

## Adoption

**MPS** The glory of God's love in salvation is revealed through adoption whereby we become children of God.

**OBJ** Every person can understand God's love in salvation by three lessons from Adoption.

**INTRO** I want to share with you today about one of the most dear subjects in my life, adoption. This is likely the most difficult sermon I will ever preach NOT because of its glorious content, but of its deeply personal nature, and my often inability to hold it together.

The glory of God's love in salvation is revealed through adoption whereby we become children of God.

**OBJ** Three Lessons Adoption continually teaches us.

**Lesson 1:** Adoption teaches that God's love is so much more glorious than we dare imagine. [Theology of Love]

**Adoption is one of the central metaphors the Bible uses to encompass our salvation in Jesus Christ.** The Greek word for adoption, *huiothesia*, is used five times in the New Testament; Romans 8:15, 23; 9:4, Galatians 4:5, and Ephesians 1:5, each time in reference to and explanation of our salvation, and specifically the assurance of our salvation. I want to draw from these passages to provide a Biblical introduction to adoption, beginning with its spiritual truth and moving toward its practical application.

**READ** Romans 8:15-17; 22-24

*<sup>15</sup>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!" <sup>16</sup>The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup>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.*

*<sup>22</sup>For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. <sup>23</sup>And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. <sup>24</sup>For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? <sup>25</sup>But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*

The adoption metaphor teaches the **central truths** about God's love and our salvation in Jesus Christ.

**1.** Adoption demonstrates that **we are made family with God.** And none are second-class family members. Explaining our standing with God through adoption, Christian scholar F. F. Bruce states, "The term 'adoption' (used here in older English versions) may have a somewhat artificial sound in our ears; but in the Roman world of the first century AD an adopted son was a son deliberately chosen by his adoptive father to perpetuate his name and inherit his estate; he was no whit inferior in status to a son born in the ordinary course of nature, and might well enjoy the father's affection more fully and reproduce the father's character more worthily."<sup>1</sup> **Without exception, every person that is saved by faith in Jesus Christ to become a Christian is adopted, enjoying all the blessings of the family and full heir of the inheritance.**

**2.** Adoption **brings the Spirit Christians receive in salvation that distinguishes our new identity and our known intimacy of close relationship with God. The Spirit of adoption / sonship produces a radical change in us about ourselves with a new identity.** We have a new identity, that though we were separated from God by nature we are made children of God to enjoy all the rights, privileges, and inheritance as children of God. And this new identity produces our known intimacy with God. The Spirit of adoption / sonship produces in us the change from relating to God as unknown power / force to "Abba

<sup>1</sup> F. F. Bruce, [Romans: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 6, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 167.



Father”<sup>2</sup>, the most intimate of names. Adoption changes the source to which a child looks for their security to abolish fear, and their provision to satisfy need, and their identity to establish personhood.<sup>3</sup>

**The Spirit of adoption also produces a radical change in us by our known intimacy with God.** The One who is our Savior and Redeemer is our Heavenly Father. The Spirit testifies that we know God, and that we are known by God as His children. The Spirit tells us that we need not run away in fear but to run into the presence of our Father. “He is mine, and I am His.”<sup>SoS2:16</sup> Adoption is our confident assurance that we know and are known by God, our Heavenly Father, because the Spirit of adoption testifies to us from within us that we are His children.

3. Adoption guarantees our eternal inheritance in Jesus Christ to provide the foundation for our eternal hope now that strengthens our patience to wait for His return. Paul completes his teaching on adoption, Romans 8:23, by connecting our reality of it now to our hope for eternity. Adoption encompasses the Christian’s eternal inheritance as children of God. We know we are His, and we know one day He will come to take us home ultimately and eternally to be with Him. Adoption is our confident assurance that holds Christians until the Day of Jesus’ return to take us home.

**TRANS** Because of these central truths, there is more we can say about God’s love.

4. Adoption reveals God’s eternal heart and very nature is one of love. In adoption we see the heart of God in the purpose of His will by the manifestation of His love. Ephesians tells us that God’s decision for our adoption was determined before the foundation of the world.

