

# Theology of Response Styles

Joyzy Pius Egunjobi

Psycho-Spiritual Institute of Lux Terra Leadership Foundation at Marist International University  
College, Nairobi, Kenya.

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90500001>

Received: 15 April 2025; Accepted: 29 April 2025; Published: 27 May 2025

## ABSTRACT

This article explores the theological implications of Joyzy Pius Egunjobi's Response Styles Framework (Adherer, Rejecter, Falser, and Nonchalant), initially developed to understand children's reactions to parenting. While psychological in origin, this framework offers a compelling lens through which to analyze human responses to divine initiative, authority, and relational guidance within a theological context. Drawing upon biblical anthropology, discipleship, and spiritual formation, the article argues that these response styles resonate deeply with various biblical narratives and characters, reflecting fundamental postures of the human heart towards God. The Adherer embodies grace-filled discipleship and covenantal fidelity, while the Rejecter reveals the mystery of resistance and the persistent pursuit of grace. The Falser highlights the challenges of inauthenticity and the call to spiritual integrity, and the Nonchalant exposes the dangers of spiritual apathy and the dormant soul. By examining these styles through scripture, tradition, and practical theology, this article demonstrates the framework's value as a tool for spiritual discernment, faith formation, and pastoral care, ultimately emphasizing the transformative power of grace in shaping human response towards authentic communion with God.

**Keywords:** Response Styles, Theology, Biblical Anthropology, Discipleship, Spiritual Formation, Pastoral Care, Human Response, Grace, Obedience, Resistance, Authenticity, Apathy, Adherer, Rejecter, Falser, Nonchalant.

## INTRODUCTION

Egunjobi (2021) developed response styles to parenting in reaction to the popular belief that children's behaviors are a result of parenting, or the parenting styles employed by the parents. At the heart of obedience is the 'will', the decision, to obey or not to obey. For him, every child has a WILL and is thus capable of internalizing and responding to the outside influences. No one is born *tabula rasa* (blank slate), as a child is very knowledgeable about the affairs in the womb and at the same time interacts with the world outside the womb and responds appropriately for its survival. This is not only applied to children, but it also applies to all as we constantly respond to life in a specific style as an adherer, a rejecter, a falser, or nonchalant. These response styles explain why children who were trained by the same parents do not behave the same way and why some people behave the way they do in the realm of human family, relationships, and organizations.

### Adherer

- **Description:** The Adherer is cooperative and compliant. They accept correction or authority and are often eager to please.
- **Traits:** Obedient, respectful, loyal, conforming, eager to please authority
- **Motivations:** Fear of punishment, desire for approval, need for structure.
- **Potential Strengths:** Teachable, dependable, responsive to structure, responsible.
- **Possible Challenges:** They may suppress their own needs and become overly dependent on external validation.

### Rejecter

- **Description:** The Rejecter resists authority and correction. They respond with defiance or withdrawal.
- **Traits:** Rebellious, oppositional, skeptical.

- **Motivations:** Fear of control, prior experiences of betrayal or hurt.
- **Potential Strengths:** Independent, strong-willed, critical thinker, fight for justice.
- **Possible Challenges:** Prone to conflict, mistrustful of help or authority, struggles with boundaries.

### Falser

- **Description:** The Falser appears compliant on the surface but internally rejects or resents guidance. They often present a false self.
- **Traits:** Superficially agreeable, deceptive, conflicted.
- **Motivations:** Fear of rejection, survival strategy in unsafe environments
- **Potential Strengths:** Adaptive in challenging environments.
- **Possible Challenges:** Inauthenticity, inner turmoil, inconsistent behavior.

### Nonchalant

- **Description:** The Nonchalant is indifferent to correction or authority. They exhibit apathy or disengagement.
- **Traits:** Detached, passive, emotionally distant.
- **Motivations:** Emotional shutdown, learned helplessness, unresolved trauma
- **Potential Strengths:** Unaffected by pressure, emotionally self-contained.
- **Possible Challenges:** Lack of motivation, difficulty engaging meaningfully.

