

LIVING AS CHILDREN OF GOD

STUDY ONE –WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CHILDREN OF GOD?

Lesson Summary: God has planned from all eternity that we should be his children. God's adoption of us as his children gives us some assurances that we should know about and depend upon.

A. PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE, GOD HAS PLANNED OUR ADOPTION.

1. God planned us to be his children before he created the world.

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. *Ephesians 1.*

2. God set about the fulfillment of his plan through the coming of Jesus.

⁴But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, ⁵to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. *Galatians 4.*

3. When you received the Spirit, you received the Spirit of Sonship.

⁹You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ...¹⁵[Y]ou did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." *Romans 8*

4. Although we who have received God are now His children, there is yet more to be revealed.

¹⁸I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. ¹⁹The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. ²⁰For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

²²We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. *Romans 8.*

B. WHAT CAN WE KNOW ABOUT GOD'S WORK IN US?

Made Alive in Christ

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, Chapter 2

According to this passage:

A. What was our condition before we became God's children? (verses 1-3) -

WHAT we were: 1. _____ 2. _____
 3. _____ 4. _____
 5. _____ 6. _____

BUT – God has been at work in us!

B. WHY did God bring us to himself? (verse 4)

1. _____
2. _____

C. WHAT did God do? (verses 5-7)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

D. HOW did this happen? (verses 8-9)

1. _____
2. _____

E. WHAT is the RESULT of God's work in us? (v. 10)

C. SIX “INCOMPARABLE BLESSINGS.”

Our relationship with God does not depend, at core, on our good works. Good works will be the result of our relationship with God (verse 10). Our relationship is built on God’s love for us while we were still “dead in sin.” Therefore our relationship can be damaged but never undone by our failures. This is what Paul means when he says (verse 7) “in the coming ages he [will] show [us] the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”

Our relationship with God is like this:

WHAT CAN CHANGE:

- Our fellowship
- Our experience of his blessing
- Our assurance of his love
- His delight in our actions
- His discipline
- Our sense of guilt

WHAT CANNOT CHANGE:

- Our sonship
- His desire for our welfare
- His actual affection for us
- His love for us
- Our destiny
- Our security

D. THE MOTIVE FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

- **Two Illustrations – Children’s Adoption and a Children’s Christmas Game**

- **What the Big Boys Say.**

“People will say that being saved by grace alone leads to people sinning all they want to. But being a true Christian means that I **DO** sin all that I want to. In fact, I sin **MORE** than I want to, because now that God has given me a new heart that beats for him, I don’t want to sin at all. Now I love Jesus and I want to obey and please him.” *Adrian Rogers*

“The secular world never understands Christian motivation. Faced with the question of what makes Christianity tick, unbelievers maintain that Christianity is practiced only out of self-serving purposes. They see Christians as fearing the consequences of not being Christians (religion as fire insurance), or feeling the need of help and support to achieve their goals (religion as crutch), or wishing to sustain a social identity (religion as badge of respectability). No doubt all of these motivations can be found among the membership of churches: it would be futile to dispute that. But just as a horse brought into a house is not therefore human, so a self-seeking motivation brought into a church is not thereby Christian, nor will holiness ever be the right name for religious routines thus motivated.

From the plan of salvation I learn that the true driving force in authentic Christian living is, and ever must be, not the hope of gain but the heart of gratitude.” *J.I. Packer, Rediscovering Holiness, p. 75*

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STUDY ONE –WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CHILDREN OF GOD?

What would you like to change?

