

# Lesson 8

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## God Takes Mankind into His Family: Adoption

His drunken parents sadly neglected Louis. He lived a life of misery, fear, and hardship. Gradually he became hardened in his attitudes toward people and bitter in his outlook on life. The government welfare agency placed him in a number of foster homes, but because of his hardened condition no one kept him very long. Many families who knew his pathetic story *could have* taken him in, but they *would not*. Finally, Mr. and Mrs. Burnett decided to adopt the boy, and all the legal arrangements were made to complete the adoption. However, at this point the family who *would have* adopted him *could not* because Mr. Burnett died suddenly.

At last another family took Louis and eventually adopted him. He responded to their love and concern for him and grew up to be a well-adjusted adult, later entering the ministry. Today, his life is a source of blessing and comfort for others. But it all began when he was adopted into a family whose compassion, love, resources, and name gave him a place of acceptance in society.

God has done the same thing for us. For in addition to forgiving our sins and giving us life through the new birth, He has placed us in His family as sons and daughters with all the rights and privileges that accompany family membership. The wonder of this act of adoption is that, knowing our awful, sinful, lost, rebellious condition, He *would* expend heaven's resources for us. None of us can ever doubt that He *could* redeem us; the wonder will always be that He *would*. He is our Heavenly Father, and we are His children! Is He not, therefore, worthy of our unending praise and devotion?



### lesson outline

Nature of Adoption

Time of Adoption

Experience of Adoption

### lesson objectives

When you finish this lesson you should be able to:

- State the biblical teaching concerning adoption into the family of God.
- Describe the relationship between regeneration, justification, and adoption.

- Explain the means and benefits of adoption.
- Appreciate God’s great love and goodness in adopting us into His family.

**learning activities**

1. Read Romans 8, Galatians 4, and Ephesians 1. If you can, please read these chapters first for overview and then again for detailed understanding. Notice especially the Scriptures which deal with adoption.
2. Work through the lesson development according to your usual procedure. When you have completed the lesson, take the self-test and check your answers.
3. Carefully review Unit 2 (Lessons 5–8), then complete the unit student report for Unit 2 and send it to your ICI instructor.

**key words**

acquits	Graeco-Roman	liberation
disembodied	heir	paternal
down payment	inheritance	patriarchal period
earnest	internally	renovation
externally	judicial	verify
forfeit	liable	

**lesson development**

**NATURE OF ADOPTION**

Adoption, like regeneration and justification, is a work of God in the person who turns to Christ. It deals with a person’s *position* in the family of God and concerns his or her *privileges* as a child of God. As we have seen, God’s purpose for the one who turns to Him is more than just freeing the person from slavery. His aim is to make sons and daughters. Paul declares: “He chose us in him before the creation of the world. . . In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:4,5).

**Meaning of Adoption**

**Objective 1.** *Identify the explanation of the word adoption as it is used in the New Testament.*

The word translated *adoption* literally means “to place a son.” It refers to a place and condition given to one who has no natural claim to it. Most of us are familiar with the act of adoption. An orphaned child is taken into a new family and treated as a natural son or daughter and given all the rights and privileges that belong to this relationship. However, the apostle Paul deals with the idea of adoption in a spiritual sense. He uses the term *adoption* to indicate the act of God’s grace by which the one who receives Christ becomes a child of God. This believer’s relation to God as His *child* is made possible by the new birth (John 1:12,13). However, the adoption is the act of God by which the adoptee has been placed in the rank or position with God of an adult son or daughter (Galatians 4:1-7). He thus has all the privileges of being a natural child and is regarded as a natural son.

Now that we have introduced the concept of adoption, let us review briefly. You undoubtedly remember that in regeneration a person receives *a new life* and *a new nature*. In justification he receives *a new standing*. And in adoption he receives *a new position*.

