

You Are a Child of God

The Bible is clear that when we accept Jesus as our Savior, we are adopted into God's family as a child of God. Our status is that of an heir, a son or daughter. We are members of a loving family. We are wanted, accepted, and loved. But we also have responsibilities, just as family members do.

What does it mean to be a child of God, a member of God's family? When we put our trust in Jesus and receive his free gift of salvation, we become his children. "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

When we work for peace, we represent God's family well. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

God's children are meant to live in unity with one another. "And not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one" (John 11:52).

God's children don't just sit there—they follow the Spirit. "For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God" (Romans 8:14).

The physical world needs the intervention and attention of God's children. "For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed ... that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:19, 21).

We become children of God through faith in Jesus. "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith" (Galatians 3:26).

Our witness as God's family points others toward God. "So that you may become blameless and pure, 'children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.' Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky" (Philippians 2:15).

God loves his children excessively. "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" (1 John 3:1).

Although we are his children and deeply loved, God is forming us into something even better. "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

As God's children, we are called to live in a way that reflects his character and values. "This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister" (1 John 3:10). "This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands" (1 John 5:2).

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 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" (Rom 8:16-17)

All Christians, therefore, are in the family of God where God is the Father and we are each his child. "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Ephesians 2:19). Of course, in a family it is expected that the children be obedient to their parents. It is no different in God's household. "Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy."" (1 Peter 1:13-16).

And as children, we face discipline from our Father. "And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives." If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? ...but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.(Hebrews 12:5-13)

Being a child in a family means we can expect an inheritance. This too is paralleled in the Christian's relationship to God. "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:4-7).

It is no secret that our biological children are considered to be our offspring. They usually look like us and, good or bad, they usually grow up to be like us, that makes our children uniquely ours and different from others. This being said, our children, both biological and adopted, learn many things from us. Therefore, it is important that we carefully consider what we teach them and what we expect from them in both word and deed.

What makes God's children different from others? If we are God's children, then it would be expected that there would be some common factors that all of us possess as well. And, if Christ is in us, do we behave like Christ? In other words, when people look at us, do they see any similarity to Christ, the Son of the Father? They should see similarity to Christ because the Bible teaches us that Christ is our example (1 Peter 2:21-23). When we follow the example of Christ, like our earthly parents, He influences our hearts and minds, which enables us to be conformed to His image and become more like Him. God intended that this would happen to His children; to become conformed to the image of His Son, Jesus (Romans 8:26-29). As God's children, we are expected to learn how to live our life by what God expects of us. Studying the Word of God is how we learn to live our lives (2 Timothy 2:15).

There are certain distinct characteristics that should mark every child of God.

They Hear God's Voice: All of God's sheep know the voice of the Shepherd. They can discern His mind and distinguish it from that of a stranger. A stranger they will not follow. (John 10:3-4)

They Are Blameless And Harmless: Every child of God is called upon to be "Blameless and Harmless" in this "crooked and perverse nation." Being "Blameless," he must give no occasion for others to accuse him of any wrongdoing. As "Harmless," at no time ever injuring or bringing hurt to another in word or deed. (Philippians 2:15)

They Are Bold As A Lion: The righteous man has true courage. (Proverbs 28:1) He is not moved by any foe or circumstance for he knows that he is in right standing with God and that He fights his battles. Acts 20:24

They Have A Contrite Spirit: Every child of God should be of a "contrite spirit." This is the one with whom God chooses to dwell. This is the one to whom He looks. (Isaiah 57:15) A "contrite spirit" is one in total opposition to a proud, haughty, self-confident, and self-righteous one. One who is of a "contrite spirit" is self-abasing and self-denying. He is borne down with a sense of unworthiness. He trembles at God's Word - fearing Him.

They Are Faithful: Every child of God should be "faithful." (Rev 17:14) To be "faithful" is basically to be trust worthy, true, and someone who can be relied on. Who have kept the Faith and trust in the Promises of God.

They Are Humble: Like the Lord Jesus, the child of God is meek and lowly in heart. He is willing to take the lowest place and will perform any office in order to benefit others. He has the least confidence in his own merit/sufficiency.

They Are Godly: A godly person is one who demonstrates love toward God and man with a great desire, ardor, and zeal. He is devout, kind, and benevolent. (1 John 3:18)

They Have No Guile: A child of God is sincere and upright. He is never crafty, subtle, deceitful, or hypocritical. At all times, he is what he professes to be. He can surely be trusted in all of his commitments and pursuits. (John 1:47)

They Are Merciful: The child of God is so affected by the sufferings of others. He is inclined to pity, help, and comfort all those in misery and grief. He easily pardons the injuries of those who offend him. (Mat 5:7)

They Are Obedient: The child of God is attentive to God's commands. He is in compliance and submission to each one. He has a mild disposition to learn and improve upon his walk with the Lord. (1 Peter 1:14)

They Fear The Lord: Every child of God should Fear God. It is to - have a reverence for the Majesty of God, submit to His authority and to humbly comply with His Word and Law, fearing at all times of ever offending this Holy One.

