



Children Separated By War, Then Reunited With Families

The Wired Word for the Week of April 12, 2026

In the News

Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, thousands of Ukrainian children have been separated from their families. Ukraine says that close to 20,000 children have been illegally sent to Russia and Belarus, reports *Newsmax*, where some have been subjected to military training and forced to fight against their own nation's troops.

Earlier this month, seven Ukrainian children were returned from Russia and reunited with their families. The *Kyiv Post* reports that the group of children, aged 13 to 17, includes several orphans who had been held in Russian-controlled social centers. Among those returned is a 13-year-old boy who had been placed in a rehabilitation center after losing both parents. Another 14-year-old boy was reunited with his mother after a four-year separation. Two brothers, aged 13 and 16, were repatriated after resisting attempts by Russian officials to prevent them from reuniting with their sister.

Ukrainian Ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets expressed gratitude to First Lady Melania Trump for her "humanitarian support" in facilitating the return. This is the fourth time that she has been involved in efforts to expedite the return of Ukrainian children. According to *United24Media*, seven other Ukrainian children were brought back home from Russia in December 2025, with the assistance of the First Lady.

Last August, Mrs. Trump wrote to Russian President Vladimir Putin about the plight of Ukrainian children separated from their families by war. "Reunifying children with their loved ones in this region of the world remains one of the most important global issues today," she said in a statement that preceded the latest release. "I am encouraged that both sides remain committed to ongoing cooperation, raising the safety and well-being of children above this abhorrent war." She has commended the diplomacy between Russia and Ukraine, and has expressed hope that these humanitarian efforts will eventually lead to broader regional stability.

"My ongoing mission is twofold," said the First Lady in October, according to *Fox News*: "to prioritize and optimize a transparent, free flow of health-related information surrounding all children who have [fallen] victim to this war, and to facilitate the reunification of children with their families until each individual returns home."

On March 27, the State Department of the United States announced \$25 million in new assistance for the identification, return and rehabilitation of abducted children. Ukraine's First Lady Olena Zelenska previously commended the United States administration's involvement, saying that "every Ukrainian child must come home." Since the start of the war, Ukraine has successfully brought home 2,070 children.

Last month, a United Nations investigation found that Russia's deportation and transfer of Ukrainian children amounted to crimes against humanity. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued arrest warrants for Putin and five other Russian individuals over illegal deportation of children (Russia, like the United States and several other nations, is not subject to the opinions of the ICC). Moscow denies it is taking children against their will, insisting that Russia has been evacuating people voluntarily in order to keep them safe from war.

More on this story can be found at these links:

[Seven More Ukrainian Children Returned From Occupation With U.S. Support. *Kyiv Post*](#)

[WH: 6 Ukrainian Children to Return From Russia, Reunite With Families. *Newsmax*](#)

[Seven Ukrainian Teens Rescued from Russian-Occupied Territories. *United24Media*](#)

[Melania Trump Says 7 More Ukrainian Children Reunited With Families as Part of Initiative with Russia. *Fox News*](#)

Applying the News Story

We can celebrate the return of 2,070 Ukrainian children since the Russian invasion of 2022, while acknowledging that this is a fraction of the 20,000 who have been separated from their families by war. Use this story as an opportunity to discuss what it means to be a peacemaker, and to rejoice in small victories even if larger problems are not solved.

The Big Questions

1. Why is caring for children so important to God? What are the effects of family separations, whether they occur internationally or in the local community? How can you and your church help to reunify children and families?
2. When have you attempted to be a peacemaker in a time of conflict? What did you attempt to accomplish? What worked, and what was not effective?
3. Peacemaking often requires a focus on one issue at a time, as the First Lady is doing with the reunification of Ukrainian families. What is the value

for starting small? When have you taken a similar approach, and what was the result?

4. How is conflict addressed in your church community, if at all? What biblical or theological resources are used in the effort to make peace?

5. When have you celebrated a small victory, even when a larger problem remained unsolved? What satisfaction did it give you? How did it encourage you, or leave you feeling frustrated?

