oftentimes in America, poverty or families that are in poverty, oftentimes it's because of a cycle. And so it's going to have to take something pretty drastic to break that cycle. And sometimes it's, another family loving on and engaging in adopting and being there long term for another family that may be vulnerable.

And that may be months. It may be years. It's not something that's going to happen overnight. And I think that's, that's another area where the body of Christ can do, can actually prevent kids from going into the foster care system. Right?

Phil: [00:35:20] No, absolutely. Safe families is a great, great thing. So, yeah, I think that's, that's so good.

So good. So the last question I have before we get into the final two questions. So it's the last before the actual last two. But, you know, the last two, we always ask all our guests. But this last one I just wanted to really dive into, you know, you've in your, in your adoptions, as an adoptive parent, you've received, presumably you've received support from the church. You've received a lot of good from the church. What would be some of the things that you have received, but also, and some of the things that really have helped you along the way that you could encourage other churches to be doing. But also, you know, what might you wish they would have done differently?

Things that may, you know, may have, may have been, a weakness, so to speak in the church's relationship with you?

DJ Jordan: [00:36:12] Man, those are great questions. So I'll talk about one thing that the church did really well, that we were in is they had a good support system on a network where they came alongside us and constantly was there for us if we needed anything.

You know, something as simple as dinners, man, we, we didn't cook for the first two weeks that we brought our daughter in and anybody who has adopted, anybody who's had a new child into the family period. You know how important it is, bro. And we, we had that with our group we have, you know, people checking in on us and we yeah, constant prayer, whether they were joining us on the phone for five minutes of prayer. I mean, I had brothers, I had guys who would like come over and cook and cut my grass, man. They were doing lawn work so that I could one more time, you know, getting into my family time and making sure that we had that bonding period. One thing that I wish my church did a little bit more and I can't really be all that upset with them, but that is having a trauma informed child ministry. And I know you guys have talked about this before, but, you know, we as the American church, we have to learn a little bit more about the impact of trauma on these children. And to realize that sometimes when children are acting out, sometimes when children are doing some really off the wall type thing, it's really, it's a, it's a trauma issue.

And for us to have that grace and patience and even the facility, even, even having, you know, just the setup to be able to minister to that child would be great. And I know that more and more churches are doing it and I'd like to, to see every single church get to that point where they're, they're more knowledgeable about trauma and the impact on children.

Phil: [00:38:04] Absolutely

Dr. Rick: [00:38:05] Man, DJ, there's so much that you said during this interview that I I've just wanted to sit over here and say Amen, but I didn't want to run over you and talk over you while you were. But, but I think man, just, we could go on for a long time and delve into a lot of these issues and I hope maybe we can have an opportunity to have you back on at a later date and talk a little more, but something that we do and something that we, we want to kind of share with our viewers and our listeners is, kind of helping, having our guests help by referring other resources and things that have been helpful to them. And so, something we always want to ask is what, what's something that you've, that you've read or that you've listened to, or that you've watched recently that has, has really helped to shape your thinking or impact your thinking about how we can love orphaned and vulnerable children with excellence.

DJ Jordan: [00:39:03] Oh wow. There are so many resources. I gotta remember them now. I know, Jedd Medefind, the President of Christian Alliance for Orphans has a series of blogs on his website that were really, really helpful for us and talking about, the, the ups and downs of the journey and how spiritual it is and how much you need to rely on. Another resource, the late, Dr. Karen Purvis, man, her videos were, were wonderful. You know, they really taught us so much, just about, connection, bonding, trauma, parenting skills for, for new,

adopted children. It was, it was phenomenal. It was one thing that really, really helped us and our process.

And we use, we use a lot of the skills that she taught and things on all of our children. It made us, it made us better parents. It really did, but yeah, those are, those are a couple of resources.

Phil: [00:40:03] Two great, great folks, that, have contributed a ton to a lot of people. I know that. So, speaking of people that have impacted us, what one person has most impacted your thinking on how we can love orphaned and vulnerable children with excellence?

DJ Jordan: [00:40:19] I'd probably say Dr. Russell Moore. He himself is an adoptive parent and his teaching, on, biblical justice, I think, has impacted me and my wife tremendously. We think about, you know, James 1:27. We think about Isaiah 1:16. We think about all of the scripture in regarding doing justice.

And the examples that go with those scriptures in the word are often times serving the orphan, the widow, the vulnerable, the disabled. And that's justice. And, you know, justice is sometimes a word that's thrown around. Oftentimes, often a political context. Justice started in the Bible and the calling to do justice was first and foremost for the church.