They Are Led By The Spirit Of God: To be "led by the Spirit of God" is to submit to His influence, suggestions, and control. The Holy Spirit is said to conduct, guide, direct, and move us. We must yield our wills to His influence and submit to His control. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Romans 8:14)

How do we know who are and are not children of God? We find the answer to this in 1 John 3:10, In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. According to this verse, people described as "those who doeth not righteousness" are not of God. Righteousness is accounted to believers by God's grace through our faith in Christ. With these things in mind, those who are not children of God are identified by their lack of belief in what God said about Jesus being the Christ. (1 John 5:9-12; 2:22-23, John 3:36) Simply stated, that those who do not believe that Jesus is the Christ are not born again as children of God. If they are not children of God, then who are they children of? The Devil according to 1 John 3:10. This is reinforced by the fact that they do not believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay for their sins (John 3:16) They do not believe their sins have condemned them to Hell (Romans 6:23) And, their un-repentant condition leaves them without hope because they are deceived (1 Cor 15:12-20) The Bible says that only those have faith in Christ are the children of God. Those that reject Christ are described as being the children of Devil. Therefore not all are God's children.

How can I become a child of God?

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Becoming a child of God requires faith in Jesus Christ. "To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12)

"You must be born again" When visited by the religious leader Nicodemus, Jesus did not immediately assure him of heaven. Instead, Jesus told him he had to become a child of God, that required being born again: "Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"(John 3:3) When a person is newly born, he is a child. Thus, when a person becomes a Christian he is born again, becoming a child of the one who gave him birth -- God. Again, Jesus told his disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3)

The first time a person is born, he inherits the sin nature that stems from Adam's disobedience in the Garden of Eden. No one has to teach a child how to sin. He naturally follows his own wrong desires, leading to such sins as lying, stealing, and hating. Rather than being a child of God, he is a child of disobedience and wrath (Ephesians 2:1–3). As children of wrath, we deserve to be separated from God in hell. Thankfully, Ephesians 2:4–5 says, "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved." How are we made alive with Christ / born again / made a child of God? We must receive Jesus by faith!

Receive Jesus: "To all who have received him—those who believe in his name—he has given the right to become God's children" (John 1:12). This verse clearly explains how to become a child of God. We must receive Jesus by believing in Him. What must we believe about Jesus? First, the child of God recognizes that Jesus is the eternal Son of God who became man. Born of a virgin through the power of the Holy Spirit, Jesus did not inherit Adam's sin nature. Therefore, Jesus is called the second Adam (1 Cor 15:22). While Adam's disobedience brought the curse of sin on the world, Christ's perfect obedience brings a blessing. Our response must be to repent (turn from sin) and seek forgiveness in Christ. Second, the child of God has faith in Jesus as Savior. God's plan was to sacrifice His perfect Son on the cross to pay the punishment we deserve for our sin: death. Christ's death frees those who receive Him from the penalty and power of sin. His resurrection justifies us (Rom 4:25). Finally, the child of God follows Jesus as Lord. After raising up Christ as the victory over sin and death, God gave Him all authority (Ephesians 1:20–23). Jesus leads all who receive Him; He will judge all who reject Him (Acts 10:42). By God's grace, we're born again to new life as God's child. Only those who receive Jesus—not merely knowing about Him but relying on Him for salvation, submitting to Him as Master, and loving Him as the supreme treasure—become children of God.

Become a child of God: Just as we had no part in our natural birth, we cannot cause ourselves to be born into God's family by doing good deeds or conjuring up faith of our own. God is the one who "gave the right" to become a child of God according to His gracious will. "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!"(1 John 3:1) Thus, the child of God has nothing to be proud about; his only boast is in the Lord.

A child grows up to look like his parents. Similarly, God wants His children to become more and more like Jesus Christ. Although only in heaven will we be perfect, a child of God will not habitually, unrepentantly sin. "Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. "He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother" (1 John 3:7–10).

Make no mistake—a child of God cannot be "rejected" by sinning. But someone who consistently engages in and enjoys sin without heeding Christ and His Word reveals that he was never born again. Jesus told such people, "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire" (John 8:44). The child of God, on the other hand, no longer craves the gratification of sin but desires to know, love, and glorify his or her Father.

The rewards of being a child of God are immeasurable. As God's child, we are a part of His family (the church), promised a home in heaven, and given the right to approach God in prayer (Ephesians 2:19; 1 Peter 1:3–6; Romans 8:15). Respond to God's call to repent of sin and believe in Christ. Become a child of God today!

We see just how great God's love is when we consider how much the process of adopting us cost him. He punished his sinless Son for our disobedience. God adopted us because of his love. It's no wonder John exclaimed in our text, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!"(1 John 3:1a)