

“My Father’s” (Adoption)
(Study 1 of “Getting Personal with God: Sonship A” Series)

Opening Questions (5-10 Minutes)

1. Would you say your life is driven more by a sense of duty or by a sense of freedom?
 - For instance, when you make choices, do you generally do what you’re “supposed to do” *or* do you just do what you “feel like” doing?
2. Why do you think you feel so not free?

Let’s take a look at how the Bible understands these kinds of questions...

Scripture Study (10-15 Minutes)

Read Romans Chapter 8, verses 14-17 and 38-39 (first in the ESV, then the NLT)

1. Be quiet for 30 seconds. Think or write. Now what are your first impressions?
 - What’s your emotional, gut-reaction?
 - Ask a question you have (or can think of).
 - Volunteer a thought or comment- about a verse or the whole passage.
2. How does this passage address the harm of spiritual slavery?
 - What does Romans 8 means by “the spirit of slavery” (verse 15, ESV)?
 - How is spiritual slavery linked to fear (in verse 15)?
 - What’s a recent time when you felt these (trapped or afraid)?
3. How does this passage address healing for spiritual slavery?
 - What does Romans 8 mean by “he adopted you as his own children” (v 15, NLT)?
 - How does God’s adoption push back on our fears (verses 15-17 or 38-39)?

Scripture Passages (Paul’s Letters to the Romans 8:14-17, 38-39)

Romans, Chapter 8- English Standard Version Translation (ESV): 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, “Abba! Father!” 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 fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him [...] 38 For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 39 nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans, Chapter 8- New Living Translation (NLT): 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. 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.” 16 For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children. 17 And since we are his children, we are his heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering. [...] 38 And I am convinced that 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. 39 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.

Group Discussion (25 minutes)

Can I get one or more volunteers to read the below story out loud?

“When I was very young my older sister was hanging up my father’s white business shirts on the clothesline to dry. I was suddenly filled with the urge to hang up one of my daddy’s white shirts. I’m not sure I can explain my motive. He was my daddy too, and I was his daughter. I loved him in my childlike way and wanted to express it. I couldn’t reach the clothesline – it was too high, but I saw a wheel barrow in the yard and its handles were just the right height for me. I didn’t notice how rusty it was and I rather joyfully clothes pinned the wet shirt to the handles. When my dad got home and saw the shirt on the wheel barrow he became very angry with me and punished me severely for ruining his shirt. I hadn’t realized the impact that event and others like it had made on me. [...] As I remembered these scenes from the past I saw that through the years I had not been believing that my Father in heaven was any different than my earthly father. I hadn’t been listening when He described Himself [...] So the next morning I told our counselor, Jeff, that I thought I was beginning to understand. I told him the memory and said that I guess if the Father saw me standing next to the wheelbarrow with the ruined shirt on it, He would forget the shirt and hug me. “You still don’t understand fully,” he said. God would not overlook the shirt, but take it, put it on, and wear it to work. And when someone commented on the rust marks, He would say, ‘Let me tell you about my little girl and how much she loves me ...’ I was overwhelmed with that realization. I am beginning to realize that my Christian life has been a continual effort to earn God’s pleasure by getting “the shirts hung up right.” God would answer if my prayer was “right.” God would smile upon me if my theology was correct. And since I knew how I had failed day by day in my works, I sort of snuck them up on the line and tried to be away when God got home, so to speak. [...] My entire Christian life had been oppressive. I did not know how to live day by day without an overwhelming sense of failure to perform up to what I thought God demanded. With that came a sense of God being disappointed and even disgusted with me. [...] I can love others, I can obey God with my heart because I don’t fear that He will be furious with me if I get the shirt “a bit rusty.” There is a freedom to love that I haven’t known since the moments before my father got home that day long ago. [...] It’s the very fact that my Father delights even in rusty shirts that moves [me] to live a life of faith expressing itself in love. (From “My Father’s Shirt”)

1. What are your first impressions?
 - What strikes you about this story?
 - How do you relate to it?
2. If you had a father, what was your relationship with your father like growing up? (If you didn’t have a father, what was that like?)
 - What’s one *pleasant* memory of your father (or a father figure)?
 - What’s one *disappointing* memory of your father (or a father figure)?
3. In what ways do you think your relationship with your earthly father has affected the way you view God as heavenly Father?
4. How does picturing God like this story help us to live more freely in our daily lives?

Group Prayer (15 Minutes)

Ideas for Communal & Personal Prayer (Share for yourself, pray for person to your left):

1. What’s one *burden* you need prayer for- for relief or healing?
2. What’s one *sin* you’d like to (re-)confess to God?
3. What’s one *deed* in your life or community you’d like to praise God for?
4. What’s one *desire* stirred by this time together with God that you can pray for?