

Orphan or Child: Overcoming an Orphan Strategy

The “Big Lie” From the Enemy

He looks to shift focus from *abundance* to *limitation*.

He accuses God of *not being good*.

He invites us to become independent from God.

An Orphan Strategy is an enemy tactic in which we believe the lie that God is not good, and then we view our circumstances as if we have to accomplish everything in our own power.

Matthew 5:11–12 NLT

God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

Numbers 13:27–33 NLT

This was [the spies] report to Moses: ‘We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces. But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak! The Amalekites live in the Negev, and the Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites live in the hill country. The Canaanites live along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea and along the Jordan Valley.’

But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. ‘Let’s go at once to take the land,’ he said. ‘We can certainly conquer it!’

But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. “We can’t go up against them! They are stronger than we are!” So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites: “The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there. All the people we saw were huge. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them, we felt like grasshoppers, and that’s what they thought, too!”

Numbers 14:1–4 NLT

Then the whole community began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron. “If only we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!” they complained. “Why is the Lord taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder! Wouldn’t it be better for us to return to Egypt?” Then they plotted among themselves, “Let’s choose a new leader and go back to Egypt!”

We move from being *dependent* to *independent* so that we can become *interdependent*.

Galatians 5:13 NLT

For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don’t use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love.”

1 Corinthians 9:19 NLT

Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ.”

Acts 20:35 NLT

You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus: “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

We find greater satisfaction in our *interdependence*, where we serve others, than in our *freedom*, where we serve ourselves.

If you trusted God fully in all things, what would be different about the way you think, speak, and act?

4 Keys to Defeating an Orphan Strategy:

1. Recognize that the extraordinary life is found in dependence on God and interdependence with others.

Matthew 5:3 NLT

God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

Matthew 6:33 NLT

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

2. Repent and reject the pride of independence and accept the responsibility of interdependence with God and others.

John 14:15–21 NLT

If you love me, obey my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you. Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them.

3. Receive and embrace the truth that you are a child of God.

Romans 8:14–17 NLT

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ, we are heirs of God's glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering.

Galatians 4:5–7 NLT

God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, “Abba, Father.” Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

4. Remember that correction is not rejection.

Hebrews 12:5-8 NLT

And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, “My child, don’t make light of the Lord’s discipline, and don’t give up when he corrects you. For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.”

As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Whoever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? If God doesn’t discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all.

Small Group Guide: Orphan or Child

Opening Question

When you hit a significant obstacle or disappointment, what is your gut instinct — to reach out for help, or to hunker down and handle it yourself? Where do you think that instinct comes from?

You Are Not an Orphan — Don't Living Like One

Independence is one of the highest values in our culture. We celebrate it, pursue it, and build our lives around it — the freedom to do what we want, when we want, how we want, answerable to no one. And independence is genuinely good, up to a point. The transition from dependence to independence is a real marker of maturity. But it is not the destination. The enemy has convinced an entire culture that independence is the highest form of freedom, when in fact the richest life — the one with the most joy, fulfillment, and satisfaction — is found one step further: **in interdependence**.

Interdependence is the acceptance of responsibility toward others in exchange for the freedom to do life alone. This plays out in marriage, in family, in friendship, in community, and most fundamentally, in our relationship with God. The enemy's strategy is to keep us one step short of that, convinced that self-sufficiency is strength. But pride in independence, which sounds like, "I don't need anyone," "I can handle this," "people will only let you down," is not strength. It is an **orphan strategy** operating beneath the surface.

An orphan strategy is what happens when we believe the lie that God is not good, and then live as though we have to accomplish everything on our own. Orphans feel abandoned and alone. They see the world through a lens of lack. They depend entirely on their own resourcefulness because they have learned — or been convinced — that no one else can be trusted. Read Numbers 13:27–33. The ten spies who came back from Canaan were operating out of exactly this posture. They compared their capabilities to the giants and found themselves wanting. What they failed to factor in was God. Joshua and Caleb were looking at the same land, the same obstacles, and the same fortified cities, but they were doing different math, because they knew they were not going in alone.

The ten spies' response is revealing: rather than risk trusting God and entering the promised land, they preferred to go back to Egypt and be slaves. That is not a reasonable calculation. It is the calculation of people who genuinely believe, at some level, that God is setting them up to fail — that the other shoe is always about to drop, that good things don't last, that they are ultimately on their own. That belief is the orphan strategy's deepest root.

The antidote is not a pep talk. It is a change of identity. Romans 8 is explicit: we have not received a spirit of fearful slavery, but the Spirit of adoption by which we cry "Abba, Father" — a word so intimate it is better translated "Daddy." We are not orphans scrambling for scraps. We are heirs — joint heirs with Christ of everything the Father has. And Jesus promises this: "I will not abandon you as orphans. I will come to you" (John 14:18). The discipline we experience as children of God is not rejection; it is the evidence of belonging. A father disciplines the children he loves, and difficulty is often the means by which God trains us to trust Him more. The giants in the promised land were not a sign that God had forgotten Israel. They were an opportunity for a victory that would demonstrate His power. They still are for us today.

For Discussion

1. An orphan strategy can be defined as *taking hold when we believe we are alone and solely dependent on our own resources*. Where in your life right now — a relationship, a challenge at work, a financial pressure, a parenting situation — are you most tempted to operate out of that posture?
2. Note this progression by which we are intended to live: dependence → independence → interdependence. Where are you in that progression — with God? With the people closest to you? Is independence somewhere you have camped out rather than passed through?
3. Romans 8 says you have been adopted. Does that identity feel real to you on a daily basis, or more like something you know theologically but don't fully inhabit? What's the gap?
4. Correction is not rejection. God's discipline is evidence of belonging, not abandonment. Is there a difficulty in your life right now that you have been interpreting as God being against you? What would it look like to reframe it as God training you?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for being close. Thank you for adopting us at great cost, for calling us heirs, for disciplining us because we belong to You, and for never abandoning us. Forgive us for the ways we have lived as orphans — self-sufficient, guarded, convinced that we are ultimately alone and that You cannot be fully trusted. We renounce the orphan strategy. We receive our identity as Your children. Jesus, thank You that You did not leave us as orphans but sent Your Spirit to live in us and with us. Holy Spirit, make the reality of our adoption feel as true in our daily decisions as it is in Scripture. Move us from independence into interdependence — with You and with one another — and give us the courage to lay down the burden of doing life alone. In Jesus' name, amen.