

What You Can Do to Destroy an Orphan Spirit in Your Life

Homeless. I was shocked. I had no clue what to make of the situation unfolding before me.

I'd gone to live with my dad several years after he and my mom divorced. But I had no idea he was living on the beach in a tent. Did that mean I was homeless too?

We pulled up onto the sands of Thousand Peaks beach, where there were tents everywhere. I mean everywhere. Lines were strung between tents with laundry drying in the wind. Campfires dotted the beach here and there. Were all these people homeless?

My dad grabbed my duffel from the bed of the truck and led me to his tent. He had set it up like a campsite, with boxes turned upside down serving as end tables. Rocks weighed down the flaps in the sand to keep the boxes from blowing away.

I said nothing but crawled inside and lay on the mattress, realizing I'd gone from one bad situation to another. My dad zipped up the tent, and I blinked back tears of exhaustion and trauma. I stared at the roof and felt more hopeless than I had ever felt before.

One day melted into the next. I didn't really talk to anyone, and mostly I would walk down the beach and find a spot to sit and listen to my music on a Sony Discman and try not to think too much. There was a public-access toilet on the beach but no showers. My dad would take me to the public aquatic center, where I could shower and clean up every few days.

I knew that in his heart, my dad wanted to provide for me and offer me more, but he couldn't. He made sure I had food and did his best under the circumstances we were in, but I felt

alone in life.

This “orphan spirit” would follow me for a long time and dictate every decision I would make.

Orphans have to look out for themselves. Self-provide. Self-protect. Self-soothe. They can't connect too closely with anyone or let their guard down too far. They have to prove their worth and make their own way. Orphans live with the pain of abandonment and rejection; they become fiercely independent and suspicious of every relationship. If anyone tries to get too close, they have to put up walls to protect themselves.

Sometimes bad things happen to us. They are hard to explain and even harder to understand. Being homeless makes you feel invisible to the world around you. It brings a cloak of shame that makes it seem like not a soul in the world cares about you.

But oh, how I was wrong.

From internet cafes, I sent emails to family members. News of my situation reached my aunt, and in an act of great kindness, she sent me a one-way plane ticket to Houston, where most of my extended family lived.

I was almost 17 years old when I arrived in Houston. I showed up a deeply troubled teen. Lost. Withdrawn. Depressed. I would stay with a relative for a time, but before long, I had gone through all the relatives willing to take care of me.

My mom arranged for me to fly to Pennsylvania, where my older brother had an athletic scholarship to a college. My brother lived on campus, so he booked me a room at a Red Roof Inn while trying to figure out what to do with me.

Responsibility for his homeless sister was beyond his capacity to handle, so he reached out to his basketball coach. A Christian man who loved the Lord, the coach reached out to his

pastor, who shared my situation at a staff meeting.

A woman there listened closely to everything he said. She immediately called her husband, who responded, "We've raised three boys, and I would love to have a girl." Just like that, without any hesitation, they made a decision. "We'll take her!" she said.

I sat alone in a bedroom they'd set up for me and reflected on all that had happened over the last year. I wished things had been different. I had been homeless for almost a year, but when you're homeless, one day feels more like a month. I wanted to run away, but where would I go? All I wanted was a safe place, a warm bed and stability.

If you have ever felt like this, then you understand. However, amazingly, God was at work for me behind the scenes. I had no idea that the same God who hung the stars and filled up the oceans saw me, heard my voiceless cry and put people in my path to demonstrate His great love for me.

It would take 10 years before the seeds that family sowed sprung through the soil of my hardened heart and burst into life, but God knew the timing. He knew the seeds needed to be planted, and He used them to point me to Him simply through being solid and steady and kind. When life separated me from my family, God answered and provided for me through a different kind of family.

Whether you are in a situation that seems hopeless or have a loved one who is, I want to encourage you to take courage. The story is not over. The ending is not yet written.

There is nothing we can ever do that God cannot undo. He has an infinite supply of ideas and infinite resources in heaven for healing and restoration. Don't give up. Keep praying. Keep believing. Keep standing on the promises of God.

Pray for the heroes whose names you do not yet know. Thank God

in advance for working things out and hold steady to the hope He offers. He will be your anchor in the storm. {eoa}

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