

New Life Session 3

Our Identity – Children of God

Review of Session 2

- Did anyone find themselves relating better to Father God and understanding how much he loves us? How did the letter 'My Child' help us this week? Did anyone pass it on to someone or talk to someone about it?
- Did anyone try repeating truths out loud as often as possible? Have any of the truths made that important 18 inch journey from head to heart? Have our feelings/emotions aligned themselves to the truths in God's word about the truth that *God is our Father*.

Session 3 Aims

- To understand what it means to be 'born again' and to be 'new creations'.
- To think about what it means to be adopted as sons and daughters into God's family and that Jesus is our brother.
- To understand our inheritance as a child of God.
- To understand that our inheritance gives us purpose and significance in the Kingdom of God.

PART ONE – Born Again

'You must be born again' John 3: 1-15

A pharisee called Nicodemus visited Jesus in secret, in the still of the night. The Rabbis and Pharisees of the Jewish temple were turning against Jesus because he was proclaiming he was the son of God. This was a blasphemous statement and one that carried a death penalty. Nicodemus was obviously curious and maybe his heart was being softened by Jesus, and he wanted to follow him more than the Jewish Law.

Jesus went straight in at the deep end! You can tell that Nicodemus is really struggling after Jesus said the words in verse 3...

***"Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God
unless they are born again."***

It's not surprising that Nicodemus is shocked and can't grasp this concept easily. Firstly this is two men talking together about childbirth - shocking! Only the women of the family and midwives were ever involved in any childbearing in Jesus' time, and the men were well and

truly out of the way while all that took place and yet here was Jesus talking about this in very plain language.

Nicodemus said... ***“Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”*** Jesus went on to explain...

“Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water (symbolic of purification) and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.”

There are a couple of things to notice here:

- Jesus was already baptised, as were his followers. They had a re-birth through water. Here Jesus is already connecting baptism (water purification) with belief in Him. Something we very much follow and encourage when someone is saved at GodFirst. We would aim to get someone baptised as soon as possible.
- The two versions of the word ‘spirit’ - one with a capital ‘S’ and one lowercase ‘s’. This is significant and ‘Spirit’ refers to Holy Spirit (his name), ‘spirit’ refers to our spiritual being - our inner being that is deeply connected to God. Before Holy Spirit helps us with our spiritual rebirth, the bible tells us that we were spiritually dead. We can only come alive to God when the Holy Spirit is involved in our spiritual birth. **Ephesians 2: 1-5**

 **Discussion:** Jesus’s conception in Mary’s womb. What does the bible say actually happened? You can look at the Gospel stories in **Matthew 1:18 & Luke 1:35**.

So let’s think about this for a minute....

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God. John 1:12-13

Here is something truly mind blowing and outstanding when it comes to our new identity as children of God...

When we accepted Jesus as Saviour, we were truly born again, we were ‘born of God’, just as Jesus was. We had a spiritual re-birth. We were conceived in the Spirit therefore we can truly call ourselves brothers and sisters of Christ.

Consider the following verses as you reflect on your spiritual birth:

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

Pointing to his disciples, Jesus said, “Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”

Matthew 12:49-50

Before moving into a time of worship, read the following verses out loud:

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

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: the old has gone, the new is here!

2 Corinthians 5:17

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Romans 9

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!” The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...

Romans 8

PART TWO – We are New Creations

We will go into this a little deeper when we consider our understanding of ‘freedom from sin’ in a later session. But what is important to understand for now is that everything in our spiritual being and our connection to Father God changed when we welcomed Jesus as our Lord and Saviour into our lives.

We are now holy. God considers us righteous, forgiven, free and purified by the blood of Jesus on the cross. Freedom in Christ puts it like this...

‘We are not sinners! We are saints who sometimes sin.’

The point is that we are not saints because we are good people, we are saints because we are in Christ Jesus.

"To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:"

1 Corinthians 1:2

'As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do, for it is written: Be holy, because I am holy.'

1 Peter 1:14-16

So as 'New Creations', we live this out in two ways:

- **Justification.** A one-time legal declaration by God where a guilty sinner is pronounced righteous and not guilty.
- **Sanctification.** A lifelong, progressive, internal process where Holy Spirit transforms a believer to become more like Jesus.

So ***when*** we are tempted and ***if*** we ***choose*** to sin, **this doesn't change our status as new creations and sons and daughters of The King.**

We will look at this more fully in a later session but just for now, let's consider the following...

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."

1 John 1:9

Just as we did in our last session, gently walk your way through repentance on a regular basis (prompted by Holy Spirit). This is a great thing to include in our lives, as we learn how to be a 'New Creation' in Christ.

