THE ORPHAN SYNDROME

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Breaking Free *and* Finding Home

Dr. Nick Eno

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Dedicated to my mother, Felicia Mambo Eno.
I send you love always

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Soli Deo Gloria!

Foreword

Each and every one of us is brought into this world alone. Yes, we may have parents who raise us, and some of us don't. The constant is we each enter and exit this world alone, a worldly orphan. This is not how it is meant to be. God, our Heavenly Daddy, is with us from conception to departure. No one is an orphan, spiritually, except by choice.

In Nick Eno's book, life examples are given, personalities and struggles are discussed, and conclusions made about the root causes of every example. There is hope for every orphan spirit through the healing power of Jesus Christ and the grace that is freely offered to each one of us, a gift from God our heavenly Father.

My prayer is those seeking peace will find it through faith and through grace. The answers to earth's questions are found in grace; the acceptance of grace will heal an orphan spirit.

—David J. Durrett
CEO
New Birmingham Inc.

Introduction

She sat across from me, her face buried in her hands, as she sobbed. "I am so tired, so dry inside." Heather, forty-nine, a mother of two grown children, had just opened up about the gnawing loneliness and despair that had been her constant companions since she was seven. She felt disconnected from her children and unloved by her husband.

Heather had professed Christ when she was nine, but had never experienced the kind of personal relationship that others often describe. Heather worked really hard to dot the i's and cross the t's in her life—college degree, married with children by twenty-five, a very successful career in real estate, and active in her church and community. Yet there she sat in my office—fearful, lonely, depressed, on the verge of divorce, in constant physical pain, and feeling very alienated from God and her family.

She feels like an orphan. Heather has an orphan spirit. The different manifestations of that grave condition constitute the orphan syndrome.

In my twenty-five years of counseling, similar scenarios have been replayed over and over with different people of all ages. I write this book to help all those whose hearts feel orphaned like Heather.

There is no shortcut to Christian maturity. It takes time as well as our cooperation. It is a process, not an event. Too often we want God to deliver us by miracles. However, God wants to develop our character so we can apply his principles, and not end up in the graves that we dig for ourselves.

Thomas Aquinas wrote:

> Two things are required in order to attain eternal life: the grace of God and man's will. And although God has made man without man's help, He does not sanctify him without his cooperation.[1]

Over the long history of the church, different groups have proffered various formulaic and quick fixes to achieve union with Christ. The hype typically did not match the result. Today is no different.

Wilderness excursions, weekend intensives, deliverance sessions, ubiquitous conferences, breaking soul/generational ties, and self-help psycho-babblers are still offering people silver bullets that consistently fail to assuage man's greatest need—*love*!

Our deepest anxiety stems from the fear of losing love—feeling isolated and without comfort in a cold, evil world. We know, deep down, we were not created to be orphans, yet "sonship" eludes most of us.

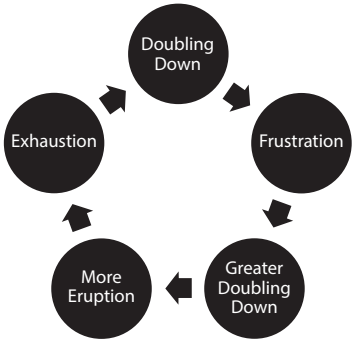
As Jesus prepared to depart this world, he comforted his followers with these words, "I will not leave you alone, like orphans. I will come back for you" (John 14:18 NCV). He promised to send the Comforter, the *Paraclete*, to lead his followers into all truth.

Yet, today too many professing Christians feel isolated and burdened by the constant pressure to perform for acceptance. They are exhausted from feeding off the trough of stale mantras, rote worship and shallow fellowship. Self-help sermons, no matter how titillating or affirming, lack the power to touch us in our "inward parts" (Ps. 55:6).

We crave to be loved and to love back.

Our rituals and liturgies are directed mostly at external cues. Thus the cycle of eruption leads to doubling down which leads to frustration, which leads to greater doubling down, which leads to more eruption, which leads to exhaustion, and continues to be perpetrated. We have drunk deep from the wells of faith but ignored what makes faith work—*love* (see Gal. 5:6).

Cycle of Eruption



This cycle produces "the weary saint," seemingly the norm these days. We soldier on like orphans without a father. We work hard to hide our deep hurts from each other, cope by escaping through consumerism and hedonism, and medicate our dread of the future with "Big Pharma."

After twenty-five years of counseling in the "basement" with the saints, I have sadly come to the conclusion that the kind of deep inner transformation believers crave is largely

missing in today's iteration of church. We are trained to confront sin by reframing it in the context of cheap grace, blaming the devil, or toughening our resolve to conquer sin through the force of our own will.

