

# DISCIPLESHIP ESSENTIALS

## "Adoption"

8/19/12

Verses from New Living Translation unless noted.

Today is the final installment of a four-part series in the midst of our longer series call Discipleship Essentials. Last week I showed you some maps of London, remember?

The top left is a street map. The bottom left is a tourist map. The top right is a subway map for the Tube, and the bottom right is a venue map for the Olympics that ended last Sunday.



Each map is accurate and correct, but none give the complete picture. To see the whole, the maps would have to superimpose on top of each other. However, that would be too confusing, so we just use one 'layer' at a time.

It is similar we when we try to describe what Jesus Christ did for us when he came into our world 2000 years ago. In the middle of the Discipleship Essentials series we focus on four very meaning-filled words; each depicting in its own way, this world-changing, eternity-altering event.

The words are grace, redemption, justification and finally, adoption.

Now let's explain our terms: Adoption is the legal action by which a person takes into his or her family a child not their own with the purpose of treating it as, and giving it all the privileges of his own

natural child. The adopted child is legally entitled to all rights of a natural-born child.

A first-grade teacher was discussing a picture of a family with her class. One of the children in the picture had a different hair color than did the other family members.

A little girl in the class suggested maybe that was because the boy had been adopted. "I know all about adoptions," she exclaimed, "because I was adopted."

Another little boy in the class asked, "What does it mean that you're adopted?" "It means," said the little girl, "that you grew in your mommy's heart instead of her tummy."

Spiritually speaking our adoption began in the heart of God. It is the result of God's love!

I think it is interesting that some of the Bible's greatest leaders were adopted. Moses was adopted by an Egyptian princess; Esther, adopted and raised by an older cousin; Jesus who was adopted by Joseph, his earthly father. These were all adopted.

Today, I want to talk about our spiritual adoption, adoption into the Family of God; God's forever family; God's eternal household.

Jesus used different analogies to help us understand what he did for us. In John's gospel we read about being born-again. Jesus uses a physical birth analogy. Today we're looking at a second term, adoption. But the end result is the same – we become children of God.

I want to give you seven considerations taken from the context of scripture to help us understand our adoption into God's family.

## 1<sup>ST</sup> OUR ADOPTION WAS GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN

This was not spur of the moment, impulsive act on God's part. This wasn't even plan B. God pre-planned our adoption before the creation of the world.

Plan A was not lots of children who never sin and never need to be redeemed. Plan A was creation, fall, redemption, adoption.

Yes, God created a world that allowed for sin, and he knew we would. This way the full range of God's glory of his mercy and grace could be known by his adopted children.

I don't have time this morning to explore that fully. You'll have to take my word, but adoption was not second best or plan B. It was planned from the beginning.

Ephesians 1:4-5 "Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure."

The great thing about an adoption is that you get a choice, right? With your birth children you have to take what you get. One dad of three rambunctious boys was asked, if he had it to do over would he have children? His answer, "I think I would, but definitely not the same ones."

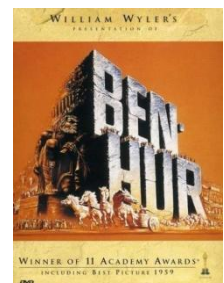
With birth children you don't have a choice. You don't even get to choose their sex. But adoption is different. It's a choice and God chose you!

## 2<sup>ND</sup> OUR ADOPTION WAS OUT OF SLAVERY

Two weeks ago we discussed the word Redemption; the 2<sup>nd</sup> word in this "Good News mini-series". If you weren't here you can go to our website and listen to the message. We talked about the redemption of slaves with the purpose to set them free.

Galatians 4:5 says, "God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children."

One of the greatest movies all time is the epic historical drama set in ancient Rome, titled Ben Hur.



I actually read the book when I was back in high school.

The title of the book written by General Lew Wallace was Ben Hur: A Tale of Christ. It was considered "the most influential Christian book of the nineteenth century".

Then in 1959 this stunning film masterpiece was released. It won a record breaking 11 Academy Awards. The film starred Charlton Heston.

It was the most expensive motion picture ever made at the time, and its sets were the largest yet built for a film. The movie contains a nine-minute chariot race which has become one of the most famous sequences in cinema.

The story recounts the life of Judah Ben-Hur, a Jewish prince and merchant in Jerusalem at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Messala, Ben-Hur's childhood friend returns home. He has become an ambitious commanding officer of the Roman legion occupying Palestine.