**1** To review a bit further, match the doctrines (right) with the appropriate completion or definition (left).

- |   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| .... <b>a</b> Deals with a person's standing before God   | 1) Regeneration  |
| .... <b>b</b> Speaks of the change in a person's nature   | 2) Justification |
| .... <b>c</b> Refers to a person's being in God's family  | 3) Adoption      |
| .... <b>d</b> Gives the rights of sonship   |                  |
| .... <b>e</b> Credits Christ's righteousness to the believer and transfers his or her guilt to Christ |                  |
| .... <b>f</b> Introduces a person into spiritual life by means of the new birth                       |                  |

The Greek word translated *adoption* does not appear in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, but examples of adoption are given. These Old Testament examples show that certain customs were common in patriarchal times. According to these customs, a childless husband and wife could adopt an adult son who would serve them in life and bury them at death. For this service the adopted son would receive an inheritance unless the parents had a natural-born son at a later time. If this happened, the natural-born son would become the heir and the adopted son would forfeit (give up or lose) his rights. This custom may help to explain the relationship of Abraham and Eliezer (Genesis 15:2-4). In addition, if a wife were unable to bear children, she might provide a slave to produce children for her husband (See Genesis 16:2). Should the slave maiden bear children, law forbade the wife to send her away. This helps to explain Abraham's concern over Sarah's conduct (Genesis 21:11,12).

**2** Read the Old Testament Scriptures below and tell in each case who was adopted.

- a** Exodus 2:10: .....
- b** 1 Kings 11: 20: .....
- c** Esther 2:7,15: .....

In the Old Testament the concept of sonship is more important than the concept of adoption. Likewise, being a son by divine regeneration receives primary emphasis, but the concept of adoption is not excluded.

**3** Read Exodus 4:22,23; Deuteronomy 14:1,2, 32:18-20; Jeremiah 31:9; Hosea 1:10; 11:1; Malachi 1:6; 3:17 and answer the following questions.

- a** In these Scriptures, who are the *sons of God*?  
.....
- b** Which Scriptures refer to sonship by birth?  
.....
- c** Which Scriptures imply adoption as sons?  
.....

We see the idea of adoption was not foreign to the people of God in Old Testament times. However, the Old Testament practices of adoption don't seem to have direct bearing on the New Testament teaching. Instead, it is the Graeco-Roman custom of adoption that appears to have formed the background for the apostle Paul's use of the term, for it contrasted the freedom of a son in the household with the bondage of a slave.

Adoption was a very common practice in the Graeco-Roman world. If a husband and wife had no children, the husband could adopt a son who would become his heir. The adopted one might have living parents, but this did not interfere with adoption. For often families were willing to give up their children in order to give them better opportunities in life. Once a child was adopted, however, the natural parents had no further control over him, while the adopted father had complete authority over his adopted son. He regulated his son's relationships, controlled whatever the son might own or earn, and had the right to discipline him. However, he was also liable for anything his son might do, and he was required to provide for the needs of his son.

Being a part of an extended family gave an adopted child the training he needed to be successful in his future life. He learned to respect elders and to assume responsibility. And through loving correction, he learned valuable lessons in discipline that prepared him for the tests and demands of life. As he matured, he also acquired the social graces that prepared him for adulthood. All in all, the new family relationship gave great advantages to the adopted son or daughter.

Paul's teaching on regeneration, justification, and adoption reflects this idea of adoption. He describes the process by which God takes us out of our former state, introduces us into His family by the new birth, forgives us for the actions of our former lives, and places us in His family as an adult son or daughter. The adopted child is thus made a part of the family of God, with its privileges and responsibilities. As a result, all time, possessions, and strength should be subjected to God's control. Adoption, then, is the act of God's grace by which He places as sons and daughters in His family the ones who receive Jesus Christ. He confers on them all the rights and duties of family membership

**4** Circle the letter of each TRUE statement.

- a** The apostle Paul reflects the usage of the Old Testament custom of adoption in his teaching on adoption.
- b** In the Graeco-Roman world the practice of adoption was fairly common.
- c** An adopting parent in the Graeco-Roman system had absolute control over the adopted son, and also had to provide for the needs of the son.
- d** We become part of God's family when we assent to the doctrine of adoption.
- e** We are placed as adult offspring in the family of God by the act of adoption when we experience the new birth.

