

Spencer Reeves Interview

Dr. Rick: [00:00:00] All right. Welcome again, to the Think Orphan Podcast. I'm Rick Morton, along with my cohost Phil Darke. Phil, how are, how are things in California today?

Phil: [00:00:09] It's going all right. It's going all right. You know, I mean, we're still in the midst of the COVID craziness in California. I mean, people are saying for some reason that it's it's closed, they might be closing back down again.

But most people in California are saying, when did it open up? So, you know, and that's, that's really the question I'm asking at least here in Sacramento County. So other than that, man, you know, just plugging away, continuing to do what we're feeling, feeling led to do out here and getting excited about our guest today that we have on. How you doin'?

Dr. Rick: [00:00:40] Fantastic. I mean, I'm good. We're, you know, we're kind of beginning to get back to normal a little bit, whatever normal looks like. Actually took my first trip this past week. And so got, got out there and, got back with Delta Airlines and spent a little time with them this week and feeling good about, you know, just about how things are progressing.

Things are, you know, things seem to be normalizing a little bit and ministry stuff's going well. And we're finding, you know, finding different ways to accomplish things. It's been a, you know, it's been a wild ride, but it's, it's kinda nice to be settling into the fall and into a little bit of a rhythm.

Our kids are going back to school five days a week here in about another week. And so we're, you know, we're cautiously optimistic at this point.

Phil: [00:01:22] Fantastic.

Yeah. I mean, I, I saw somebody the other day on Facebook that were saying they're heading off to Zambia, from the United States. So I thought, man, it's looking, it's looking like normal, except there was no one on the plane with him.

So I think that it

was like this false sense of, Oh man, it

might be normal soon.

Dr. Rick: [00:01:41] It was just weird. You know, being on a plane, you know, we do this all the time and, and, and what was weird. Nobody, nobody talked. Like it was completely silent on the plane and, people, people just wouldn't look at each other or talk to each other or anything else.

And, and, and it's definitely weird having, you know, the airports at that low of a capacity, but, but

we made

it and we didn't get COVID at along the way. And so, you know, praise the Lord for one, for one more good trip

and we'll, we'll see what happens.

Phil: [00:02:11] Well, you know, we're not gonna for everyone out there with more of our conversations about airplanes and how full or not they are.

So we're going to get to this interview, which I have no doubt will be more interesting than this conversation we just had. So, I mean, some of you may have been fascinated by, so I, I, if that, if that is the case, we set the bar really low. And now we're going to just blow you away with this conversation, we're going to have today with Spencer Reeves.

He is a great guy that I've gotten to know over the last few weeks, prepping for this interview and just being able to have conversations with him about the great work that he and his organization are doing in Haiti. He works. He is the Executive Director of Child Hope International that does work in Haiti, as we were talking about.

And we're going to talk with him about all that. They're doing the transitions, they're going through what they're learning and hopefully what you can learn from them. So, As we always ask you, you know, if you haven't done so already rate and review the show, connect with us about this episode, about any other episodes that you've talked about, you can do so at info@thinkorphan.com. We've also started up a Facebook group. And if you do enjoy the conversations we're having here, we're going deeper in that Facebook group. Been asking about, you know, guests that you might want on, but, and getting questions you might want to ask the guests that we're having on some other cool things that we're able to do in there that we haven't done elsewhere.

So it's just a little more, a little deeper than you might go, just listening to the podcast. So with that, let's get to this interview with Spencer Reeves.

Spencer.

Welcome to the Think Orphan Podcast.

Spencer Reeves: [00:03:54] Thanks Phil.

Phil: [00:03:55] Well, we're excited to get into this today and, you know, we just introduced you as the Executive Director of Child Hope International and. But I know there's a lot more to you than just that. So why don't you just take a minute and briefly introduce yourself to our audience and how you got involved with Child Hope, how you've gotten involved with caring for orphan and vulnerable children.

Spencer Reeves: [00:04:17] Yeah. You bet. Well, by God's grace, I'm a married man with three beautiful kids and, that's my family life. But Child Hope began for us, my wife and I, in Redondo Beach, California, we were part of a small, vibrant church that really in the same season launched two families out of that church to go and plant orphanages in missions.

And one went to Mexico and one went to Haiti. And so we, we knew these families in the church. We came around them, you know, prayed, prayed with them as they transitioned. We were going down to Mexico once a month support in that family down there, but really trying to learn during that season. to kind of fast forward, that was I think 2004, but, after the earthquake, in Haiti, we, and my wife and I knew that if we were there, we would want people that we knew to come and help.

It was a massive earthquake and, So we formed a team and we, we decided to go, and that was the beginning of God, preparing us to eventually moved there alongside Hhild Hope. We went on a short term mission, came back. I went again, six months later with another team. And, within two years we, we were moving there as a family.

We spent a year preparing and raising support and we, we joined the work in Port-au-Prince. Yep.