At first the childhood friends are delighted to be reunited but soon come to realize that they have changed; they've grown up and now hold conflicting and incompatible political views.

Messala is Roman Tribune and Ben Hur is a Jew; a leader of a people suffering under the cruel oppression of Rome.

During a military parade, a tile falls from the roof of Judah's house and barely misses the Roman governor. Messala knows it was an accident and that they are not guilty, but angry because Judah refused to betray his own people and work with the Romans, Messala condemns the entire Ben-Hur family.

Without trial, Judah is sent to work until death as a Roman galley slave; his mother and sister are both thrown into prison. But Judah swears to come back and take revenge.

After three years chained to an ore in the belly a Roman war ship as a galley slave, Ben-Hur finds himself assigned to the flagship

of the Roman navy. Roman Consul Quintus Arrius aboard his ship, has been charged with destroying a fleet of Macedonian pirates.

The Roman fleet encounters the Macedonians and Arrius' ship is rammed and sunk, but Ben-Hur in the heat of battle escapes and saves the life of Quintus Arrius. Arrius fearing the battle ended in defeat, is prevented by Ben-Hur from committing suicide.

Ben-Hur and Arrius are later rescued, and Arrius is credited with the Roman fleet's victory. He becomes a Roman hero and out of gratitude the Consul takes Ben Hur into his home and treats him like the son he never had.

Several years pass and Ben-Hur learns Roman ways and becomes a champion charioteer, in Rome's famous Colosseum. Out of pride for what Ben Hur has become, the Roman Consul legally adopts him gives him his family signet ring.



But Ben Hur still longs for his family and his homeland. Eventually he returns to Jerusalem, where he seeks revenge against his one-time friend and redemption for his family.

Now I could finish the story but I'll bet there are a lot of you who have never seen it so I'm not going to be a spoiler. Rent it.

But what you see in the remainder of the film is that Judah has gone from bondage to freedom; from destitution to great wealth; from slave to son.

Romans 8:15 "So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father."

God adopted us out of slavery and our adoption is permanent.

Author Keith Miller tells of an outgoing 40-year-old woman who was part of a sharing group he led. Here is her story:

"When I was a tiny little girl, my parents died, and I was put in an orphanage. I was not pretty at all, and no one seemed to want me. But I longed to be adopted and loved by a family as far back as I can remember. I thought about it day and night, but everything I did seemed to go wrong.

I must have tried too hard to please the people who came to look me over, and what I did was to drive them away. But then one day, the head of the orphanage told me that a family was coming to take me home with them.

I was so excited that I jumped up and down and cried like a little baby. The matron reminded me that I was on trial and this might not be a permanent arrangement, but I just knew that somehow it would work out. So I went with this family and started to school.

I was the happiest little girl you can imagine, and life began to open up for me just a little. But then one day a few months later, I skipped home from school and ran in the front door of the big old house we lived in. No one was at home.

But in the middle of the front hall was my battered suitcase with my little coat thrown across it. As I stood there it suddenly dawned on me what it meant--I didn't belong there anymore."

Miller reports that when the woman stopped speaking, there was hardly a dry eye in the group.

But then she cleared her throat and said almost matter-of-factly, "This happened to me seven times before I was 13 years old.

But wait, don't feel too badly. It was experiences like these that ultimately brought me to God--and there I found what I had always longed for--a place, a sense of belonging, a forever family."

Romans 8:38-39 "Nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the

sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

### 3<sup>RD</sup> OUR ADOPTION WAS AT GREAT COST

All parents know the cost of bringing a child into your home. And the cost is not just economic. There is great emotional cost as well. And one expert I read this week noted that the cost doesn't stop when they reach 18 or 21. The cost of adult children is often greater than the cost of small children.

Adoptive parents tend to encounter greater costs.

Ephesians 1:7 “He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins.”

One night in a small rural town, a small house caught on fire. In a few seconds the roof and the timbers were engulfed in flames. Unfortunately there was no fire engine in this remote place and the town's people stood around helplessly.

Suddenly, a young man burst on the scene and cried out..... isn't someone going to try to save them?

When no one responded he jumped through the flames and into the house. A moment later he emerged with a child under each arm. He had carefully covered the children under his coat to prevent them from being burned, but he himself was badly burned.

The parents of the two children perished in the flames. There was much sympathy in the town for the two children who survived. Later, two petitions were submitted to the court for adoption. One was the town mayor. He had money, position, and everything that the children might need to make sure they were provided with the best of everything.