Confronting the News With Scripture and Hope

Here are some Bible verses to guide your discussion:

Exodus 2:5-6

The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. "This must be one of the Hebrews' children," she said. (For context, read [Exodus 2:1-10](#).)

At the heart of the book of Exodus is the story of the Israelites escaping Egyptian bondage. This story is central to Jewish faith and identity, remembered each year in the celebration of Passover, which began this year on April 1. The word *exodus* is from Greek and means "going out" -- that is, going out of captivity in Egypt. The promise of the book is that oppressive empires are no match for the power of a just and loving God.

Given the struggle between the Israelites and the Egyptians, the book begins with a surprising story involving Pharaoh's daughter. Feeling threatened by the number and the power of the Israelites, Pharaoh gave the order that all of the sons of the Israelites should be killed by being thrown into the Nile River. When one Israelite woman gave birth to a son, she

sought to protect him by putting him in a papyrus basket and hiding him among the reeds on the bank of the river.

When the daughter of Pharaoh came to bathe in the river, she saw the basket among the reeds. Opening the basket, she saw the child "and she took pity on him" because he was crying. She realized that he "must be one of the Hebrews' children," but she did not kill him as her father ordered. Instead, she arranged for him to be nursed and nurtured.

When the child grew up, he was delivered to "Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. She named him Moses, 'because,' she said, 'I drew him out of the water'" (v. 10). In Hebrew, the name Moses resembles the word for "drew." Moses grew up to become the great liberator of the Israelites.

Questions: How did God use the compassion of the daughter of Pharaoh to advance his will? In what ways can concern for children be part of God's plan today? How are you and your church involved in caring for vulnerable children?

Isaiah 65:25

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, but the serpent -- its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD. (For context, read [Isaiah 65:17-25](#).)

In the book of the prophet Isaiah, God says, "I am about to create new heavens and a new earth" (v. 17). Be glad "and rejoice forever in what I am creating, for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight" (v. 18). This message of joy and delight is a healing balm to the people of Israel, since they have been isolated, stressed, and distressed by their time of exile in Babylon.

"No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days," promises God, "or an old person who does not live out a lifetime" (v. 20). God offers a vision of a society in which the most vulnerable of people -- newborns and the aged -- are cared for, so that they can both survive and thrive. This helps us to envision a community structured around compassion instead of competition.

This new creation is filled with *shalom*, the Hebrew word for peace. This peace includes good relations, prosperity, restoration of health, personal wholeness, and physical safety. "They shall build houses and inhabit them," promises God; "they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit ... for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (vv. 21-22).

In this glorious new creation, people enjoy long and healthy lives, marked by safe homes, good food and purposeful work. Children thrive and senior citizens experience quality of life. Our challenge is to participate in this kingdom of peace, cooperate with what God is doing, and take steps to align our choices with the reign of God, in which the "wolf and the lamb shall feed together." We participate in this kingdom when we take actions that heal and build up, rather than hurt and destroy, in our individual and congregational lives.

Questions: Why is peace more than simply the absence of conflict? What is the value, if any, of structuring life around compassion instead of competition? When have you worked for the kind of peace that includes at least one of these qualities: good relations, prosperity, restoration of health, personal wholeness or physical safety? What did you learn from the experience?

Luke 15:4-5

"Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does

not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. ..." (For context, read [Luke 15:1-10](#).)

In the time of Jesus, religious leaders were quick to divide the world into black and white categories: evil and good, unclean and clean, unrighteous and righteous. Wearing the black hats were tax collectors and sinners. Sporting the white hats were the Pharisees and the scribes. They grumbled about Jesus and said, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them" (v. 2).

Jesus responded by telling them a parable about a shepherd with one hundred sheep. Losing one, he leaves the other ninety-nine in the wilderness and goes after the one that is lost until he finds it. Then he puts the lost sheep on his shoulders, carries it home, and invites his neighbors to a party, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my lost sheep" (v. 6).