These Response Styles Framework (Adherer, Rejecter, Falser, and Nonchalant) can also be understood theologically as they find meaningful resonance with various biblical characters and passages. Though the framework is psychological, many scriptural stories reflect the core attitudes and behaviors each style represents. Thus, there are rich theological applications of Egunjobi's Response Styles Framework, especially when viewed through the lens of biblical anthropology, discipleship, and spiritual formation.

## Theological Background to the Response Styles Framework

The following serve as the foundational theological basis for understanding Egunjobi's Response Styles Framework within biblical and theological anthropology, drawing from Scripture, tradition, and practical theology.

### Human Response as a Theological Category

From Genesis to Revelation, the Scriptures present human beings not merely as passive recipients of divine initiative but as active responders. God speaks, calls, instructs, and invites — and humanity is constantly positioned in relation to this divine summons. Whether in obedience (Abraham), rebellion (Jonah), duplicity (Judas), or apathy (Laodicea), the biblical narrative showcases a range of response patterns that shape the fundamentals of human lives. These responses are not just behavioral; they are deeply theological, reflecting the state of the heart, the formation of conscience, and the dynamics of relational trust with the Divine.

At its core, the Response Styles Framework (Adherer, Rejecter, Falser, and Nonchalant) articulates the qualitative posture of individuals toward authority, truth, and relational guidance. Theologically, these postures reflect the mystery of human freedom in the face of grace, truth, and moral demand.

### Biblical Anthropology and Freedom of Response

The Christian tradition affirms that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God - - *Imago Dei* - (Genesis 1:27) — endowed with intellect, will, and the capacity for relationship. This likeness includes freedom of will, which allows for authentic love but also opens the door to distorted responses to God and others.

According to Saint Augustine, “*God who created you without you, will not save you without you.*” This provides a profound implication: salvation history is a drama of divine initiative and human response. Egunjobi's framework, in this light, becomes a psycho-theological map of how this response can manifest, either as faithful

adherence or resistant falsity.

Each response style reflects a theological anthropology:

- **The Adherer** corresponds to redeemed responsiveness.
- **The Rejecter** expresses fallen resistance.
- **The Falser** illustrates the duplicity of sin.
- **The Nonchalant** reveals a spiritual sloth (*acedia*) — an unwillingness to engage the demands of grace.

### *Jesus and the Responses of the Heart*

The ministry of Jesus Christ was not merely aimed at behavior modification but at the transformation of inner response. Again and again, the New Testament exposes the heart's posture relating to the response styles:

- “*These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me*” (Matt. 15:8) – a critique of the **Falser**.
- “*You are neither hot nor cold...*” (Rev. 3:15-16) – a call to awaken the **Nonchalant**.
- “*He who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice...*” (Matt. 7:24) – the mark of the **Adherer**.
- “*You always resist the Holy Spirit...*” (Acts 7:51) – a lament over the **Rejecter**.

In this way, the New Testament narratives can be seen as a canvas upon which these styles are illustrated, not merely as psychological tendencies but as spiritual stances before the truth.

### **The Church Fathers and Moral Response**

The early Church Fathers understood the moral and volitional dimension of faith. For instance, Origen, Augustine, and Gregory of Nyssa wrote extensively about the soul's ascent to God and the interior struggles that affect its path. In this tradition, sin is often a misdirected response to divine love, while sanctity is a total and willing response to God's initiative.

The **Adherer**, in patristic terms, echoes the *docile heart* of the saints, while the other response styles embody the *wounded will* in need of healing. The Church's sacramental and pastoral praxis — especially in confession, spiritual direction, and catechesis — has long sought to discern and redirect these internal postures toward truth and love.

