



NEW LIFE: Child of God

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Jesus explained the truths of the kingdom of God in many ways. Let's look at his encounter with a man named Nicodemus to see what we can learn about our new identity. *READ JOHN 3:1-8.*

Jesus says we need to be born of the Spirit. Paul talked about how we died to our sinful nature in Romans 6 and have new life in the Spirit. Then Romans 8:1-2 says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death (NIV)."

1. What similarities do you see between how Jesus and Paul describe our new life?

What's interesting is how both Jesus and Paul paint this picture of how we become children again! The Holy Spirit does a work in us, and we become God's kids! *READ more in Romans 8: 14-17.*

Paul makes a big point about how we are no longer slaves, living in fear, but have been adopted to sonship. This points to having the same full legal standing as natural children. Understanding this perspective is huge to having the right view of our relationship with God. We're his children- NOT slaves living in fear.

2. What are some of the differences between life as a slave versus life as a child?

Paul seems to really be emphasizing that love is greater than fear. We often agree with this, but that doesn't mean we are living it very well. Ever heard someone say that Christianity is not about "religion," but about "relationship?"

3. What are the differences between Christianity as religion or as relationship?

As Paul is pointing out, the main difference is in our motivation. Are we driven by fear or by love? I remember being in youth group as a teen when the topic of conversation was often about defining sin. Where was the line? How far could you go? What was right/wrong? It was certainly more about keeping the rules and trying to stay on God's "good side!"

What if we did this in marriage- just doing enough to keep the peace and trying to keep our spouse happy? For some people relationship may be just doing the bare minimum to keep someone from getting mad. But these are fear-based relationships. Dr. Jim Wilder, a Christian neuro-scientist, describes it as living from *fear bonds* or *love bonds*. This difference in motivation actually changes how our brain works!

"Fear bonds cause us to avoid painful experiences while love bonds attract us to others."

— Dr. Jim Wilder (<https://www.yourbrainonjoy.org/love-bonds-fear-bonds>)

Dr. Wilder's conclusions agree with what Paul is saying in Romans 8. Fear is not a great way to live, instead live from love and joy- as a child of God. One of the biggest problems is if a relationship is based on fear, you must keep feeding the fear. Without the fear, the motivation is gone, and things fall apart.

4. Why do you think fear is such a great motivator?

5. What are ways you seen the difference between living from fear vs. from love and joy?

1 John presents a different picture. It says, "God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment." (1 John 4:16-18 NIV)

"There is no fear in love!"

Think of how kids want to approach their fathers—fun & play! Children may not understand what's going on, but they love to share a laugh or do something new with their fathers. What if God wants this sort of relationship with us? We call him, "abba" which is like calling him "daddy!"

Nothing illustrates this more than when you see orphan kids in poverty that come to know the family of Jesus. Heidi Baker, a missionary in Mozambique tells this about how her adopted children begin to realize they are part of the family. They have access to the fridge!

Sometimes people come to visit us and they expect to see ragged misery, but instead they are surprised to meet hundreds of happy children. They wonder how an orphan can carry so much joy. Our children know that they have been adopted and are no longer alone. They are in a family and live lives full of love and joy, knowing that they are sons and daughters. In fact, they get to minister the Father-heart to our visitors. These are kids that the world says are cast-off orphans. And yet, generally they are a delight to be around. Jesus pours His extravagant love through them.

Every weekend some of our children come over to our house for a sleepover. One day I was watching them as they ran into our house, opened up the fridge and dumped the ice trays out all over the kitchen! We don't always have electricity, so when it's on it's very exciting because that means we all have ice. It is such a delight for the children to have ice, and they get very excited about it. My children didn't come in and ask politely if they could have some ice. They simply knew that they had access to the fridge! They weren't even that sweet or tidy about getting it. They made a huge mess. As I watched them eat the ice I was thrilled because I knew that they were confident that this was their home and that they had access to the things in our house. The Spirit of adoption had healed their orphan hearts. -Heidi Baker, "The Primacy of Love," *Renewal Journal*, July 19, 2012, <https://renewaljournal.com/2012/07/19/primacy-of-love-in-missions-with-power-byheidi-baker>.

6. Some children are not treated well and grow up in fear. Do you relate to this and how do you bring that to your relationship with God?

GOING DEEPER>> Read & think about 1 John 3:1-10. Ask God where you need to grow as his child.