

# ADOPTION

Since Old Testament times God has been passionately pursuing His adopted “children,” the ancient Israelites, and like many families their relationship has been both rich and rocky.

We are children, perhaps, at the very moment when we know that it is as children that God loves us—not because we have deserved his love and not in spite of our undeserving, not because we try and not because we recognize the futility of our trying, but simply because he has chosen to love us. We are children because he is our father, and all our efforts, fruitful and fruitless, to do good, to speak truth, to understand, are the efforts of children who, for all their precocity, are children still in that before we loved him, he loved us, as children, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

~Frederick Buechner,  
*The Magnificent Defeat*

1

As you read the following **mark the passages** and **make comments** on any points that touch you about God’s relationship with His children. Notice the ways God took the initiative to demonstrate His jealous love for His children (to be jealously and protectively and exclusively cherished by the Lover of our souls).

**Deuteronomy 14:1,2 (NLT)**

**Deuteronomy 32:6-14**

2

In spite of great measures to adopt His children, the responses to God’s extravagant love are varied. **Ezekiel 16** uses graphic language to describe the relationship between God and His Israelite children.



Read **Ezekiel 16: 4-16**. Now draw three columns with the titles, *God’s Loving Initiative to Israel*, *Israel’s Response to God*, and *How God Felt*.

Reread **Ezekiel 16:4-16** and fill in your observations for each column.

How can you relate to Israel?

3

Today God is still described as an adoptive parent but His children aren’t

limited to the Israelites; now they are chosen on a radically different basis. As you read the following passages, notice what Jesus has to do with us becoming God’s children, and the dynamics of the relationship between God and His children.

**Romans 8:14-17 (NLT)**

**2 Corinthians 6 16b-18**

**Ephesians 1:4,5 (NLT)**

4

From the above passages, how can one be adopted into God’s family? Why is Jesus necessary for spiritual adoption?

5

## Reflection

Respond to one or more of these questions:

- How do you think God feels about His children?
- If you were a holy, perfect God, would you adopt someone like you into your family?
- Why do you think God is willing to adopt people into His family through Jesus?

For deeper study, go to *Jesus’ Good News Module 1, The Heartbeat of Jesus: linking me with God’s love*. Available through Dawson Media. Toll-free: 1 (888) 547-9635 • [dawson.media@navigator.org](mailto:dawson.media@navigator.org) • [www.dawsonmedia.com](http://www.dawsonmedia.com)

# SPIRITUAL ADOPTION:

*How Do I Join God's Family?*

*I will deal with them according to their conduct, and by their own standards I will judge them.  
Then they will know that I am the LORD. **Ezekiel 7:27***

*Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged,  
and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. **Matthew 7:1,2***

**H**ow in the world did we get to be so far away from God? Maybe it's all His fault. Maybe He's the one who drifted away from us. Maybe He walked out on us because we didn't measure up to His impossible standards.

But according to these verses, we're alienated from God by our own choices . . . and by who we are. We fail to meet our own moral standards. And if we want to know exactly what our own moral standards are, just take a look at how we judge (and condemn) others in our hearts.

Take a peek inside: When have you ever criticized someone to his face or behind her back? Whatever you think is so wrong with the other guy—that reveals your moral standard. Who among us hasn't judged others? And who among us hasn't turned around and done the very same thing—or worse—in action or in thought?

*Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment. **Hebrews. 9:27***

Isn't it only fair that God judges us by our own moral standards? Our inability to keep the moral standard we expect of others (let alone God's even higher standards) is the real basis for the alienation between God and every human being.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to know something is wrong. Humans long for a deep love. But as people we just aren't capable of delivering. This often makes us feel flawed. Sometimes we believe that we just don't deserve to be loved. Inside the negative tapes play over and over, our shame convincing us that, "I am bad. I am worthless. I deserve to be punished. I don't deserve to be loved. The problem isn't just what I've done. If that's all it was, I could try to stop doing it. No, the real problem is *who I am*. And there's nothing I can do about that."<sup>2</sup>

So we do everything we can to hide . . . to avoid exposing our inadequacy . . . to prevent anyone from getting close enough to see us. Of course this just leaves us incredibly lonely and disconnected and alienated behind our masks. The human problem is like a fatal disease. It kills. Everyone dies. And it requires a radical solution.