The kind of self-examination (1 Cor. 11:28) that is required to help us identify and own our deep alienation from love (God) is typically reserved for the few minutes before sporadic communion services. Surrender is not an option—strive on Christian soldier! "Strive on" could be a fitting anthem.

The Orphan Syndrome: Breaking Free and Finding Home seeks to help us identify the source of our deepest wounds, describe their effects, and offer us practical and time-tested ways to offer the deepest parts of ourselves to Christ. Only God can transform our crushed spirits and broken hearts into healing altars. His love alone transforms us from orphans into sons and daughters.

However, we must be willing to cultivate habits and virtues that prime us for such inner change. These habits include, but are not limited to, confession, repentance, solitude, worship, simplicity, and a lifestyle of sacrifice and generosity. Often we need the help of an anointed and qualified counselor along the journey to freedom in Christ.

As Theresa of Lysieux so elegantly stated, "If you are willing to serenely bear the trial of being displeasing to yourself, then you will be for Jesus a pleasant place of shelter."[2]

As you read these pages, my prayer is that you choose to surrender your deepest hurts to God and allow his love to penetrate and abide in your heart. That way you can become a vital part of the healing community that fulfills Jesus' test of true discipleship.

> Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.
>
> (John 13:35 NLT)

ONE

A Picture of the Wounded Spirit

It was a crisp February morning in Dallas, Texas. I was at home resting after an intense weekend of ministry when the phone rang. It was a dear friend—an associate pastor at a very prominent ministry in the Dallas area, bearing news a friend never wants to hear.

"Nick, Jay shot himself this morning." He had been found by one of his children.

Horrified and in disbelief, reeling, and pondering numerous questions, I listened as my friend filled me in on the details, including the funeral arrangements for Jay. This did not make sense. I was well acquainted with this family, especially his wife, Janet. The couple appeared to be the very pillars of stability and Christian maturity. Long-term members of a well-established church, they were involved in the highest levels of ministry.

I drove out to the family's home that evening and attended the wake the next day. At the committal service, Jay's pastor from his hometown spoke first. He assured everyone that Jay was definitely born again with a sure

testimony, and then proceeded to describe his firsthand account of Jay's experience with the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Jay was driving, and the pastor was talking to him about the Holy Spirit's baptism. After speaking about the baptism with fire, the pastor invited Jay to ask God for the gift. Well, boy did he receive it! Jay began speaking in tongues, and drove for several miles with his eyes closed without crashing! Sitting in the passenger's seat, the pastor admitted he was terrified, yet rejuvenated by the experience. The questions on my mind were amplified. This man was saved, sanctified, and filled with the Holy Spirit! How could he shoot himself?

Next, a striking young preacher was invited to speak. The tall, blonde, and muscular young man tried to speak, but sobbed bitterly. All he could mutter was, "Please forgive me, Lord. Please forgive me!" Finally, composing himself, he proceeded to describe his relationship with Jay over the previous eighteen months. Jay had taken a liking to him and the two would have breakfast every Thursday morning together and talk about faith and life in general. They had just met as usual, the previous Thursday before this tragedy. Something seemed different about that last meeting, though. Unlike in previous meetings, Jay wanted reassurance that his family, especially his wife and friends, loved him.

The young man broke down again as he went on to say the Lord woke him up that Thursday morning and impressed upon his heart to fast and pray for Jay to be healed of a *wounded spirit*. He felt no sense of urgency at the time, so he rolled over and decided to put it off until the following week.

"Oh, Lord, forgive me," he wailed.

Feeling his pain, I began weeping too. First for Jay, then his family; then I wept for my own compassion deficits; and finally for the body of Christ.

Jay had seemingly crossed all the "t's" and dotted the "i's" required by full-gospel Christianity to ensure a victorious life, even until the end. Yet, on a Sunday morning, alone and in despair, he took his own life.

The service came to an end, and we followed the flag-draped casket of this pastor and veteran to the Dallas/Fort Worth National Cemetery.

An All-Too-Familiar Fight

After saying goodbye to Jay's family, I approached the broken young preacher who had been meeting with Jay and invited him to breakfast. We agreed to meet the following Thursday at a diner midpoint from our homes.

During breakfast, he proceeded to elaborate on what had transpired at Jay's funeral. He had woken up early that fateful Thursday with an urgent impression upon his heart to fast and pray for Jay. After inquiring further of the Lord, he discerned he needed to fast and pray so Jay would be healed of a *wounded spirit*.