### **Practical Theological Implications**

In contemporary pastoral theology, understanding response styles is vital for:

- **Spiritual direction** – discerning whether someone is resisting, faking, or disengaged from spiritual growth.
- **Faith formation** – tailoring catechesis to address not just knowledge deficits but relational and volitional responses.
- **Pastoral care and counseling** – engaging the woundedness behind rejection or the fear beneath falseness.

Grace always invites, but it does not override. The Response Styles Framework, therefore, is a practical theological tool to read the human heart with clarity and compassion.

### **Grace and Transformation**

Importantly, these styles are not fixed destinies. Scripture and tradition testify that grace transforms response:

- Saul the **Rejecter** becomes Paul the **Adherer**, although Saul and Paul are his real names.
- Peter, at moments a **Falsar**, becomes a bold proclaimer.
- The Laodicean church is urged to repent and reignite its love.
- Even the indifferent can be awakened by divine encounter, as seen in the Samaritan woman's transformation (John 4).

The Response Styles, therefore, reflect both the brokenness and potential of the human heart. The Church's mission is not just to diagnose these postures but to create conditions for conversion — helping individuals move from resistance, falsity, or apathy into authentic, loving adherence to God's truth.

## Theological Application of Response Styles

**Figure 1 Theological Representation of the Response Styles**



## The Adherer and the Capacity for Grace-Filled Discipleship

The adherer's response style, as described by Egunjobi (2021), reflects the deep human capacity to respond positively to *divine grace*. Within Christian theological anthropology, this response aligns with the biblical motif of covenantal fidelity, where human obedience is not rooted in fear or compulsion but arises from a trusting, loving relationship with God (Deuteronomy 6:4–5; John 14:15). The adherer embodies what the Apostle Paul describes in Galatians 5:6: *"For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love."* This faith-in-action reveals a heart attuned to God's purposes, one that resonates with the biblical call to "walk in obedience" (2 John 1:6).

In this sense, the adherer models an ideal theological posture: discipleship rooted in covenant love rather than rule-based religiosity. As Hans Urs von Balthasar (1991) emphasizes in his work on theological aesthetics and response, true Christian obedience is not passive conformity but an active, loving response to the beauty and call

of divine love. Similarly, Karl Barth notes that human obedience is a grateful response to divine initiative, not an achievement of merit (Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/2).

Yet, pastorally, this response style must be carefully nurtured. When detached from authentic relationship and interior freedom, adherence risks becoming rigid legalism, a moralism devoid of relational depth. Pope Benedict XVI cautioned against such distortions in *Deus Caritas Est* (2005), where he distinguishes between formal religiosity and a living encounter with Christ that transforms the heart. Without a grounding in love and grace, adherence can mirror the behavior of the elder son in the parable of the prodigal son—obedient yet estranged in spirit (Luke 15:25–30).

From a pastoral psychology perspective, adherers may internalize obedience as a means of securing approval or avoiding rejection, particularly if formed in environments where love was conditional on performance (Egunjobi, 2021). This echoes the concerns of James Fowler's stages of faith development, especially in the "conventional" stage, where external authority and conformity dominate unless matured into a more relational, individuated faith (Fowler, 1981).

Thus, the spiritual formation of adherers must aim at freedom for love—a transformation where obedience is not rooted in fear or anxiety but in the joy of communion. As Thomas Merton writes, "The will of God is not a fate to which we submit, but a creative act in our lives producing something absolutely new" (Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 1961). Adherence, then, is best formed in an atmosphere where grace precedes demand, and where trust, dialogue, and love cultivate a sustained "yes" to God.

Biblical support for adherer style includes:

- **Mary (Mother of Jesus)** demonstrates trust and faithful adherence to divine instruction as she said, "*Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.*" (Luke 1:38).
- **Joshua** made a firm declaration of loyalty and adherence to God, saying, "*But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" (Joshua 24:15).
- **Psalm 119:11** also states, "*I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.*" This reflects the internalization and devotion characteristic of the Adherer style.
- **Philippians 4:9** (Paul's instruction): "*Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.*" This encourages adherence to the teachings and example of a respected leader.
- **1 Corinthians 11:1** (Paul's instruction): "*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*" This directly calls for adherence to a specific model of behavior.
- **Luke 8:15** (Parable of the Sower - the good soil): "*But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.*" This illustrates those who positively receive and adhere to the teachings.

