

The Blueprint What We Believe and Why Adoption

Introduction: One of the popular phrases typically used in our culture to justify why we should treat everybody as our equal is that “we are all God’s children.” However, as well-intended as that statement is, it’s Biblically incorrect. There is no question that the Bible teaches the standard of God for humanity is to love one another, but according to the Bible, we are very clearly not all God’s children, and nobody made that more evident than Jesus Himself. For example,

42 Jesus said to them, “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. 43 Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word. 44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. ... 47 Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God.” (John 8:42-47)

In one of John's letters, he further explained what Jesus had said to those Jewish leaders. John wrote,

10 By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. (1 John 3:10)

Paul reminded the believers in Ephesus of this truth when he wrote,

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ... and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. (Ephesians 2:1, 3b)

We’ve talked about this for the last few weeks in this series. To have and experience God’s life, we must be born again. You cannot be or experience what you were not born to be and experience, and we were born as those who were only capable of falling short of God’s expectations and life. Therefore, it is correct that the world should see one another as equals before the Lord but not in the warm fuzzy way of seeing one another as children of God, but rather as those under the curse of sin and equally in need of the grace of God to be saved from His eternal wrath! The world should be united in its cry to God to rescue them from the curse of sin instead of being united in its efforts to shake its fists at God and one another!

So that sounds like the most horrifying depressing news a person could hear, and it would be if it were the only story in the news, but it’s not. You see, although the Bible makes the bad news obvious and clear, its purpose isn’t to reveal the bad news, but the Good News, that is, who Jesus is and what He has done, is doing, and will do—AKA the Gospel. The Good News to people of every tribe and tongue is that if you repented, believed in, and started following Jesus, then you, who were children of Satan, got rescued from that reality

into a reality totally opposite from the one you were born into. You were not simply born again as a new creation freed from the curse of sin, but rather, you've been born again as one who has been adopted into God's household as one of His fully favored children! It is called the Doctrine of Adoption, and the Westminster Confession of Faith states it this way,

“All those that are justified, God vouchsafeth, in and for his only Son Jesus Christ, to make partakers of the grace of adoption, by which they are taken into the number, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of the children of God, have his name put upon them, receive the Spirit of adoption, have access to the throne of grace with boldness, are enabled to cry, Abba, Father, are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by him, as by a father: yet never cast off, but sealed to the day of redemption; and inherit the promises, as heirs of everlasting salvation.”¹

Similarly, but with more modern English, I put it this way,

All who are justified by the work of Christ have, by God's intentional and loving will, been publicly adopted by God to permanently be His fully favored sons and daughters. They enjoy all the rights, privileges, and normalcy of access to the Father as Christ because they are fully loved with the same love the Father has eternally loved the Son. They are protected, provided for, and disciplined as only a perfectly righteous and loving Father can and does. All who have been adopted by God testify of it through their genuine desire to obey God and reflect His character.

Proposition: My statement of faith declares four inspirational truths about the Doctrine of Adoption in the Bible.

The first inspirational truth my statement of faith declares about the doctrine of Adoption in the Bible is that,

- (1) All who are justified by the work of Christ have, by God's intentional and loving will, been publicly adopted by God to permanently be His fully favored sons and daughters.**

Let's dissect that statement for a few minutes.

A. “All who are justified by the work of Christ ... ”

- 1. As we discussed two weeks ago, to be justified by the work of Christ means that the death Christ suffered on the cross completely paid the penalty of my sin, and therefore, I have the right to be a child of God not because of what I have done but because of what Christ did for me. Paul wrote,**

¹ https://opc.org/wcf.html#Chapter_12

2. **9 Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life. (Romans 5:9-10)**
 3. Notice that being reconciled to God, as in adopted as His kid, isn't because of our will or actions but His will and actions. Therefore, in writing about how we are adopted, I wrote, "All who are justified by the work of Christ ..."
- B. " ... have, by God's intentional and loving will ..."**
1. Jesus said, **"16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide..." (John 15:16a)**
 2. Ada was an infant when we adopted her, so she was obviously too young to express an opinion about it, much less understand what was happening. However, even if she were old enough to give an opinion on it, her opinion would not have been a legal cause for the adoption. A child doesn't get to be adopted by somebody because the child informed the state that so and so was going to be their parents. The state doesn't show up to your door and say, "Hey, this kid called us up and said they wanted you to be their parents, so here you go!" The parents are the fundamental agents of choice and determination in adoption, and therefore, no child can be adopted unless it is the will of the parents to do so. Therefore, by definition, because adoption is not something assigned to the adopter but rather to the one being adopted, God doesn't adopt us because we chose Him, and thus He's now obligated to choose us, but rather we chose to repent, believe, and follow Him because He first chose us! We are adopted by His intentional will, not ours!
 3. Furthermore, the Bible states, **3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. (Ephesians 1:3-6)**
 4. Likewise, the Bible makes it clear that we didn't cause Him to love us, but His love for us is what causes us to love Him! - **10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10)**