Directions:

- The purpose here is to **identify one or more areas in your life that are in need of change**, and to put into practice the principles of Biblical change that we will discuss over the next weeks together.
- The areas of change ought to be **relatively specific** (“I want to stop gossiping” or “I want to start to repair my poor relationships with my sister,” – and not “I want to be a better person.”)
- Also, recommended - a **limited number of areas** – not more than three areas – more areas becomes too difficult to keep track of and measure.
- For some people this will be easy – you already know exactly what you need to change. However, we also need to be aware that **there are forces at work that would be just as happy if we did not face our own shortcomings**. Some of these are external spiritual forces and some are the natural product of our own poor judgment.
- For this reason, attached are some **Scriptures and some reflection questions** to help you to identify some areas of that might need changing to follow Christ more closely.
- The format is a Scripture; a few reflection questions, a “Continue-Start-Stop” section. You can make some notes here about what you should **continue** doing well, what you should **start** to do actively; and what you should **stop** doing.
- **PRAY** for your eyes to be opened to your own sin.
- **ASK** the Holy Spirit to help you to identify sin.
- At the end, **IDENTIFY THE AREAS OF YOUR LIFE** where you think God would be glorified and you would be more satisfied if you were to change. **Pick the one to three most immediate.**

Acts of the Flesh

“¹⁹ The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; ²⁰ idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Galatians 5

Reflection Questions: *From my earliest years, what have I struggled with? If I were to ask my siblings or parents, what would they say were my biggest faults growing up and into early adulthood? Have I really changed in these areas since childhood? Is it time to grapple with these now?*

Continue

Start

Stop

Fruit of the Spirit

“²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” Galatians 5

Reflection Questions: *Do I demonstrate these qualities to my family and co-workers? What of the fruit of the Spirit do I lack?*

Continue

Start

Stop

The Weightier Matters

²³ “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.” Matthew 23.

Reflection Questions: *Do I have a tendency just to maintain the rules? Or do I really value the things God values, like justice, mercy and faithfulness? Do I need to repent of hypocrisy?*

Continue

Start

Stop

Relationships

²⁸ One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

²⁹ “The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.’ ³⁰ Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your

mind and with all your strength.’^[a] ³¹ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’^[a] There is no commandment greater than these.”

Reflection Questions: *Do I really love God with all of myself? Or do I keep Him in a narrow compartment, so I can live as a practical atheist, making my own decisions? From what areas of life do I exclude God from my decision-making?*

Continue

Start

Stop

Reflection Questions: *Do I really love my neighbors? Or do I keep people at a distance? Am I willing to sacrifice for others? To whom, in what way, could I show love for others, and I am not doing so?*

Continue

Start

Stop

For Those Who are Married

²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

²² Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing^[b] her by the washing with water through the word, ²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. ²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.”

Reflection Question for Husbands: *Do I love my wife as Christ loved the church? In what way could I love her sacrificially in the coming week? Do I encourage and provide for my wife’s spiritual growth, that she might be becoming holy before God?*

Reflection Question for Wives: *Am I willing to serve my husband, especially when it seems foolish to do so?*

Continue

Start

Stop

For Parents

⁴ Fathers,^[b] do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Reflection Questions: *Do I frustrate my children? How do I speak to them – in consistent kindness or frequent exasperation? Am I providing for the spiritual growth of my children, or is that something I “contract out” to others?*

Continue

Start

Stop

Judgment

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder,’^[a] and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister^{[b][c]} will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’^[d] is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.” Matthew 5

Reflection Questions: *Of whom (individual or group) am I scornful, openly or secretly?*

Continue

Start

Stop

Lust

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’^[e] ²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Matthew 5

Reflection Questions: *Are the things that fill my eyes and occupy my thoughts worthy of me? Do I make objects of other people? What habits need do I need to change in this area?*

Continue

Start

Stop

Anxiety and Materialism

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes?..

²⁸ “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ Matthew 6.

Reflection Questions: *What am I anxious about? What do I obsess over that I need to trust to God and his good plan for me?*

Continue

Start

Stop

The Tongue

⁶ The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one’s life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell...

It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

⁹ With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God’s likeness. ¹⁰ Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. ¹¹ Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹² My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.” James 3

Reflection Questions: *Where do I permit my tongue to get the better of me? Do I misuse God’s name? Curse others, perhaps my own family members? Am I a gossip?*

Continue

Start

Stop

Based on the above, my knowledge of my family and friends, the conviction of the Holy Spirit in my heart, my knowledge of the character of God, I think the area(s) of my life where change is most needed is/are the following:

Ask God to continue to convict you of the need for change, the wisdom to do so and the work of the Spirit to make it possible.

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