

Who we are and who we also are

By [Mark Ralls](#)

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In Jean Thompson's novel *The Year We Left Home*, Anita extends an impulsive invitation to a mere acquaintance, Rhonda. Their lives have turned out very differently. Anita enjoys a contented home life with her husband and children, while Rhonda has endured an abusive boyfriend for far too long. So Anita invites Rhonda to her home, and says she can stay as long as she likes.

Driving home, Anita contemplates the implications of her sudden act of hospitality. What will her husband think? How will her children react to a new member of their family? Anita reassures herself, however. "Rhonda," she decides, "would be the one doing them the favor... There are times when a family needs an orphan."

In this moment, Anita somehow embraces two realities at once. She is aware of the bare and rather bleak facts of her present circumstance, but she also keeps in mind the redemptive relationship to come. Due to this rare combination of nimble faith and fervent hope, Anita is capable of seeing Rhonda as she truly is: as both orphan and patron, at once the primary recipient and the principal bestower of care. Anita sees in her a perfect truth.

This is akin to the lofty declarations of 1 Peter: "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." Regardless of how others may see you, "you are God's own people."

With nimble faith and fervent hope of his own, this ancient pastor recognized another, truer reality than present circumstances allowed. He was not just making a prediction about who the people might become. He was declaring who they are yet

to be, their truth perfected by grace.

And once this is recognized, two realities must be simultaneously affirmed—that which through human sin merely occurs, and that which by God's grace will surely be. The people are *chosen* in the same way that Rhonda is singled out by a compassionate friend. And just as Rhonda takes on a new identity as she crosses the threshold of her surrogate family's home, so these people are now "God's own people."