Dr. Rick: [00:05:44] Spencer, that's a, that's an awesome story of just the, the way that God moved you from, you know, from being that, that volunteer in that person that was, you know, that was connected, but kind of at a distance, to, you know, it's all in.

And, and, you know, one of the things I know at Child Hope you guys are undergoing a transition at this point and, and kind of really changing your ministry model from, you know, more from an institutional model to a family based care model. What's that been like? You know, could you kind of talk about maybe some of the, just kind of, some of the broad strokes of what led you there and then, and then maybe let's dig into, you know, kind of talking about the transition and how that, how that's progressing.

Spencer Reeves: [00:06:23] Sure, sure. You know, like in your first year in missions, when you move overseas, you, you, You get put right next to the fire and you get hurt, purged and pruned. And, we went through that in a big way. And in a lot of it, you know, some was relational, some was. I don't understand the orphan parent connection.

One of the big stories for me was leaving work one day I was hosting a team and a was leaving after hours. And I saw a kid on the wall talking to a woman who was selling mangoes on the street and he called me over. He said, Spencer, come here, come here. I want to introduce you to my mom. And I was, and it just, it froze me.

And it just like, why is this have to happen like this? And I didn't know, you had a mom and, and it really, he just showed, there was way more than I needed to understand both culturally in the, in the poverty. and that kind of led us into a stirring. We didn't know what it was, but we ended up, stepping away from Child Hope itself, you know, kind of blessing and, and moving to the side to, to, to really ask hard questions, learn language. I did some other ministry with the local church, but I wanted to, I wanted to know more. I wanted to understand this crisis that was unfolding. And, until 2016, we were invited back to the ministry. The beloved founders transitioned back to the States and some friends had covered for a gap year and, and, they thought they might be there longer, but they, they were transitioning to, and they invited us back in and, and, It really gave us an opportunity to take the knowledge we had

and, and to say, this is how we may try to do this if, if we step into this role. And, you know, by God's grace, the things had come together and the board was in a place and the org was in a place, to, to receive that. And, it was, it was kind of a condition as we stepped into it. But, It was, we wanted to run a case model.

We wanted to see if these kids had families and see if God was already working in their families to, to restore and, and do that. So we began a, family tracing project. We, we began to, learn a lot, knowledge share. We partnered with anybody doing family based care that we could think of. CAFO was a big resource for us.

We were really green in that. We invited people to come and speak at our board meetings. Elli Oswald came over the mountains. We met in Ellensburg and just, she just shared with, you know, Faith to Action stuff. The, transitioning to family based care tool kit. That was man, that was our bible that, you know, like, how do we do this?

What are we going to do? And, God just provided everything we needed at the right time, both, both structurally and he's continuing to do that. And so, we began, we hired social worker, one social worker, and he just started finding family, family tracing. And then we, we went from there and just started inviting family back to the table.

But we had a, we had a legacy model, well, that really needed to be addressed with our donors. And that was, that was a, a really big step and one that we had. We were encouraged not to take it lightly. you know, try to over communicate as much as possible about the directional changes. the reasoning, why we're making changes, why we're going in this direction.

and so that's still going to this day. It's been four years and we're still at times connecting with donors that just say, you know, I'm, I don't know if I understand this. Why, why are you doing this? And, but, a majority of the support just, blessed it and said, wow, that's wow, great there's family.

Great. You know, so.

Dr. Rick: [00:10:27] What about, like obviously there are, I mean, you've got all kinds of constituents and groups that are a part of that, you know, your, your own staff, your own team, the people in the community, around you, your board, others, like, could you, could you kind of go maybe a little, a little deeper into xhow, you know, kind of how you expanded the vision and, and, and sort of what was the, what was the rhythm of the way that you brought all of those groups along in order to help them to, to buy into this unified vision, to move toward family based care?

Spencer Reeves: [00:10:57] Yeah, I think, I guess we'll start with staff. With staff we really needed to come in with a new mission and vision.

And, that had already been in the works. So we just kind of solidified that. And my first week I just shared, this is the vision and mission that we're doing now that we're going in. And, but I also really didn't come out and say, Hey, we're. We're going to reunify all the kids with their families. I, I, I really gave the staff time to process what is family based care? And, I

expressed we're going to start searching for families and invite them to be a part of the kid's life. And so I would kind of categorize it as soft, a soft sell into it. There was some objection up front and, about the poverty about, you know, them not being able or capable, and, or maybe it wasn't the best idea from some staff that, but when I bring it back to the personal level of family and my staff's children, you know, and, and why do you?

Where does your child sleep at night? Why do you bring them in close? Why do you care and comfort and feed and protect? And, and these, these things that children need to develop, you know, the, the staff understood it. They knew it was the right, right thing to if possible. They had a lot of doubt. Like, I don't know if you're going to be able to, but I understand that. And that's, I think that's tribute to, to, you know, the leaders before me and the organization and the, the, the ministry development in the hearts of the staff.

