

A New Identity

Lesson 1 - Sons and Daughters



The Big Picture

Several years ago, I attended a worship gathering where individuals were being encouraged, as the Spirit of God led them, to stand and describe the activity of God in their lives. A young woman stood and said, “I grew up in a home where I really can say, sadly, that I never knew or found out what it was like to be the daughter of a loving father.” She said, “I thought I was just destined to live that way, fatherless. But then at a certain age, I received Christ and I found out that I have a loving, trustworthy, tender, understanding, always faithful, heavenly Father.”

The rest of us who were listening could tell by the sincerity and the tone of her voice that she wasn't referring abstractly to a cold theological doctrine called adoption. She was thinking and feeling and acting in accordance with the identity of God had given her. She had learned from the Word of God that she had a Father in heaven who loved her more than words could describe. God had said to her by His Spirit, “You're my daughter. You've got a Father now.” And she not only believed it, she felt it. She was moved by it. It changed her forever.



A Wide Angle View

1) What images and impressions come to mind when you think of your earthly father?

What was one way you experienced the love of your heavenly Father through your earthly father?

Complete this sentence: “One way I would have loved to receive love from my dad was...”



A Biblical Portrait

Read John 1:12, Galatians 4:4-7, and 1 John 3:1

2) What do these passages teach you about your relationship to the Father?



Sharpening the Focus

Read Snapshot “The Father’s Adoption”

The Father’s Adoption

To my knowledge, the understanding of God as a seeking, intimate, and loving Father is unique to the Christian faith. I'm not aware of any major world religion that has any parallel understanding. It seems in most world religions a person learns doctrine, obeys rules, jumps through the required hoops, serves in a prescribed way, and then is promised a euphoric existence in some faraway place. It's all rather cold.

But in biblical Christianity, things are different. God doesn't just save us. He doesn't justify us and regenerate us by His Holy Spirit and then assign us a condominium somewhere in the cosmos when we die. He saves us, cleanses us, justifies us through the death and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, His Son. Then because of who He is, He claims us and adopts us. He says, “I'm doing to make you My son and daughter. You're going to be Mine forever.” And then He treats us like sons and daughters: respectfully, tenderly, faithfully and lovingly, t's amazing, isn't it?

3) Since we have been adopted as sons and daughters of God, how should we view our relationship with Him and with other followers of Christ?

How do you respond to God saying, "You're Mine Forever?"

4) Sometimes, we feel like outcasts and unworthy of God's love. What causes us to feel this way?

Read Snapshot "The Father's Affection"

The Father's Affection

In John 5:20, Jesus very casually says, "The Father loves the Son." Jesus didn't have to embellish these words. He lived in the awareness that His Father had a great, great affection for Him, so He felt loved, protected, watched over, nurtured, and provided for. He was full of worship for His Father. He felt free to pray to the Father because all good fathers have a listening ear to their sons and daughters.

Putting it simply, because Jesus felt the Father's love, He thought and behaved and felt like a son. When He taught the Lord's Prayer, He said, "You know how I want all of you to start your prayers? 'Our Father.'" And because we too are His sons and daughters, we should call Him Father."

Is God your Father? Do you understand that you have been accepted by Him? Do you know you are His beloved child? Psalm 103:13 says, "As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him." Do you realize how safe you are because you're His child? How secure?

5) How have you felt God's fatherly love?

6) Who is one person in your life who needs to experience the Father's love right now?

What can you do in the coming days to share the Father's love with that person?

Read Snapshot "The Father's Authority"

The Father's Authority

Not only did Jesus live in constant awareness of the Father's affection for Him, but He lived under the Father's authority. Jesus wasn't worried about the Father's authority being destructive or manipulative or negative. You see, when you are absolutely convinced of the Father's affection for you, you have no fear of whatsoever of the Father's authority. Because you know He has your best interests in mind, you can be assured that His wisdom, His counsel, and His guidance can be trusted. You find yourself wanting to cooperate and enthusiastically seek ways to bring you live under God's authority.

7) When you hear the word "authority", what images come to mind?

What specific things can the members of your group (this class) do to help you grow in submission to the Father's will in your life?

8) What is one specific area in which you struggle to keep under the authority of your heavenly Father?

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