



An Orphaned
Heart
By Martie du Plessis

A mother phoned me shortly after their visit as a family to my hometown Clarens in the Eastern Free State. She told me how her son of 12 has lost his knife somewhere in town during the weekend. It was not an ordinary knife but one that he crafted himself with his dad after they went together for training on how to make knives.

The dad has, on many occasions, warned the boy about how he should handle and take care of his knife but this incident has taught the young man a lesson of life. The dad, after this incident, spent a lot of time reflecting on how he warned the son in the past, how he trained him to treat his precious knife. It seemed to the father that all his warnings went unheeded and that his son showed no real understanding, yet now the pain of losing a precious object brought a keener appreciation. In turn this life lesson will become one of the significant teachings for the young man when he is a father himself one day. Although this experience is painful for the parents, they can see it as a life lesson and not a way to punish the son, of inflict guilt on him.

During each session when I help families I become more and more aware of how orphaned we are as people due to past relationships. I see people with wealth, degrees, beauty and great gifting can act from places of deep heartache in spite of all their exterior success. If a person's core is not nurtured from young, this individual stays in lack his entire life; unless of course we allow God the Father, the Son and Spirit to make us whole as it was preordained through the action of the Cross.

I find in families where a parent (or both) is living with an orphaned spirit, a resulting difficulty to live in harmony. This is principally due to strife among family members as a result of lack of leadership from the father, either because he does not lead strong enough or because he does not lead at all. A great disunity is birthed due to a lack of a family vision and values. Often this lack of family values finds a negative breeding ground in the disciplining of the hearts of the children. In short the children are not presented with clear



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guidelines which will ultimately lead to them being spoiled; children are capable of manipulation or they simply do as they please.

To spoil a child can be the most traumatic single act in a person's life as the heart of this person has never learnt to honour, obey or have self-control. Even good parents can make major errors due to the standing of their own hearts. Secure parents do not have issues with the disciplining of their children, as they understand that a person simply lives out what is already in their hearts.

I have done a lot of research over the years on why adults become so dysfunctional and why they cannot effectively take up their role as life givers. Parenting often fails when either one or both parents display a spirit of control. If a future father was raised in such a controlling environment he will be unable to be successful in his role of parenting as well. Sadly, this father will be distant, retreating into a closed spirit, isolating his heart from outside influence. He will be incapable of real intimate relationships in his own family and it could result in a next generation being orphaned in their hearts too.

One example where these kinds of 'flawed' relationships would develop is where a very hardworking, conventional parent with strong views on ways in which they wanted tasks completed, tried to raise a very sensitive and compassionate child who did things at a slower pace. The fact that the two people (parent and child) have such different working preferences would escalate into major frustrations and personality incompatibilities. I am using these two disparate personality types to illustrate why parents, with sincere intentions of wanting the best for their family, can in fact hurt a person who is supposed pass on the baton to the next generation. We are often guilty of unnecessarily delaying the work of the Kingdom for many years.

It is easy for parents to accept the child when they share similar characteristics, styles and values. However, what should be done in the case where they differ dramatically? The challenge is that parents have to rely on God daily to give them an understanding about the purpose for each child. There will be a serious need for more patience and wisdom lest a sensitive child is negatively affected. For parents to celebrate and honour a child who is not like themselves is a great test. Honour involves a decision that is made to put love in action, and to give a person a position of high value

and worth. If there is not honour, there is judgement, resentment, anger, sarcasm, criticism, comparisons, favouritism, envy and even racism. Parents can choose to dishonour or give the gift of honouring. Before one is either a parent or a child, one is human first, eternally stamped with the image and likeness of the Creator. Because all people are unique we need to honour each other.

My suggestion to struggling parents is to find a mentor - somebody with the love of the Father, wise and graceful, but also a strict person who can give counsel according to the word of God. Parents must learn to share their life with a significant mentor who can model a life of intimate, caring and loving relationships, and also to give guidance where changes in the raising of children can be instituted. These same virtues should also be emphasised in churches and life groups.

God wants parents to live a life of grace towards their families. Orphan thinking should be exchanged for God-thinking; in other words, the root of our deliberation should be as a child of God. The Father of Creation has a special place for each person He created. On the other hand, the father of lies (and maybe our own earthly father and mother) has caused an orphan spirit.

Satan wants to weaken the nations, and he does this by weakening families. He causes people to be neglected so they don't feel they have a home anymore, and at times as if they never had a home.

There is a new generation of families that I am working with - those are the families that take the education of their children seriously. These families allow God to change them as parents first and then they start practicing parenting from a true son and daughter relationship. While it does not make them perfect parents, it does allow them to operate from a place of forgiveness. They have forgiven their own parents - if they were not true reflections of the heart of the Father - and they are forgiving in their relationships with their own children. These parents that make a difference in the Kingdom are true children of God; Jesus said, "Unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven. Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18: 3 -4).

Dynamis helps families through family consultations to find the true value of functioning as a family, to work interdependently with one another and to serve the Kingdom together. ▣



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