### The Rejecter: The Mystery of Resistance and the Pursuit of Grace

The Rejecter response style, as outlined in Egunjobi's Response Styles Framework (2021), reflects a human posture of resistance to divine or relational authority, often rooted in deep psychological and existential dynamics such as pride, trauma, or woundedness. This resistance is not merely an act of defiance but is often a protective mechanism, a way of asserting control or preserving dignity in the face of past experiences of hurt or disempowerment (Egunjobi, 2021; van der Kolk, 2014). In theological terms, the rejecter embodies the tragic yet paradoxically dignified capacity of human freedom—the freedom to say "no" to God, to love, or to trust.

This dynamic is poignantly illustrated in Genesis 3, where Adam and Eve's choice to assert autonomy over surrender marks the archetypal moment of human rebellion against divine authority. Their decision reflects what theologians have described as *curvatus in se*—the turning inward of the human will in pride and mistrust

(Augustine, *Confessions*; Luther, 1521). The rejecter's refusal, therefore, is not only a problem of will but a cry from the soul: a complex intersection of freedom, fear, and the longing for control.

Psychologically, the rejecter may emerge from relational contexts where authority was experienced as coercive, inconsistent, or abusive. According to attachment theory, individuals with disorganized or avoidant attachment styles often struggle to trust authority or receive help, interpreting offers of correction as threats rather than care (Bowlby, 1988; Siegel, 2012). In trauma-informed theology, such resistance is increasingly recognized not merely as sin but as a symptom of unhealed wounds—what Judith Herman calls the "survival strategies" of the traumatized self (Herman, 1992).

Nevertheless, Scripture repeatedly affirms that divine mercy relentlessly pursues even the most resistant hearts. The story of Saul of Tarsus in Acts 9 serves as a powerful case study. Saul, a vehement rejecter of the early Christian movement, is not overpowered by divine wrath but arrested by grace. His transformation into Paul, the apostle of love and inclusion, illustrates how grace can pierce even the armor of rejection and reconfigure a soul once driven by pride and zealotry.

The prophet Jonah is another archetype of the rejecter—fleeing God's call, angry at God's mercy, and ultimately confronted with the absurdity of his resistance (Jonah 1–4). Yet Jonah is not cast off. He is met with both correction and compassion, symbolizing the patience of divine love. As Karl Rahner (1978) notes, "Even our flight from God takes place in God's presence and under God's gaze." God's pursuit is not halted by rejection; rather, it becomes the backdrop against which divine mercy is made manifest.

From a pastoral care perspective, rejecters should not be approached first with correction but with compassion, curiosity, and presence. Their resistance may be less about rebellion and more about pain. As Henri Nouwen (1994) insists in *The Wounded Healer*, true pastoral engagement means entering the place of the other's woundedness with humility, offering not answers but companionship. Notwithstanding, this should transcend to a *Healed Healer*. This is because a wounded animal can be dangerous, making the *Wounded Healer* prone to be a *Wounded Wounder* (Egunjobi, 2019).

Thus, the rejecter response style ultimately reveals the mystery of human freedom—a freedom capable of resisting God yet always held within the reach of divine love. The pastoral task is to recognize sacred dignity even in resistance, to discern the pain beneath protest, and to trust that grace is still at work, even when it seems most rejected.