And, so yeah,

Dr. Rick: [00:12:41] Well, so kind of four years in how, like, talk a little bit about the progress you've made and like where, where you sit today versus, you know, versus where you were with, You know, kind of with a dream and an idea that you were trying to, you know, trying to bring people along to.

Spencer Reeves: [00:12:57] Yeah, well, it's been like, I'm kind of blind blindfold, you know, just feeling our way through scenarios.

It's like, Oh, so, and so's family. Great. Let's see where this goes, you know, Oh, we got this, you know. Nothing was guaranteed. I want to just preface to, we went through in my first year, we went through a massive audit by the government that nearly closed our doors

and God

miraculously provided in that moment.

But that put a lot of work on hold, financially. Okay. Since then we've had crisis after crisis between sickness, chickengunyah, Zika, you know, political unrest, protest for about three years now. And, a lot of shelter in place scenarios. We evacuated twice during that time. We had a lot of disruption, but my biggest concern was doing it well

and, and, taking the time to make decisions. I didn't, I didn't want to rush anything. I knew the poverty was a very, very real, and even in the process, of our, family reunification, we'd find family members and. I think we lost almost five family, family members in the period of time of bringing them back to the table.

And it's not, it was mostly poverty related, some violence, some just sickness, lack of help. We didn't know scenarios were unfolding accidents, vehicle accidents, just, just hard things. And those, those were

difficult because you've brought a child into that relationship. And now they're processing, you know, a pain in that.

But, overall, I, I just really wanted to build the process. we've re

we've

reached out to a lot of our partners and we continue to, try to grow and learn. We ask a lot of questions, and, we're. I'm taking state social workers, you know, that that are, that are graduated from the university in Haiti and we're representing this approach.

And, and so it's a lot of dialogue. A lot of time spent with them getting the mission, vision, and, and learning as we go on how to, how to work with the families and, and bet, you know, best support them. So,

Dr. Rick: [00:15:16] I mean, I appreciate hearing just you kind of even talking about the messiness of it and the fact that, you know, this is not a, this isn't, I'm an academic project, right?

Like this is, this is not something happened in theory, it's happening in people's real lives. And that that's, that's hard and it's difficult and their challenges, and there are always going to be challenges. And I mean, we've talked a lot, you know, on the show about. We can find reasons why not to make these changes, right?

Like we can always say there's a crisis looming or something. That's keeping us from it. And man, it's great to, it's just great to hear you tell your story that in spite of all of those challenges, in spite of the big questions that don't have clear answers that are kind of in, that are in front of you, that you're, that you're still, you know, very patiently walking out that vision.

One of the things that you, that you've done, that, that I think is just really cool is, your family sponsorship program. And, you know, in, in that, that's just a, that's a concept that we're, you know, we're all familiar with child sponsorship programs and that's, you know, that's so prevalent in our world, but, but the idea of, of providing sponsorship and assistance for a family is,

is really kind of out of the box and I'd love it. If you could just kinda talk our listeners through that a little bit and just kind of talk about what you guys did and maybe a little bit about how that works.

Spencer Reeves: [00:16:40] Yeah. Yeah. it's definitely in extreme poverty it's something that you have to be really careful with and you have to measure everything you do against dependency and creating dependency and, and, so.

I mean for us, we needed, we needed a way to, to bring the donors along in this journey. And, as we were reunifying children back home, we, we gave our, our donors the opportunity to, to continue you, to support this child in their family, or to transition their support, you know, elsewhere in the organization.

And almost, you know, we've had, we've had almost 10 years, I think of a building child sponsorship, you know, around the kids and just, really reinforcing support around a child and we needed to get. We needed to kind of say, Hey, now there's a family involved. And I know it's,

it feels really

personal because you've been supporting this child.

But how cool is it? There's an, there's a family. And do you want to, do you want to step into this journey with us? And if so, we'd love to move you into a family support model.

We're exploring how that relationship's going to look still in terms of support and communication and updates and protection of privacy and all those things that play into a sponsorships scenario. But, Yeah. Most of the donors said, yeah, I would love to. I would love to. And it, and so now we're giving, we give some updates on the family, the child's back home, we've done our third followup and they're doing well, and they're going to school and thanks for your support along those lines.

But we're also presenting it to new. New donors, people that want to get behind the work we're doing. when we start sharing some of the data in Haiti and globally, you know, this 80% number, this, kids in orphanages in third world countries, you know, have families nearby. Chances are really high that there's family nearby.

When we start sharing that, You know, people get really interested in the idea of getting kids back into a family scenario, we're, it's new to people. There's a lot of fear, I think, especially in the church, like fear of the families, if they're good or bad, or, are they Christian or non-Christian, are they, you know, like these things come up and, And we just have to trust the process and, and give them an opportunity to, to come alongside.

