



Spiritual Orphans

Recap

1 John 2:18-29

Recap

The Anti-Christian

Anyone who **denies** the Son doesn't have the Father
left our churches
a **liar**

Anyone who **denies** the Father and the Son
Anyone who says that Jesus is **not** the Christ
lead you **astray**

Recap

The Anti-Anti-Christian

Fight for **community** (humility)

Embraces Father, Son and Spirit (salvation)

Live the **truth** (belief and behaviour)

Reliant upon the Holy Spirit
(dependent and transforming)

Recap

And now, dear children, remain in **fellowship** with Christ so that when he returns, you will be full of courage and not shrink back from him in **shame**. Since we know that Christ is **righteous**, we also know that all who do what is right are God's children. *Vs 28-29*

What is Relational

Theology distinct from relationship becomes rules and worse, abstraction

Thomas Jay Oord

Many Christians find the ideas and language of **relational theology** helpful. But many also appreciate relational theology without really being **clear** about what it is. Misunderstandings emerge. As they read the Bible, Christians frequently encounter relational theology's ideas and language. Unfortunately, however, conventional Christian theologies have sometimes ignored relational ideas and language. The conventional theology that results is sometimes impractical and nonsensical.

What is Relational Theology?, Thomas Jay Oord

At its core, relational theology affirms **two** key ideas:

God affects creatures in various ways. Instead of being aloof and detached, God is active and involved in relationship with others. God relates to us, and that makes an essential difference.

Creatures affect God in various ways. While God's nature is unchanging, creatures influence the loving and living Creator of the universe. We relate to God, and creation makes a difference to God.

Because God loves before He creates the physical world, **love precedes matter**. We need to be careful with this truth because matter really matters. In fact, the Western church's underappreciation of the physical realm has created all sorts of problems. Yet while the material world is deeply important to God, there is a sense in which **loving relationships are even more ultimate**, more foundational, and more solid to the working of the cosmos than the sidewalk under our feet. **God's love is more trustworthy than the very ground we walk on.** *Tim Challies*

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him. Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure. [3:1-3](#)

What we are-**identity** vs 1
What we shall be-**promise** vs 2
What we should be-**hope** vs 3

The "anti-christian" exists **outside** of relationship with God. It's the only way they can **justify** their behaviour

And now, dear **children**, remain in **fellowship** with Christ so that when he returns, you will be full of courage and not shrink back from him in shame. Since we know that Christ is righteous, we also know that all who **do what is right** are **God's children**. [2:28-29](#)



One's tendency with a statement like this always is just to stand in **wonder and amazement** at it. I have never chosen, in and of myself, to preach upon **this text**. I have often felt that I would like to, but there are certain great words like this in Scripture of which frankly I am, in a sense, frightened; frightened as a preacher, lest anything that I say may detract from them or may rob anyone of their greatness and their glory. That may be wrong, but this is how it always affects me...[Dr. Martyn-Lloyd Jones](#)

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us **his children**, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him. **Vs 1**

Identity

Marriage as the ultimate act of love relationally

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us **NKJV**

Behold/see is **plural** here, literally, "**everyone behold**." (Everyone pay attention) The usual form is singular. John is calling upon all the saints to wonder

Here is an astonishing thing, he says. It is not the fact that God loves, but **how** God loves. **Ray Stedman**

Identity

the impact of the father's death was more profound than it is today. Both of these points are stressed by J.-U. Krause in his massive *Habilitationschrift* on widows and orphans in the Roman world. Krause estimates that during the time of the Roman Empire some **40-45 per cent of children aged 14-15 had lost their father**. **J.T. Fitzgerald**

Identity

Orphans constituted a long-standing problem in the ancient Mediterranean world, and early Christians were not unique in seeking to address it. They made a variety of responses both as individuals and as an institution. Of the responses by **individuals**, adoption was surely the most significant one, and it was encouraged by church leaders... The creation of an orphanage, on the other hand, was an **institutional** response, and as such, it was an utterly unique, truly *sui generis* institution in the ancient world. And it was to have a long history, extending even to today. **J.T. Fitzgerald**

Identity

In the day on which you fast you will taste nothing but bread and water; and having reckoned up the price of the dishes of that day which you intended to have eaten, **you will give it to a widow, or an orphan**, or to some person in want, and thus you will exhibit humility of mind, so that he who has received benefit from your humility may fill his own soul, and pray for you to the Lord. [Shepherd of Hermas, 110 AD](#)

