

November is National Adoption Month. Help us spread the word by sharing this post with others!

4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. 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. (ESV)

Galatians 4:4-7

My wife and I have adopted five kids over the last four years. We have four kids from Ukraine: James, Angela, Jana and Victoria. After about a year, we then went to Ethiopia to get Joshua.

The primary motivation for us adopting kids was theology. Not biology. Because our lives are directly related to what we believe, our theology should lead way to our biography.

Adoption wasn't a topic I considered until five years ago. I was asked to speak to a youth camp about the poor. As I began to study the poorest of the poor around the world, I came to the conclusion that the poorest of the poor are orphans. There are 140 million children without fathers in the world today. I began to see in the Scriptures that one of God's titles is Father of the fatherless

⁵ Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation. Psalm 68:5 (ESV)

As I began to teach at the youth camp, I became convicted. I was teaching them they needed to be taking care of orphans, but I still didn't know one. I was never opposed to orphan care or adoption. I was just indifferent.

Our Adoption Journey

I learned from the Scriptures that God is an adoptive father. There are no natural born children into the Kingdom of God. All of us, who are in the family, are here by virtue of adoption. I went to my wife and said I wanted some kids. We had a five-bedroom house and no kids. She said okay. She wanted two little girls from Eastern Europe. After an eighteen-month process, we were approved for two kids under the age of five and got a phone call saying we needed to be in Kiev in a few days.

We got to the governmental agency, had one hour to look through available children and then they would match us. A lady came in and asked if we would consider four kids, instead of the two we were approved for. I said, "Sure, why not?"

They were ages four, six, seven and nine years old. It was a biological sibling group. We agreed to meet them. They came walking into the orphanage director's office, not knowing why they were there. They thought they were in trouble. They were holding hands, pale faced and in dingy clothes. They spoke no English. The orphanage director told them we came from America to adopt them and asked them, "Do you want to be adopted?" Long story short, they all said yes. Twenty-seven hours later we made it home.

After about a year, we decided we had one more spot in the minivan. The kids wanted a brother. I asked James if he wanted us to go back to Ukraine to get him. He had been playing with his cousins, who had been adopted from Ethiopia. He said, "No, me want the sunscreen brother." He still gets his English words mixed up. I said, "You mean sun tanned brother?" He said yes. So we contacted an adoption agency, looking for a boy from Ethiopia and six months later, we were back home with Joshua.

Our journey has taught us much about the Gospel and the miracle of adoption. The great miracle is that God has sent His Son to adopt us, to bring us into His family. This privilege is unbelievable. In his book *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer says, "Adoption is the highest privilege that the gospel offers."

The Cinderella Doctrine

The Doctrine of Adoption has become the Cinderella Doctrine, the neglected doctrine. There's lots of focus on justification, reconciliation and redemption. Rightly so. But when we fail to consider the Doctrine of Adoption, we're missing out on a lot.

The Doctrine of Adoption is a unifying doctrine, bringing together so many pieces of the Christian life. When you talk about sin and slavery, you can talk about being adopted out of that. When you talk about being a child of God now, you can also talk about being revealed in the new heavens and earth as His children. You can talk about Sanctification, what it means to grow in Christ, because through adoption God is now making us like our elder brother Jesus. So many doctrines find their way into this particular area.

Galatians 4 & 8 Similarities

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

Let me share with you some similarities between our adoption of kids and God’s adoption of us, so you may understand some of the privileges.

1) Adoption is planned

When you set out to adopt kids, you think about it. You attend seminars, read books, and check out your finances. No one haphazardly walks into adoption.

In Galatians, notice the plan that was involved in adoption, “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son...(Gal. 4:4)” This language is of intentionality. At just the right time God sent forth His Son. God knew exactly what He was doing. Adoption for God was never Plan B. Most humans today only think about adoption as a second resort, when they can’t have their own kids. But for God, it was *always* Plan A. Before there was creation, God planned to adopt us.

If you’re a Christian, it’s by no accident. It’s by God’s good and sovereign grace that He has appointed you and loves you with an everlasting love.

Marvel at that privilege.

2) Adoption requires the right qualifications

When you set out to adopt children, they’re going to check you out and ask you a lot of questions. They have to make sure you have the right qualifications.

When it comes to your adoption, there’s only One who’s qualified; the pre-existent Son, born of woman. God sent the pre-existent Son, which means He’s fully divine. Yet, the son was born of woman, which speaks to His full humanness. This is the mystery of the hypostatic union; one Jesus, two natures. Fully God, fully man.

As a man, He was thirty-three years old. As God, He was eternal. As a man, he got hungry and needed to eat. As God, He was the bread of life that could feed a multitude. As a man, he got thirsty and need to drink. As God, He was the Living Water. As a man, He cried and wept at Lazarus’ tomb. As God, He raised Him from the dead. As a man, He

got tired and slept on the boat. As God, He commanded the waves to be still. As a man, He was nailed to a cross in agony. As God, He was raised from the dead.