The other man who petitioned the court was the young man who has risked his life to save them. When the judge asked this man

why the court should allow him to adopt the children, he did not answer with words. Instead he held up his hands that bore the scars from his burns. The scars on his hands make his convincing case.

1 Peter 1:18-19 "For you know that God paid a ransom to save you from the empty life you inherited from your ancestors. And the ransom he paid was not mere gold or silver. It was the precious blood of Christ, the sinless, spotless Lamb of God."

Even though God owns the universe, there was still a cost – a cost that couldn't be counted in dollars; a cost more valuable than all the world's silver and gold.

#### 4<sup>TH</sup> OUR ADOPTION WAS A LEGAL TRANSACTION

I find it interesting that when God described the type of relationship he wanted to share with us, one of the illustrations he used was adoption.

All of us know about the adoption of children. It's a very frequent occurrence in our culture. Though adoption has been practiced of centuries there was no legal recognition in the U.S. until 1850 and none in England until 1926.

People had adopted children but few considered the legal implications.

Galatians 4:4-5 "When the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children."

Subject to the law – what is this all about? You might expect that if God decided to visit our planet he would come down like a celebrity. He was God. He made it all.

What is this "subject to the Law: He didn't have to subject himself to anything or anyone. However, to accomplish the task he set out to do, it was necessary.



The purchase price for buying back the enslaved human race was extreme. Remember, God is perfectly just, and you would not want it any other way.

You wouldn't want a God who disregarded the sinfulness and wickedness of men.



You wouldn't want a God who didn't hold Hitler, Stalin and Idi Amin responsible for their crimes.



A God who just turned his head, ignored their atrocities, was soft on crime – that would be unacceptable even to our flawed sense of justice. But because God is just he had to require appropriate and adequate payment for the sins of humanity.

So what price would be sufficient? A judge sentences a drug offender to 3 years in prison. That's the payment a human judge required for wrongs. What would the judge of the universe require in payment for all the sin of all mankind for all time?

What payment would be enough? What would be satisfactory? Subject to the law – First Jesus had to prove his own innocence. He subjected himself to the law and obeyed it perfectly. That's the only way he could qualify to be a substitute for our sin.

There is a story that once during the civil war a slave chose to offer himself as a substitute for military service for his beloved master's son. The son was young and not physically strong and since the slave had no obligation to military service, he could offer himself as a substitute.

The slave was killed in action; he literally gave his life for the life of his master's son. Only because the slave was not subject to military service was he eligible to offer himself as a substitute.

Jesus could offer himself as a substitute for us because he had no obligation to die for his own sins. Only because Jesus had no requirement to pay for his own sin, he could volunteer to make our payment.

Jesus was the perfect substitute. He was also the adequate substitute. Because of God the Father's infinite love for his Son, Jesus could satisfy the infinite price of human sin. God the Father's immeasurable abhorrence for sin could only be appeased by the ultimate sacrifice, the infinitely perfect son of God.

Our adoption, it was his choice that he made, it was his price that he paid – but it was also His Spirit that he gave.

## 5<sup>TH</sup> OUR ADOPTION GAVE US CHRIST'S SPIRIT

Galatians 4:6 "And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father."

Anybody ever have trouble seeing the Trinity in Scripture. There it is – not the word "trinity" but right there in that verse you see God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

Now Jesus the man, God the Son is not here on earth anymore. His disciples watched on a hilltop outside Jerusalem as he literally ascended up into the clouds. The Bible tells us that he is in heaven right now, sitting at the right hand of the Father.

However, before he left, he told his disciples that he would send His Spirit to live in them. When you invite Jesus to come into your heart, who comes? Right there in that verse it says His Spirit comes.

That's the Christians power source. It's the Holy Spirit's power that enables us to live the Christian life. A Christian without the Holy Spirit is like a new Ferrari without an engine. Can you imagine paying \$260K for a car that has no engine? But actually, there is no such thing as a Christian without the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:9 says, "And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them are not Christians at all."

It is His Spirit in us that makes us different. That's how we've changed. Before we were trying to be good, trying to do all the right things, but once His Spirit comes to live within us, now there is a supernatural power to live like Christ.

"Abba, Father." "Abba" is Hebrew slang word that was only used by a little Jewish child as they talked with their dad. A slave was never allowed to refer to His master as "Abba". Only a son or daughter had that right. When we surrendered to Christ, we were adopted and given the right to call God- "Abba, Father- daddy!"

