

“I Am a Child of God”

Series: IDentity: Becoming Who We Are
May 7, 2017 – Brad Bailey

“See what amazing love the Father has given us! Because of it, we are called children of God. And that’s what we really are!” - 1 John 3:1 (NIRV)

“[Christ] gave the right to become children of God... a birth that comes from God.” - John 1:12-13 (NLT)

Genesis 1:26

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness...”

1. I was _____ to be a child of God... to bear the nature of God.

John 1:9-10, 12-13

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ...¹² ...to all who received him, 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.

2. In Christ, God has _____ my position as a child of God.

Romans 8:14-16 (NLT)

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶ For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children.

3. The Spirit of God _____ that in Christ I am _____ as a child of God.

“And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory.” - Romans 8:17 (NLT)

4. Through Christ I am _____ into an eternal _____ that belongs to a child of God.

“Now you are no longer a slave but God’s own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.” - Galatians 4:7

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Intro

Last week... we began looking at the way we search for identity... for knowing who we are.

Identity is the answer to the question... “Who are you?”

A **common way** we think about our identity... is to think of **what we identify with...** and what we identify with... generally **comes in phases in our life.**

My identity changed depending on what I was most into...

Builder

Football

Biking

Hippie... still close to heart.. as is

Surfing...most of my life until 30's was spent at the beach and ocean

Academic

I have identified myself with each of these areas of interest and lifestyle.

In some ways...they were a **PART of who I was and am...** but they are **not the essence** of who I am.

These aspects can serve as **distinguishing us...**but **not as defining us.**

They can help us find some **social fit...**but **not our ultimate nature and worth.**

Similarly ...you may be an employee... sibling... parent... spouse... volunteer. Those may serves as **roles** we play...but they are not the **root** of who we are.

Imagine if there was no one else around you... anywhere... and consider if those secondary elements provide much meaning.

> The answer to “who we are” **must ultimately be rooted in something that is durable** something that **doesn't change.**

Who you are is not defined by age or **stage** in life...it is about your **source.**

1 John 3:1 (NIRV) – “*See what amazing love the Father has given us! Because of it, we are called children of God. And that's what we really are!*”

> **It is what we ARE...not just what we try to be... but what we ARE through Christ.**

John 1:12-13 (NLT)

“*[Christ] gave the right to become children of God... a birth that comes from God.*”

> BORN of God...

Your core identity is BIRTHED, not BUILT.

Jesus came to reconcile and restore human life... the central identity of being a child of God... of being rooted in God as Father and His eternal love.

He came to restore our true identity... the identity out of which he lived when he came into this world.

Nothing in this world could change who he was.

Christ was known as carpenter... healer... teacher... even savior. But his identity... was that of being loved by his father – who had declared over him: “this is my son... whom I love.” That is what he lived his life out of.

In this world he was popular...and rejected...and it didn't change who he was.

This world could love him...or hate him... and it didn't change who he was.

There would be elements of understanding and joining him...and elements of misunderstanding him and abandoning him... and it didn't change who he was.

He lived out of the depth of knowing he was bound to God the Father...

This is what he come to restore in us. [1a]

Now ‘Child’ may not sound good if you are emerging out of childhood... ready to stop being ‘just a child’...

> Being a child of God is not about age or **stage** in life...it is about your **source**.

Who you are is ultimately defined by the nature of who you came from.

And the Scriptures begin with God providing a poetic summary of his creating...and culminates in His declaring...

Genesis 1:26 (NIV)

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..."

1. I was CREATED to be a child of God... to bear the nature of God.

To consider that we were created to bear God's image...nature...in some unique way...is **not to diminish any other aspect of creation**. In fact... it **affirms** that there is **something sacred in all of creation**.

The whole created realm...universe...universes are created by God.

All reflect His glory...His goodness.

Every facet of the cosmos... and every creature is sacred...created by God.

But into that biological life... one is given God's unique image to bear...given His eternal spirit.

It means that whatever the process by which we developed... God breathed His Spirit into human life...and we became living souls... who were spiritually alive. [1b]

In this sense we were created to be children of God...not in the way of bearing one's physical nature...but of bearing an eternal spiritual nature. [2]

We were **created to represent God...**to further create life... **bring care and goodness.**
It's hard to fully fathom such a life...but maybe we can begin to **imagine the profound security**
and **significance** that was intended.

Bible tells the story of how we chose to leave such a state... and give ourselves to the idea that we could be just like gods ourselves... more than creatures...more than humansand the result was that we lost the very nature we had.

We left home only to find we became wanderers lost and exploited.

We sold our identity.... and we've been uncertain of who we are ever since.

What God created to love... and share in His goodness (glory)...His love will provide a way to restore.

Like the parent of a child taken off by someone when young ... father will not give up. Even if the child willfully rebelled. So God wants to restore us to who we really are.

God is God.... And there is **more at hand.**

Not only is His power greater than any other....His power lies in His love.

For "God IS love"... so what unfolds is not just God acting in physical force...but in love.

He invades with His presence. **He comes with a Father's love.**

John 1:9-10, 12-13 (NIV)

The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ...¹² ...to all who received him, 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.