Adoption is a key teaching of the New Testament, even though it is mentioned in relatively few Scriptures. Since it is so closely related to regeneration, some people may feel that its discussion is less important. Nevertheless, adoption is an important teaching of Paul, and it is one of the most beautiful and touching teachings in the New Testament.

5 Read each Scripture below that refers to adoption. Note in its immediate setting what adoption is contrasted with in each passage. The first one has been done for you.

- a Romans 8:15,16: ..... *With being a slave to fear* .....
- b Romans 8:20-23: .....
- c Romans 9:4-12: .....
- d Galatians 4:3-7: .....
- e Ephesians 1:5-7: .....

Notice how in Romans 9:4 Paul refers to Israel’s relation to God as one of *adoption*. From the order in which he places adoption in this Scripture we see that all the blessings flowed from Israel’s special relationship with the Lord. The specific reference here is to the nation of Israel. But in view of the New Testament teaching that the church is the true Israel, it is fitting for us to see similar principles of operation in each. In a sense, then, our special relationship with God is the basis on which we receive all the blessings He bestows. What good thing will He refuse His children? (See Psalm 84:11.) Paul responds, “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). And while we may not always know what is best for us, God works only for good with those who love Him—those whom He has adopted (Romans 8:28). However, we must always remember that the blessings we receive are not ours because we deserve or earn them.

6 Read Luke 17:7-10. In your notebook write what should be our attitude concerning our work for the Lord.

As His adopted sons, we are to recognize that all our efforts are unworthy of the great love He has demonstrated in bringing us into His family and placing us as His sons and daughters. Moreover, the benefits of the relation continue as our Heavenly Father ministers to our needs.

Mr. and Mrs. Potter adopted a young man from another country. They gave him the first name *Dan* and of course Dan assumed the family name in the process of adoption. Dan blended into the family life completely and he was treated with all the rights and privileges of the Potter children. The Potters became legally responsible for Dan. They made it possible for him to receive a good secondary education and to attend college also. As an *adopted son*, Dan was well fed and clothed, and on special occasions, such as his birthday and Christmas, he was remembered just like all of the other family members. In short, he was loaded with all of the family benefits because of his adoptive relationship. This is but an inferior illustration of the kind of love that our Heavenly Father demonstrates in saving us, making us heirs of His promises, and daily loading us with benefits.

7 Circle the letter of the correct explanation of the word *adoption* as it is used in the New Testament context.

- a) Adoption is the legal act by which a person becomes a child of God.
- b) Those who become children of God through the new birth are placed in the position of adult offspring by adoption.
- c) Adoption refers to the act of a person who decides to adopt a new way of life by going God’s way.

## TIME OF ADOPTION

**Objective 2.** *Explain the significance of the three phases of adoption.*

Adoption occurs in three phases. First, we see that there is a *past* phase. In Ephesians 1:4-6 Paul says, “Before the creation of the world. . . he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.”

**8** Reread Ephesians 1:4-6 and answer the following questions.

- a Who is the adopting one? .....
- b Who are the adopted ones? .....
- c Who made it possible? .....
- d What is the source of adoption? .....
- e What is the purpose of adoption? .....

Notice that God is the prime mover in adoption. It proceeds from His love according to His will, returns to Him in an adopted family, and ends in the praise of His glorious grace. Notice at the end of verse 4, and in verse 5, that God’s decision in eternity to adopt us as His sons is based on His love. His love alone prompted the eternal decision to adopt us. And since adoption results from the free exercise of God’s grace, all human merit is ruled out.

We see in this Scripture that while adoption brings tremendous privileges, it also involves responsibilities: “For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Ephesians 1:4). If we claim God as our Heavenly Father, then we must live so that He will not be ashamed to call us sons. The experience of adoption involves more than simply securing a ticket to heaven. It requires us to allow the Holy Spirit to demonstrate that we are obedient sons and daughters as we reflect the glory of God (2 Corinthians 4:6). What impression would you have of a person who always wore white, clean clothing but who never took a bath? The person’s inconsistency wouldn’t make sense, would it? How much more inconsistent it is for a person to claim the righteousness of Christ and yet live in a manner unworthy of Christian adoption?

