

Stories from the field

how A Child's Hope International is making a difference

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Journey to the Fatherless™ “The Rallying Cry”



S. Truett Cathy, founder of Chick-fil-A™, was a passionate man, one who was well respected for his business ethics, his faith, and his love for people. Cathy was also a

compassionate man who believed that children who are victims of circumstance should have an opportunity to grow and prosper, just like any other child.

In 1984, out of Mr. Cathy and his wife, Jeannette's, desire to shape winners by helping young people succeed in life, WinShape Foundation™ was birthed. Then, in 1987, WinShape Homes™, a program that provides loving, nurturing homes to children in need of a stable, secure family environment, was founded.

WinShape Homes™ places children who have been permanently removed from their families into Christ-centered homes with families who will love and guide them so they might discover their unique, God-given potential. Each home can take up to 12 children, and everything they need to grow and thrive is provided at no cost, including higher education should they choose.

Through the years, hundreds of children have reaped the benefits of growing up in a WinShape™ foster home.

What started with one home in Georgia, where the WinShape Foundation™ is headquartered, has now grown to nine. Three homes have also been established in Tennessee and one in Alabama. Each has a husband and wife team (house parents) who have made a life-long

commitment to helping the children placed in their care become all God desires them to be. Some have been with the organization over two decades, and one couple for 27 years! The tenure of these staff members speaks volumes about the organization they work for and the heart God has given them for the kids.

In 2014, WinShape Homes™ held their first training retreat for relief parents, employees who fill in for house parents when they need time off. Though some of this staff had done relief work for years and had ties to house parents or the community-at-large, they didn't have the bigger WinShape™ picture.

Part of the picture that would be painted that weekend was Truett Cathy's philosophy.

Whether he was selling chicken or caring for children, it was always the same. Honor God and invest in people.



Since 2013, Allen Butler has been a case manager for children in several WinShape Homes™. Butler doesn't remember exactly how he learned about *Journey to the Fatherless™* by Larry Bergeron, but he knew this would be his retreat training material because it was from a Christian perspective and also professionally relevant.

Journey shares God's heart for the orphan—a heart that the organization mirrors—and it resonates with WinShape's™ beliefs, calling, and purposes. It was uncanny to Butler how closely the curriculum matched what was being lived out in their homes and programs day-to-day.

The book makes a biblical argument for the church to care for orphans and vulnerable children and provides a realistic, non-biased assessment of adoption and foster care, so those who bring orphans into their home don't get discouraged and quit when difficulties arise.

Most of WinShape Homes™ relief parents are lay people who live normal lives and work normal jobs, but they all have one thing in common: *God's heart for the orphan.*

Since these staff don't have formal training in counseling or social work, *Journey* was educational, inspiring, enlightening, and encouraging.

"*Journey to the Fatherless*" became our rallying cry," said Butler. "It really synced-up with the relief staff's hearts and what had drawn them to getting involved with our families and ministries in the first place."

Before the retreat, many staff members had a hard time expressing what was deep in their hearts, but they all agreed with Butler afterwards. "This is exactly how we feel," Allen said. "This is why we do what we do."

As some of the staff have heard more about the orphan care movement in the church in the United States, they have taken it one step further and adopted or become foster parents themselves. Allen and his wife, Joanna, are a prime example of God on the move in this arena.

For the Butlers, *Journey to the Fatherless* came at a pivotal point in their lives. The couple had been married a little less than a year. They knew they wanted to adopt and bring foster children into their home, but thought they would have biological children first, then fostering would come when they felt "comfortable and ready." They just didn't know when that would happen or what it would look like—but they were about to find out...

Soon after the retreat, while Allen and Joanna were reading through *Journey* as they vacationed at the beach, they got "the call"—literally. WinShape Homes contacted Butler to ask if he was interested in a case worker position in Tennessee. At the same time, they inquired if he and Joanna would consider fostering a teenage girl whom they felt would do better with specialized one-on-one care instead of a being in a larger family.

"As we were reading," Allen said, "It was like God was saying, 'Hey I've called you to this.' But that opportunity came along a lot quicker than we thought."

...And it wasn't necessarily for when Allen and Joanna were "comfortable and ready."

The Lord was definitely moving the Butlers out of their comfort zones—calling them away from the security of their families and the familiar, to another state, into a new job and a new home, with a 17-year-old under their wing.

Out of obedience, they took that step of faith. Ever since, they have been blessed—by the move, and especially by Amber's presence in their home. This beautiful young woman is now 19 years old, has graduated from high school, is working, and assessing college options.

Little did Allen Butler know when he purchased that *Journey to the Fatherless* curriculum for his relief parents, how God would use it to impact his life personally.

Since Allen and Joanna first received their "call," God has multiplied their blessing with four more children through WinShape's new foster care placement program. José is 18 years old, Zyaire is 10, and Zoey and Enrique are both 8.



Hearing the Lord say, collectively, "This is why I've called you to serve these families. This is why I've called you to be involved," was just what WinShape Homes' staff needed to give them a greater clarity of purpose. It has also given them a deeper passion and appreciation for the work God has called them to do, and even greater love and compassion for the children that have been entrusted to their care.

Allen and Joanna's is just one of the remarkable stories of how God is using *Journey to the Fatherless* to rally a WinShape family to defend the cause of the orphan. To find out how *Journey* can become a rallying cry for your organization and the children you serve, please contact us at the number below or visit our website.



As a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, the mission of A Child's Hope Int'l is to motivate and mobilize the church and community to care for orphans and vulnerable children through adoption, foster care, orphan care, and humanitarian relief. As advocates for the least of these, our programs reach thousands of children worldwide.

We exist because the children are waiting™.

A CHILD'S HOPE INT'L

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