5. The point is that God didn't decide to adopt us because He felt guilty, or needed something from us, or because His reputation would somehow be improved. Instead, He chose to adopt us for one reason and one reason only—love. In the Greek language, this form of love is called “agape,” and it doesn't simply mean His love is unconditional, but more deeply, it means His love for us is a complete willful choice. His love for us, which led Him to choose to adopt us, is not conditioned on our love for Him but solely on His willful choice to love us. You don't “agape” because you have to, but rather you “agape” because you want to and choose to. That is, you “agape” when, in your desire to love somebody, you willfully choose to actually do it.
6. So, God not only chose the method of adoption to be the atoning work of Christ on the cross, but God is also the agent of choice and determination that decided to adopt us. It is entirely His will and work that we become His children; He does it entirely because He loves us. This is also why what I stated next about Him adopting us is not surprising. We have,

C. “... been publicly adopted by God ...”

1. God does not hide the fact that we are his children; instead, He changes us so that the world knows we are His, meaning He ain't scared to tell the world we are His!
2. **18 "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. 19 If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. (John 10:18-19)**
3. **“1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God;” (1 John 3:1)**
4. There is no concept of God covertly adopting us so that nobody knows we belong to Him. The deepest, darkest sinner that God saves is just as much publicly declared by God to be His as anybody else! God chose us to adopt us because He loves us; therefore, there's no way possible that He's not going to run around proclaiming that we are His kids and no way possible that we are not going to stand with Him at His return (1 Thessalonians 4:17).
5. In addition, in publicly proclaiming us as his children, He makes it clear that we are not only permanently His children but also permanently fully favored children, and thus I wrote that He adopts us,

D. “ ... to permanently be His fully favored sons and daughters.”

1. I will go further into what it means to be fully favored when we dissect the second truth about the Biblical Doctrine of Adoption in my statement of

faith, so for now, I just want to focus on its permanence. Listen to God's Word,

2. **28 I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. 29 My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. (John 10:28-29)**
3. **38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 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)**
4. **29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. (Romans 11:29)**
5. **4 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, ... 8 who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:4-8)**
6. **13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)**
7. There is no doubt that God's intentional, willful act of adopting us will never be revoked because He loves us, so much so that He sent His Son to suffer the penalty of sin that separated us from Him so that we could justly be permanently adopted as His kids! The price He paid to adopt us should make it abundantly clear He will never let us go!

The second inspirational truth my statement of faith declares about the Doctrine of Adoption in the Bible is that,

- (2) **They enjoy all the rights, privileges, and normalcy of access to the Father as Christ because they are fully loved with the same love the Father has eternally loved the Son.**
 - A. The New Dictionary of Biblical Theology states, "**Adoption is the legal establishment of a kinship relationship between two people that is recognized as being equivalent to one based on physical descent.**"²
 - B. The point they made in that quote is that your children are your children—period. It doesn't matter how they became your children; all that matters is that

² Ciampa, R. E. (2000). Adoption. In T. D. Alexander & B. S. Rosner (Eds.), *New dictionary of biblical theology* (electronic ed., pp. 376–378). InterVarsity Press.

they are your children. For instance, when you die, if one of your biological children tried to claim part of the inheritance of one of your adopted children because they believed being a biological child gave them more rights to your love and blessings, the courts would not agree! So, listen to God's Word on what He has given us by adopting us as His children!

- C. **3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, (Ephesians 1:3-8a)**
- D. The evidence of just how lavishly he poured out His grace on us in adopting us comes out specifically in places like Romans 8. For instance, Paul writes,
- E. **17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, (Romans 8:17a)**
1. We have the same standing with the Father that Jesus has! The perfect eternal love of the Father for His Eternal Son is the same exact love that He has for us, and it's evidenced by the fact that we are fellow heirs of the Kingdom of God with Christ, who is the eternal Son of God! We have all the rights and privileges with the Father that Christ Himself has!
 2. I want you to think about the significance of that for a minute. As a former Virginia Tech Football player, they sell us prime seating for every home game at the cost of the cheapest seat in the stadium. In addition, they also give every former player a pre-game sideline pass for every home game and allow you to enter your name into a lottery for one of the limited amount of full-game sideline passes exclusively designated for former players. However, at Virginia Tech, if your name is Michael Vick, Bruce Smith, Bud Foster, or Frank Beamer, you don't have to purchase a ticket and don't need a pass to be on the sideline during the game. Those guys have rights and privileges the rest of us don't have because they earned it! Those guys have brought more money and attention to the University than can even be counted, and as such, they understandably have rights and privileges the rest of us don't have. However, when it comes to God, all who have been adopted through Christ have received the FULL rights and privileges of being a child of God; the same rights and privileges the perfect eternal begotten Son of God has with the Father are the same rights and privileges we have as His adopted sons and daughters.