People who called themselves follower of Jesus Christ. To actually, to, to fight for things that were right and to serve those who are vulnerable. And, you know, that's something that's really always stuck out for me. And it's very, very inspirational. A godly man that's actually walking the walk.

Phil: [00:41:23] Absolutely. I know Rick and I agree with that. So, DJ, thank you so much. Thank you for who you are. Thank you for what, all God's doing through you. It's a very encouraging to me. and I very much appreciate your time here on the show.

DJ Jordan: [00:41:39] Thank you for being on. I look forward to seeing you back in Virginia.

Dr. Rick: [00:41:43] Thank you my friend.

Alright

DJ Jordan: [00:41:46] God bless.

Dr. Rick: [00:41:46] Alright, bye bye.

Phil: [00:41:51] All right, brother. That was, that was great, man. I, as I said, I could. And you said, we both said. We could have gone on and on and, hopefully we will be able to go, further and deeper in the future. But, what, what, what's kind of, some of the things that stuck out to you, man.

Dr. Rick: [00:42:06] Just, you know, really love that brother and his, his heart for the, all of the people that are in the system.

You know, I think one of the things that you, you know, that you hear very clearly in what he said, and, you know, we expanded on it a little bit, is this idea that, it's, it's not just about

caring for vulnerable children. That's, that's hugely important, but, but a holistic answer is also about caring for birth families and poverty alleviation and those, you know, those kinds of things.

It's engaging with people that are working in the system and, and people that are, you know, that are trying to, to work and advocate on behalf of orphaned and vulnerable children. And I think, you know, and DJ is a guy that I just know has, that's not lip service. That's, you know, that's a career that's been dedicated to, you know, to doing those things personally, to leading the church to do those things, but also, you know, to engaging and engaging deeply and the places where God's placed him in the halls of government.

To, you know, to advocate for those things as well. And so when, when I hear that from him, it's, it's not, that's not a theoretical position. That's a, that's a guy who, you know, who's leveraging the places where God's placed him in order to do that. And so it's just super meaningful.

Phil: [00:43:31] It's always great for me to hear people talking about the importance of fathers and to see him living that out to see him, as he said, it's something that is it's true.

I mean, we, we repeat our father's sins, but we also are blessed by the generations. Right? And we're blessed by our fathers. I, too, have been blessed with a great father. Who has loved me and continues to love me to this day. And that impacts how I father and it impacts how I love. And so to come into, especially given what we do, where fatherlessness is part and parcel of the work that we're doing and how can we bring fathers to the fatherless and to remind the fatherless of their heavenly father and help them to introduce them to their heavenly father as well. And so what does that look like, I think, as he said towards the end, to the idea of, you know, really relationship is critical to all of this.

Right? Every single thing we do needs to be rooted in relationship. And, relationship with our heavenly father, relationship with others, you read about it in *When Helping Hurts*, as well, in the context of poverty, right? It's relationship with ourselves, relationship with the rest of creation.

What does that look like? What does that look like as he's talking about in the context of the government relationships? In the context of the social workers? The children themselves? Our spouses? I mean, they just, all these different relationships that we're navigating throughout life that implicate, that are implicated in the work that we do.

And so it was really good for me to hear from him just, from obviously a different perspective working in the government for decades. I don't know decades. I know a long time. Longer than I have. But also being a foster parent, being an adoptive parent, being able to work with Virginia Kids Belong, all these different things that he's doing, Part of the fatherhood initiatives.

It's, it's something that just brings that perspective that I very much appreciated. But also, I just want to, I really want to emphasize folks like, and I think I've shared this before on, on the show, but the idea of these gaps that we're talking about, where there's, where people don't see the government as legitimate so therefore they don't get involved. That's real.

That's very common. And it might not even be like they could also, you know, it doesn't have to be a racial thing. It doesn't have to be a government thing, even it couldn't just be the foster, they've have all these myths about the foster care system.

Right? We talked about myths and misperceptions that you hear, Oh, well only these type people get involved or only these type kids are in there, all such and such. So it's in these relationships that we learn. And one of my friends, when he does mediation in the Middle East. And I just said to him, because sometimes we think these bridges, or these divides are too far and people are like, why even bother?

