

Good morning. I'm Cindy Brewer and I'm adopted. And if you are a Christian, if Jesus is your Savior, then so are you. It is my privilege to speak to you about spiritual adoption, the means by which we become members of God's family. The concept of adoption is found everywhere in the Bible. From the idea of being "the people of God" in the Old Testament, to Jesus' instruction to all of his disciples to pray to "Our Father, who art in heaven...", it is evident that the perfect and holy Creator of the world desires a close, bonded, and intimate relationship. So the idea of adoption is prevalent in the Bible. However, if you search the Scriptures, you will find that the word "adoption" is mentioned only a few times, somewhere between 2 and 5 occurrences, depending on the version of the Bible you search. Three of those references provide some foundational insights about what it means to be adopted. I'd like to read these passages, and then briefly outline four insights about adoption.

Romans 8:14-17

<sup>14</sup> For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

<sup>15</sup> For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

<sup>16</sup> The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

<sup>17</sup> And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with *him*, that we may be also glorified together.

Galatians 4:4-7

<sup>4</sup> But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

<sup>5</sup> To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

<sup>6</sup> And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

<sup>7</sup> Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Ephesians 1:3-6

<sup>3</sup> Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

<sup>4</sup> According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

<sup>5</sup> Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

<sup>6</sup> To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

From these passages, I hope we can remember four basic principles about spiritual adoption. In school, we are taught the "3 R's"—reading, writing and arithmetic. I hope we will all remember the "4-R's" of Biblical adoption: relationship, reproduction, reason and requirement.

The first is **relationship**. Spiritual adoption is not about how you enter the family of God; after all, every one of God's children except for Jesus enters by adoption. Christian faith, adoption is about a binding relationship—the rights and responsibilities of being in the family. The term “adoption” is not used to describe how you came to God's family, only that you are rightfully in it. The word “adopted” is a past tense verb denoting something that has been done, not an adjective to tell who a person is. I do not introduce my children as “my adopted daughters.” They are my daughters. I may describe them as chosen, prized, or amazing. So then, it makes sense that we can hear the voice of God addressing us as “My Child”, not “My adopted Child.” Jesus told us to pray to our “Father in heaven” not our “adopted Father.”

The second “R” of spiritual adoption is **reproduction**. In this world, many people are hindered in considering international or inter-racial adoption because they want children who look like them. However, God wants to reproduce His character, not His physical attributes. Our Father God adopts His children so that they can have His wisdom, love, kindness, mercy, compassion and sense of justice. As children of God, our calling is not to “look like” Jesus in a merely physical sense, but to be like Him as He develops His character in us.

Thirdly, spiritual adoption is the **reason** that Jesus came to earth. Notice the passage we read from Galatians 4:

<sup>4</sup> But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

<sup>5</sup> To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Jesus' death and resurrection purchased more than forgiveness. He made it possible for us to be children of God, to know God as Father, as Daddy.

Finally, adoption is a **requirement** of all God's children. It is not a last resort, or second-best, or one option. It is not “a way” into God's family—it is the only way. Sometimes people have negative feelings about the idea of adoption. They may associate it with abandonment, a painful past of not belonging, or with being unwanted. But if we accept God's view of adoption, we see that just the opposite is true. Adoption is about being chosen. It is about being loved. Adoption is about having a future. It is all about identity and relationship. A few years ago, my husband Tony wrote a short article called “The Spirit of Adoption.” I would like to close with a small portion of that article. Let it remind us to be thankful that as children of God, we are all adopted.

“Love initiates, animates, and completes adoption. Adoption love is the type of love that compels one to move out of comfort zones, that causes one to sacrifice, that causes one to give. It is the type of love that is most starkly obvious in the face of the direst need. Love is the spirit of adoption.”

As believers, we know that the spirit of adoption is the Holy Spirit Himself. He brings us into the family of God, and seals us as children of the Father. May we be grateful, joyful, loving children who reflect His likeness.