Then Jesus followed up with a parable about a woman with ten coins. Losing one of them, she lights a lamp, sweeps the house, and searches carefully until she finds it. When she locates it, she too invites her neighbors to a party, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost" (v. 9). These parables of Jesus teach us to leave no one behind, even if the person is a tax collector or a sinner.

Questions: What is the value of rejoicing in a small victory: Finding the one lost sheep, or the one lost coin? Why is it important to Jesus to leave no one behind? Who gets lost in your community, and how can you find them and bring them home?

Romans 12:18

If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. (For context, read [Romans 12:9-21](#).)

In chapter 12 of his letter to the Romans, Paul lays out the marks of a true Christian: "Let love be genuine," he writes (v. 9), "persevere in prayer" (v. 12), "pursue hospitality to strangers" (v. 13), "live peaceably with all," and "if your enemies are hungry, feed them" (v. 20).

Paul begins by echoing the commandment of Jesus to "love one another" (John 13:34). When Paul says that love should be genuine, he is saying that it should be unhyprocritical. This is a real challenge in a world in which Christians are often seen as hypocrites, people who say one thing and do another. [In a recent poll](#), half of Americans who describe themselves as non-religious say that Christians are self-righteous, hypocritical, and judgmental.

All these characteristics are in our control, and we can change them if we want. According to Paul, the place to begin is to make our love genuine and unhyprocritical. If we do this, we will find a receptive audience. The vast majority of those surveyed -- 84% -- said that they believed Jesus to be an important spiritual figure. Even among those who described themselves as non-religious, 50% felt this way

Paul says that following Christ means to "love one another with mutual affection" and even to compete with one another by outdoing "one another in showing honor" (v. 10). We are to be generous both inside and outside the Christian community, making an effort to contribute "to the needs of the saints" and also to "pursue hospitality to strangers" (v. 13). Yes, a true Christian is generous to needy fellow Christians, while also being welcoming to outsiders.

When Paul says, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them" (v. 14), he is sounding like Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. When he says, "Do not repay anyone evil for evil" (v. 17), he is saying that we Christians should always be committed to loving our enemies, turning the other cheek, and praying for those who persecute us. "If it is possible, so far

as it depends on you," he says, "live peaceably with all." Instead of being overcome by evil, "overcome evil with good" (v. 21).

Questions: What does it mean to you to live peaceably with all? When, if ever, have you tried to overcome evil with good? What happened? Which of Paul's marks of a true Christian are most important to you, and why?

For Further Discussion

1. TWW Team Member Mary Sells is reading *White Chrysanthemum*, a work of historical fiction that takes place in Korea during Japanese occupation. War crimes were committed during the war, including the abduction of children to work in factories and the taking of adolescent girls to be sex slaves for soldiers. What do you think a child feels and thinks when taken from a family in a time of war? Where can such children and their families find hope? How can we minister to runaways, or to families of lost children?

2. After entering Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, Jesus wept over the city, saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace!" (Luke 19:41-42). In your experience, what are "the things that make for peace," in your family, congregation, and community? Be specific.

3. Church consultant [Sam Ranier has observed](#), "When a church fights over what color the carpet should be, it's rarely about the carpet. It's often about control, influence, or feeling heard. The 'small' issue becomes a safe battleground to fight a 'bigger' but unspoken issue." When, if ever, have you experienced this in your congregation? How did you surface the unspoken issue and work to resolve it? What is required for peaceful relations in church?

4. What could you do to help children in Ukraine? You may feel moved to work through political or charitable channels, as an individual or a

congregation. World Vision has information on the crisis, with [ideas about how you can help](#). How would such involvement be an expression of your Christian faith?

Responding to the News

Stay informed about the war in Ukraine, and look for opportunities to support efforts that help children to be reunited with their families. Try to be a peacemaker in your family, church and community, following the guidance of the Bible. Do not be overwhelmed by the enormity of conflict in the world, but instead remember that every small effort has value and significance to God.

Prayer

We thank you, Lord, for inspiring us to be people of love and compassion. Help us to care for children, as you do, and to look for opportunities to search for the lost sheep around us. May we live peaceably with all, as we seek to be part of your new creation. In Jesus' name. Amen.