Biblically,

- **Cain** demonstrates rejection of divine guidance and unresolved anger when *he rejected God's correction and killed Abel* (Genesis 4:6-8)
- **Pharaoh's** clear example of rejecting divine authority despite signs and wonders. He even said, "*Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice...?*" (Exodus 5:2)
- **Isaiah 30:9** stated, "*For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the Lord.*" This speaks directly to the rejecter's posture.
- **John 3:19** (Judgment because of unbelief): "*This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.*" This describes a rejection of what is good and true.
- **Hebrews 3:15** (Warning against hardening hearts): "*As it is said: 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.'*" This warns against a rejecting and resistant attitude towards God's word.
- **Matthew 23:37** (Jesus lamenting over Jerusalem): "*Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you—how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers*

*her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing.*" This highlights a clear rejection of Jesus' offer of protection and guidance.

### **The Falser: Inauthenticity, Hiddenness, and the Call to Integrity**

The Falser response style, as described in Egunjobi's Response Styles Framework (2021), illustrates the deep human impulse to hide, self-protect, and seek approval, a response rooted in fear, shame, and the longing for acceptance. This instinctive behavior traces back to the Genesis 3 narrative, where Adam and Eve, upon becoming aware of their nakedness, sew fig leaves to cover themselves and hide from God (Genesis 3:7-10). The falser embodies this spiritual pattern: presenting an outward appearance of righteousness while concealing inner vulnerability or disconnection.

This style often manifests in religious environments as a tendency toward performance-based identity, where individuals maintain spiritual façades to avoid rejection or judgment. Jesus strongly critiques this dynamic in Matthew 23, where he denounces the Pharisees for their focus on external religiosity while neglecting the deeper matters of justice, mercy, and faithfulness: *"Woe to you... for you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence"* (Matt 23:25, ESV). In this sense, the Falser is not simply deceptive but is often caught in a cycle of fear and self-preservation, shaped by environments that reward appearance over authenticity.

Theologically, this style reflects the concept of the "false self", a term developed by Thomas Merton and later adapted in spiritual direction and contemplative traditions. Merton (1961) wrote: *"Every one of us is shadowed by an illusory person: a false self... This is the man I want myself to be, but who cannot exist, because God does not know anything about him."* The false self thrives in communities that prize perfectionism, doctrinal conformity, or moralism without emotional safety, leaving little room for real human struggle.

Psychologically, the falser may develop in attachment-insecure or emotionally suppressive environments, where vulnerability is met with punishment, indifference, or shame. In such contexts, individuals learn to survive by masking their true selves, a strategy akin to what Winnicott (1965) called the "false self-organization"—a protective persona created to cope with expectations that do not allow for genuine self-expression. This false self becomes difficult to dismantle, especially when reinforced by religious systems that reward surface-level compliance.

From a pastoral care perspective, falsers are difficult to identify because their external behavior often mimics genuine piety. They may be leaders, ministers, or "model believers" whose inner dissonance remains hidden. As Henri Nouwen (1972) observed in *The Genesee Diary*, spiritual leaders often face the temptation to live in roles rather than reality: *"Much of my life had been a stage on which I played to an approving audience."* Addressing the falser, therefore, requires a gentle yet prophetic invitation to authenticity, grounded in grace and not shame.

Spiritual direction, authentic community, and pastoral discernment are essential tools in helping falsers move toward integration. According to David Benner (2002), *"We cannot be fully free until we are fully known."* Healing the falser involves creating spaces where people can be vulnerable without fear of rejection—spaces where masks can fall and the true self can emerge under the gaze of unconditional love.

Ultimately, the falser's journey is a call to inner conversion, a transformation that moves beyond outward conformity toward the integration of belief, behavior, and being. As Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:5, there is a danger of *"having the appearance of godliness but denying its power."* The pastoral task is not to condemn the falser but to walk with them through the slow process of rediscovering their belovedness, apart from performance.

Some Biblical supports:

- **Ananias and Sapphira** who pretended generosity while lying about their offering—external compliance with internal dishonesty (Acts 5:1–10)
- **Judas Iscariot** was outwardly close to Jesus but secretly betrayed Him.

“Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?” (Luke 22:47–48)

- **Matthew 23:27–28** presented Jesus criticizing the Pharisees for presenting an outward holiness that hides inner corruption. He said, “*Woe to you...hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs...*”
- **Acts 5:3–4** (Peter confronting Ananias): “Then Peter said, ‘Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn’t it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn’t the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.’” This illustrates the act of presenting a false image and lying about one’s actions.

### The Nonchalant: Acedia, Indifference, and the Dormant Soul

The Nonchalant response style, as identified in Egunjobi’s Response Styles Framework (2021), represents a spiritual disengagement from one’s deepest identity and calling. It is not marked by overt hostility toward God or faith but by a more subtle, insidious state of spiritual apathy, lukewarmness, and moral indifference. This condition parallels the classical Christian vice of *acedia*, often translated as *spiritual sloth*, which early monastic writers described as a loss of heart or inner listlessness toward spiritual things (Evagrius Ponticus, *Praktikos*, 4th century; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II-II, Q. 35).

In the book of Revelation, this malaise is captured in the divine rebuke to the church in Laodicea: “*Because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth*” (Revelation 3:16, NRSV). Here, the critique is not of passionate rejection, but of dangerous indifference—a soul no longer stirred by the beauty of truth, the urgency of conversion, or the mystery of divine love. The nonchalant may keep religious appearances but inwardly lacks desire, engagement, and spiritual vitality.

Acedia, as Kathleen Norris (2008) explores in *Acedia and Me*, is not laziness but a more profound weariness of soul, a condition that “tempts us to believe that nothing matters.” It blunts spiritual desire and fosters detachment not from sin, but from meaning itself. According to Evagrius, *acedia* “makes the monk lazy and bored and leads him to hate his cell, his prayer, and even his brothers” (Evagrius, *The Praktikos*, §12). In contemporary spiritual life, this may manifest as disengagement from prayer, moral passivity, or a lack of passion for justice or love, even while maintaining surface-level religiosity.

From a psychological perspective, the nonchalant response style may be linked to learned helplessness or existential ennui, in which individuals no longer believe their actions matter or can effect change (Seligman, 1975). It may also reflect the spiritual consequences of overstimulation, burnout, or trauma—where the soul “numbs out” in response to overwhelming or unmet spiritual hunger (May, 2004). The danger here lies not in rebellion but in spiritual desensitization, which can become a settled posture of indifference.

Jesus’ poignant question to the paralytic in John 5:6— “*Do you want to be made well?*”—reveals the pastoral and spiritual approach needed for the nonchalant. It is a gentle but penetrating invitation to desire. This question is not accusatory but evocative. It awakens the possibility that the soul, though dormant, still longs to be stirred. According to Hans Urs von Balthasar (1985), “*To be awakened by beauty is often the beginning of conversion.*” In this light, the liturgical life, sacred art, storytelling, and community witness are not ornamental but essential tools in rekindling desire and breaking through the fog of *acedia*.

Pastorally, the nonchalant do not need condemnation but invitation and accompaniment. As Pope Francis (2013) urges in *Evangelii Gaudium*, evangelization begins not with obligation but with the joy of the Gospel—a joy that awakens hearts from slumber. The Church’s task is to create spaces where desire can be rediscovered, even in those who seem indifferent.

Thus, the Nonchalant response style reminds us that the absence of hostility is not the same as spiritual health. Beneath the still surface may lie a soul asleep to its vocation, yet still capable of awakening through grace, beauty, and authentic encounter.