"Wounded spirit! What is that? And how do you diagnose it?" I desperately asked.

I had been a licensed counselor by then for two decades. I was in clinical practice, served as head of counseling for a large church, and had spent over ten years in full-time ministry—yet this was a relatively new concept to me.

Weren't salvation and sanctification supposed to take care of all those things? After all, the Bible categorically states, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17 NKJV).

As I spent some time with Jay's widow, Janet, and probed further into this issue, Jay's tragic end started to make sense to me.

I asked Janet, "When was Jay happiest in your marriage?"

Her response was heart piercing. "Once when he was in Korea, and the other time when he was in Vietnam."

Jay had resisted his wife's love and the love of his children for over five decades! Even more devastating, Jay had resisted God's love all his life. He would give the shirt off his back to help a stranger. He gave of himself and his substance to the service of the Lord. However, in his personal relationships, he felt unworthy of love. He would deflect and deny love at every turn. He always felt detached, unwanted, fearful, ashamed, and was without joy.

Cases like this one have become increasingly prevalent. Preachers, ministers, and Christians in general who have a covenant with the source of life—our Abba Father—find themselves empty, distraught, and overwhelmed with despair, as they battle bouts of depression while in God's service.

Something is wrong with this picture.

Jay's funeral began my search to understand what I now refer to as the *orphan syndrome*.

On another evening, not long after this tragic event, I read a local paper, with the headline:

> MACON GA PREACHER FATALLY SHOOTS SELF BETWEEN SUNDAY SERVICES.
> The pastor of a church in Macon, Georgia apparently shot himself fatally after returning to his home from Sunday services, authorities said. The Rev. Teddy Parker Jr., pastor of Bibb Mt. Zion Baptist Church was found dead

> in the driveway of his home . . . he was 42. He was found by his wife. Authorities believe the gunshot wound that caused his death was self-inflicted. The couple has two daughters . . . It could not be determined if they were with their mother when she found him. . . . News of his death sent shockwaves through religious circles.[3]

Yet another case of the orphan syndrome.
I was determined to find answers.

My Own Wounds

My quest to learn more led me to Conway, South Carolina to a conference on "Experiencing the Father's Embrace." There on the altar of ministry, I had to confront my own "orphan" state, born out of a wounded spirit. I vividly remember the events that shifted my entire paradigm on belonging, and my ability to connect to God and others.

One night in my early teens, I heard a lot of commotion, then loud voices, and finally footsteps running toward my bedroom door. Suddenly the door swung open and my mother rushed in with my father in hot pursuit. She dashed in, slammed the door shut behind her, and then locked the bolt from the inside. In short order, my father was banging on the door on the outside, commanding me, "Open the door!" My mom was leaning against the door on the inside begging me, "Don't let him in."

I can still feel the deep sense of angst and confusion that paralyzed me. I felt like an accordion—pulled wide from both sides, then released. I bit my fingernails until they bled as I heard my siblings crying outside the door.

My mother eventually left that night, reassuring us, "I'll be back in a few days." She never returned.

Fast forward to July 3, 2003. I had just dropped my wife of fifteen years off at the airport. She was ostensibly going to visit her mother in New Jersey. Her father had died a few months earlier, so this was a planned visit. I returned home, to find she had left a note from her lover informing me she was not coming back. I agonized over how to break the news to my ten-year-old daughter, only to find out her mother had told her she was leaving, and had sworn her to silence a full day before she left.

I have never felt as hurt and betrayed as that before or since.

Being emotionally hurt is not all that resulted from these two instances of rejection. I was spiritually wounded. My spirit, the core of who I am, was wounded and therefore, dysfunctional. All that flowed out of me was tainted by these traumatic events. As Proverbs 18:14 (NIV) explains: "The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness but a wounded spirit who can bear?"

That day at the conference was a turning point in my spiritual restoration, a milestone in my spiritual development, and a moment of revelation on how a wounded spirit produces the orphan syndrome. From that day on, I began the journey toward *sonship*.

I believe Jay's outcome would have been different if someone could have ministered to his wounded spirit. The orphan syndrome would have never been produced in him, and this man of God's life could have been preserved.

The message of the *Orphan Syndrome* is to preserve you, and help you heal. It is real help for real hurt. Whether you are in the depths of despair and flirting with thoughts of suicide, or simply feeling cold and empty, our Heavenly

Father—the source of life—is pursuing you to bring you to wholeness.

The following chapters will help you identify symptoms of a wounded spirit and how it leads to an orphan syndrome—and how to heal. I believe the word of the Lord when it says, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me, all the days of my life" (Ps. 23:6 KJV).