

# Slavery to Sonship (1) Exposing the Roots of the Spiritual Orphan

## *Jack and Trisha Frost*

For the first fourteen years of my daughter Sarah's life, rarely was she able to receive me as her father – her safe place where she could receive affection, affirmation, security, comfort, and protection. As a result of my own wounded heart, I was a stoic, intense, and harsh authoritarian father who demanded obedience but had very little ability to provide expressed love and nurture, even though I loved my children deeply.



In her early years, Sarah responded with a strong will, independence, and often defiance. Her adolescent years only amplified the issues. Then, in November 1995, I had a personal revelation of Father's love. My character was radically transformed in less than an hour. Trisha said that my personality changed more at that moment than in the previous 15 years altogether in the Lord. I went from an impatient father who did not have the ability to be intimate with my children to a gentle, comforting, and affectionate dad.

Following my change in heart, Sarah skeptically watched to see if my transformation would last. I still made mistakes, but instead of making excuses like I had done in the past, 90% of the time I would eventually come to her with a humble heart and ask her forgiveness for misrepresenting the Father's love. It took several months before Sarah would risk opening her heart to me, but as she did, our relationship steadily improved over the next three years. As she began to more freely receive my affection, love, and parenting, she became softer and less defiant. She began developing a sense of value and respect for me as I acted more like a father and she more like a daughter. But you can legally be a son or daughter, live in a home of perfect love, yet choose not to receive the love or the parenting! Just ask the prodigal son and his older brother (Luke 15)!

Even in this newfound intimacy Sarah and I shared, I began to see a relational pattern in her life. When everything was going good, she was able to receive my love and admonition. But when things went wrong at school, church, or home, she would often close her spirit to me and isolate herself, even though I may have done her no wrong. She would go from being my joyful and chatty daddy's girl to acting like a withdrawn and somber orphan. She would live her life as if she did not have a loving and affirming home, a safe place where she constantly heard her mom and dad tell her that she was the child whom they loved and in whom their favor rested. How many of Father God's children live their lives in similar ways – constantly struggling with feelings of rejection, independence, isolation, or oppression? Too often, they live their lives as if they do not have a home or a loving Father!

To a Christian, home is where we can constantly hear the voice of our Father saying, "You are the child I love and in whom My favor rests!" When we feel we are truly at

home in the Father's love, we do not constantly struggle with fears, anxieties, insecurities, lusts, addictions, compulsions, or aggressive striving. When we do not feel at home, secure and at rest in the Father's love, it becomes very easy to live our lives as if we do not have a home. We are left feeling like a spiritual orphan – feeling that we do not have a safe and secure place in the Father's heart where He protects us, affirms us, provides for us, expresses His love to us, a place where we belong.

Follow the 12-step progression of the underlined points and see how they may apply to your life. As a child, Sarah began to (1) focus upon the faults she saw in me. She did not understand that my attitudes and actions that were misrepresentations of love to her often came from my own unhealed issues and the hidden core pain from my youth. My surfacing pain was not about her, yet she received it as personal rejection and this left her (2) disappointed, discouraged, and wounded. As a result of her pain and judgments, she (3) lost basic trust in parental authority.

Basic trust does not mean the ability to believe or trust one another. It is the capacity to hold your heart open to others, especially if you believe another's motives or intentions are not pure. Basic trust is having an open heart. It is when you risk being vulnerable, even when it hurts you to stay open and not to close your spirit. Basic trust is when you are able to move beyond the weaknesses in others, receive God's healing touch one moment at a time, and not run away. You are able to risk being childlike again and receive love and nurture. Basic trust is foundational for building healthy relationships. Without basic trust, especially toward those in authority, relationships easily become dysfunctional: "I do not trust you enough to talk about my feelings." If you do not have basic trust, you may battle with pride, fears, independence, and control, thus finding great difficulty in receiving love and comfort from God and others. Intimacy is lost!