## Biblical support:

- **Pilate** in Matthew 27:24 said, *"I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves."* Pilate washes his hands, showing indifference to justice to avoid responsibility.
- **Laodicean Church** in Revelation 3:15–16 was told, *"You are neither cold nor hot... I will spit you out of my mouth."* The lukewarm attitude reflects the Nonchalant response.
- **Ezekiel 33:31–32** states, *"They hear what you say but will not do it... to them you are like one who sings love songs..."* This is a passive, entertaining, yet unresponsive posture toward truth.
- **Matthew 24:37-39 (The days of Noah):** *"As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man."* This describes a state of being unconcerned and oblivious to impending judgment.
- **Amos 6:4-6 (Woe to those complacent in Zion):** *"Woe to you who are complacent in Zion, and to you who feel secure on Mount Samaria, the notables of the first of the nations, to whom the people of Israel come! ... You lie on beds adorned with ivory and lounge on your couches, eating choice lambs and calves fattened from the stall. You strum away on your harps like David and improvise on musical instruments. You drink wine by the bowlful and use the finest lotions, but you do not grieve over the ruin of Joseph."* This depicts a self-satisfied indifference to the troubles around them.

The Response Styles can be seen as reflections of the soil types in Jesus' Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13):

**Table 1 Response Styles and the Parable of the Sower**

Response Style	Soil Type Parallel	Spiritual Posture
<b>Adherer</b>	Good soil	Receptive and fruitful
<b>Rejecter</b>	Rocky or thorny soil	Blocks or resists growth
<b>Falsar</b>	Surface-level shallow soil	Appears to grow but lacks root
<b>Nonchalant</b>	Path / trodden ground	Uninterested, unengaged

At the heart of this framework lies the divine invitation and human response — central to Christian soteriology. The grace of God always initiates, but the human response (in one of these four ways) shapes the journey of sanctification.

In conclusion, the "Theology of Response Styles Framework" provides the analysis of various response styles and their theological implications. Examining the different ways individuals and communities respond to theological questions and challenges exposes the framework to highlight the importance of understanding and respecting diverse perspectives. The key themes explored in this document include the significance of empathy, the role of cultural context, and the impact of personal experiences on response styles. Ultimately, this framework serves as a valuable tool for fostering meaningful dialogue and promoting a deeper understanding of theological concepts. No matter what the response style is, there is always room for improvement – for God isn't finished with anyone yet. We are all in the process of becoming.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Agwu, U. K., Kamengwa, C. & Sapalo, B. C. (December, 2022). A Critical Review of Joyzy Pius Egunjobi's Child Response Styles to Parenting. International Journal of Arts and Social Science, Volume 5 Issue 12. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368849729\\_A\\_Critical\\_Review\\_of\\_Joyzy\\_Pius\\_Egunjobi%27s\\_Child\\_Response\\_Styles\\_to\\_Parenting](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/368849729_A_Critical_Review_of_Joyzy_Pius_Egunjobi%27s_Child_Response_Styles_to_Parenting)