And it's been, it's been turning out well so far. So

Dr. Rick: [00:19:24] You talked a little bit about the, you know, kind of the idea of not creating dependency. and, and, and so there's, I think there's a balance probably in that. You know, and that idea of, of wanting to support, but wanting to, to enable and to empower people to, you know, to be able to, provide for themselves.

There's also an efficiency piece to this as well that, the, the you're able to help your donors to see that. The resources go further. And in a lot of respects, when, when you're supporting families, can you kind of delve into that a little bit and just the way that way did you guys kind of shape this and talked about it and help donors to identify with that?

Spencer Reeves: [00:20:03] Yeah, well, I think, I think the dependency trap is always present when when we begin a reunification with a family and they have zero hope and they have zero hope for tomorrow. They're living day to day. And when we start kind of moving in the direction of like, look, I hear that you don't have money for school, but we could maybe continue our support in school.

It's like they serve, you know, breathing in that hope again and, and the stumbling blocks become less, less than, you know, not as big and, for a family to take in their child again, in the context of poverty. So with our staff, I'm constantly talking about, we need to empower, encourage, encourage, encourage, encourage, bring partners in. Network.

All of them know that we are constantly looking for partners to network with that. We can maybe create a wraparound, something around this family, whether it's a pastor, a church, a businessman, and we try to just empower them and encourage them. One of the things that we're

we're

exploring in the family sponsorship is a.

You know, like a micro finance, it's not really a loan, it's more of a income generating activity that we, we help them either start or we enhance what they're, what the, how they're surviving already. And so we're, we're tweaking that and, but that's, that's been great. And as we, the challenge that we have as the organization is I'm looking at, I have one leg in legacy by budget of a, of a home, operations, generator, vehicles, staff, school, food, shelter, rent, you know, I have one foot there and then I have one foot in where we're going. As we start, you know, downsizing kids or getting kids back into families, we're shifting those dollars and trying to shift those dollars into a support model that.

I want to be clear to the family sponsorship is it at no point there is their money just handed out. It's really worked through

a process.

if, if it's a medical, you know, we're, we're helping them pay that that bill social worker is, or, our supervisor is so. Did I answer your question? I think I,

Dr. Rick: [00:22:40] yeah, no, I think you did.

And

Spencer Reeves: [00:22:43] I appreciate it with, with dependency. Yeah. I,

Dr. Rick: [00:22:48] And I appreciate you even linking that back to the, to the activity of the social worker and, you know, in that, and the idea that there, you know, that you're, you're helping to bring those resources to bear and, and helping to guide that this isn't just an enabling where you're you know, you're not just sending checks to families or paying bills or those kinds of things, but you're really working with them, to, to meet needs, but to help them get farther along and, and reach goals that you're, you know, that you're helping them to set as well.

Spencer Reeves: [00:23:21] Yeah. And with, with aid, whenever you have aid, you know, you have the risk of dependency.

And so if you don't have that. empowerment and ending timeframes that's not kind of clearly stated, those are really two critical pieces. And, and so we do kind of project out timeframes with the families. You know, we try to set some expectations. We're going to continue supporting the kids through school as far as they want to go.

And as far as God allows us to. That's one of our goals with the family. So if they continue doing well in school, we, we want to continue supporting that. And our aftercare, once a child goes home, we, we continue that for a year if it's needed. It's a two way street. They can call us, they can call us at any time.

we have mental health on staff that can meet with them. That first

year is so critical for

conflict resolution. It's, you know, they're learning how to live together again, kids and families and, and trying to find that rhythm. And so. It is messy. It's messy, but it's, we're getting a call here and there and we're able to sit down with them and work through it and, and encourage them.

It's messy in my family

The conflict resolution.

Phil: [00:24:42] Absolutely. Yeah. With the, with that Spencer, I mean, with having, you know, an orphanage full of kids that are now being reintroduced into or introduced back into families or into families, some of which have never been part of it outside of the institutional setting. Right. So have there been any instances as we talked earlier about kind of pitfalls some issues, whatever, with the donors, with staff?

Yeah. But with the kids and the families, have there been any issues that you guys have, have encountered the last few years, as far as you know, oftentimes with, unfortunately with adoptions there's issues with bonding there's issues on both sides with parents and the kids. Have you guys seen that in the, in the context of these re re integrations reunifications have there been any that have, have failed from the standpoint of the kids have not stayed with the parents for any reason?

how have you, any, you talked about having people on call, but how have you guys, if you've encountered any of that, how have you navigated those situations?

Spencer Reeves: [00:25:45] Yeah. I appreciate the question it's because it's not, it's not simple. It's not, it's very complex. It's it's weC do. I think one of the reasons we went we'd go slow in our reunification is we try to really dive into that family to understand why this child was at Child Hope.

