



Adoption Theology

Introductory ideas

- Adoption is not a peripheral thing for Christians but part of our core understanding of what it means to be Christian.
- Paul's letters to the Ephesians, Galatians and Romans use the metaphor of adoption to help us understand our relationship to God.
- Theologian J I Packer says 'adoption is the highest privilege of the gospel itself', yet we can forget to mention it when we preach, pray, sing.
- It's great to understand the gospel through ideas of forgiveness, redemption or rescue but adoption trumps all these wonderful metaphors of the gospel by telling us something more.

[Galatians 4:3-7 \(NIV\)](#)

So also, when we were under age, we were in slavery under the elemental spiritual forces of the world. But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father.' So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

[Ephesians 1:4-6 \(NIV\)](#)

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

[Romans 8:14-16 \(NIV\)](#)

For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

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There are three ways in which adoption develops our understanding of the Gospel.

Through adoption we have a new identity:

- Once we were slaves, held captive, but God in His mercy has offered us sonship and daughtership into His family.
- This is incredible – God the creator of the universe chooses to call us His sons and daughters!
- This adoption means we have a new sense of being and a new sense of who we are.

Through adoption we have a new security:

- We often talk about gospel in terms of rescue, which is wonderful thing that God has done for us. We were once in peril but God rescued us out of the mess we got ourselves into.
- Imagine a helicopter pilot rescues you from the sea. The responsibility of pilot is to take you to safety. So they take you to a hospital and leaves you there because their job is done. We need more than rescue. We need security.
- When God says you're adopted, He's saying, 'you're in my family, I'm never letting you go'.
- Adoption in the ancient world was irreversible. In the Roman law you couldn't undo an adoption, it was forever. And God says, 'you are coming home with me. In my family. Forever. Never undone.'

Through adoption we have a new intimacy:

- Once we were far away from Him but now God wants to call us His children.
- This is even more powerful than just thinking about being forgiven.
- With forgiveness it was like before we were at a negative relationship with God because of our sin, but now God wipes the slate clean and doesn't count our sins against us anymore. You could say that relationally we are now at zero thanks to forgiveness.
- But with adoption it gets way beyond that. God says, 'you're my son, you're my daughter. I'm never letting you go.'
- Additionally, through the work of the Holy Spirit God says we can call Him 'Abba Father', a term of incredible intimacy somewhere close to calling God 'daddy'. God gives us that privilege through adoption.

But what motivates God to do this? Was it that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were lonely in heaven and they needed children in their lives to complete them?

- Galatians 4 says that we were vulnerable children held captive by the elemental spiritual forces of this world. That was what motivated God to send Jesus into the world. There wasn't a need in the trinity, they were in perfect relationship. Theologians sometimes call

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that the aseity of God - in need of nothing.

- God was motivated by compassion and by our need. God did everything necessary to adopt us, even letting Jesus die on the cross for our sins

Potential response

Home for Good is calling the Church to model this same adopting love as we engage with the vulnerable children in our communities. Not because we need more children in our lives, but because those children need us. A Christian approach to fostering or adoption is going to model the same motivation that God had for adopting us.

It's not just about us getting the children we want in our lives. It's about asking ourselves if we could be the parents that these children need in their lives. Just like God the Father looking at us. He saw that we needed Him and so He reached out to make sure that we would have a new identity, new security and new intimacy with Him.

And so, we call you, Church; let's live out our theology. Let's provide the world with a little mini parable of the incredible adopting grace of God by giving every child that needs one in the UK a home for good.