2. Allender, D. B. (1990). *The wounded heart: Hope for adult victims of childhood sexual abuse*. NavPress.
3. Aquinas, T. (2006). *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q. 35: "Of Acedia". Trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province. Christian Classics.
4. Augustine. (2006). *Confessions* (H. Chadwick, Trans.). Oxford University Press. (Original work ca. 397)
5. Augustine. (2007). *On grace and free will* (P. Holmes, Trans.). CreateSpace. (Original work ca. 426)
6. Ayako, L. I. (2023). Child Response Styles to Parenting and Mental Health among Adolescents in Embakasi East sub county, Nairobi County, Kenya, *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, Volume VII Issue VII July 2023, 1141–1149. <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.70790>
7. Balthasar, H. U. von. (1991). *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, Vol. I: Seeing the Form. Ignatius Press.
8. Barth, K. (1956). *Church Dogmatics*, Volume I/2: The Doctrine of the Word of God. T&T Clark.
9. Benedict XVI. (2005). *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love). Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
10. Benner, D. G. (2002). *The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery*. IVP Books.
11. Bowlby, J. (1988). *A Secure Base: Parent-Child Attachment and Healthy Human Development*. Basic Books.
12. Bradshaw, J. (2005). *Healing the shame that binds you*. Health Communications.
13. Egunjobi, J. P. (2022). Child Sexual Abuse and Child Response Styles. <http://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.22085.12006>
14. Egunjobi, J. P. (2022). Human Developmental Vices. *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation (IJRSI)* vol.9 issue 11, pp.18-23 November 2022 <https://dx.doi.org/10.51244/IJRSI.2022.91101>
15. Egunjobi, J. P. (2021). Child Response Styles to Parenting. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, Volume V, Issue XII, 448. <http://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2021.51225>
16. Egunjobi, J. P. (2019). African Priests and Religious Psychological Challenges and Consequences: From Wounded Healer to Healed Healer. A Conference Paper at the Regional Conference In Psychological and Psycho-Spiritual Counseling in The Church Context at: Nairobi, Kenya. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337464425\\_African\\_Priests\\_And\\_Religious\\_Psychological\\_Challenges\\_And\\_Consequences\\_From\\_Wounded\\_Healer\\_To\\_Healed\\_Healer](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/337464425_African_Priests_And_Religious_Psychological_Challenges_And_Consequences_From_Wounded_Healer_To_Healed_Healer)
17. Evagrius Ponticus. (2003). *The Praktikos & Chapters on Prayer*. Trans. John Eudes Bamberger. Cistercian Publications.
18. Fowler, J. W. (1981). *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning*. Harper & Row.
19. Francis, Pope. (2013). *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel). Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.
20. Gregory of Nyssa. (2000). *The life of Moses* (A. J. Malherbe & E. Ferguson, Trans.). Paulist Press. (Original work ca. 390)
21. Herman, J. (1992). *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. Basic Books.
22. Ikechukwu, J. T. (2025). Response Styles to Religious Superiors and Job Satisfaction Among Catholic Consecrated Men and Women Within Selected Catholic Religious Communities in Karen-Nairobi. A thesis submitted to the psycho-spiritual institute in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of master of arts in psycho-spiritual therapy and counselling, Marist International University College a Constituent College of The Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya. (Unpublished).
23. Luther, M. (1521). *Lectures on Romans*. (J. Pelikan, Ed.). Concordia Publishing.
24. May, G. G. (2004). *The Dark Night of the Soul: A Psychiatrist Explores the Connection Between Darkness and Spiritual Growth*. Harper One.
25. Merton, T. (1961). *New Seeds of Contemplation*. New Directions.
26. Norris, K. (2008). *Acedia and Me: A Marriage, Monks, and a Writer's Life*. Riverhead Books.
27. Nouwen, H. J. M. (1972). *The Genesee Diary: Report from a Trappist Monastery*. Doubleday.

28. Nouwen, H. J. M. (1994). *The return of the prodigal son: A story of homecoming*. Image Books.
29. Nouwen, H. J. M. (1994). *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society*. Image.
30. Opara, A. N., Ehusani, R. & Mutisya, S. (2024). Relationship between Child Response Style to Parenting and Psychological Well-Being among Secondary School Students in Owerri, Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation In Social Science (IJRISS)*, Vol 5, no 4, 5713-5721.
31. Origen. (2002). *On first principles* (G. W. Butterworth, Trans.). Oxford University Press. (Original work ca. 220)
32. Rahner, K. (1974). *Theological investigations* (Vol. 6, K. Smyth, Trans.). Herder and Herder.
33. Rahner, K. (1978). *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*. Seabury Press.
34. Seligman, M. E. P. (1975). *Helplessness: On Depression, Development, and Death*. Freeman.
35. Siegel, D. J. (2012). *The Developing Mind: How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
36. Smith, J. K. A. (2016). *You are what you love: The spiritual power of habit*. Brazos Press.
37. *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*. (2001). Crossway
38. van der Kolk, B. (2014). *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. Viking.
39. von Balthasar, H. U. (2004). *Love alone is credible* (D. C. Schindler, Trans.). Ignatius Press. (Original work published 1963)
40. Willard, D. (2002). *Renovation of the heart: Putting on the character of Christ*. NavPress.
41. Winnicott, D. W. (1965). *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment*. Hogarth Press.