Identity

It was a community committed to the sanctity of life. It wasn't simply that Christians opposed abortion. Abortion was dangerous and relatively rare. A more common practice was called "**infant exposure**." Unwanted infants were literally thrown onto garbage heaps, to either die or be taken by traders into slavery and prostitution. **Christians saved the infants and took them in.** [Tim Keller, 5 Features That Made the Early Church Unique](#)

Identity

Some things grow **commonplace** over time. We've heard about them and known them for years. Maybe at first, when it was new, an idea or experience affected us. But over the years, the effect grows weaker and weaker, until finally it's just a far-distant memory. But the Father's great love for us is the kind of experience that should grow **stronger and stronger** over the years, until it totally dominates every aspect of our lives. It should consume our thoughts and control our behaviour. [Steve Cole](#)

Identity

The lack of family leaves someone vulnerable. John stands in awe of God's **gesture** of love that invites us to live a life of **familial** relationship. And the early church responds by extending this new 'spiritual relationship' to **all**

But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the **right** to become children of God. [John 1:12](#)

Identity

I believed that there was a God because I was told it by my grandmother and later by other adults. But when I found that I knew not only that there was God but that I was a **child of God**, when I understood that, when I comprehended that, more than that, when I internalized that, ingested that, I became **courageous**. *Maya Angelou*

Identity

So then, since we have a great High Priest who has entered heaven, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we believe. This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin. So let us come **boldly** to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive his mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it most. *Hebrews 4:14-16*

Dear friends, we are **already** God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. **But (and)** we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. *Vs 2*

Promise

Second and third generation disciples may **question** this relationship.

The two thoughts of the present (now) and the future condition of God's children are placed side by side with the simple and, as parts of one thought. Christian condition, **now** and **eternally**, centre's in the fact of being children of God. In that fact lies the germ of all the possibilities of eternal life.

The now and the not yet, our ongoing **tension**

And all who have this **eager** expectation will keep themselves **pure**, just as he is pure. [Vs 3](#)

Hope

If you know that He is righteous (pure), you know that everyone also who **practices** (present tense = their lifestyle, it does not mean "perfection" but "direction" of their life - toward heaven rather than toward hell!)

The disturbing reality is that it is possible to think one is actively "serving God," but without a **true** relationship with Him [Tony Garland](#)

Hope

Note that believers don't live holy lives to prove they are children of God, but they live holy lives because they **are** children of God. To **invert** the divine pattern is to open one's self to the subtle trap of legalism and self-righteousness.

Hope

How foolish can you be? After starting your new lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own **human effort**? Have you experienced so much for nothing? Surely it was not in vain, was it? [Galatians 3:3-4](#)

What you are **looking** for will determine what you are **living** for

Hope

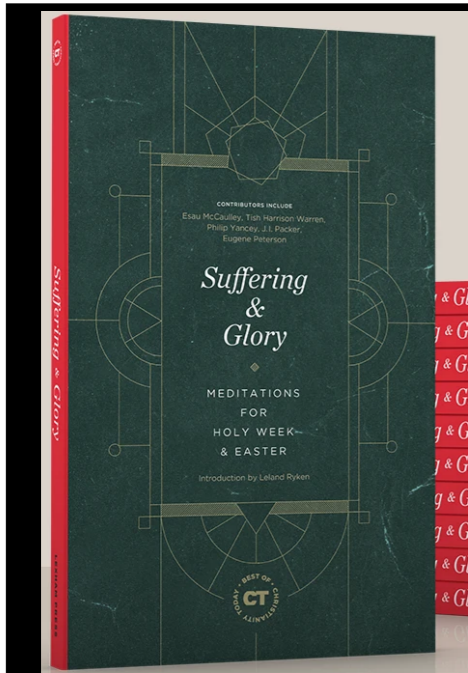
So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he **adopted you as his own children**. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we are his **heirs**. 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. [Romans 8:15-17](#)

I do feel that this is perhaps the greatest **weakness** of all in the Christian church, that we fail to realize **what we are, or who we are**. We spend our time in arguing about the implications of the Christian truth or the application of this, that and the other. But the central thing is to realize what the Christian **is**. We grumble and complain, and it is all due to the fact that we have not really seen ourselves in terms of this picture. Surely, as we read these words, we must of necessity be humbled, indeed in a sense humiliated, as we realize the inadequacy of our ideas and the unworthiness of our view of ourselves as Christian people. [Dr Martyn-Lloyd Jones](#)

Now you are no longer a **slave** but God's own child. And since you are his **child**, God has made you his **heir**. [Galatians 4:7](#)



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