God's rescue ... must engage restoring our true nature...and that of children surrender in love to their creator and father. So God comes as the eternal only begotten Son...to bring that life into the created world.

He comes as the true light... to restore our relationship...and bestow his nature within us.

2. In Christ, God has RESTORED my position as a child of God.

We cannot simply change our nature... so God sends His nature to us by the Son coming to us...and if we receive him... we can be reconciled and be united with that nature.

Notice that the Scripture says that this right comes not from “natural descent, nor of human decision”...

> “The will of your human parents is not what defines who you are.”

You may have had parents who had planned and prepared for you... provided well for you. Their will is not what defines you most.

You may have had one or both parents who weren't there... whose will for you was there...but not able to maintain their commitment and care ...and you never felt clearly wanted by them.

“The will of your human parents is not what defines who you are.”

Next Sunday is Mother's Day... and next month Father's Day. I don't know all that those days might mean to you. But I know this... whatever they represent... it is not your ultimate identity. Mothers and fathers will be most honored when we **remember** that **our ultimate identity lies beyond them.**

Nor is your identity rooted in simply our own will.

We don't will ourselves to be God's children.... It is rooted in His will.

God knows that we are not fully home. So we live with a conflict.

Our nature is **still working out old and new**...and the world is still not restored to God's intent.

So how can we stay rooted in our true identity and nature?

Jesus said... the Spirit of God would be coming...and dwell in a new way in human lives.

And God marks his child... with an indwelling presence...

Romans 8:14-16 (NLT)

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, “Abba, Father.” ¹⁶ For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children.

As lives began to receive Jesus... unite with him... he said another would come...the Spirit of God. And Jesus said... it was essential that the Spirit come fill those who would now go forward.

That Spirit...the Holy Spirit... **brings this truth to work within us.**

The Spirit testifies...that we are no longer slaves...but children. [3]

3. The Spirit of God AFFIRMS that in Christ I am SECURE as a child of God.

A slave can never be secure...they have to live in fear of their master's will. They have no rights they can count on... not real sense of belonging....so naturally they live in FEAR.

**God's Spirit is that declares we are children.
It is the very nature of what Jesus lived out of in this world.
"Abba Father"...**

This Spirit comes to work within ALL who receive him.

Romans 8:15

"...you received God's Spirit when he adopted you ..."

> DO you know that God wants to adopt you...and when He does...His Spirit is at work in you. The Spirit of all creation... has come as a deposit...bringing news of the Father's love... and future joy even now.

But there is more... when a slave was adopted as a son... it meant they inherited everything.

Romans 8:17 (NLT)

And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God's glory.

4. Through Christ I am ADOPTED into an eternal INHERITANCE that belongs to a child of God.

Galatians 4:7 (NLT)

Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

In Roman culture...from which Paul writes... children inherited the wealth of their parents and also received the full effects of the family name, honor, responsibilities, traditions, and position. This included the responsibility of honoring the parents when they passed... carrying their ancestral legacy into the future.

A slave was taken from his family... any their treatment was inconsistent... depending on favor of their master. They lived in fear... never secure in their standing.

That is unless the rare decision was made to adopt them.

Adoption generally involved that of a slave.

This came from a desire by couple who had no children and wanted an heir to carry their name and wealth forward.

It carried so much implications...that it came with huge legal responsibility and process.

All the debts of the *one being adopted* were cancelled, and in effect he started a new life. The adopted person did, though, lose all rights in his old family, but gained all the rights of a fully legitimate son in his new family. In the most basic sense and in the most literal way, he got a new father. [5]

When we receive Christ...we are receiving the terms of adoption. All our indebtedness of life is reconciled... and we are now the child of the one adopting us.

We are no longer slaves... nothing to fear.

And we are now heirs... we inherit all that is of the family.

And what does that include?

Everything that exists in the perfect realm of God.

> Life as it should be... where there is no pain death or suffering...and that lasts forever.

As Christ was raised into a new body and from the fallen world to the eternal good....so will all who receive him.

It's "an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you" ([1 Peter 1:4](#)).

Inheriting the "world to come" is a guarantee for all those who belong to God's family. [4]

Some may think about how much their life would change if they won the LOOTO. ...or received a huge unexpected inheritance.

Closing: God created you to be His. He knows who we are. He is waiting for us to come home...and Christ came to lead us home. He has taken the separation upon himself... he bore our sin and separation... was crucified to take that upon himself. Now offers his life...as the son.. to dwell within us.

Prayer: To receive that new life...identity. Then to let the Spirit speak to us...to affirm we are His son or daughter.

Including these words which God has spoken and lie within the Scriptures... formed as a letter to your soul.

My Child...

