

Orphan vs. Sonship Chart

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If you are a Christian, you have been adopted! God is your Father, and because of Christ, he has lavished his love upon you which includes all the rights and privileges of being his child. You have received his name, his promised presence, protection, provision, loving discipline, the inheritance of eternal glory, and more.

But do you still think and feel like you are an orphan? Do you live as if you are on your own—like you still have to earn God’s love and acceptance?

Years ago, I was helped by working through World Harvest Mission’s checklist “The Orphan’s vs. The Child of God.” I realized, though I was an adopted son of God, I thought, and felt, and lived, like I was still an orphan in many ways and situations. I needed help to believe and live a life grounded in the truth of my adoption as one of God’s cherished sons.

Take a few moments to work through the checklist below.¹ Mark the box in each row that describes you most of the time. Then work through the exercise that follows.

¹ World Harvest Mission, *Sonlife Course—Lesson 1*, accessed at godrenews.us/by/sons (accessed December 13, 2019).

The Orphan

I will not leave you as orphans...
(John 14:18)

- ☐ Feels alone. Lacks a vital daily intimacy with God. Is full of self-concern.
- ☐ Anxious over felt needs: relationships, money, health. "I'm all alone and nobody cares. I'm not a happy camper."
- ☐ Lives on a succeed/fail basis. Needs to "look good" and "be right." Is performance-oriented.
- ☐ Feels condemned, guilty, and unworthy before God and others.
- ☐ Has little faith, lots of fear, lots of faith in himself: "I've got to fix it."
- ☐ Labors under a sense of unlimited obligation. Tries too hard to please. Burns out.
- ☐ Rebellious. Resists authority. Heart is hard. Is not easily teachable.
- ☐ Defensive. Can't listen well. Bristles at the charge of being self-righteous (thus proving the point).
- ☐ Needs to be right, safe, secure. Unwilling to fail. Unable to tolerate criticism. Can only "handle" praise.
- ☐ Excessively self-confident or self-loathing. Discouraged, defeated. Lacks spiritual power.
- ☐ Tends toward an "I can do it myself!" attitude. Is strong-willed, driven.
- ☐ Unbelieving effort. Relies only on his gifts to get by in ministry.

The Child of God

But he has given us the Spirit of sonship
and by him we cry, 'Abba, Father!'
(Rom 8:15)

- Has a growing assurance that "God is really *my* loving heavenly Father."
- Trusts the Father and has a growing confidence in his loving care. Is being freed up from worry.
- Learning to live in daily, conscious, partnership with God. Is not fearful.
- Feels loved, forgiven, and totally accepted because Christ's merit really clothes him.
- Has a daily *working trust* in God's sovereign plan for her life as loving, wise, and best. Believes God is good.
- Prayer is the first resort: "I'm going to ask my Daddy first." Cries "Abba, Father!"
- Has strength to be submissive. Has a soft (broken and contrite) heart. Is teachable.
- Open to criticism since she *consciously* stands in *Christ's* perfection, not her own. Is able to examine her unbelief.
- Able to take risks and even fail, since his righteousness is in Christ. Needs no "record" to boast in, protect, or defend.
- Confident in Christ and encouraged because of the Holy Spirit's work in her.
- "I can do all things through *Christ* who gives me strength!"
- Trusting *less* in self and more in the Holy Spirit—a daily, conscious, reliance.

Pick one of the statements you checked in the orphan column. Reflect on a time when you actually thought and acted like an orphan in that way. Dare to feel the sadness of it. Then move to the sonship column and read what is true about you as God's adopted son. Takes some moments to let the truth of your sonship sink in. Now imagine that same orphan moment believing the truth of what is yours as a child of God. Cry out to your, "Abba Father" and ask him to grip you your heart and mind and emotions afresh with the truth of his love.