There will never be another Jesus Christ. He's not one among many. He's the one and only. God sent heaven's best for you, His Son, the only one with the right qualifications to save and adopt you.

3) Adoption is costly

There is a great cost to bringing someone into a family. If you set out to adopt kids, you'll understand this. It costs a lot, but not just the money up front. The real cost happens when you get home and you're trying to reorient your life.

But when it comes to your adoption, it cost Jesus His life and His blood. He was born under the law and kept it everyday of His life to redeem those who are under the law. The law crushes us, we can't keep it. It tells us we're not righteous. So we need a law fulfiller, one who will be obedient for us. Jesus obeyed for us everyday He was alive. He didn't just die for us, but also lived the life we couldn't live.

He lived the perfect life and died the substitutionary death. That's what it cost to bring us into the family. We cost a lot.

4) Adoption saves children from terrible situations.

Orphanages are some of the coldest places you'll ever be in. They're full of children who have been neglected and have had no affection. Some have also experienced abuse.

Before we are Christians, we are enslaved to false gods and fear, dead in our sins, alienated from God, without hope in this world. We need to be purchased and adopted. God brings us out of all that.

5) Adoption involves a legal change.

When we went to court finally, I asked the judge's kind permission to let us be parents to these orphans and give them a family and a home. I remember when he took the big gavel and slammed it down, declaring it to be so. The moment he slammed it, my life changed. Their lives changed. Immediately.

There is a legal transfer that takes place. One moment you're not in the family, next moment you are. Paul calls that justification. When God the judge declares

you are now righteous in His eyes and adopted into the family, you come into the family immediately.

When you become a Christian you get a new status, a new identity.

6) Adoption involves the spirit of sonship

My kids have never seen legal paperwork and could care less about that. But they're our kids. People ask me if they feel like our kids. I say yes. There is a sense that they belong to poppa.

God has sent the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, "Abba father."

In Romans 8, Paul says the fundamental proof you're a child of God is that the Spirit of God is in you. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. His spirit is bearing witness in your spirit that you belong to Him.

Now we can cry out, "Abba, Father!" This is a privilege. In your darkest hours, you can cry out knowing that He will respond to your cry, because He's your Father.

This privilege of sonship is not only a vertical dimension with Father, but also has a horizontal dimension. We are brought into a family and now have brothers and sisters. This is powerful. We're tighter than blood; we're united by Jesus' blood.

7) Adoption transforms children in every way

When the Spirit of God comes into our heart, He's fighting sin and changing us from the inside out. He's doing Galatians Five, bearing the fruit of the Spirit, creating in us characters like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

When we're adopted, we're permanently adopted. God continues to persist, being patient with us as He shapes us into the image of Jesus. He's giving us a new appetite and aspiration to be like Jesus in this life.

Adoption gives us purpose. It gives us a vision of who we are to be and what we are to do in this life, to make much of Jesus and glorify our Father in heaven.

This is mirrored in physical adoptions. When a kid comes in they're transformed in so many ways. They want to be, in many ways, just like their new parents.

Adoption gives the child a right to be an heir of the Father

You're no longer a slave, but a son. If a son, then an heir. It has not been fully revealed as to what this exactly means. But we can know that we have an inheritance coming to us.

It would be one thing if we could just enjoy the benefits of being adopted in this life. We have the Spirit in us and have a family of brothers and sisters to enjoy life with. That would be enough. But Paul says we are heirs and the best is yet to come.

The worth of an inheritance is determined by the worth of the person giving it. God owns it all. While we don't understand the full spectrum of the new heavens and earth, we do know that we'll get God. He is our inheritance. We'll get to be with God, in His presence, where nothing but goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our life. In a place where there are no plane crashes, no tsunamis, no orphan beds, no human trafficking, no cancer, no HIV. We'll get to be with God in all His glory.

Our Response

You ask what you have to do to get all this? Simply say yes, you want to be adopted. Do you wrestle with if you're too bad to be adopted? It's not true. He doesn't adopt us for our attractive merits. He adopts us because of His amazing mercy. We are in the family, anticipating the glory that is to be revealed, by His mercy. Therefore, if you're a great sinner, you're a great candidate for someone to be adopted into the family.

If you've received adoption, I would encourage you to do Ephesians 5:1, imitate God as beloved children. Do this by showing His adopting love to a broken world. We are all called to imitate God, to visit orphans in their affliction. We are to put on display the character of God in this world. That can happen a million different ways. The question for the Christian is, "What am I doing?"

Do something. Repent of indifference. Repent of inactivity, selfishness, fear. Don't be intimidated by the vastness of the brokenness in the world. Remember what Jesus said, "If you've done it to the least of these, one of these, you've done it unto me." These orphans have a face. That face is a Galilean carpenter. Every time you care for one of them, you do it as an act of worship unto Him.

Let us be a grace given, grace displaying people as recipients of His adopting grace