

What Does it Mean to be a Child of God?

John 1:10–13 (NKJV)

¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.

¹¹He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.

¹²But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

¹³who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

- *The picture the Bible paints of salvation is so much more wonderful than just having our sins forgiven and not going to Hell.*
- *The Bible declares that “as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.”*
- *The Greek word used for children in John 1:12 is τέκνον teknon and it means “a child, offspring, a born one,” speaking about a relationship based on parentage.*
- *For one to really grasp the reality and implications of what it means to be a child of God, all we have to consider is what a healthy father and son relationship looks like and think about the bonding, acceptance, affection, love, security, and privileges that accompany this relationship.*
- *For one to have an audience with a president or a king requires an appointment or a formal initiation, but a child of that president or king has a special place in his heart. The door is always open for the child to share his or her needs, problems, or simply to come in and give his or her father a hug and say, “I love you Dad.”*
- *By making us His children and calling us His, God expresses the great depth of His love for us and how much He values us. “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1).*
- *Many believers misunderstand their relationship with God and see it more as a Master/servant relationship than a Father/son relationship. Because of this misconception they rob themselves of much of the delight and purpose that God has for their lives.*
- *The delight is that we are actually His children and the purpose is for us to grow and mature in our relationship with God as our Father as we serve Him and fulfill His will on this earth.*

- *If we fail to see that God is not only our King and Saviour but also our Father and our Friend, we miss an essential part of the relationship God wants to develop with us.*
- *Our Father exalts His children above the angels, “do you not know that we shall judge angels.” (1 Corinthians 6:3). He desires to “crown him (man) with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands.” (Hebrews 2:7-8).*
- *The most amazing thing about being a child of God is not only does “the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came forth from God” (John 16:27), but that the Father loves us with the same love that He loves His only Begotten Son, Jesus Christ, “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” (John 15:9).*
- *In John 1:12 where it says, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name,” the Greek word for “right” is ἐξουσία (exousia) and it means “power; authority.”*
- *What is this power and authority that can turn sinful men and women into children of the Most High God and how is this power released in us?*
- *The power to become a child of God is imparted and released in us through the “new birth” which takes place at the moment we put our faith in Christ.*

John 3:3–7 (NKJV)

³Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

⁴Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?”

⁵Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

⁷Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’

- *God created the natural world to provide analogies and insights in order for us to understand the invisible spiritual realm just as it says in Romans 1:20. “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.”*
- *In John, Chapter 3, Jesus points to conception and childbirth in the natural realm as an analogy to help us understand how we are transformed into children of God through the new birth, “unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”*

- *In this brief encounter with Nicodemus, Jesus told him five times that one must be “born again” or “born of the spirit” to be able to enter into the Kingdom of God. (verses 3, 5-8).*
- *Nicodemus was “the teacher of Israel” (John 3:10), but he failed to understand that Jesus was using the analogy of childbirth to illustrate how one becomes a child of God. Instead, Nicodemus puzzled over what Jesus was speaking, took His words literally, and responded, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born.” (John 3:5).*
- *Jesus pointed out that He was speaking about the spiritual realm and not a physical event but a spiritual one. “If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?” (John 3:12.)*
- *Although the miracle of how life is reproduced in the natural realm through conception and birth is totally amazing, it is even more amazing and miraculous when one experiences the new birth and is born again. God transforms our very nature so that we are transformed from being children of darkness to children of light—His children!*
- *The Bible uses two different analogies from the natural world to help us to understand the new birth—one from the plant world and the other referring to the conception of a person.*
- *1 Peter 1:23 employs the analogy of how plants reproduce to provide insights into the new birth, “...having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.”*
- *The Greek word for seed used in 1 Peter 1:23 is “spora,” referring to seed that is sown in the ground, and it expresses the meaning of “parentage.”*
- *God’s divine nature has been sown into our spirits through the new birth, and just as a seed planted in the earth will grow and produce a plant exactly like the one from which the seed was derived, the perfect nature of Christ Himself has been “planted” in our reborn spirit and that is why it is described as incorruptible and divine.*
- *The word incorruptible clearly signifies that our reborn spirit is perfect and pure, and can never be made impure, be defiled, or be subject to decay.*
- *In our reborn spirit is the complete and perfect nature of Christ Himself with all His righteousness. That is why the Bible says we are the righteousness of God in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:21).*