You may not know me, but I know everything about you (Psalm 139:1)

I know when you sit down and when you rise up (Psalm 139:2)

Even the very hairs on your head are numbered (Matthew 10:29-31)

For you were made in my image (Genesis 1:27)

In me you live and move and have your being (Acts 17:28)

For you are my offspring (Acts 17:28)

I knew you even before you were conceived (Jeremiah 1:4-5)

You were not a mistake, for all your days are written in my book (Ps. 139:15-16)

And it is my desire to lavish my love on you (1 John 3:1)

Simply because you are my child and I am your father (1 John 3:1)

I offer you more than your earthly father ever could (Matthew 7:11)
For I am the perfect father (Matthew 5:48)
Every good gift that you receive comes from my hand (James 1:17)
Because I love you with an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3)
My thoughts toward you are countless as the sand on the seashore (Ps. 139:17-18)
And I rejoice over you with singing (Zephaniah 3:17)
For you are my treasured possession (Exodus 19:5)
One day I will wipe away every tear from your eyes (Revelation 21:3-4)
And I'll take away all the pain you have suffered (Revelation 21:3-4)
For in Jesus, my love for you is revealed (John 17:26)
He is the exact representation of my being (Hebrews 1:3)
He came to show you that I am for you, not against you (Romans 8:31)
If you receive him, you receive me (1 John 2:23)
And nothing will ever separate you from my love again (Romans 8:38-39)
I have always been Father, and will always be Father (Ephesians 3:14-15)
Will you be my child? (John 1:12-13)
Love, Your Dad. Almighty God

Notes:

1a. In his classic book *Knowing God*, J. I. Packer wrote:

"If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all."

1b. Gen. 2:7 – "Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." Apart from the breath of God, we are just dust. And so, when we choose separation....we are destined to become dust again. As we read in Genesis 3:17-19

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it'; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it All the days of your life. "Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return."

2. There is no confusion about God's supremacy. There is only one God. He is the only source... power...and the One to whom all honor and worship is given. But we have the privilege of bearing aspects of his good nature...his goodness (glory) and excellence. This is what is being referred to in passages such as 2 Peter 1:3-4 (ESV)

“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.”

3. Regarding the Spirit, it is interesting... that what identified Jesus to be the eternal Son of God was the Spirit...

John 1:33-34 (GW)

I didn't know who he was. But God, who sent me to baptize with water, had told me, 'When you see the Spirit come down and stay on someone, you'll know that person is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.'³⁴ I have seen this and have declared that this is the Son of God.”

Consider also:

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 (CEV)

God... put his Spirit in our hearts to show that we belong only to him.

Ephesians 1:14 (NLT)

“The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.”

4. Regarding what we inherit...

Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, is the natural “heir” of the Father. “God said to him, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father’” ([Hebrews 5:5](#); cf. [Psalm 2:7](#)). Christ's inheritance is the whole universe, all that is in existence: [Hebrews 1:2](#) says that the Son has been “appointed heir of all things.” Being a co-heir with Christ means that we, as God's adopted [children](#), will share in the inheritance of Jesus. What belongs to Jesus will also belong to us. Christ gives us His glory ([John 17:22](#)), His riches ([2 Corinthians 8:9](#)), and all things ([Hebrews 1:2](#)). We are as welcome in God's family as Jesus is; we are “accepted in the Beloved” ([Ephesians 1:6, NKJV](#)). All that belongs to Jesus Christ will belong to us, the co-heirs, as well.

“You are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir” ([Galatians 4:7](#)). Think of all that means. Everything that God owns belongs to us as well because we belong to Him. Our eternal inheritance as co-heirs with Christ is the result of the amazing grace of God. [From <https://www.gotquestions.org/co-heirs-with-Christ.html>]

5. Drawn from good article - Coming Home: Adoption in Ephesians and Galatians by Sarah Julien, Quodlibet Journal: Volume 5 Number 2-3, July 2003; ISSN: 1526-6575

<http://www.quodlibet.net/articles/murray-adoption.shtml>

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Home Church Discussion

Who are you? Where do you find your sense of self and self worth? It's a defining question and the one that may defy us most. In our current series we're focusing on the transforming power of discovering our true identity in Christ. This week we're exploring our central identity of being a child of God... of being rooted in God as Father and His eternal love.

1. What was one of your favorite things to do as a child?
2. What are some great things about being a child?

Read Romans 8:14-16 (NLT)

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God's children.

3. What do you think it means to be "led by the Spirit of God" (v.14)?

In Scripture there are many different names used to describe God. While all the names of God are important in many ways, the name "Abba Father" is one of the most significant names of God in understanding how He relates to people. The word *Abba* is an Aramaic word that would most closely be translated as "Daddy." It was a common term that young children would use to address their fathers. It signifies the close, intimate relationship of a father to his child, as well as the childlike trust that a young child puts in his "daddy." (v.15)

4. How does this understanding of "Abba Father" impact our relationship with God?

Read Galatians 4:7 (NLT)

Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

5. What have we received as his children? (1 Peter 1:4).

Read 1 John 3:1 (NIRV) – *"See what amazing love the Father has given us! Because of it, we are called children of God. And that's what we really are!"*

6. Why is it sometimes hard to believe we are God's child?

7. How might knowing our identity as God's children impact how we live: our attitudes, our actions? (Read 1 John 3)

8. Read through The Father's Love Letter together.
 - What stands out to you here?
 - What is hard for you to believe?
 - What brings joy to your heart?

9. What are some things we can do to remind ourselves about our identity as God's child?