**9** The significance of the *past phase* of adoption is that

- a) the age of a teaching increases its value.
- b) it shows us that the redemptive plan of God (which includes adoption) is eternal.
- c) we are able to see how the plan began in the Old Testament.

Then there is a *present* phase: “Dear friends, now we are children of God” (1 John 3:2). Notice also that Paul uses the present tense in Galatians 4:6: “You *are* sons.” The fact of our present sonship should do several things to us. First, it should free us from any doubt about the future. We do not have to wait until we stand in God’s presence to know whether we are His children. We know *now* on the authority of His Word *and* by the testimony of the Holy Spirit that we *are* God’s children (Romans 8:16).

Second, it should impress us with the necessity of living in this world consistent with our status as sons of God. John says that those who look forward to Christ’s appearing keep themselves pure, just as Christ is pure (1 John 3:3), while Paul urges us to “say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age” (Titus 2:12). Godly living is therefore appropriate for the children of God.

Examine carefully Romans 8:14-17 and Galatians 4:4-7. These Scriptures speak of adoption as present experience. They show us that adoption delivers us from slavery, enables us to address God as *Father*, and makes us heirs of God. Once indeed we were slaves to sin, Satan, and self. We were haunted by fear, especially the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14,15), for we knew that judgment awaited us. But Christ Jesus came to redeem us from the bondage of sin, giving His life to pay the redemption price and to set us free to be the sons of God. Therefore, we need not live in fear any longer: neither fear of death nor fear of God.

**10** Read Hebrews 12:28. In what sense are we to fear God?

.....

.....

But we are not to be *afraid* of God. Fear of this kind is not pleasing to Him, for it arises from guilt and has to do with punishment. Rather, as our lives become one with Christ's, His love is made perfect in us (1 John 4:16-19). We are able to "approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

Adoption permits us to call out directly to God, "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6). This expression has a tone of familiarity and endearment that arises out of our love, respect, and appreciation for our Heavenly Father. As we pray thus, we experience His gentle assurance that we are His children and that He loves us. The Holy Spirit guides us in appropriate worship to the Father. And He enables us to come courageously and lovingly to the Father in accordance with His will (Romans 8:15-17, 26,27).

Another present benefit of adoption is that *we are heirs of God*. And while we have not yet received our full inheritance, we are heirs just the same. Paul declares that God himself has set us apart and has placed his mark of ownership upon us, and has given us the Holy Spirit in our hearts *as the guarantee* of all that he has in store for us (2 Corinthians 1:21-22; 5:5). The Holy Spirit in our life is the seal that we belong to God. Paul also claims that the experience of the Holy Spirit is a foretaste of the blessedness of heaven; and it is the down payment, the guarantee, that some day the redeemed will inherit completely the blessedness of God.

**11** Circle the letters of the TRUE statements.

- a One of the blessings of the present phase of adoption is the knowledge that we are God's children.
- b Knowledge of our adoption causes us to relax as we need not be concerned about our present behavior.
- c To fear God means to reverence and honor Him.
- d Our reverence is the seal that we belong to God.
- e God has given us the Holy Spirit as a guarantee that our full inheritance yet awaits us.

Adoption also has a *future* phase. It is not at the present complete. Nevertheless, we live in anticipation of the glory that will be ours at the coming of Christ. Then we shall fully realize the benefits of heirs.

**12** Read Romans 8:23. What does adoption refer to in this Scripture?

.....

In Romans 8:18-23 Paul paints a magnificent picture. He speaks with a prophet's vision. He sees all creation waiting for the glory that shall be. At the present he points out that creation is in decay. It is longing for sin's power to be broken, for decay and death to be banished, and for liberation from the effects of the curse. We Christians, like nature, long for release from the present world with its physical

limitations, pain, and death. Even now our physical being is gradually decaying (2 Corinthians 4:16). Through the experience of the Holy Spirit, however, we have received an *earnest* or *down payment* of the future glory. But we yearn for the *full realization* of what adoption into the family of God means.