As God was restoring our family, Sarah began having a measure of trust restored toward me; yet, when she was receiving rejection from others in daily life, there was still a (4) fear of submission to receiving love, comfort, and admonition from me. Love, comfort, and healthy admonition are all part of healthy relationships and are things to which we must be willing to submit. Submission is a Latin word that means, "to place yourself underneath and to push up at the same time." Submission is having an open heart which enables us to be close, vulnerable, and honest in our relationships. Submission is an act of humility and receiving that releases God's grace and abilities in our lives and helps free us from our fears and insecurities with relationships (1 Peter 5:5-7). Because Sarah had been hurt earlier in life by my misrepresentation of Godly, loving authority, her fear of submission resulted in (5) a closed spirit toward me during her time of need. She felt that she could not risk being vulnerable and keeping her heart open to me. This led to (6) an independent spirit: "I subconsciously cannot trust you to help me, so I would rather handle everything myself."

Independence often causes us to hide or deny our pain, so we begin (7) controlling our relationships with anger, passivity, isolation, or "news/sports/weather" games. Our (8) relationships become superficial as we fear truly opening our hearts to people because we fear being hurt again. Nobody really knows us. We especially keep our distance from those in authority or from the very ones who may be able to help us by providing comfort, wise counsel, love, acceptance, and/or belonging. We may find ourselves with (9) very little healthy, supportive, and affirming relationships around us. We end up

feeling alone and isolated, even around friends and family. We have fallen into the ungodly belief of (10) living life like a spiritual orphan.

We are left feeling that we have no safe place, no one to care for our soul, no one we can trust to affirm and admonish us, no place to belong and be protected. So the spiritual orphan (11) begins to find comfort and identity in one or more of the following counterfeit affections: possessions – finding security in money or things; passions – addictions or compulsions to alcohol, drugs, food, immoral issues, etc.; position – finding acceptance by striving to be seen or slaving for the praise of man; power – being in control of your own life and destiny.

The end result is (12) a person who finds great difficulty receiving love, acceptance, and admonition from God and/or from others, especially during times when they feel like they have failed or when they believe others have failed them. Because receiving is difficult for them, true intimacy is a fleeting thing, so they often focus their relationship with God upon His acts, gifts, discipline, duty, and/or in hyper-religious activity. They may not even be able to sustain a healthy relationship with God at all. Their relationships with others, especially within their family, often depend upon the others' performance. Because they may fear their own weaknesses being exposed, they may feel threatened or withdraw if others get too close to their hidden core pain. They tend to find it very easy to see others' faults and justify keeping a reserved distance by the weaknesses they see in others. They may be very subtle in criticizing or devaluing others, either in their thought life or in conversation.

Experiencing a revelation of the Father's love and living life as if we have a home is often hindered by our unhealthy fear of His discipline in our life (Hebrews 12:7-10). When things seem to be going wrong, we subconsciously think it wise to keep our distance from others and from Father God and may try to handle the pain and disappointment ourselves. A lack of basic trust may be at the very root. As long as our image of Father God produces within us fear or condemnation and not compassionate, forgiving love, it becomes easy to act more like orphans (servants) than sons or daughters.

At 17, Sarah went through several weeks of deep rejection in school. Once more, during a time of personal crisis, she separated herself from me during her time of need. My heart ached at the separation I felt. I longed for her to run to my affectionate embrace so that I could wipe the tears from her eyes and hold her until the feelings of rejection went away. But something in her seemed to drive her to isolate herself from the very one who loved her and could comfort her the most: her daddy! Even while affirmation, acceptance, and belonging in her daddy's arms were only footsteps away, she once more fell into the roots and ungodly beliefs of feeling like a spiritual orphan. The distance I felt left me with a deep inner grief and the cry, "What did I do to cause her to separate her heart from my love?"