*In love <sup>5</sup>he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, <sup>6</sup>to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. Ephesians 1:5-6*

According to Paul, the doctrine of adoption reveals HOW God ordained to fulfill His predestination and election in our salvation. God’s love for me did not begin with me but is His very heart and nature. His love is established in eternity. It has no start nor end date, and nothing can change that. And if His love did not begin with me, then it won’t / can’t end with me. The love of God that holds me in His salvation through adoption is His very nature of everlasting love.

**TRANS** This first lesson of God’s love tells a most glorious truth of celebration.

5. Adoption is the reward of God’s love in our redemption through Jesus Christ.

In Jesus Christ, we are not only set free from sin by God, but we are brought home with God to live as His children, in His holiness, righteousness, and glory.<sup>Gal4:4-7</sup>

**READ** Galatians 4:4–7

*But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. <sup>6</sup>And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” <sup>7</sup>So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God. Galatians 4:4-7*

**ILLUS** [Pic: Bringing JMH & BAH home] This truth reminds me of what we call our “Family Day”, the day our children came home with us.

**Why is adoption such a powerful metaphor and most accurate picture of our salvation in Jesus Christ?** Orphaned is the reality of our sin, the helpless condemned without hope, cast away from all that identifies and defines us, secures us, provides for us, and most importantly for all of this, loves us. There are countless solutions offered, but none provides what love freely gives. Orphaned captures the image of the one lost in sin, who, without a Savior, has no hope for help or love.

<sup>2</sup> F. F. Bruce, [Romans: An Introduction and Commentary](#), vol. 6, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 167. Bruce explains, “Abba! Father! This phrase occurs in two other places in the New Testament—in Mark 14:36 (in Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane) and Galatians 4:6 (quoted in note on verse 14 above). The fact that this form made its way into the worshipping vocabulary of the Gentile churches is best explained by Jesus’ characteristic use of it.”

<sup>3</sup> Grant R. Osborne, [Romans](#), The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 205–206. Osborne explains, “The adoption metaphor is peculiarly Pauline (Rom 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5) and comes from Hellenistic practice (though still reflecting the Old Testament idea of sonship). It depicts the transformation of the believer’s status “not only from slave to freedman (see on 6:16) but also from freedman to adopted son” (Dunn 1988a:452).”



Adoption is central to our salvation in Jesus Christ. We are saved by a man who was adopted by his earthly father. Adoption has taught me more about God than all my studies, not because of the volume of information but the depth of the lessons delivered on a daily basis. If you are a Christian, you have been adopted. And if you are not a Christian, God invites you to receive his love by trusting in Jesus Christ today to receive forgiveness and cleansing of sin, and to be adopted into His family. [God wants you to become His child.](#)

## Lesson 2: Adoption teaches the power of God's love is so much greater than we dare imagine. [The Power of Love]

### Harrison Adoption Story / Testimony

Christin and I decided that we would adopt when we were dating in college. One of our early conversations we had was about children, how many we wanted, etc. We both shared that we believed God wanted us to adopt. Back in that day, adoption was not a hot topic Christian cause. You simply didn't hear much about it. I grew up with friends who were adopted, but I didn't know much about it other than that. I did always sense that adoption was something I was supposed to do. Christin and I made the decision that we would adopt before we were ever married. Little did we know how important that decision would become for us a few years later.

Three years after Christin and I were married, in 1996, we decided to begin our family. That started a process of numerous surgeries and struggles with infertility that would plague us constantly over the next six years. As doctors continued to tell us there was no reason we could not have children, which we would later discover was technically but likely not actually accurate. We did not want to wait any longer. Our decision from college returned and we agreed we would begin the adoption process.

Our decision, though, was not simply to start a process. Rather, in the midst of all the complications and infertility struggles, we concluded that God had determined to build our family through adoption. It is hard to say exactly how extensively the conclusiveness and conviction of this decision affected us, other than to say it brought a focus on God and His leading. There was no bitterness, but an elation over the certainty of knowing this. And while the physical struggle with infertility remained a couple of years after our first adoption, our understanding that God had ordained our family to form through adoption only deepened and strengthened within us.