- *When we are born again and Jesus Christ comes into our spirit, He doesn't come in as a "baby," but in all His glory and fullness as the Son of God, so that the fullness of God's nature and righteousness dwells in our reborn spirit.*
- *Even though the perfect nature of Christ is in our reborn spirit the moment we are born again, the character of Christ must be developed and manifest in our souls through the process of sanctification, growth, and maturity.*
- *An illustration from the natural realm is that of an acorn. Within the acorn is the fullness of an oak tree, but to the world it is only an acorn until it is planted and allowed to grow.*
- *In our reborn spirit is the fullness of Christ, but we must submit to the Holy Spirit to take us through the sanctification process. Then Christ's character can be developed in our souls and His character can be manifest to this world.*
- *The only way an acorn can produce fruit is to be planted and allowed to grow and mature into a tree. For us to produce fruit we must allow the life of Christ in our reborn spirit to be manifest in our souls.*

Another picture or analogy of the new birth found in the natural realm is that of human conception.

- *1 John 3:9 alludes to the analogy of human conception when it says, "Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God."*
- *1 John 3:9 is clearly not referring to our bodies or souls, which were conceived and birthed from the first Adam, the natural man. Our reborn spirits are birthed from the second Adam, Jesus Christ, and are perfect and therefore incapable of sinning, because they contain the very nature and righteousness of Christ.*
- *The Greek word for seed used in 1 John 3:9 is sperma, from which we get our English word "sperm," referring to the sperm which enters an egg and fertilizes it to produce new life. We can picture our human spirit as an egg and Christ's spirit as the sperm. An unfertilized egg has the potential for life, but if left unfertilized it will never realize its potential.*
- *Another important meaning of the Greek word "sperma" is "that thing which contains the genetic or imparted nature." When we are born again the very nature of God is imparted into our spirit, offering another reason why we refer to God as our Father.*
- *1 John 3:9 provides additional information into our new birth when it says, "for His seed remains in him," signifying that once Christ's spirit joins our*

spirit, the resulting union is unbreakable, irreversible, and enduring. Once a natural egg has been fertilized it cannot be separated from the sperm—the two have become one inseparable being, a new creation.

- *We might summarize this information by seeing our new birth as an egg being fertilized—with our human spirit being the egg and Christ’s spirit providing the seed, containing the very nature of God.*
- *Once united, a new creation that never existed before is produced which contains the very nature and righteousness of God. Christ’s spirit and our human spirit become one.*
- *“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.” (John 10:28).*
- *As we can see from the examples of the fertilized egg and from our reborn spirit, true salvation is both permanent and irreversible.*
- *Whenever an egg is fertilized new life always results, and when we receive Jesus, we have a new life and a new identity, having become a new creation. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17).*
- *Those who put their faith in Christ have become a child of God through birth—the new birth.*
- *One of the great joys of the Gospel is that we have in reality become God’s children through rebirth!*
- *However, the New Testament also paints what appears to be quite a different picture of how we have become children of God when it says four times that we are children of God through adoption.*

Romans 8:15-16 (NKJV)

15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the **Spirit of adoption** by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

- *The principle of adoption raises a couple of questions regarding our relationship with God.*
- *Does being adopted imply a lesser relationship than a son who is born into a family? And why would God refer to us as being adopted when other Scriptures clearly state that we are born again as His children?*

- *The Bible describes our relationship with God using the idea that we were birthed into the family of God, but it also states that we were adopted. This seems to present a contradiction, because in the natural realm one wouldn't tell their child he was adopted one day, and the next day tell him he was actually their biological child.*
- *In the natural realm the concept of becoming God's child through both birth and adoption is contradictory and incompatible.*
- *However, in the spiritual realm the biblical concept of becoming children of God through birth and adoption are not conflicting ideas. Neither are they contradictory or incompatible, but complementary.*
- *God's plan of redemption for us is so wonderful and immense that we need to understand both concepts to fully grasp the magnitude of this great salvation we have received through Jesus Christ.*
- *We are going to look at this question of adoption from two points of view:*
 - *Choice*
 - *Inheritance*
- *First we are going to study adoption in terms of choice:*