After three weeks of daily struggling with loneliness, insecurities, and fears, she finally came to Trisha and me and asked us to pray for her. Our prayer went something like this: "Father, show us at what time in Sarah's life she ceased receiving me as her daddy and allowing me to comfort, protect, and parent her!" Several minutes passed, and then Sarah remembered an incident at five years of age when she ran and jumped into my lap while I was seated. Her knee happened to hit me in a very private place and caused much of my hidden core pain to surface. As a subconscious response to my agony, I

threw her through the air and across the room onto the couch. She wasn't hurt physically, but she began to weep uncontrollably as basic trust was broken. I did not intentionally wound her. It was a reaction to my own pain. But my little girl, who was created to run into her daddy's arms and receive love and comfort, lost basic trust, and a fear of submitting to my love began to take root in her mind, will, and emotions. The root of feeling like a spiritual orphan was watered and grew over the years by my inability to express tender love, nurture, and affection, and her reaction and judgment to that.

As we prayed over that memory of the five-year old girl, Sarah wept uncontrollably for 15 minutes in my arms as expressed love, comfort, and forgiveness began the process of healing and restoring basic trust. Since that day, the ability for Sarah to trust me during times when she is in need of comfort, healing, and admonition has been steadily increasing. As a result, Sarah has given me a precious and priceless gift – knowing that now I have as special a place in her heart as she has always had in mine! This has broken much of the hardness and fear off Sarah's heart, and her relationships are becoming increasingly more healthy. She is finding the joy of receiving life as a daughter who has the favor of her mom and dad. No longer does she live her life as if she does not have a home. Our prayer for her, now that she is 19 and growing into a beautiful woman, is for a divine exchange to take place – that she go from her daddy being her source of safety, comfort, and love to the Heavenly Father being the One in whom she is able to find rest, security, and identity – that she daily hear His voice clearly saying to her, "Sarah, you are the daughter whom I love and in whom My favor rests!" No longer living like a spiritual orphan, but at home in Father's love!

The root of feeling like a spiritual orphan is one of the greatest hindrances to people receiving their healing and walking in expressed love, intimacy, and in healthy relationships. It takes basic trust being restored in order to daily feel secure enough to receive the love that is needed to heal our wounded hearts. The more love and comfort we are able to receive, the less fearful we are of opening our hearts to intimate, loving relationships. We must be willing to let go of our need to suppress our childhood pain and to control our emotions in order to open our hearts to receive the Father's healing love and to walk in true intimacy with others.

That is a defining moment, when basic trust was lost and your ability to receive love and healing was hindered. Find a quiet place to pray and wait upon the Lord. Let your memory get in touch with the emotions of that day. Where was Jesus that day? You were not alone. From the moment you were conceived in your mother's womb, God has not left nor forsaken you (Psalms 22:9-10; 139:13-24; Isaiah 49:15-16; Hebrews 13:5-6). He has promised not to leave you feeling like an orphan. He will come to you (Psalms 27:10; John 14:18-23). There has never been a moment in time when God has not pursued you with His love and sought to purify, cleanse, and restore you (Jeremiah 1:5; 31:3; Isaiah 53:4-5; 66:11-13).

I am not saying for you to use your imagination or visualization, but to get in touch with the pain and loneliness of the moment when you cut yourself off from receiving a parent's love. Look throughout the memory and see if you can see what Jesus was doing when you were closing your heart to love. Can you see Him? What is He saying to you? Be still and listen! Allow Him to speak words of comfort, acceptance, and belonging. Even if you feel like you are not receiving anything, then meditate upon the

scriptures that are listed. Play some soft and gentle music that expresses Father's love for you and allow Him to rejoice over you with singing as you wait to experience His love and the restoration of basic trust (Zephaniah 3:17).

You really are perfectly and unconditionally loved and accepted by Father God. There is nothing a baby can do to be loved but to receive it! Just be willing to lower the walls, fears, and insecurities, and His perfect love will cast out the fear of submission and healthy, loving relationships. You were created for love! Freely receiving and giving love is your destiny! (I John 4:16-19; Genesis 1:26)

In the Father's love,

Jack & Trisha Frost

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