CREATION



WAITING FOR  
RELEASE

The final phase of adoption will be the adoption of our bodies. Paul did not think of a person in the state of glory as a disembodied spirit (2 Corinthians 5:1-5). A person in this present world is a body *and* a spirit; and in glory the total person will be saved. However, the glorified body will no longer be subject to decay and the impulses of sin. It will be a glorious spiritual body fit for the life of a spiritual person: “The Lord Jesus Christ. . . will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Philippians 3:20,21). See also 1 Corinthians 15:35-54. When our adoption is at last completed, then our bodies will have undergone a marvelous transformation. Because of this *future phase* of adoption, let us, with Paul, rejoice that life in Christ is an eager anticipation of a liberation, a renovation, and a re-creation worked out by the glory and power of God. Speaking of the future change we shall undergo, Paul declares “it is God who has made us for this very purpose and has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (2 Corinthians 5:5).

In adoption, God’s grace flows like a river out of eternity into time and back into eternity again. And His grace, like a strong current, engulfs us and carries us along toward the goal of future blessedness and glory and immortality.

**13** Explain the significance of the three phases of adoption. Use your notebook for this response.

## EXPERIENCE OF ADOPTION

### Means of Adoption

**Objective 3.** *Select a statement that identifies the means of adoption.*

You may ask, “How is adoption brought about?” God brings about adoption through the agency of the Holy Spirit as people respond to the truth of the gospel.

A person’s part in adoption is *to believe* in Jesus Christ and *to receive* Him. As we have seen previously, however, this belief involves the total person: intellect, emotions, and will. It involves *knowing* the truth of the gospel (John 8:32) and *giving heart assent* to it (Romans 10:10). And to receive Jesus and to make a complete commitment of one’s life to Him requires a definite *act of the will*. The faith we demonstrate in believing and receiving does not produce adoption; it does, however, set the stage for it (Galatians 3:26). John adds “to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12).

God's part in adoption is, of course, primary. A person's response to His offer of salvation gives Him the opportunity to begin His transforming work. In an instant He forgives sin, imparts a new nature, gives a new standing before himself, and accords a new status in His family. As the Holy Spirit makes our sonship real, we are able to respond to God, "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15) with a sense of amazement and wonder. Our adopted status is not the result of any merit in us. It is God's love and grace alone that bring us into His family where there are no distinctions, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). And all, through the Spirit of Christ in their hearts, cry out together, "Abba, Father!" (Galatians 4:6).

- 14** Select the statement below which correctly identifies the means of adoption.
- a) The means of adoption is primarily the result of a person's efforts and desires.
  - b) The irresistible grace of God is the means of adoption by which all whom God elects are made His sons and daughters apart from any decision on their part.
  - c) The means of adoption is God's love and grace with which He receives us when we respond to the gospel and receive Christ.

**Distinctiveness of Adoption**

**Objective 4.** *Identify similarities and differences among characteristics of adoption, regeneration, and justification.*

We have viewed salvation as a single work of God. And we have used the illustration of a chain reaction to describe how the various aspects relate to other aspects of the work. Each of the doctrines of salvation has special meaning as well as meaning in relation to the others. Let us review briefly some of the similarities and differences that exist among regeneration, justification, and adoption.

We see that adoption and justification involve the administration of divine justice; therefore, they are considered *judicial acts*. Both of them give status: justification gives the guilty sinner the status of *acquitted*, while adoption gives him or her the status of *adult son* (about which we shall comment further). And both involve a relationship to God. However, the character of the relationship is different. Justification is a relationship between a righteous Judge and a "guilty" sinner; whereas adoption is a relationship between the Father and a child. Justification is basically legal; whereas adoption is basically paternal. Justification proceeds from righteousness; whereas adoption proceeds from love.

RIGHTEOUS JUDGE	LOVING FATHER
SINNER RECEIVES PARDON	CHILD RECEIVES POSITION
JUSTIFICATION	ADOPTION

Regeneration and adoption are concerned with our being in the family of God. Regeneration is the experience that introduces us into the family of God; adoption follows and gives us the status of adult offspring.

