

1. *“Our Father in Heaven” - Adopted*

The first words Jesus gives us is “Our Father”. Already his words take us to the deepest desires of the God who longs for us to come to him first, not as servants, not as citizens of the Kingdom, not even as prayer warriors but to relate to him as Father. This is an incredible privilege. Can you hear what is really open to you? Jesus is inviting us into the relationship that he himself has with the Father God. Because He stood where we stand in the mess of this world and carried the cross, we get to stand where he stands and call God “Father”. This word that he uses is not of a distant, authoritarian kind of parent but an intensely personal name, “Abba”, meaning daddy or papa. Jesus is inviting us into the same relationship that he has with the Father. Some of the phrases Jesus gives us in the Lord’s Prayer would have been familiar from Jewish prayers but this word “Abba” is a completely new, personal way to relate to God. What Jesus is really offering here is all that he has won for us in the new covenant; the new promise and reality in which God tells us “I am yours and your are mine and nothing can separate us”. Whatever your experiences have been of parents, God longs for you to come believing He loves you and wants to be near to you.

Ephesians 1:5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure. (NLT)

We have a Heavenly Father who made it possible for us to be adopted as His daughters through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Adopting a child does not happen by accident. It is a very deliberate choice that takes time and effort and often a great cost. The opportunity for us to know God as our parent did not come easy, it was not cheap. Jesus paid the price for our adoption into God’s family; it cost God his own Son. He didn’t have to but he wanted to; it was His pleasure.

Have you ever heard a song of praise to the God who has adopted you? We have heard that God is Father but there is very little said or sung about the amazing gift of being adopted. The incredible joy and honor of this is that you have a new start. When a child is adopted they get an “adoption certificate” which is a legal document now used in place of their birth certificate. It includes the names of their new parents and the child’s new name. That certificate shows they have a new identity; they are not only who their bloodline had made them to be and that is a great picture of what God does for us. However your family have treated or influenced you and whatever your genetic history, you can have a new Father and a new family name.

This honor of adoption is not for a few of his “favorites”, maybe the people you think are more spiritual than you. God does not just tolerate you because he is stuck with you in his family and you are not an embarrassment to him. No, He chose you; you are wanted and cherished by this Father who wants you to know him as “Abba”. When you come to him, he does not just see you as the world does, measuring you only by what you have done or valuing you for what you might do for him. He calls you to himself as a beloved child; that is who you are now because of his saving love. Ask Jesus to minister the truth of God’s fatherly love to you as you read today.

John 1:12 Yet to all who did receive him (Jesus), to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. (NIV)

1. Read these verses from the gospel of John. Look at verse 12. How does it describe who is given the right to become God's children; what have they done?

Read Romans 8 verses 14 to 17

2. Look at verse 14. What does this verse tell you further about who are the children of God?
3. Read verse 15 again. What does the first half of verse 15 say about what we are **not** because of Spirit have we received?
4. In what ways do we often live in slavery to our thoughts and desires or the past and who the world tells us we are, so that we live in fear and can be afraid of God or his work in us? (Give examples)
5. Read verse 15 again. What does the second half of verse 15 tell us about what we can call God because of the Holy Spirit of adoption (or sonship) in us? How does this touch you?
6. Look again at verse 16 and 17. This verse says that it is the Holy Spirit who bears witness in our hearts that we really are God's children. What does verse 17 promise us we will be for eternity if the Holy Spirit has made us children of God?
7. How do you feel to think that you can be an adopted daughter of the King now and that you have a royal inheritance with Christ for eternity?
8. Look at the last part of verse 17. As children of God and heirs with Jesus, how does this verse say we will we share with him and identify with him? How does this strike you?