

***“A Self-Assessment: Spiritual Orphan or Child of God?” (Adoption)***  
***(Study 1 of “Spiritual Processing Group: Sonship B” Series)***

**Opening Question (5-10 Minutes)**

1. When you were a child, what did your family tend to celebrate most?
  - Was there a specific event, person, or time of year that you all celebrated?
  - Is there a specific moment growing up when *you* remember feeling celebrated?
2. When you were a child, was there an activity you really enjoyed doing that you felt like your dad or mom enjoyed doing too? Tell us about it.

Let’s take a look at a story Jesus told about a dad celebrating a son...

**Scripture Study (10-15 Minutes)**

Read Luke 15:1-3, 11-32 (you can ask someone to read it aloud in the ESV or NLT)

1. Be quiet for 30 seconds. Think or write. Now what are your first impressions?
  - What’s your emotional, gut-reaction?
  - Ask a question you have (or can think of).
  - Volunteer a thought or comment- about a verse or the whole passage.
2. What does this story tell us about being lost?
  - In your own words, describe how the younger brother is lost.
  - In your own words, describe how the older brother is lost.
  - When you feel spiritually lost, what brother do you most resemble? Why?
3. What does this story tell us about being found?
  - In your own words, describe what the father does when he finds the younger brother.
  - In your own words, describe what the father does when he finds the older brother.
  - Is there a recent time you felt spiritually found? If so, what did God do?

**Scripture Passages (The Parable of the Prodigal Son)**

Luke, Chapter 15- English Standard Version Translation (ESV): <sup>1</sup> Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him [Jesus].<sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”<sup>3</sup> So he told them this parable: [...] <sup>11</sup> And he [Jesus] said, “There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. <sup>13</sup> Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. <sup>14</sup> And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. <sup>16</sup> And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.’” <sup>20</sup> And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his

servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. <sup>23</sup> And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. <sup>24</sup> For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate. <sup>25</sup> "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. <sup>27</sup> And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' <sup>28</sup> But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, <sup>29</sup> but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' <sup>31</sup> And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup> It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.' "

Luke, Chapter 15- *New Living Translation (NLT)*: <sup>1</sup> Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. <sup>2</sup> This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them! <sup>3</sup> So Jesus told them this story: [...]

<sup>11</sup> To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

<sup>13</sup> "A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. <sup>14</sup> About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. <sup>15</sup> He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. <sup>16</sup> The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, <sup>19</sup> and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.'"

<sup>20</sup> "So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'

<sup>22</sup> "But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. <sup>23</sup> And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, <sup>24</sup> for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began.

<sup>25</sup> "Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, <sup>26</sup> and he asked one of the servants what was going on. <sup>27</sup> 'Your brother is back,' he was told, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.'

<sup>28</sup> "The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, <sup>29</sup> but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. <sup>30</sup> Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!'

<sup>31</sup> "His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. <sup>32</sup> We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!'

**Group Discussion (25-30 minutes)**

Can I get one or more volunteers to read the below description out loud?

**Spiritual Exercise:** “Spiritual Orphan or Child of God? (A Self-Assessment)”

*This exercise was developed by an American missionary in Uganda who observed and got to know street-children orphaned by the dictatorship of Idi Amin. Then this missionary (Jack Miller) applied their often-hardened thoughts, feelings, and behavior patterns to his own relationship to God. A guiding scripture for Miller and this exercise is John 14:18. Here, Jesus says to his followers, “I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you.”*

*Read through each description under the headings “Orphan” and “Child.” As you read these contrasting descriptions, underline words and phrases you recognize in yourself (or have been told about yourself). Then circle the notch on the continuum you feel best identifies where you are between each “Orphan” versus “Child” description.*

Take 5-10 minutes of silence to complete the below self-assessment exercise for yourself.

ORPHAN		CHILD
Lacks a feeling of vital, daily intimacy with God	----- ----- ----- -----	Feels freed from worry because of God’s love for you
Anxious about friends, money, children, house, the future, etc.	----- ----- ----- -----	Learning to live in a daily partnership with God
Feels as if no one cares about you	----- ----- ----- -----	Not fearful of God’s rejection
Lives on a success/failure basis	----- ----- ----- -----	Feels forgiven and totally accepted
Needs to look good	----- ----- ----- -----	Daily trusts in God’s plan for you
Feels guilty and condemned	----- ----- ----- -----	Prayer is a first resort or instinct
Struggles to leave results to God	----- ----- ----- -----	Content in relationships because you’re accepted by God
Has to fix others’ problems	----- ----- ----- -----	Freedom from being important
Not very teachable	----- ----- ----- -----	Is teachable by others
Defensive when accused (of error or weakness)	----- ----- ----- -----	Open to criticism, because you rest on Christ’s perfection
Needs to be right	----- ----- ----- -----	Able to examine deeper motives
Lacks confidence	----- ----- ----- -----	Able to take risks- even fail
Feels discouraged and defeated	----- ----- ----- -----	Encouraged by the Spirit at work
Strong-willed with ideas, agenda, and opinions	----- ----- ----- -----	Able to see God’s goodness in times of confusion
Solution to failure: “Try harder”	----- ----- ----- -----	Content with Christ’s provisions
Has a critical spirit (complaining and bitterness)	----- ----- ----- -----	Trusting less in self and more in the Holy Spirit in you

“Competent analyst” of others’ weakness (quick to find fault)	----- ----- ----- -----	Aware of the inability to fix life and able to freely confess faults
Tends to compare self with others	----- ----- ----- -----	Doesn’t always have to be right
Needs to be in control of situations and of others	----- ----- ----- -----	Experiences more and more victory over self-centeredness
Looks for satisfaction in “positions”	----- ----- ----- -----	Prayer for God’s will to be done is a vital, ongoing part of the day
Looks for meaning in “possessions”	----- ----- ----- -----	Jesus is more and more the subject of conversation and thought-life
Often motivated by obligation, shame, and/or future fear	----- ----- ----- -----	Often motivated by love, gratitude, and/or future joy

1. What strikes you about this exercise?
  - What did it feel like to do this inventory?
  - Was there something you found yourself thinking about?
2. What 1 or 2 descriptions of being a spiritual orphan felt like they most applied to you?
  - Give a recent example of this orphan response in your life.
3. What 1 or 2 descriptions of being a spiritual child felt like they most applied to you?
  - Give a recent example of this son or daughter response in your life.
4. How did the actions of your father (or father figure) communicate how God the Father relates to you?
  - How do you still live out that belief about God the Father?
  - How could your life change by believing more deeply in a God that is a good, engaged Father?

**Group Prayer (15 Minutes)**

Ideas for Communal & Personal Prayer (Share for yourself, pray for person to your left):

1. Here is a reflection questions to ask yourself and- if time permits- share about:

*What’s one thing you’re processing about God from our time together?*

- (Is there a related question or comment that is sticking with you?)
- Is there a praise, a confession, a word of thanks, or a request you’d like to make about this question or comment?

2. Is there something else going on that what can we pray about for you?