The unique position we occupy at the moment of regeneration is this: being born of God, and therefore His legitimate offspring, we are advanced in relationship and responsibility to the status of *adult heirs*. However, all the experiences of childhood and adolescence, which are normal in human life, are excluded in spiritual adoption. And as a result, we are instantly free from tutors or governors and are responsible to live the many-faceted spiritual life of *adult offspring*

in the Father’s household. In the spiritual realm there is no period of irresponsible childhood. The Scriptures recognize no distinction in conduct between beginners in the Christian life and believers who are mature. What God says to the mature and established believer, He says to all other believers—even to those who are newly born again. Lest we stumble at these responsibilities because of Paul’s reference to Corinthians as “mere infants in Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:1), we must recognize that Corinthian Christians were babes because of carnality, not because of the length of time they had been Christians. As adult offspring, therefore, we are immediate heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ. And this privileged status enables us to inherit immediate blessings and benefits, as we shall see.

**15** Identify similarities and differences between characteristics of adoption, justification, and regeneration by circling the answers of statements that are TRUE.

- a** Justification and adoption are considered judicial acts because they involve the administration of divine justice.
- b** Justification gives the status of *righteous* to one who believes in Christ, while adoption gives him or her the status of *adult offspring*.
- c** The relationship involved in justification is that of a father to a child; whereas in adoption the relationship is that of a righteous judge to a guilty sinner.
- d** Both adoption and regeneration concern the believer’s being in the family of God.
- e** Adoption introduces us into the family of God and regeneration gives us the status of adult offspring.
- f** Whereas regeneration is an instantaneous act, adoption requires a time of probation, that is, of testing, to see whether the adopted one is deserving of the benefits of family membership.

**Blessings of Adoption**

**Objective 5.** *Recognize statements that describe the blessings of adoption.*

Adoption produces certain benefits that we have chosen to call *blessings*. One of the greatest is the witness of God’s Spirit with our spirit that shows that our adoption is real and assures us of the Father’s love and concern for us (Romans 8:15). But there are many other benefits.

**16** Read the following Scriptures and list the effects of adoption.

- a** Matthew 7:9-11 .....
- b** Psalm 23:1 .....
- c** Psalm 144:1,2 .....
- d** John 14:26 .....
- e** Hebrews 12:7 .....
- f** Hebrews 4:14-16 .....
- g** Romans 8:17 .....

Notice that all of the preceding results of adoption are present experiences. Note, too, that the emphasis is on what God does. Some additional provisions that result from adoption are:

1. Our Father supplies our needs out of His boundless supply (Philippians 4:19).
2. He delivers us from legal bondage (Galatians 4:4,5).
3. He delivers us from fear (Romans 8:15; 2 Timothy 1:7).
4. He brings us into fellowship with himself (1 John 1:3).

These blessings and countless others are directed to meeting believers’ basic needs.

In adopting us God intends to bring glory to His name. In adoption He magnifies His grace and love. In fact, all that God does in saving us will ultimately bring glory to His name. And perhaps His glory is nowhere more evident than in the many blessings that flow out of adoption.

**17** Circle the letter of the statement that does NOT describe the blessings of adoption.

- a) We receive all of the Father’s understanding, care, and compassion, as well as the necessities of natural and spiritual life.
- b) We receive protection, instruction, and correction that arise out of His loving concern for us. And we receive assurance of adoption also.
- c) We have confidence and boldness as we enter into God’s presence, and we become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.
- d) We are assured that once we are adopted, we are guaranteed eternal life regardless of our manner of life after adoption.

**Evidences of Adoption**

**Objective 6.** Give examples of internal and external evidences of our adoption.

Adoption is basically an objective work; that is, it takes place outside of us. We depend primarily on the Word of God to verify the fact of our adoption. It is, then, the chief external evidence of our adoptive status. Nevertheless, adoption becomes apparent to us by the things we experience internally and demonstrate externally.

**18** Consider each of the following Scriptures and list the evidences of adoption that are referred to.

- a Romans 8:4; Galatians 5:18: .....
- b Galatians 4:5,6: .....
- c Ephesians 3:12: .....
- d 1 John 2:9-11; 5:1: .....
- e 1 John 5:1-3: .....