Right? Well, the things that really have, have helped me understand that that's just a cop out is my buddy does mediation in the Middle East. Right? If there's ever a place that we think, Oh, you're not going to be able to bring the parties together, it's, it's the middle East. Right. And I said, how in the world do you do that?

And he says, you know, we just start with what they agree on. Right? It seems so simple and it is. And I was, and you think it can't be that simple. But it is. You bring them together. You bring these parties that seem miles and miles and miles apart. And you say, do you love your family? Well, yeah, of course.

Okay. So do I. Do you have hopes, dreams and fears? Yeah, of course. So do I. You know, we're human. It humanizes the other side. Right? And then it doesn't become the other side anymore. Then it becomes quickly because not the other side. It's just a relationship. A friendship. Right. So I think we sometimes complicate things way too much as opposed to saying, okay, how can we just take that first step?

What's the next right step? Let's take that. So anyway, that's some of the things that really came to my mind as I was listening and that I'm just even navigating a lot of that's going on in our country right now, a lot of this going on, you know, has been going on and will continue to go on the orphan care space.

That question, what is the next right thing?, I think is something that I've really focused on.

Dr. Rick: [00:47:47] Yeah, and I think the, you know, the word there is that we sometimes get overwhelmed by those things at the, you know, at the meta-level and the truth is that none of us really much have the ability to control that.

I mean, you know, here we, we just, we just heard from a guy who, you know, who was senior staff to a US Senator for, you know, for several years. And, and yet what he talked about were, you know, were very simple actions anybody can do. He didn't go to the things that are beyond our reach to be able to do.

He pointed to the very, you know, to the very simple things that we all can do. And that's, you know, that quite frankly, is, you know, part about, you know, it's just part of what I love about DJ is the fact that, you know, that his heart is for the church, his heart is for, you know, for this community, his heart is for vulnerable children.

And, but he points us and reminds us to things that, you know, that really God has placed within our grasp to, to be able to, to do. So, great interview, you know, great opportunity to, you know, to be challenged, to think about, you know, ways that we can do that further. So, very thankful.

Phil: [00:49:07] I think it is, it's funny because as he's talking about it, he used an example that the great Dr. Rick Morton used in his interview way back, I think it was episode 12, maybe sometime. It was one of those early episodes. And just you, I remember you, I'll never forget. I've actually quoted it many times talking about what's one thing you can do. And you talked about the 80 something year old guy, or he was really old guy who just said I can mow people's lawns.

Dr. Rick: [00:49:28] Yep, cutting the grass

Phil: [00:49:29] And that's DJ's same example, right?

Making meals. I mean, things that we do. Right? And that's the things that the it's, it seems so easy and like, Oh really? Is that going to help that much? Well, he mentioned that as the thing, right? Just making meals, just people bringing meals. You don't have to make a meal because, you know, I'd love that even now.

I mean, if you're here in my area and you hear this, you know, we'd love to have you just bring meals over. I mean, whenever. We would accept them and thank you. So, but no, seriously, like that little things that are the same speak volumes. Right? And, and they're just like that, ah, I don't have to do this tonight.

A break. I don't have to do this right now. That's just a break, a breath. And sometimes we just need that breath to say, okay,.

Dr. Rick: [00:50:18] Any encouragement? Like, I think part of it too, is it's, it's that, you know, it's a tangible reminder that there are people that are around that are, you know, that are holding you up.

And, and you know what I mean? He talked about, he said, you know, that it was also people that, you know, got on the phone with him and said, you know, said a quick prayer with him. Or people that, you know, that that reached out and, and, you know, checked on them and, and things like that. And, and it really truly is, you know, this idea that we, that none of us have the ability probably to do, you know, things that are that move mountains and, and are, you know, have that kind of significance. But when, but when we all do the little things, that adds up to, you know, mountain moving kind of, you know, kind of power and that God has, God has invested and asked that of his, you know, of his church. And so, yeah, for sure.

Phil: [00:51:13] Absolutely man. All right. So, as we're bringing it, another episode, you know, we're start to get used to this video thing. I think, you know, I don't know if our audience is getting there. It's still a little clunky, but you know what? That's all right. Because, you know, well, we say it's all right.

So that's just the way it is. So before we get into our recommendation.

Dr. Rick: [00:51:34] Well, I feel like even before we get into recommendations, one of the things I, you know, like people are going to come back and hear the next episode because it's like, we have like a, you know, like a, an old, like serial, like Roy Rogers, cliff hanger. People are going to come back next time to find out if you've got COVID or not.