John 15:15-16 (NKJV)

15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

16 You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

- *“You did not choose Me, but I chose you” – Our salvation was not just something that inadvertently happened. It was the result of a deliberate act by God—He chose us!*
- *Our position as children of God is the direct result of God intervening in our lives and choosing to save us.*
- *When a child is born the biological parents do not make an active choice as to who their child will be.*
- *In adoption the parents do make a clear choice who their child will be.*
- *In one way adoption actually makes the child more special. The parents made a conscious and deliberate decision to adopt the child knowing the child beforehand.*

Ephesians 1:4-5 (NKJV)

4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love,

5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Ephesians 1:5 (DARBY)

5 having marked us out beforehand for adoption through Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

- *Here we see clearly the idea of adoption tied in with the concept of God “having marked us out beforehand for adoption.”*
- *This means it was God’s idea and not ours that we become His children.*
- *The Greek word for adoption is υιοθεσία huiiothesia, which is derived from two Greek words, tithemi (to place) and huios (an adult son). Therefore it literally means “to select one as an adult son.”*

1 Timothy 4:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰For to this end we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.

- *There is another aspect to adoption when it comes to choice involving the part of the child.*
- *The child, if he or she is old enough, also has a choice if they are willing to be adopted. Although Jesus Christ is the Saviour of all men, not all people will choose to put their faith in Him and acceptance salvation.*
- *God calls everyone to repentance and faith in Christ, but not all choose to respond to His calling. Those who do not respond are not chosen for adoption and that is why Matthew 22:14 says, “For many are called, but few are chosen.”*
- *When it comes to salvation, God is always the initiator, but each person still has the responsibility to respond to the call of salvation and put their faith in Christ.*
- *“For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” The lost still need to choose to come to Him when He calls and the concept of adoption deals with this fact. (Luke 19:10).*
- *We have looked at the principle of adoption from the point of view of how it illustrates choice, God’s choice and our choice, and now we are going to look at the principle of adoption and how it relates to the concept of inheritance.*

- *The Greek word for adoption υιοθεσία huiothesia not only means “to select-out ones as adult sons,” but it also carries with it a legal standing, “To formally and legally declare that someone who is not one’s own child to henceforth to be treated and cared for as one’s own child, including complete rights of inheritance.” Louw and Nida’s Greek Lexicon*
- *“Thus God takes an unbelieving sinner, regenerates him and by means of this makes him His child (teknon, a born one). Then He takes this child and places him in a legal position as an adult son (huios).”*
- *“We thus become joint heirs with Christ, having been raised to a civil status as adult sons, in which we become heirs of God and inheritance jointly with Christ all that He possesses as an heir of God the Father by virtue of His Sonship and work on the Cross.” (Kenneth Wuest -The Word Studies in the Greek New Testament)*
- *Through our new birth we become children of God by nature, and through adoption we legally become co-heirs with Christ.*
- *The Greek word “adoption” is used five times in the New Testament.*
- *Each time, adoption is somehow tied in with the idea of inheritance.*

Galatians 4:4-7 (NKJV)

4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law,

5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”

7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

- *While we were yet orphans, under the condemnation of the Law, and in total poverty and depravity because of our sins, Jesus made this promise. “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.” (John 14:18).*
- *God chose us for redemption and adoption, “to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” (verse 5).*
- *God’s generosity as seen in adoption didn’t stop there. He also joined us with Christ so we could come with confidence and call God, Abba Father, “And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!”” (verse 6).*

- *However, God’s generosity went much further for He took us, who were once impoverished and helpless sinners, enriched us, and made us “an heir of God through Christ,” and not simply heirs, but “joint heirs with Christ.” (Romans 8:17).*
- *We see a beautiful illustration of the principle of adoption in terms of inheritance in Genesis, Chapter 48.*

Genesis 48:1-6 (NKJV)

1 Now it came to pass after these things that Joseph was told, “Indeed your father is sick”; and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

2 And Jacob was told, “Look, your son Joseph is coming to you”; and Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed.

