

I. Our Internal Image of God

A. The way that we perceive the Heavenly Father can be dramatically influenced by our relationship with our earthly father or father figures.

B. I have found that many will embrace the sacrificial, lavish love of Jesus yet feel aloof from the Heavenly Father because of challenges and pain that they have experienced in relationships with their earthly father or father figures.

C. We tend to extend the problems we have had with earthly fathers beyond our relationship with our earthly father to our Heavenly Father.

1. When we project upon God the negative aspects, pain and woundings from earthly fathers or father figures our internal image of God becomes perverted and distorted.

2. When this happens we exchange the truth of who God is as a kind, loving Father for an image that we have received from our earthly fathers and we, therefore, have difficulty receiving the reality of God's acceptance of us and unconditional love for us.

II. The Orphan Mentality

A. Hurt from a father or father figure can manifest in our lives by us living like a spiritual orphan. The progression may look something like this:

1. Fear of submission to authority or authority figures. Many times it is simply a fear of or aloofness towards male authorities.

2. This results in a closed spirit. The heart becomes closed towards leadership and unintentionally closed towards God.

3. A closed spirit will lead someone to unhealthy independence. An independent spirit causes you to trust and rely solely upon yourself because you fear others will let you down.

4. An independent spirit will often cause people to hide or deny the pain in our heart. We don't want to allow people to know our weakness and pain because we are afraid of being vulnerable and we don't want to be exposed as weak.

5. Many times those operating in this way will control their relationships through anger, passivity or isolation. All of these are mechanisms by which people shield themselves from intimacy with others and the potential of being hurt or exposed.

6. When we live in this manner we live superficially in our relationships with others. Though many people may “know” us, the truth is nobody really knows us.

7. We end up feeling alone and isolated, even around friends and family.

III. Traits of the Orphan Mentality

A. When you have an orphan mentality you likely find comfort and identity in the following counterfeit affections

1. Possessions – finding security in money or things
2. Passions – addictions or compulsions to alcohol, drugs, food, or immorality
3. Position – finding acceptance by striving to be seen or to attain the praise of man
4. Power – being in control of your own life and destiny or controlling others

B. A person with an orphan mentality finds great difficulty receiving love, acceptance, and admonition from God and others.

C. This results with the individual living with a great emphasis upon their performance as a means to receiving approval and acceptance.

1. If they feel they have performed well they feel accepted and if they feel they have performed poorly they feel rejected.
2. However, our acceptance by God is never dependent upon our performance. His love toward us is without condition.

D. Oftentimes a person with an orphan mentality exhibits traits of self-hatred. This can manifest in a variety of ways; from a subtle sense of never feeling acceptable to severe things like eating disorders or self-harm (i.e. cutting).

E. Oftentimes they have an especially difficult time forgiving themselves when they feel like they have failed or forgiving others when they believe others have failed them.

IV. Combating the Orphan Mentality

A. The orphan mentality is not something you can cast out because it consists of ungodly beliefs and/or attitudes that have been developed over a lifetime. It actually becomes part of our personality.

B. It must be displaced by personal experiences in the Father's love and revelation of His acceptance. This requires continual meditation on the Word of God regarding God's emotions toward us.

C. When we feel we are truly at home in the Father's love, we will not constantly struggle with fears, anxieties, control, isolation, insecurity, lust, addiction, compulsion, or dutiful striving. We will be confident and secure, without regard to our performance or position. We will be liberated to love God and love people lavishly without fear.

D. God fully answered the orphan mentality through the sacrifice of His Son for us. He offered Jesus to break down the barrier between us and God so that He might adopt us as His own children.

V. Chosen in Him and Adopted by the Father

Eph 1:3-6 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as he chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame (blameless) before Him in love, 5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

A. *Chose us in Him before the foundation of the world (i.e. before time began)*. You were the dream of the Father from eternity past.

B. *That we should be holy*. Holy means that God wanted to set you apart as His own and adorn you with His glory.

C. That we should be *without blame (blameless)*. This is speaking about living before the Lord without a sense of shame or fault. This is not according to our doing, but according to His grace.

