

It all started when my wife and I went to live in Mexico for seven years. Without us knowing it, the Lord had led us to a very poor, marginalized and dangerous neighborhood. We started reaching out to the street kids bringing them food, playing board games together, and of course, sharing the love of Christ with them.

However, we quickly discovered the idea that God could be a loving heavenly Father seemed like a very distant possibility to these kids. Many of them had no fathers, didn't live at home or if they did go home, they had a distant or abusive father.

It made sense that they would struggle trusting that God is a good father because they had never experienced one. It broke our hearts seeing how wounded these kids were at such a young age.

So, I had an idea. I began writing cartoon booklets, illustrating it myself. I chose two orphan mice named Daniel and Pablo as the main characters.

They were aimless little brothers, searching for a reason for their existence, and definitely wanting a father to be a part of their life. We'd pass these booklets out to the street kids that worked the busy intersections of the city washing car windows for a few pesos. The kids loved these stories, even the ones that were older teenagers, which surprised me. With time we came to understand better this idea of the orphan heart. God's design for the family was very intentional. Fathers weren't just there to provide clothes, shelter and food. They are desperately needed in the daily lives of their children, not just for provision but also to nurture them. No matter how much a mother tries to make up for his absence she cannot replace a father. His role gives not just direction and stability but also a profound sense of identity and belonging within the family.

Yet as we saw the obvious struggle that the street kids had trusting God as a good father, we also recognized that even the kids from two parent families at church also shared this same challenge. It was then that we realized we all struggle with that orphan heart that tends to doubt that God could be a good father. Why? Because we don't believe that God exists? No. There are just no perfect fathers anywhere, no matter how faithful they are. They still fall short in the lives of their children because they are just as flawed as all of us are. And that tendency to see the imperfection of our earthly fathers in the image of God is common to all of us.

This is the great challenge that we all have, which is why I wrote this children's book with this particular theme: Knowing the father heart of God. Just imagine a world where children are learning to trust that God is a good father, one who they will rely on to lead them through difficult times and discover their calling in life.

Daniel and Pablo are actually two real brothers who my wife and I knew well and still do today. I chose those names intentionally. They were not street kids rather two boys from church who nevertheless struggled with that same orphan heart, just like all kids everywhere, this author and all adults do. We must one day come to God in faith believing that he made us for a purpose. And there is no greater purpose than to trust him as a good, good father and be called his son or his daughter.

As with other children's story books about the life of Jesus, this one tells of his life and ministry. But the difference in Daniel and Pablo's Great Adventure is that we see it through their eyes. It's through their perspective as two very marginalized and unwanted creatures that we follow their journey discovering the worth that their Creator has given them. And eventually the love of Jesus, leads them to understand that God isn't just a Creator, but a father who made his creation with purpose and intention.

It is our hope and prayer as you journey with Daniel and Pablo that you will discover the forgiveness that our Heavenly Father provides through his son Jesus. And that children and parents alike will understand that forgiveness doesn't just bring them to heaven. It births a new relationship where God becomes your father. He longs to call you his precious son or a precious daughter. And he has plans to lead and guide you as a good father would because he will never leave you or forsake you.

If you want to learn more about the father heart of God and the adventures, we had with the street kids of Mexico you can find that in the book I wrote entitled: Held, authored by Eric Hahn and published in 2011 by Xulon press