3. The doctrine of Adoption in the Bible doesn't just speak to the rights and privileges we have been given as His children, but it also speaks to the normalcy of the relationship. Paul wrote,

F. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. (Galatians 4:6-7)

G. Similarly, Paul wrote,

H. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:15)

1. The Aramaic term abba "... **denotes childlike intimacy and trust, not disrespect.**"³ It's like when you and I say "dad" when we say something directed at or about our father. It's not a special word for referring to your dad; it's just the normal word for speaking to him or about him, and, thus, the point of how adoption creates normalcy between God and us!

2. Let me explain the significance of what I mean by normalcy a little deeper. The other week, I met the governor of Virginia on the sideline of a Virginia Tech football game. I don't know him, and he doesn't know me, but I thought it would be cool to very quickly introduce myself and thank him for how he has carried himself as the Governor of Virginia and, as such, helped positively influence the entire nation toward values and political policies that I think are very important for our nation. He seemed genuinely appreciative to hear my gratitude, shook my hand, and we took a quick selfie. The entire interaction was probably 30 seconds. He then went on down the sideline, meeting other people, but soon, like me, he made his way onto the field to help form a human alley at the end of the tunnel the coaches and players walk through to get from the locker rooms and practice facility into Lane Stadium. As soon as the Johnny Cash song, "God's Gonna Cut You Down," starts, the energy in Lane Stadium starts to boil! The chant, "Let's Go, Hokies," eventually starts to ring out, and it gets louder and louder until the crowd finally erupts into utter insanity when Metallica's "Enter Sandman" starts blasting through the stadium speakers and the Hokie football team runs out the tunnel to take the field. There is nothing like it, but then I ran off the field and went to my seat, and I'm guessing he and his family went to a suite. But as we waited for that to all start, I had no expectation of standing there trying to have a conversation with him because he didn't come there to talk to me; he came to hang out with his family and see the Virginia Tech football game! He was greeting almost

³ Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, G. W. (1985). In [*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume*](#) (p. 2). W.B. Eerdmans.

everybody on the sideline as he waited for the show to start, but shaking his hand and taking a selfie with him on the sideline didn't make me think I could run up with him and his family to watch the game with them. I don't have the right to expect a normal level of friendship with Governor Youngkin, not because I'm not good enough to be friends with somebody who gets elected Governor, but because I'm not in Youngkin's family and nothing about our lives has any point of interaction with the other. In fact, it would have actually been quite arrogant of me to think he should give up the time he carved out to spend hanging out with his family and close friends to instead stand there and have a conversation with me. It would have been arrogant of me to think he should listen to what I've got to say about political issues or anything else instead of getting to fully experience what many consider to be the most electric entrance of any team in America and then go enjoy watching the game with his family and friends who came with him to do the same. The point is because I'm not close family or friends with Glen Youngkin, I'm not privileged to experience normalcy with him and there's nothing unethical or unreasonable about that. There are over 8 billion people on this planet so we not only can't have normal family and friend relationships with everybody, we also don't have the right to insist that anybody should have it with us—whether they are a governor or not!

3. So think about how big of a deal it is to be a fully favored child of God who has been given the right to experience normalcy with HIM! The King of all Kings and the Lord of all Lords has given me the right to have a normal father-son relationship with Him, the kind of normal relationship a son is supposed to be able to have with his father.
4. He has not only given me the right to treat our relationship with normalcy; He wants me to treat it with normalcy! It's why He sent His son to die for me and tear down the veil that separated us. It's why He placed His Spirit within me to stir my heart to say, Abba!
5. Finally, normalcy never gives us the right to disrespect somebody. So, we who are his children should at no point ever think it makes sense to forget who He is, but rather, in always knowing who He is, we should be blown away by the grace that has made the way for us to know Him as our loving Father; to know Him with the confidence, genuineness, and closeness that characterizes a normal, healthy relationship between children and their parents.