## 6<sup>TH</sup> OUR ADOPTION MADE US HIS HEIRS

Galatians 4:7 "Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, everything he has belongs to you."

There was an elderly man who had a disabled son. One day the elderly Father died and the disabled son was left being cared for by the servants. While his father was still living he had a artist paint a picture of his son and being a proud father he had hung it on the wall all the years of his life.

Now the disabled son was dying and family members could not wait, for they were eager to gain the wealth of the Father from the son's death.

The son finally died and the dad's attorney was carrying out the wishes of the father. Because of the faithfulness of the servants taking care of the elderly man's disabled son, he'd instructed that they be given the opportunity to choose one thing from the house as a gift.

Some quickly chose furniture and jewelry and yet the son's nurse asked only for the painting of the son that had hung proudly on the wall.

As the attorney was taking it from the wall he found an envelope was taped to its back, with the words "Last will and testament and it gave the Father's name."

The attorney stopped all that was going on in the house and began to read the words written by a loving father. Tears began to stream down his face as the old man's faithful attorney began to read the will.

Family members and servants were growing impatient and asked well what does it say? The attorney replied to them simply it says: "He who loves my son, is heir to ALL that I have."

That's exactly what our Abba Father said... He who loves my son is heir to all that I have...

Here's a thought I'd like you to consider: "What does God own?" When you become a child of God, an heir to his wealth, can you begin to imagine what that mean?

July 26, 1942 a boy was born in Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami, Fla. A year and a half later a girl was born that same family; another year and a half and another son. Then finally a second daughter – that was my family. I was the second son.

You know, I had no choice in the matter of who my mom and dad would be. I had no choice over whether I was male or female.

My race, nationality, cultural context, date of birth, genetic makeup, and a host of other factors that determine my identity were totally outside of my control.

In fact, it would be correct to say that all of the main factors determining the greatest part of what made me who I am were out of my control. Even my religious shaping throughout my most formative years was given to me without my direction or consent.

Think about it. How much of your identity is caught up in who your family is. Someone has well said, "Where you came from determines to a large degree where you are going." Suppose you were born of a slave. Where would you be today?

On the other hand, suppose you grew up a slave and a king found you and loved you and decided to adopt you into his family. What impact would that have?

The Good News of Jesus Christ is all about just that. It's about the transition from slavery to freedom by birth, adoption and parenthood. Just think about the incredible blessings God has given us!

We couldn't get to him so he came to us! Jesus, the Son of God, born of a woman, born under the Law, came to buy our freedom.

Jesus is not a man who somehow became God. Jesus is God who because of love became a man. Jesus was not a King's Son who lived above the Law.

Jesus is the Word of God, the Law giver who came and submitted himself to the Law, living under it faithfully and then paying the price for our breaking it, though he never did.

Jesus redeems us by paying the legal price for us. We receive the adoption as children of God, Jesus receives the punishment for our sinfulness.

What were you enslaved to before Jesus set you free? That's what Paul is saying to the Galatians. Don't go back! God's children were set free from Egyptian bondage and within a short while they wanted to return to Egypt!

Near the main entrance to the Alamo in San Antonio, Tx there is a portrait with the inscription: "James Butler Bonham--no portrait of him exists. This is a portrait of his nephew, Major James Bonham, who greatly resembled his uncle. It is placed here by the family that people may know the appearance of the man who died for freedom."

A portrait of another who died for freedom is missing as well. Jesus Christ died to free us from the captive forces of sin, yet no picture of him remains. May we, the beneficiaries of his death, the ones originally made in his image, may we be once again conformed to his image and bear the likeness of our Savior.

## 7<sup>TH</sup> OUR ADOPTION IS NOT COMPLETE

Romans 8:22-23 “For we know that all creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. And we believers also groan, even though we have the Holy Spirit within us as a foretaste of future glory, for we long for our bodies to be released from sin and suffering. We, too, wait with eager hope for the day when God will give us our full rights as his adopted children, including the new bodies he has promised us.”

We haven't gotten it all yet. There is more to come, in fact much more; the best part. Yes, we are already adopted. When Christ died for us, the price was paid, and when we trust him, we are legally and permanently in the family.

But He raised Jesus from the dead with a new body, and he promises that part of our adoption will be a new resurrection body with no more disabilities and no more groaning.

Thus, what we wait for is the full experience of our adoption—the resurrection of our bodies.