3 Then Jacob said to Joseph: “God Almighty appeared to me at Luz in the land of Canaan and blessed me,

4 and said to me, ‘Behold, I will make you fruitful and multiply you, and I will make of you a multitude of people, and give this land to your descendants after you as an everlasting possession.’

5 And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.

6 Your offspring whom you beget after them shall be yours; they will be called by the name of their brothers in their inheritance.

- *Jacob took Joseph’s first two sons and adopted them to be his own, “And now your two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you in Egypt, are mine; as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.”*
- *They were already related to Jacob through birth. Joseph was their father and Jacob was their grandfather.*
- *But through adoption Ephraim and Manasseh became equal to Joseph and shared equally with him in Jacob’s inheritance.*
- *Through birth Ephraim and Manasseh were related to Jacob as his grandsons. But through adoption they became his own sons and were as much sons to Jacob as was Joseph.*
- *When we put our faith in Christ, the Father adopted us as His own children and we became co-heirs with His Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ!*
- *In Numbers, Chapter 2, when God described where each of the tribes of Israel will be located around the tabernacle, both Manasseh and Ephraim are named.*

- *When God gave each tribe an inheritance in the land of Israel both Manasseh and Ephraim were included and received their equal share as if they had been born to Jacob directly!*

Isaiah 14:12-15 (NKJV)

12 “How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations!

13 For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north;

14 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’

15 Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit.

- *In Isaiah, Chapter 14, we gain some important insights into this spiritual battle in which we are engaged and what is at stake.*
- *Lucifer corrupted himself with pride and became Satan. He wanted something for which he was never created—to be seated with God on His throne.*
- *Once when I was praying this question came to my mind, “Whose place did Lucifer wanted to usurp?”*
- *At first I thought, “Jesus,” but then immediately the thought came to me, “Since Jesus is God He couldn’t usurp Jesus.” Then the thought came “our place.”*

Revelation 3:21 (NKJV)

21 To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

- *Lucifer, no matter how glorious an angel he had been created, he was not created to be seated with God on His throne—that place is reserved for God’s children.*
- *God created us, His redeemed sons and daughters, to actually be seated right beside our Father and His Son Jesus Christ on His throne to rule and reign with Him for all eternity!*

Romans 8:16-19 (NKJV)

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.

- *From both Revelation 3:21 and Romans 8 we can learn two important truths about our inheritance.*
- 1. *We are children of God, so we are now joint heirs with Christ and have the opportunity to share perfect fellowship with Him as we reign with Him forever.*
- 2. *We must respond and be willing to go through the preparation process of sanctification and maturing so we can overcome the flesh in order to receive our inheritance, **“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne”** and we are **“heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him,** that we may also be glorified together.”*
- *Our positions as children of God and our justification is secure, however, to be joint heirs with Christ and receive the crowns, rewards, and inheritances, is contingent on us allowing the life of Jesus Christ in our reborn spirit to be manifest in our souls and to overcome the flesh.*
- *Every heir is a son, but not necessarily every son becomes an heir but only those who overcome.*
- *Through our new birth we are the children of God, but now God wants us to grow up to become mature sons and daughters of God, so that we become overcomers in our souls just as Jesus overcame.*
- *Satan’s wrath has been poured out against mankind, because we were created for the very thing he wanted.*
- *Satan’s two purposes are:*
 1. *To deceive people from receiving Christ so that they will suffer in Hell with him for eternity.*
 2. *To deceive Christians and keep them in a state of bondage and defeat, so they will not receive the inheritance God has for them and forfeit the glory of being seated with Christ on His throne.*

Hebrews 12:15-17 (NKJV)

15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;

16 lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.

17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

- *Let not the enemy of our souls deceive us into living lives of compromise and forfeiting our eternal inheritance, “lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright.”*

Philippians 1:6 (NKJV)

...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

- *Remember this is God’s work not ours, but we must co-operate with Him for it to be accomplished.*
- *Our great joy and confidence is that God is with us and He fully intends for us to be overcomers. He knows the way and the process. All we need to do is take His hand and allow Him to lead us.*