- **Ask for Holy Spirit revelation**
- **Confess**
- **Speak out your willingness to repent - turn around and go the other way. To try again.**
- **Ask for Holy Spirit's help to do this. To protect, empower and strengthen you.**
- **Understand and accept the forgiveness and love the Father has for you.**
- **Thank and praise him.**

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

Romans 12:2

... How does this scripture help us with our understanding of being 'New Creations' in Christ? What does the journey of 'sanctification' look like amongst us?

PART THREE - Our Adoption into God's Family

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!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God...

Romans 8:15-16

These are incredible verses and when Paul wrote about adoption in Romans, he was not considering the Jewish Law. He was writing to a mainly gentile converted church in Rome and they would have been very familiar with the Roman rules of adoption which differed greatly from Jewish customs.

Jewish adoption in Jesus' time, still very much favoured the birthright of the firstborn biological child over any adopted child and to raise and nourish an orphan or vulnerable child, carried a status of honour for the parents. It was also a way of continuing a family name if a firstborn son was deceased.

Roman Adoption

- A formal and legal process considered both for a child and an adult.
- It was used to secure family lineage, wealth and estate.
- It often involved adults who could manage political or financial responsibilities.
- They received the full legal rights of a firstborn son, gained a new name and identity, shared any inheritance and were freed from any previous debts.
- It was a permanent legal status, and an adopted son could not be disowned by his new father under Roman law.

This was the realm of adoption that Paul considered when he wrote these words.

... How significant was the Roman status of adoption to Paul when he wrote these words? How does it relate to our spiritual status as a child of God - what are the parallels?

Our Inheritance as Children of God:

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Romans 8:17

💬 Have you ever received an inheritance? What was it? Did it change your life? Was it of personal value or worth?

Our inheritance as children of God is something we should want and need, and it will make a vast difference to our lives both now and in eternity...here are just a few of the things we inherit as children of God.

Think of everything that Jesus had access to, all that he could do and how he lived, and we've got it! What Jesus did, we can do and more!

John 14:12

- Eternal Life
- Seated with Jesus in heavenly places
- Access to the throne room of the King
- We can be generous as we rely on our Father's provision for us
- We have no fear or condemnation
- Authority in the spiritual realm - we are significant & have a significant role God's kingdom
- A seat with Jesus in heaven
- A heavenly mansion
- Keys of the Kingdom
- We can loose and bind
- Access all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, we bear spiritual fruit in our lives
- Freedom - including freedom from sin
- Ability to move in the supernatural and the miraculous
- Command the elements
- Talk to the Father
- Access to heavenly riches
- Can bring light into darkness, speak truth, healing
- Have love and compassion
- Victorious living
- Carry Wisdom
- Bring hope

- We have fullness of life and pleasures for evermore
- Renewal of minds
- Empowered to change

Any others?

We can see now that our inheritance is not just about our gift of eternal life and our heavenly destination, it is about how we live now and Jesus is our role model in this. He showed us how we can bring Kingdom culture and values into every situation we find ourselves in, taking Godly authority, freedom and the miraculous to those around us.

John the Baptist and Jesus used these words about the 'Kingdom of Heaven'.

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand".

Matthew 4:17

The Greek phrase translated as **"at hand"** or **"has come near"** indicates that God's sovereign rule and presence have broken out directly into human history through Christ - not as a distant or abstract concept, but as a dynamic, active reality.

 **Did you know that you have access to all of the above as a child of God? Do you understand how significant you are to God and to His Kingdom on earth?**

How does our understanding of this help us to be 'Transformed people who transform the world'?

Freedom in Christ cards - 'Who I Am in Christ' & 'Twenty Cans of Success':

The truths that we find hard to believe...

"When it comes to the truth of God's word - it is true even if it doesn't feel true!"

Freedom in Christ

It can take time for our heart to align itself to what we know is true, especially if it doesn't feel like it's true. We could call this **'The 18-inch Journey'** - it's approximately 18 inches from your brain to your heart! Take time this week to say these truths that are meant for us as the children of God - out loud - every day! Write them on post-it notes, stick them on mirrors, fridges, anywhere that will remind you of them as much as possible.

OUR RESPONSE

- Come back next week and share if you have noticed any change in what you are choosing to believe. Have any of the truths made that important 18-inch journey from

head to heart? Have our feelings/emotions aligned themselves to the truths in God's word about who **WE ARE** and what **WE CAN DO**.

- Think about what the phrase 'The Kingdom of heaven is at hand...' means for you, in your family, friendships, work - anywhere where you find yourself living and moving. If you have any adventures with this, come back next week with stories of what this looked like.