The third inspirational truth my statement of faith declares about the Doctrine of Adoption in the Bible is that,

- (3) **They are protected, provided for, and disciplined as only a perfectly righteous and loving Father can and does.**

- A. It's not only that God is the only one who can protect, provide, and discipline us as a perfectly righteous and loving father but that He also only ever protects, provides, and disciplines us as a perfectly righteous and loving father!
- B. As our perfectly righteous and loving Father, He PROTECTS us from all that would inhibit us from living out the days He has given us on this earth. – **7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life; you stretch out your hand against the wrath of my enemies, and your right hand delivers me. (Psalm 138:7)**
- C. As our perfectly righteous and loving Father, He PROTECTS us from the enemy of His people and kingdom! - **3 But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. (2 Thessalonians 3:3)**
- D. As our perfectly righteous and loving Father, He PROVIDES all we need to live out the days he has given us on this earth. - **30 But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matthew 6:30-33)**
- E. As our perfectly righteous and loving Father, He PROVIDES all we need to spiritually, emotionally, and relationally thrive during our days on this earth. - **3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. (2 Peter 1:3-4)**
- F. Finally, as our perfectly righteous and loving Father, He empowers us to spiritually, emotionally, and relationally thrive in this life by DISCIPLINING us in a way that ensures it. - **6 For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." 7 It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. 11 For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who**

have been trained by it. **12 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, 13 and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. (Hebrews 12:6-13)**

The fourth inspirational truth my statement of faith declares about the Doctrine of Adoption in the Bible is that,

(4) All who have been adopted by God testify of it through their genuine desire to obey God and reflect His character.

A. Let's quickly go back to Romans 8, and I think you will easily see what I'm saying here. Paul wrote,

B. 12 So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. (Romans 8:12-14)

Note: A testimony of our adoption is that the Spirit of God leads us in our lives. Those who haven't been born again are NOT led by the Spirit. The leadership of the Spirit manifests in our life as a genuine desire within us to obey God that confronts our fleshly desires that don't. Because we are His children, it becomes a natural part of who we are, so much so, as we said last week if we don't experience it, then it's because we aren't His! Paul then continues describing the genuine testimony of one who has been adopted as a child of God.

C. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:15)

Note: Part of the testimony of a person who has actually been saved and adopted by God is that they genuinely long to know Him as their father. The Spirit is at work within them, giving them a hunger for that kind of relationship with God, so much so that when we don't experience it, we eventually find ourselves so void and empty that, like the prodigal son, we run back to Him to have it! Finally, Paul says,

D. 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. (Romans 8:16-17)

Note: People who are actually children of God will long to labor with Him in what He's doing. To suffer with Him is to labor with Him in what He's doing in the world. If we don't long to be a part of what He's doing, it's because we are

not His kids! The Spirit bears witness with our Spirit that we are His, and when we realize that we are indeed His, we can't help but begin to love others the way He loves us and to be a part of His family, also known as the Church, and as such, serve others, and serve with others, as we labor with Him to bring His life to those who don't have it!

E. John put it this way,

F. 1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him. 2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. 3 For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome. 4 For everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith. (1 John 5:1-4)

Challenge: If you claim to be a follower of Christ, ask yourself how well your life is testifying to the gracious, blood-bought privilege of getting to be a child of God.

That's a pretty straightforward challenge based on all we've just talked about, but especially on what we just read that demonstrated the fourth truth about the Doctrine of Adoption in the Bible. God has not adopted us to be spoiled rotten brat kids who live entitled lives with God and one another; lives that disregard the grace they have been given to know God as their Father and labor with Him in His works; the grace to walk in His righteousness instead of sin; that instead live lives that demand others to revolve around them; lives that see their desires as their god and thus not only inflict themselves with the damages of surrendering to those desires but press on continuing to dump those consequences in the laps of those around them. What about your life matches up with what the Scriptures say about the desires and practices of people who know His incredible grace has made them children of God?

If you're not a follower of Christ and thus not a child of God, what's holding you back from saying yes? Are you talking to God about it? Are you reading the Bible to find out what He has to say about your concerns, or are you looking for reasons to justify your unwillingness to repent, believe, and follow Him?

When I was a kid, the band U2 had a huge hit song called "I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For." It was a massively catchy tune about the journey to know God and His life, but U2 wrote it and presented it as if God can't ultimately be found and experienced which is completely not at all what we learned in the Gospel of Jesus! He came to seek and to save that which is lost and to give us His abundant life to have and experience in the midst of this crazy, dark world. So, we can be sure that if we will objectively entertain the conviction of the Holy Spirit and turn in the direction of His Word to find Him, then we will! As God promised through the prophet Jeremiah,

13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:13)

Are you seeking Him or a reason not to?