*He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ,  
in accordance with his pleasure and will. **Ephesians 1:5***

Alienated relationships need relational solutions. God knows this, so He just doesn't allow our disdain, disbelief, or avoidance of Him to put Him off or dampen His deep and continuing love for us. In fact, from before time began He set in motion a plan to counteract our resistance and carry our shame for us so that we could be adopted into His family. At the very center of His plan was His Son Jesus. In fact, He has no other plan to build His family.

Jesus came as an innocent baby, lived a blameless life, died a cruel death as payment for us, and rose from the grave to live as the victor over death. He is fully alive today as the only one who can remove our sin and shame, and the only one who can offer us hope and meaning now, as well as life eternal!

*Now God has us where he wants us, with all the time in this world and the next to shower grace and kindness upon us in Christ Jesus. Saving is all his idea, and all his work. All we do is trust him enough to let him do it. It's God's gift from start to finish! **Ephesians 2:7,8** (MSG)*

But wait a minute . . . Who is this God? And why should we trust Him? Isn't He distant and harsh . . . the intolerant God who punishes . . . the one who allows suffering . . . the one who's made such a mess of the world? Yeah, why should we trust Him?

Well, we should trust Him for the best of all reasons: because He is exquisitely trustworthy. Why wouldn't you trust someone who:

<i>Keeps His own moral standards</i>	<i>Is eternal</i>	<i>Is powerful</i>
<i>Feels and grieves for your pain</i>	<i>Is just &amp; holy</i>	<i>Is beautiful</i>
<i>Is merciful and tenderhearted</i>	<i>Is kind &amp; good</i>	<i>Is honest</i>
<i>Is everywhere and beyond</i>	<i>Loves you jealously</i>	

Because guess what? That is exactly how God is described in the Bible. In fact, those irresistible traits are just the beginning of God's beauty and goodness! But what about Jesus, you say? Didn't He die 2,000 years ago? Maybe He's sort of "undead" now. So how can He really offer hope today?

<sup>2</sup> Ennis, Ralph, et. al. (2004), *The Issue of Shame in Reaching People for Christ: When Guilt-free Isn't Enough*. (The Navigators, 2004) p.9

*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. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. **Ephesians 2:4-7***

God's radical solution for humanity's problem was to send us a gift—His precious Son as a perfect human representation of the Father, to live and die and overcome death—and by doing all that to draw people into God's family through adoption. What was humanity's problem? Our inability to measure up to the perfection of a Holy God is our core problem. Every one of us falls short of His glory (Romans 3:23). We are deeply flawed in our nature. Unless our sin can be canceled out somehow, there is no way any of us could ever stand in God's presence.

In His great love for undeserving humanity, God chose the one solution that was the most expensive to Himself: He sacrificed His beloved Son. Jesus' blood served as the only perfect sacrifice, and it has the power to wash away our sins and our flaws, as well as the shame attached to them. This was God's relational solution for our relational problem. When we deserved condemnation for abandoning God, He offered mercy and adoption through Jesus. By so doing, Jesus gives us His righteousness, His perfection, through faith. In our wildest dreams and deepest longings, we humans could never have come up with such an amazing plan!

*But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. **John 1:12 (NLT)***

DO YOU WANT TO BE ADOPTED INTO GOD'S FAMILY? Because you can refuse, you know. Millions of people have chosen to remain orphans, outside God's family, not because they were "unqualified" but because they were unwilling. Remember, God takes the addicted, the terminal, the sadists, selfish, and liars.

YOUR PART is to recognize that you aren't perfect like God, and you are not worthy of His love. Maybe your mother's love, but not God's. Never have been. Never will be. Nobody else is, either. So don't even bother trying to get yourself straightened out for God. Ask Him for His mercy, love, and forgiveness. Believe in Jesus as the One Who goes between you and God and destroys the barrier of alienation. Just ask to become part of His family through Jesus. The following is an idea of what you can pray, but in your own words . . .

*Dear God,*

*I know I don't deserve the love from You that I so long for. Please forgive me. I thank You for sending Jesus to break down this wall between us. I want to be adopted into Your family through Your Son Jesus. Please come into my heart and give me life and hope and meaning and a personal relationship with You.*

*Thanks! I believe that You will because You aren't a liar and You've promised to forgive and show mercy and adopt me if I ask.*

*I want to know and deeply love you, too, Father.*

GOD'S part is absolutely predictable, first because He promised, and second because He's done it so many times for others. He forgives—everything, immediately, unconditionally. He adopts you as a beloved son or daughter into His family. He lavishes His love on you and embraces you as His precious child! He guides you into a love-filled, meaningful life here and in eternity with Him as your God!