So, we began the adoption process in January 1999. The process alone was filled with God's sovereign hand working in every detail. Finally, we determined international adoption was the route we wanted to go. I do not have time to walk you through both of our adoptions, but I will give a few highlights. In the first process, we decided that we would accept the first referral that came to us. We received a picture of a baby boy whose birth certificate identified as Seergevich Michail Studenikov. [\[Original pic of JMH\]](#). Upon counsel, we took all the information to a local pediatrician for a medical review. We were interested to know what she would say. But our decision to accept the referral was already decided. We traveled and picked up our son, Joshua Michail Harrison, on July 20, 1999. [\[Pic of JMH for the first time.\]](#) Joshua spent the first six months of his life under the good care in an orphanage. When we brought Joshua home, we learned that he was severely malnourished. He spent several days in the hospital fighting e-coli. Once we passed that initial scare, love took hold and began to grow that baby into the man he is today.

A couple of years later I was on a mission trip. In the middle of a big circle playing with kids I sensed this very strong leading from the Spirit, "Now is the time for you to bring home your daughter". I came home and told Christin, "It's time." We decided we wanted a daughter. After working out some details of life, we started the process the first week of August 2001. By the end of September we received our referral of a baby girl with the name Cytia Pamela Minerva Galvez. As we started to make travel plans, the country suddenly closed its borders for Americans adopting, due to political strife between countries. [\[Original pic of BAH\]](#) We waited in excruciating anxiousness until the end of January, making weekly check-ups on the situation. When they finally opened the country, we immediately booked our trip and left a few days later. We picked up our daughter, Bethany Ann Harrison. [\[Pic: holding BAH for the first time.\]](#) Bethany spent the first six months of her life with a



foster mom, for who we are so grateful. Spirited from the first day, baby Bethany was unsure what to think about these weird sounding gringos. But we managed to convince her with much good fruit.

One great blessing in both our adoptions is that the week we decided and started the paperwork process was the same week our children were born. Christin and I have frequently said that no two children could have been more like us, one more like her and the other like me. We have always told our children the stories of their adoption as the expression of God's good gift to us in the way He chose to build our family. And we tell this story because we've always believed it. I thank God for my children and the way He chose to build our family for two reasons. First, because He gave us two greater gifts than we could have ever requested. And second, because my children have taught me more about God, about myself and life, than I could ever teach them. [I am reminded every day of my life, and I am a better pastor because of this: there is no formula to accurately calculate the power of love as an agent of transformation.](#)

**Lesson 3:** Adoption teaches that God's love produces a more radical change than we could dare imagine. [Mission of Love]

**Why does LPC prioritize orphan care?** The short answer is that we didn't prioritize orphan care, God did, in His Word and among His church. But His work and leading among us has consistently and continually prioritized orphan care among our church from the very beginning. I have no doubt that our adoptions gave people points of connection to our church, especially for those considering orphan care in some manner for their own lives. But the way God has grown this ministry is far beyond anything that we have done. Orphan Care ministry has provided one way for us to live on God's mission, to live for the One who loved us.<sup>2Cor5:14-15</sup> [Orphan Care will never be only a project or cause that we are simply passionate about. We prioritize this ministry in obedience to God's creational mandate to be fruitful and multiply<sup>Gen1:28</sup> and His commission to make disciples<sup>Matt28:19-20</sup> in love-compelled obedience to display the glory of His love on the earth.](#)

**The Priority of Orphan Care for LPC:** LPC prioritizes orphan care ministry for four reasons.

1. [The Bible commands it, and the gospel compels it.](#)

*"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction"* **James 1:27**

2. [Orphan Care ministry reaches a hopeless world with an endless source of eternal hope from the Father.](#)

3. [Orphan Care ministry demonstrates God's heart for people who are helpless with His unstoppable power.](#)

Jesus said, *"I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you."* John 14:18. When we care for orphans, we manifest the promise of Jesus in this physical world to those we touch and minister to, to have hope for eternity. Orphan care provides a visible picture of our redemption in Jesus Christ that rescues those lost and establishes a child's identity in love.

4. [Orphan care ministry teaches and strengthens God's children, Christians, to live more faithfully in His love.](#)

[The glory of God's love in salvation is revealed through adoption whereby we become children of God.](#)

CLOSE One final illustration and I will close. [\[Latest Pic of JMH & BAH\]](#) Son & Daughter

[God's love is an incalculably powerful agent of change and transformation. Love IS all this and so much more. But not just for the orphan. Even more for those labor to serve the orphan. The way I think about my children is but a glimpse of the deep, perfect love the Father has for His children. Orphan Care provides the opportunity to make God's love visible.](#)

[For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, and to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,"](#) **John 3:16a; 1:12**