While none of us is perfect in demonstrating these evidences, we will grow progressively in Christlikeness as we walk in the Spirit and are led by Him (Romans 8:15,16). This progressive change in us will be an obvious demonstration that we are His children.

Knowing that you are a part of the family of God should make you eternally grateful and joyful. This knowledge should also cause you to make a firm commitment: that by the grace of God, you will never do anything to bring dishonor or shame to the family of God. May you ever seek to bear the name with dignity and pride, never forgetting that you are part of a vast royal priesthood of believers whose purpose is to show forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9).

**19** Give an example of something that confirms internally to us our adoption by God. Use your notebook for this answer.

**20** Give an example of external evidence that we are children of God. Use your notebook for this response also.

The doctrine of adoption calls to mind the case of John and Joan Murphy, a childless couple. The Murphys had been married over 10 years when they were asked if they were interested in adopting a baby who was to be born to a young lady who could not take care of it. The Murphys accepted the offer and rejoiced, believing that this was an answer to their prayers. They eagerly shared the good

news with their friends. When little Beth was born, she appeared to be perfect, a beautiful bundle of joy. However, within a few hours the doctor who had delivered the baby telephoned the Murphys and told them frankly that little Beth had a cleft palate—a deformity in the roof of the mouth. He said, ‘Do you still want her?’ John answered without hesitation, “Yes! We’ve told everyone that little Beth is an answer to prayer—a gift from God. And even though this deformity has appeared, we love her just the same.” However, just before the Murphys went to claim the baby, opposition arose about the legality of the adoption, since the Murphys lived in a state other than the one in which little Beth was born. The Murphys’ minister, who had helped arrange the adoption, went to the attorney general, the state’s highest legal authority, for advice. From the attorney general he learned that if the Murphys would immediately take the baby to their home, there would be no legal barrier to the adoption. Thus, the Murphys rushed to the hospital and took little Beth to be their child. Within a few months Beth underwent surgery to correct the cleft palate. The operation was successful and little Beth was perfectly normal.

In this story we see an illustration of the love of God who adopted us when we were lost, hopeless, unfit, and condemned to die. We were tainted by a carnal nature—less than the perfect specimens God desired. But he loved us and drew us to himself. And even as He was bringing us to himself, the archenemy of our souls sought to block the transaction and keep us in bondage. But God through Christ removed the obstacles to our adoption by His death on the cross. And we have now been brought into His family: cleansed, healed, clothed in His righteousness, and made immediate beneficiaries of His blessings. For this transaction that liberated us and brought us into His family we may rejoice throughout eternity.

## self-test

MULTIPLE CHOICE. Circle the letter of the correct answer to each question.

- 1 The biblical teaching on adoption shows that it is an act of God's grace by which we are
  - a) assured of adopted status as God's children in the future when we see Jesus face to face.
  - b) placed as children in God's family, receiving all the rights and privileges of family membership.
  - c) declared to be the children of God, although we must await the benefits of family membership until we reach "maturity."
- 2 When we become sons of God by receiving Jesus Christ, God treats us as
  - a) servants who are still under the bondage of servitude.
  - b) young children still under "tutors and governors."
  - c) those who have received the adoption of adult offspring—as heirs who can draw on the rights of inheritance.
- 3 The part of people in adoption is to
  - a) strive to become worthy of joining the family of God.
  - b) believe in the Lord Jesus and receive Him.
  - c) desire adoption with all the benefits this status provides.
- 4 From the divine side of adoption, God's part is seen in that He
  - a) accepts us as *minor children* who must come to spiritual maturity *before* adoption is complete.
  - b) declares us adopted and invites us to act as if our place in His family is real.
  - c) receives us, adopts us as His own, and gives us the Holy Spirit who seals our family membership.
- 5 When we speak of the time of adoption, we understand that adoption
  - a) has eternally been part of God's redemptive plan.
  - b) refers exclusively to the act of adoption which makes one a child of God at regeneration.
  - c) speaks primarily of the future when even the physical body will be changed.
- 6 Which of these is NOT a benefit of adoption?
  - a) Deliverance from the bondage of legalism
  - b) Provision of correction
  - c) Inheritance of God's provisions
  - d) Status as legal bondservants
- 7 Adoption into the family of God as taught by the apostle Paul was influenced most by
  - a) Old Testament precedent and practice.
  - b) the Graeco-Roman custom of adoption.
  - c) Middle Eastern and Oriental customs.
- 8 Adoption, which was conceived in eternity,
  - a) is fully consummated in time.
  - b) is begun in time and will be completed in eternity future.
  - c) will only be revealed and completed in eternity future.
- 9 The final phase of adoption concerns the adoption of our
  - a) spirits, by which our salvation is determined.
  - b) souls, by which we become complete spiritual beings.
  - c) bodies, making us completely fit for the life of spiritual persons in His presence.