Like what happened in that season of life for you? And really understand that pain and, and with the child, and then try to work through it with the child on the front end. but as we know, most kids in orphanages have attachment disorders of some sort. They have, very unique ways of connection connecting with people.

And sometimes, sometimes that's healthy. Sometimes it's not so healthy. And, so yeah, it would be lying if I said, Oh, they were just, they were great. They just, they bonded and loved each other and they were fine. we've got a couple of those scenarios, but the kids that were in the orphanage longer, there's, there's

less, attachment happening and, that's just cause and effect.

But we're,

we're, really trying to find alternative situations as we go into a reunification, we really build out the family tree. so we know exactly who's around that's part of that family and we try to connect with all of them.

Aunt uncle siblings live down the street. We try to connect with all of them. So they're aware of the situation we invite their support. and, if, if needed and in one case, one child actually went and lived with an aunt, instead of the, the mom. And, so we've had that actually in two cases already.

So kinship care is really critical to that. Neighbors, the zone, the people that live around, men and women of peace that, that are in the area. Yeah. We, we, we bring in people from, from every area as much as possible.

Dr. Rick: [00:27:54] Spencer, do you guys do anything with the, like with the parents as, as you're seeking to reunify with regard to things like attachment and trauma and, you know, things like, things like that. Do you guys provide resources to the families in that regard?

Spencer Reeves: [00:28:09] To a degree it's mostly oral, it's all oral. So we, we invite the families in for, parenting classes where we, we talk about early childhood trauma. That's actually a group out in, Gressier created a parenting curriculum that we've been using in

Haiti. But they, they have, they have a school out there and they're using it with parents of kids in their school. And, so we've been doing that and it's. It's been really a positive, but we're, we're looking to grow. We're looking to grow our, our TBRI training, and try to have have better resources for the families when, when they need it, when it's needed.

you know, the reading, you know, a lot of families can't read or maybe some of them are aren't able to. And so. All sorts of challenges. Yeah.

Phil: [00:29:03] So. Spencer. Yeah. You know, I mean, I think that as we know, I, I love the transition. I love everything that, that you guys are doing there. I mean, as anybody who listens to the show at all knows that I love the fact that you guys are working with other organizations to get this stuff done with, with several of our friends who have been on this show and

that are friends of ours as well, personally. So yeah. You know, with, in your, as we've talked about offline, you're working with the people that you need to be working with. And as I, I love that you're a learner clearly, and you're coming alongside and saying, Hey, you know, we don't know at all, can you guys help us to, help these children help these families?

And, we're, we're. We have open hands to receive what you, what your gifts. So if you're listening to this, you have stuff to offer whether in Haiti or elsewhere, I've strongly encouraged you to get in touch with, with Spencer and Child Hope. but you guys, it's, that's not all you're doing down in, in, in Haiti.

and as anyone listening, if you've paid, paid attention at all to news over the last 20 years or so, Haiti's gone through, it seems like disaster after disaster, after disaster. and, and just nearly avoided a few others. Right. and so, you know, what. What else is, is, Child Hope doing really, to provide the aid and empower the nationals to address those issues can reverse the trends of poverty and societal issues in Haiti.

Now you have a Future Hope program. can you talk about that as well as anything else you guys are doing that? That would help others too, whether they're in Haiti or elsewhere to hopefully be encouraged to how to enter into some of these tragedies to help kind of reverse these issues that we see?

Spencer Reeves: [00:30:51] Yeah. that's a, that's a challenging one, you know, like, the organization, the history of Child Hope I had a huge impact in the neighborhoods, in, in Port-au-Prince, where they were based after the earthquake.

so critically from a feeding program to a medical clinic, to a school for the kids. and they grew, you know, almost five times overnight, you know, when, when after the earthquake.

And so they just really poured into the community. We, we do some, some food aid to our families when needed and to our graduates when needed. but as we, as we look at the kids in our care, we need to be asking the question while they're in our care, how are we preparing them for outside? How are we setting them up?

Experientially, emotionally, physically, developmentally.

To be ready for

a Haiti, the reality of Haiti and, One of the ways we did that. You mentioned the future hope program. This is something that was, really on the organization's heart for many years, but we wanted to create opportunities. we tried to create small businesses and let the kids be part of it and a woodworking shop and they got experience, but it kind of fizzled off.

And so we took another approach where we approached the businesses and they say some of the scarcest resources in Haiti is opportunity. And so we began approaching businesses, and we just leveraged my kids soccer team like in Haiti, the parents, the families, we networked with business owners as much as possible.

And we empowered our, our staff to, well, who does your family know that owns businesses? And we really tried to sit down with them and say, Hey, did you know about orphanages in Haiti? Do you know that there's 35,000 kids sitting in, in homes right now? That at 18, they have to, they have to transition out of the home, whether they have a family or not.

