



# Three Principles

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TO CONSIDER AND COMMON PITFALLS TO  
AVOID WHEN LAUNCHING AND LEADING AN  
ORPHAN CARE MINISTRY IN YOUR CHURCH

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# Introduction

Many churches around the country are taking bold, noble and exciting steps towards responding to God's call to care for orphans and vulnerable children in unprecedented ways. It's a historic time in the Church, one which generations to come will undoubtedly recognize as a time when God moved mightily through His people to press into a matter that is near to His heart.

While it is an exciting time, it is also a time filled with many questions from church leaders regarding how to launch and lead effective and sustainable orphan care ministries. Many are passionate, ready and eager to establish thoughtful strategies, sustainable systems and realistic next steps for their people. The question they are asking is not *should* they do it; it's *how* should they do it.

That's the goal of this resource - to provide practical, tangible and manageable "first steps" to leading and launching an orphan care ministry that are implementable in a variety of different types of church sizes, contexts and cultures.

## THE THREE PRINCIPLES WE WILL EXPLORE IN THIS RESOURCE ARE HOW TO:

1

START **SIMPLE**

2

START **SLOW**

3

START **SMALL**

I hope this resource can be a valuable help to you or your leadership team as you identify the opportunities you have before you and set your strategic priorities moving forward.



PRINCIPLE #1

*Start Simple*



IT'S MORE *IMPORTANT* TO DO THE *RIGHT*  
THINGS *THAN* IT IS TO DO *MANY* THINGS.

## Saying "No" \_\_\_\_\_

The temptation is to say yes to every good idea and launch the ministry with as much impact as possible. Yet, simplicity and focus are essential to effective, sustainable ministry. That requires being willing to say no at certain times, not yes all the time.

### HERE'S THREE SPECIFIC TIMES YOU MAY HAVE TO SAY "NO" IN YOUR MINISTRY:

- 1 **To bad ideas.** For obvious reasons – they won't work, they don't fit the vision of your ministry, they'll drain your budget or your volunteers, etc.
- 2 **To the most vocal or influential voices in the room.** This is often hard for leaders for fear of what the consequences may be – Will they leave? Will they stop financially supporting?
- 3 **To good ideas.** Maybe temporarily – "Yes, but not now.". Maybe forever – "Great idea, but probably something we'll never get involved with." You don't have to say yes to every good idea. Remember, be simple.





*Simple can be harder than complex: You have to work hard to get your thinking clean to make it simple. But it's worth it in the end because once you get there, you can move mountains.*

STEVE JOBS



# Find Your "Lane" \_\_\_\_\_

## FIND YOUR "LANE" OF MINISTRY AND MAXIMIZE IT.

What unique assets has God given your church?

Are you predominately young families? Perhaps you should focus on providing homes for children who need them.

Are you primarily an empty-nester or older generation church with some money to spend? Perhaps you focus your efforts investing in an adoption fund that financially supports those who are caring for kids.

Are you a diverse congregation with all different types of people? Then diversify, but be careful that you don't say yes to everything. Identify a few things you can do right now that complement each other well. For example, it could be mobilizing younger families to open their homes to kids and then tapping into the older demographic of the church to wrap around them and offer support. What's your lane? What are the few things you are going to do well?

**Your answers to these questions will not only help you decide what to say yes to, but will also act as guardrails that protect you from things you need to say no to.**

**IT'S MORE  
IMPORTANT TO  
DO THE *RIGHT*  
THINGS *THAN*  
IT IS TO DO  
*MANY* THINGS.**



# Story

*I recently spent time with a pastor in Kansas City. Just eight months prior he had become the new senior pastor after at a large, historic, traditional church. One of the first things he learned as he settled into his new role was that the church had spent years investing in an adoption fund - but had never distributed any of those funds. Needless to say there was quite a bit of money in it.*

*He told me that at his "state of the church" address just a few months before our time together he was able to share some exciting vision for the church moving forward, that in part included (and I quote the pastor here) "Ensuring that under no circumstances should it cost anyone in our church one penny to foster or adopt a child".*

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*Wow! He told me he recognizes that with a large demographic of senior-aged adults in his body they have to be diligent about presenting unique opportunities to get involved that don't simply consist of bringing children into their home. He's convinced that the primary and probably most crucial way his church can serve orphaned and vulnerable children is through their financial support of families who are fostering or adopting them.*

*I couldn't agree more with his assessment or with his understanding that his church may not be able to do everything, but they could certainly do something - so they've identified their something and are committed to doing it well.*





A photograph of a desk setup featuring a laptop, a keyboard, and a tablet. The tablet in the foreground displays a calendar application with a grid view for the year 2015. The text "DO WHAT YOU CAN TODAY WITH WHAT YOU HAVE TODAY." is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font across the center of the image.

**DO WHAT YOU CAN TODAY  
WITH WHAT YOU HAVE TODAY.**



**QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

Take a few moments to answer the following questions either as an individual ministry leader or as a team.

*What 3-4 things...*

*...can your ministry focus on and do right now?*

*...would you eventually like to see your ministry involved with?*

*...might be good things but are not within the scope of your ministry?*

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PRINCIPLE #2

*Start Slow*



# THE GOAL OF YOUR MINISTRY IS *SUSTAINABILITY, NOT SPEED.*

## *Too fast too soon* \_\_\_\_\_

Don't go too fast too soon. **It's entirely possible to be simple but not slow.** You can identify the few things you want to do well but still move too quickly on them.

For example, if your mission is to raise up more foster and adoptive families, be smart about it. Your goal is not just to recruit more families faster but to equip and support the right families longer.

***Quality preparation is more important than a quick pace.***

Moving too fast too soon can end up doing more harm to the ministry than help. The last thing you want to do is inadequately equip and prepare people only to have them burn out in the end. We have to develop realistic expectations for what we can accomplish effectively with what we currently have to work with.





*It is better to take many steps in the right direction than to make a great leap forward only to stumble backward.*

CHINESE PROVERB



# *A marathon, not a sprint* —————

Going slow may require that you as the leader take two steps back so your people can take one step forward. You recognize the potential and feel the urgency, but they may not be there yet.

It may be your goal to eradicate the foster care crisis in your city tomorrow, but for today the best your ministry can do is organize a backpack drive for a local agency - and that's ok. That may be where you need to start – not end – but at least start.

**Slow does not necessarily mean insignificant or unsuccessful.  
Slow often means smart.**

If caring for the orphaned and vulnerable is a lifelong marathon, not a short-term sprint then it's important to pace yourself early so that you can ultimately make it to the finish line.

It takes time, and the cause is too important to not ensure you're doing it well. Slow down, take a deep breath and move forward...slowly, but surely.

**YOU MAY NEED  
TO TAKE TWO  
STEPS *BACKWARDS*  
SO YOUR PEOPLE  
CAN TAKE ONE  
STEP *FORWARD*.**



# Thank You

for reading through this preview of  
“Three Principles”.

The full chapter can be found in the new book,  
“**Everyone Can Do Something: A Field Guide for Strategically Rallying Your Church Around the Orphaned and Vulnerable.**”



## DISCOVER HOW TO:

- Clarify your message
- Make the problem relatable
- Build communities of support
- Develop a strategic plan
- Establish discipleship tracks
- Outline clear "next steps"
- Plan and promote events
- And much more...

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