

## Separation Anxiety

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As a human being, I am sure you have felt it. As an educator, I am sure you have witnessed its effects on students in your classroom and school.

Most teachers have probably dealt with the heartache that separation can bring to their students. I experienced it in my own classroom especially during the “deployment years” of the Gulf War. Military fathers and mothers going on extended deployments and many students and spouses dealing with the emotional consequences of their absence. Even for the well-adjusted, well-prepared child, these were indeed difficult times!

Separation: The word comes from the Latin “*separatio*” meaning disjoined, severed or divided. Not too pleasant of a definition, and not too pleasant of a feeling it produces.

We have all seen the bumps, bruises, and scars caused by family separation. In fact, whether caused by distance, deployment, divorce, or even a death, it is heartbreaking to witness the strain and suffering that human separation can cause.

This human separation is tough enough, but an even more devastating separation is that feeling one experiences when one realizes a growing distance that separates themselves from their loving Father. Maybe, over many years, we’ve slowly drifted away, or maybe we’ve sprinted away or maybe we simply feel that our sinful self is no longer worthy of God’s love and presence. No matter what the circumstance, the feeling of being estranged from God can be an extremely lonely and disheartening one. Adam felt it in the garden after sharing some fruit with Eve. Peter felt it after denying Christ three times one dark and lonely night. Luther felt it as he punished himself for thinking that he was not good enough for God and desiring to gain God’s favor. And we all have probably felt that crushing loneliness at some time, or times, in our lives. But that pain, that trauma and that anxiety is totally on us! It is our perception of being left alone, but the reality is that God has gone nowhere!

***“For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’” Hebrews 13:12***

Even in our darkest and remotest times, God hasn’t gone anywhere and isn’t going anywhere. When we feel that distance widening between us and God, remember, it’s not God who is moving away from us, but rather, we are moving away from God.

***“For all we like sheep have gone astray.” Isaiah 53:6***

And when we feel that our sins are too big, our distance from Him is too great, or our hopes have all but evaporated, St. Paul, who, before his own conversion, was light-years separated from Christ, reminds us that, God is ALWAYS right there with us and for us! (And please notice that he did so with a rather lengthy, all-inclusive list of possible separators),

***“For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:38-39***

That’s right, there is ‘nothing’, (Please, underline it, circle it, highlight it!)... **“NOTHING ... in all of creation”** that can separate us from His love! What a promise! What comfort! What love! The “prodigal” in us might cause us to drift, but the grace-filled arms of our heavenly Father are ready to pick us up, dust us off and bring us home.

***“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.” Isaiah 41:10***

Share these promises with those around you! Live your life confidently in His love! May our lives shout of His love and compassion! And may we never feel the pangs of separation again knowing that He is always waiting for us!

Dear Father in Heaven,

There are so many times in our lives that we feel the darkness of separation from You. Forgive us for the times we have strayed. Forgive us for the times we have not trusted Your promises and forgive us for the times we may have even turned our backs to You. Strengthen our faith so that we may daily live in the confidence and the knowledge of Your never-failing love. Help us to share this assurance with those we meet each and every day, especially with the children You have placed before us in our classrooms. In you loving name we pray, Amen.