And most of these businesses were just kind of shocked at the numbers. And, and we began talking to them about internship programs from that. And so we've been cultivating that for a couple of years before a

lot of the, the crisis political

crisis in country, we had almost 14 internships happening. A grocery store, a hair salon at, a dealership and, a small technology company and, really just giving these kids experience.

So that's the primary role of the Future Hope manager to prepare the kids, to create life plans. so when they they're out on their own, they've got a target. They have a goal to, to continue with the school or during summertime to get an internship. And, and we, we expressed with the owners that we hope that this leads to a job and we hope that they prove themselves.

We do a little MOU agreement with the owners and lay out the expectations and, it's, it's gone. It's gone well. The businesses in Haiti are really struggling right now, which has really slowed the program now. And they're struggling because of the inflation because of the safety issues happening in country right now.

Dr. Rick: [00:34:25] it's

real cool to hear the way that you guys have focused on the collaboration with both, you know, both with the private sector and with, you know, with other folks that are in child welfare. I mean, you're kind of bridging the gap and, and, you know, bringing a coalition of people together.

And it's really great picture. I think, of, of what we hope more people will do and, and, you know, ways that you can be entrepreneurial in the way that you, that you help to, you know, help to transition kids into independence and, you know, hope and give them a future.

Spencer Reeves: [00:34:59] That's awesome. Yeah, it's challenging.

you know, I feel, I don't know how much time we have, but, you know, God continues to kind of open the door for, helping other organizations transition in this process. And, what I'm finding since I've been backstage side is there's a lot of churches wondering how to best support this relationship they have already in Haiti and, with an orphanage.

And since I've been here, I've connected with a couple, two separate orphanages. And they're asking the really hard questions. And, so I mean to churches, if anybody's in their church with their church mission's board, if you're, if you're sitting there and wondering about your relationship with the orphanage in Haiti, you know, ask, ask the questions, look into family based care.

And, I'd love to, we'd love to talk with you. I could point out many others, as well as Phil and Rick would love to talk to you guys as well. But, Phil, you connected me to Mr. Aspegren and Costa Rica, and that that's been a, just a real encouragement as well. So I appreciate that. Yeah,

Phil: [00:36:10] he's, he's a, he's a gem.

He's a guy who, is a tremendous resource for so many throughout, throughout Latin America in particular. But I know he's ventured out past that too. So if you don't know, Phil he's actually another Phil, so that's probably why you said Mr. Aspegren. 'Cause I don't know that anyone's ever called him

Mr. Aspegren. He's probably offended that you called him, Mr. Aspegren.

Spencer Reeves: [00:36:33] I hope he's not offended.

Phil: [00:36:34] No, he's not offended. I'm just kidding. But, yeah, it's Phil Aspergen and Phil and Jill at Casa Viva in, in Costa Rica are fantastic, fantastic people who have been doing this a long time and had just have a heart to help others. And so, but I, I echo what you said, Spencer.

I mean, if you're looking to go through, the transition and it's just something that you're even interested in and you've never really heard of it before, I do. I encourage you to reach out to some of the people and, and reach out to Elli Oswald with Faith to Action and their transition, you know, the, the roadmap, because that's great, but it may be, if you're just considering it, Spencer would be a great guy to talk to because they're, they're in the middle of it.

So they're closer to the, to the action, so to speak, you know, if you want to know how to play football, you might want to go read a book or, or watch a game or talk to a coach. But if you want to know what it feels like to get hit, you're probably going to go talk to somebody who's playing the game. And you know, that was for Rick, that football analogy there.

So,

Dr. Rick: [00:37:33] I'm sorry. I thought you were talking about your, your football that you always talk about, which isn't

really football,

Phil: [00:37:39] but it applies to that too, until I said, hit,

Dr. Rick: [00:37:42] I hear,

I hear you use the word football, and then I glaze over.

Phil: [00:37:46] I know really, you know,

now let's be honest. You were super impressed with that analogy.

I could see it on your face.

Dr. Rick: [00:37:52] I really was, I think I like, I think you may actually be, I may be bringing you over to the, to the dark side a little bit. This is, this is encouraging. So Spencer, there are a couple of, there are a couple of questions that we always want to make sure that we ask our guests and just a way for our listeners to be enriched a little bit by, by the things there that are important to you, things that are feeding you.

And so, one of those is like, what have you read or watched or listened to that is most impacted your thinking on how we can love orphaned and vulnerable children with excellence?

Spencer Reeves: [00:38:30] Wow. I have like so many, so many people, you know, I, a good friend really downloaded me in Haiti. Joseph, he's a Haitian American beautiful man of God. And, he just really taught me about. The orphan scenario in Haiti, during our transition time with the organization. I think of, the context.

