

Adoption

Adopt: Legally take another's child and bring it up as one's own.¹

The Greek word for adoption to sonship is a legal term referring to the full legal standing of an adopted male heir in Roman culture.

When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, under the law, to redeem those under the law, so we could receive adoption to sonship.²

Several of our friends receiving this have adopted children. Two of my own children are adopted. One was six, the other three. I was glad to “legally take another’s child and bring it up as one’s own.” Adoption is a marvelous plan for the parents and children involved.

In Jesus day and in many of the cultures in his part of the world, adoption had another application with a deeper meaning than here in the West. When Jesus was confronted by the Pharisees, he was quick to remind them, “...you are of your father, the devil...” But through God’s ultimate action in the sacrifice of his son Jesus, we can see how God’s purpose was to set the stage for him to take us from our father, the devil, in order to legally adopt us, and draw us to himself so he could bring us up as his own.

Eternal truth defies the reasoning of the world and it’s only understood through our faith in God’s ways and the revelations of the indwelling Spirit he has graciously given to us — his adopted children.

The process of adoption by God carries a special meaning and we, who the favor of God rests upon, are called to learn his ways and to walk in those ways as he reveals to us the deeper understanding of his ultimate purpose.

The writer of Hebrews reminded us that God was angry with Israel because they didn’t know his ways.

Your fathers saw my works for forty years but I was angry with that generation. They always go astray in their heart, and they did not know my ways.³

Although God’s ways are above our ways, there is a purpose in learning, trusting, and relying on his ways as they relate to our growth and reliance upon him. In that regard let me say that much of scripture in this regard is “son” focused. That was the culture of the day, but I can assure you that what I am sharing applies to sons and daughters in the faith. (See Galatians 3:28)

When Alexander the Great was twelve years old, his father, King Philip of Macedonia, arranged for Aristotle to become his tutor. Later Alexander claimed Aristotle to be his “father.” He meant, that while he had received his body from Philip, Aristotle was the father of his learning and understanding. Aristotle taught him the ways of life. Alexander said he was more grateful to Aristotle for his knowledge than to Philip for his life.

Through the indwelling Spirit of God we are blessed to be guided by the mind of Christ and the revelations of God through his Indwelling Spirit.

For who has known the mind and purposes of the Lord, so as to instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ, to be guided by His thoughts and purposes.⁴

...don't be conformed to this world any longer with its superficial values and customs, but be transformed and progressively changed as you mature spiritually by the renewing of your mind....⁵

Praise be to God for giving us through Christ every possible spiritual benefit as citizens of Heaven! For consider what he has done—before the foundation of the world he chose us to become, in Christ, his holy and blameless children living within his constant care. He planned, in his purpose of love, that we should be adopted as his own children through Jesus Christ—that we might learn to praise that glorious generosity of his which has made us welcome in the everlasting love he bears towards the Son.⁶

What the law served as a child-trainer for Israel, the Spirit of Adoption is to achieve the same purpose in us who believe. We have been given an indwelling teacher to bring us to full-sonship & fulfill the Father's intention.

Adoption in the western world is taking a child from one family and making the child a member of another family. In Greek, Roman, and many eastern cultures, especially among those who had the resources to provide it—adoption had an entirely different purpose.

In many Greek or Roman families the fathers, for example, adopted their own child. At a very young age, the father would hire a tutor. The purpose was for the child to learn the father's ways. Between early youth and the child's maturity from birth to adoption there was growth, education, and discipline. In the fullness of time the father adopted his own child in a ceremony where the child officially became his son. So, we see that *birth made him a child, adoption made him a son.*

My family moved to Denver when I was young. But until I was 12 we lived on a farm in southeast Iowa. I learned to handle horses, drive a tractor, put up hay, milk a cow, hoe a garden, pump drinking water into a tin cup, de-feather a chicken for my mother, gather eggs, tie knots, and a host of other important tasks. In short — I was learning my father's ways.

Everything about that scene was a working picture of God's ways with his children. It would seem practical that we would therefore learn God's ways as primary in our Christian growth. In a few words....

A child is one born of God — A son is one taught of God

A child has God's nature — A son has God's character

It is much more than just being born into God's family. It's a preparation and attainment of responsibility. We move from being a child of God, to being a son in God's Kingdom.

It's important to see the difference here — child & son. We read this verse from Isaiah every Christmas time....

For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder.⁷ Isaiah was, of course, speaking of Jesus who in due time was born in the little town of Bethlehem where he spent his childhood, his humanity, learning the Father's

ways. Yet it was thirty years later that the heavens opened and John the Baptist heard the Father say.... "**This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.**"⁸

And in his humanity, even Jesus went through a learning and maturing process. Again, Isaiah said, in reference to the coming Messiah. **Butter and honey shall he eat, that he might know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.**⁹

Even Jesus learned to make wise choices as... **he increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.**¹⁰

We must learn to see the whole.... not just the part. We must learn to re-think our purpose and stay focused on the ultimate eternal goal.

Paul reminded us, **In my opinion whatever we may have to go through now is less than nothing compared with the magnificent future God has planned for us. The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own.**¹¹

Considerations for us:

One - is our part as we learn and flesh out the Father's ways

Two - is his part as his Spirit molds and changes us from children to sons

Again, Paul set the example, **I press on toward the goal to win the heavenly prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**¹²

In Jesus name, we too are called to press on toward the goal!

- Underlines are for emphasis.
- A special thanks to my late friend DeVerne Fromke for his teaching on adoption, and his writing on the importance of learning the ways of our loving and gracious Father.

1 oxforddictionaries.com

2 Galatians 4:4 RA

3 Hebrews 3:9-10

4 1 Corinthians 2:15 Amp

5 Romans 12:2

6 Ephesians 1:5-6

7 Isaiah 9:6

8 Matthew 3:17

9 Isaiah 7:15

10 Luke 2:52

11 Romans 8:18-19 Phillips

12 Philippians 3:14 Amp