Like that's, that's the big deal. Like you had a test. So talked about that in the beginning. So, so where everybody's coming back. So I have great and, you know, great anticipation that we'll, we'll have people that will join us next time.

Phil: [00:52:03] I don't think you have as much anticipation as I do. But you definitely have some. We do have a cliffhanger. And you know, yeah, so that's something. I hope that there's other reasons you folks are coming back. 'Cause that is not that exciting. But I will say what I really hope even more than you hoping that, you know, to wonder about whether I have COVID is you will engage this conversation. You will ask the questions. You will make the comments. You will come, you know, go to the Facebook page, go to, the, the emails, just send us emails at at info@thinkorphan.com.

Just, you know, continue the conversation outside of this podcast. That's why we do this, but you know, we, we do this, I love having these conversations with Rick. I love interviewing people. But it's really to to stoke a conversation, and continue conversations amongst yourselves, you know, to share these with other people, you know, this podcast only goes, really, as far as you guys are sharing it with other people.

Social media posts, things like that, that you do are, are actually much more effective than the ones I post. And Rick posts, because that's you telling your friends, this is something that's worth your time. And, you know, that's something that we appreciate. It's something that we also know if it's helping you,

share it with your friends, share it with other people that you know it will help. So, and I know this will help a lot of people. These different conversations we're have, we have, we know otherwise we wouldn't have them. So I really hope and pray that you do take your time, take the time to share this with others, to engage it with us, to recommend different people that we can interview.

All those things that we talk about every episode, we mean it. It's not just us, you know, spouting it off. I've even spent a little extra time today talking about it. You know, rate and review that helps, as far as iTunes and whatever, but honestly, I want you guys to share it with the people you know that will really be able to learn from it to be, to be, helped from it. You know, maybe pastors that, you know, that, that you really, that have been asking about it maybe, or that haven't been asking about it, either way. I think this stuff would really help them. So those are the things that. That's one of my recommendations today, right.

Is just to be able to share this with others and, you know, neither Rick nor I make a dime off this thing. And so, we're doing it because we know it helps people. And that's our heart. And so, I really hope that it gets out to more and more people so that more and more people can be impacted by these great people that were able to get on.

So, the last thing, you know, the recommendations, something that I've been really blessed by. The Gospel Coalition has a resource library that has a lot, a lot of sermons on different things. I mean, sermons aren't everything. It's just the Bible, right? So it goes through scripture and you can just type in a passage of scripture and sometimes one or two, sometimes 50 sermons pop up from amazing people who are sharing Godly wisdom. And that's what I've been really doing. I actually don't have a lot of book recommendations right now because every day, instead of listening to books or podcasts right now, I've just been listening to sermons on the passages that I'm reading that day.

And it's been very life-giving. It's been great. I mean, honestly, it's like I need to just cut off everything else I think, and just be doing that and it wouldn't be a bad thing. So that's something I, you know, it goes to being in the Word, it goes to hearing from other people who are studying the word.

And, not that the Gospel Coalition is perfect, but there's some pretty solid folks that are preaching some pretty awesome stuff. So, anyway, few of the people that have been on the show are the people that are there, some of those pastors preaching. So I don't know if you've ever engaged that, Rick, but it's, it's a fantastic, fantastic resource.

Dr. Rick: [00:56:15] Absolutely absolutely love, love the resources of the gospel coalition puts out and, you know, and the thing is that, you know, you know, that stuff that you can trust and it's coming from, you know, coming from people with, you know, with the solid theological outlook and they do, they do a fantastic job. Really thankful for, you know, Colin and all the folks that are over there and how they contribute to the church.

Phil: [00:56:42] Yep. And folks, you know I like accents and there's a few of the pastors have, you know, the British accents that really help when you're there learning. Just seems like they're smarter, whether they are or not, it just seems like it. So, yeah, they probably are. Some of them definitely are. But it's a pretty low bar we're setting there, but you know, that's all right. But anyway folks, you know, again, thanks a lot for engaging this conversation.

These are really important topics, really important conversations we're having in a time where I think a lot of people are sometimes avoiding tough conversations. Avoiding conversations that are really important because they're just tired. But I'm very thankful and glad that you are engaging and continue to engage it with us and that we will continue to do so for a long time coming.

As we finish this episode as always, we are hoping that you'll take what you learned from DJ, what you learned from Rick and me and, and that you use all of it to help you to understand how you can love orphaned and vulnerable children better and better each and every day. Thanks a lot. Have a great week.