So orphanages are birthed out of, in, in poverty. A few years ago, we got to hear, Jayakumar speak Christian. he's he's from India. He's the country director with World Vision there. But, he started unfolding these elements of poverty. He writes a book, I think God has the empty handed and, Just some of the stuff really resonated with me as we looked at these families as we worked with these families and in poverty as we lived just everyday life in Haiti, that was really,

those are really

critical lessons.

I feel like I'm hearing him speak. So I'd recommend that. Yeah. And then all the people that have impacted us like 1Million Home, Agape, all the people in family based care that are, providing cranking out these resources and this data has been so,

so helpful for us

to, to, steer. I think I would hope in excellence and make sound decisions and, and, you know, effectively change our model of care.

So.

Phil: [00:40:09] Fantastic. Well, Spencer, thank you so much for, for coming on the show to share your wisdom, share what you're going through through this transition to share the, the. The struggles to share the, the just exciting, rejoicing that you're having with some of these reunifications on, but, to know really, you know, the realities of it too.

So just very much appreciate your vulnerability, transparency, sharing throughout, throughout this interview. So thanks a lot, Spencer.

Spencer Reeves: [00:40:38] Thanks guys. Appreciate it.

Phil: [00:40:40] Well, thanks so much, Spencer, for just as I said, during the interview, sharing from your heart. Sharing what you guys are going through there at Child Hope, Rick, what'd you think of that?

Dr. Rick: [00:40:50] Man, you know, really good interview and just thankful for Spencer and for the work that they're doing and trying to, you know, trying to flip the script a little bit and change their model.

And I know they're, you know, they're very much at the beginning of this journey in a lot of ways, but, but I think it was, it was very thought provoking and glad we had a, we had an opportunity to visit with him.

Phil: [00:41:11] It's interesting because you know, usually we're talking with people who are either, you know, doing studies on the theory side of these things, or, you know, just on the other side of it, where they've gone through the, in their training, others on how to do this transition. It's really interesting to talk to somebody in the middle of it.

And, you know, and that's kind of, you know, the analogy that I used about if you, you know, the football, right? It, it was, you know, to be able to, understand when you're actually in the game. Right to talk with somebody kind of in the middle of the game, they're in the middle of playing this thing.

Right. And so I, and I kind of felt like that even during the interview that he was, he was actually processing some of it as we're going, which was kind of cool, you know. Like that was just, it's different than the norm, you know? What'd you feel about that? Did you feel the same a little bit? Yeah.

Dr. Rick: [00:42:02] Yeah, absolutely.

And I, I think, you know, I was, I was kind of sitting here thinking too, it'll, it'll be fun to talk to him. And in about four more years, you know. You know, give them, give him a little bit more time. I think, cause they're, they're very much in process and kind of in, you know, in the midst of, they're kind of building the plane and flying it all at the same time and, and it, you know, you could tell in the interview that he's still, he's still wrestling with some of these things. And I think, you know, is probably felt even a little reluctant to go out there and, and, and say many things in a declarative way because, because they are so much still in process, but I, you know, I laud the fact that he, he came on, like he came on to talk about this and, and, and wanted to, you know, wanting to present kind of his ministry and where they are and the things that are important to them. even when, you know, admittedly, he doesn't have it all completely figured out. And, and I think, I think that's a, that's a healthy place wants to be

Phil: [00:43:04] Absolutely. Absolutely. You know? Cause I think a lot of people, they, you know, we don't know, we don't know anything.

We're not going to share anything. And I'm not saying at all, like they didn't know anything. Of course he knows. I mean, he's knows a ton probably way more than he was, but he probably said

Dr. Rick: [00:43:17] he probably doesn't know how much he knows. That's right.

Phil: [00:43:20] That's right. I remember interestingly on that. Right. With, with the in pursuit of orphan excellence, we had one of the authors,

I'm not going to name which one, but she, you know, she felt I'm too young. I don't have enough experience. I don't know much in this area. And I just said to her, I said, I said, I just gave up. It's it's a, her, I said, look, you know, 99, you know more than 99.9% of the people in this world about your subject.

Right. and you know what the 0.001 or whatever it is, they're not going to read this book. Right. So, and that, and that's really the, the reality is we, we often have the curse of knowledge where we were talking to people and we're talking above, but oftentimes too, we sell ourselves short with what we have actually know.

And you know, and I think that. That is, I think it's just kind of human nature a little bit. it's not terrible to have that humble posture. Actually. It's a great thing to be learning continually as we talk after the interview. and that's some, I just, you know, I encourage people out there doing this work is to be learning. Continually be learning.

But when you really, you know, when you have that knowledge that you have, act with confidence in it, while still retaining that humble posture, right. And that you have always have something to learn. and you know, I mean, that's, that's my hope. Cause I feel if God's calling you to be in a certain place and you have learned, and you've taken that and you've gone yeah.

Through and read the roadmaps, you've talked to these different people. Well, they're giving you the advice and you have, and you're learning this stuff as you're going, I have a feeling you're more than ready to go out and do this work that, that is before you, so I just want to encourage you with that.