D. *Before Him.* God always desired intimate relationship with you. He has always wanted you to be with Him, to be “before Him”.

E. *In love He predestined us.* Because of His incredible love for you He laid down a pre-programmed plan in your heart. This plan was His will for you. When you chose His will, it set you on a collision course with adoption, intimacy, acceptance and pleasure in God. When God dreamed of you, He also dreamed of the way to win your heart.

F. *Predestined to adoption.* It was never in the mind of God to leave you alone. It was always His plan to bring you near, by whatever means necessary. He always had it in His mind that you would be His child.

G. *Because of the good pleasure of His will.* God looked within Himself to consider what would bring Him the most pleasure. He considered what in all creation would please Him the most? He considered the vast array of options under creation and determined that the greatest pleasure that could be brought to Him would stem from having an intimate, Father-Child relationship with you.

H. *He made us accepted in the beloved.* You are therefore, fully accepted by Him. Even before you ever did anything, before you ever “lifted a finger” in God. Once you said “yes” you became fully accepted by God. You are the one upon whom the Eternal Father has set His affections and desires. Your greatest identity in this life is accepted and beloved. He wanted you so much that it was reasonable for Him to send Jesus to die for your sin. When you said ‘Yes’ to Jesus, you were accepted.

ORPHAN MENTALITY	IMAGE OF GOD	SPIRIT OF SONSHIP
Sees God as Master		Sees God as a loving Father
Independent / Self-reliant	DEPENDENCY	Interdependent / Acknowledges Need
Live by the Love of Law	THEOLOGY	Live by the Law of Love
Insecure and Lack peace	SECURITY	Rest and Peace
Strive for the praise, approval, and acceptance of man	APPROVAL	Totally accepted in God's love and justified by grace
A need for personal achievement as you seek to impress God and others, or no motivation to serve at all	MOTIVE FOR SERVICE	Motivated by gratitude for being unconditionally loved and accepted by God
Duty and earning God's favor or no motivation	MOTIVE FOR CHRISTIAN DISCIPLINES	Pleasure and delight
"Must" be holy to have God's favor, thus increasing a sense of shame and guilt	MOTIVE FOR PURITY	"Desire" to be holy; do not want anything to hinder intimate relationship with God
Self-rejection from comparing yourself to others	SELF-IMAGE	Positive and affirmed because you know you have such value to God
Seek comfort in counterfeit affections: addictions, compulsions, escapism, busyness, hyper-religious activity	SOURCE OF COMFORT	Seek times of quietness and solitude to rest in the Father's presence and love
Competition, rivalry, and jealousy toward others' success and position	PEER RELATIONSHIPS	Humility and unity as you value others and are able to rejoice in their blessings and success

Accusation and exposure in order to make yourself look good by making others look bad	HANDLING OTHERS' FAULTS	Love covers as you seek to restore others in a spirit of love and gentleness
See authority as a source of pain; distrustful toward them and lack a heart attitude of submission	VIEW OF AUTHORITY	Respectful, honoring; you see them as ministers of God
Difficulty receiving admonition; you must be right so you easily get your feelings hurt and close your spirit to discipline	VIEW OF ADMONITION	See the receiving of admonition as a blessing and need in your life so that your faults and weaknesses are exposed and put to death
Guarded and conditional; based upon others' performance as you seek to get your own needs met	EXPRESSION OF LOVE	Open, patient, and affectionate as you lay your life and agendas down in order to meet the needs of others
Conditional & Distant	SENSE OF GOD'S PRESENCE	Unconditional, close & intimate
Bondage	SPIRITUAL CONDITION	Liberty
Feel like a Servant/Slave	SPIRITUAL POSITION	Feel like a Son/Daughter
Spiritual ambition; the earnest desire for some spiritual achievement and distinction and the willingness to strive for it; a desire to be seen and counted among the mature	VISION	To daily experience the Father's unconditional love and acceptance and then be sent as a representative of His love to your family and others
Fight for what you can get	FUTURE	Sonship releases your inheritance