**10 MATCHING.** Match the description (left) with the correct doctrine (right).

- |               |  |                  |
|---------------|--|------------------|
| .... <b>a</b> | Is a change of rank and position, deals with a person's privileges as a child of God | 1) Regeneration  |
| .... <b>b</b> | Is a change of a person's nature   | 2) Justification |
| .... <b>c</b> | Is a change of a person's standing before God  | 3) Adoption      |

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Before you continue your study with Lesson 9, be sure to complete your unit student report for Unit 2 and return the answer sheet to your ICI instructor.

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## answers to study questions

- 11** a True.  
b False.  
c True.  
d False.  
e True.
- 1** a 2) Justification.  
b 1) Regeneration.  
c 3) Adoption.  
d 3) Adoption.  
e 2) Justification  
f 1) Regeneration.
- 12** It refers to the final redemption of our bodies.
- 2** a Moses was adopted by Pharaoh's daughter.  
b Genubath was adopted by Queen Tahpenes.  
c Esther was adopted by her cousin Mordecai.
- 13** Adoption flows out of the decision of God in eternity past, becomes a reality in the believer's present experience, and is fully realized in eternity in the future.
- 3** a The people of Israel.  
b Exodus 4:22,23; Deuteronomy 32:18-20; Jeremiah 31:9; Malachi 1:6.  
c Deuteronomy 14:1,2; Hosea 1:10; 11:1; Malachi 3:17.
- 14** c) The means of adoption is God's love and grace . . .
- 4** a False.  
b True.  
c True.  
d False. (We become part of God's family by means of the new birth experience.)  
e True.
- 15** a True.  
b True.  
c False. (Actually the reverse of these statements is true.)  
d True.  
e False. (Actually, the reverse of these is true.)  
f False.
- 5** b With the groaning of creation and our own expectation of the future fulfillment.  
c Adopted ones are contrasted with those who are not God's adopted people.  
d With bondage under the Law.  
e With our former life of sin.
- 16** a We receive good gifts from the Father.  
b We receive the necessities of life.  
c We receive protection.  
d We receive instruction.  
e We receive correction which arises out of His loving concern for us.  
f We have confidence and boldness as we come into the presence of God.  
g We become heirs of God with Christ. (See also 1 Peter 1:3-5.)

- 6** When we have done everything we have been commanded to do, we have no cause for pride or self-satisfaction. At this point we are *only ordinary servants*; we have *only* done our duty.
- 17 d)** We are assured that once we are adopted . . .
- 7 b)** Those who become children of God through the new birth are placed in the position of adult offspring by adoption.
- 18 a** We are led by the Spirit.  
**b** We have a sense of belonging to the Father.  
**c** We have confidence as we approach our Heavenly Father.  
**d** We have love for all the people of God.  
**e** We obey God.
- 8 a** God.  
**b** We are.  
**c** Jesus Christ.  
**d** The good pleasure of God's will.  
**e** That we might praise Him for His glorious grace.
- 19** Your answer. Perhaps you mentioned the peace, assurance, and joy we experience when we accept Christ and live for Him.
- 9 b)** it shows us that the redemptive plan of God . . .
- 20** Your answer. The fruit of the Spirit in our lives (Galatians 5:22-23) is outward evidence of our adoption into God's family.
- 10** We are to stand in awe (reverence) of Him. He is the sovereign of the universe, and He is our Creator.