Dr. Rick: [00:44:56] That's why we want to hear from people. Cause we gotta, you know, we, we've got a, a bunch of you that are listeners that are out there that are in process or in the middle of figure this stuff out. And, and so, you know, help us, as we, you know, as we continue to try to be part of this conversation, We, you know, we want to learn as well.

And many of you are in places where God is using you to do amazing things and to, to put feet to this vision. And you're learning things that are valuable to be shared with the, you know, the rest of the body of Christ. So, you know, please let us know. We'd love to, we'd love to hear from you and we love to love to share maybe when we get on the show.

Yeah,

Phil: [00:45:38] Absolutely. You know, and I will tell you just, if, if you want to get someone on this show, The easiest way to do that. Go join the Facebook group and answer the post I just did this last week and just respond on there. There's already been three people who have said different people. They're connecting me with them and we'll hopefully get them on the show soon.

it takes two to tango. I obviously have to ask them and they have to say yes, but my guess is if we're talking to people and they were referred to us, chances are they're going to be on this. And I have no doubt that if you guys are referring them, that they have a great story to share, so definitely encourage you that, but before we get to sign off today, Rick, you are excited to share a resource, a recommendation with us and, you know, I'm excited cause I don't even know what it is yet.

So it better be good.

Dr. Rick: [00:46:20] Yeah. So, so I kind of held this and this is like, I'm probably going to. Like, I'm probably going to get a phone call over this one, but, but it's a book that was written by a guy who's really a great friend and somebody that I, you know, that I love. And I just, I just haven't picked this book up in particular, but my friend Robbie Gallaty, he's the Pastor of a Long Hollow Baptist Church in Nashville.

Hendersonville, Tennessee. Church is engaged in orphan care in a ton of ways, CAFO has been there has been at the long hollow before, or, and, but for Robby, I have known Robby since he was, since he was a young seminary student. He, he put out a book a few years ago. Which was one of those that I picked up and immediately put on my candle and just kind of never got around to it.

And so I picked it up, in recent days, but it's called forgotten, The Forgotten Jesus. how, how, let me make sure I get the, the subtitle right. Is How Western Christians Should Follow an Eastern Rabbi. And I just love it. It's, it's a, Robby is an incredible, thoughtful writer and in discipleship and just in, in helping and encouraging people to follow Jesus, but he really kind of talks about the process of how rabbis taught and, and like what that whole, but, but it's, but it's a.

But I have to say out of all of the, kind of, out of all the things I've read about this, this is sort of the most balanced and it's also the most, really inherently applicable to, to our lives and to our context and to, to the day in which we live today. And, and so I, you know, I'd really say, go out there and grab a coffee, pick it up, the forgotten Jesus by, by Robby Gallaty, and, and really some, some really insightful things about what it looks like to follow behind Jesus.

And, and to learn and what it looks like for us to put the, the model of discipleship that, that Jesus actually employed in the gospels into practice in our lives.

Phil: [00:48:21] Yeah, no, that's that sounds I'm. I'm just glad you didn't say after, after you said that. I thought you were going to say, In Pursuit of Orphan Excellence was the book that you hadn't picked up yet and actually read. So I was just, I was relieved actually with that build up. I'm not going to lie. So Robby, I'm sorry that Rick put it off so long, but I've just relieved it wasn't In Pursuit. That's all. So that's good. That's a, that's a, that's a win.

Dr. Rick: [00:48:47] I, you know, and I'll get around In Pursuit of Orphan Excellence one of these days.

I don't know when, but I'll finally, I'll read it at some point, Phil, and then I can, and then I can, then I can endorse your book and tell people to read it on the show.

How about that?

Phil: [00:48:59] Yeah, that's good. That's good. I know you didn't endorse it cause we didn't know each other yet.

Dr. Rick: [00:49:05] Well, I'm, I'm waiting until the 10th anniversary edition comes out and you have me endorse it then.

Phil: [00:49:12] Right. I can't wait. I can't wait for that day. I will. Yeah. I just, it's just speechless. Just speechless. I don't get speechless very often.

Dr. Rick: [00:49:21] No, folks. We, we better wrap this thing up cause if Phil is, if Phil is speechless. We've hit it. We've hit a historic moment.

Phil: [00:49:29] All right, folks.

So. You know, as always, we hope I do hope, I hope and pray that, that you, I hope you pick up that book that Rick's talking about it.

I pray that you just listened to this, stuff that we, that we've been talking about on the show. other things that you're hearing, on this podcast is the other episodes that we have. If you haven't gone back and listened to the first hundred and. 50 something. I forget exactly what we're on right now.

Maybe 154 before this one, go back and, you know, maybe not listen to all of them today because I don't think you get through them, but, you know, listen to us, there's so much good stuff. And I do pray 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.