

Adoption Bible Study 1 – Overview

by Enoch Kwok ©2012

Goal of this Bible Study Series:

- A. Gain some perspectives on what the Bible has to say about adoption
- B. Give space to allow God to speak to us about His intention for transforming us through our adoption experience
- C. Give us some tools to help our children understand God’s heart and involvement with adoption.

Recognize that there are at least three different perspectives to approaching adoption – the Triad: Adoptee, Birthparents, Adoptive parents – we will do our best to keep all three in perspective as we investigate over the next few weeks and months.

1. How do you define Adoption?
2. Why would someone want be adopted? (POV adoptee)
3. Why would someone need to have their children adopted by someone else? (POV biological parents)
4. Why would someone want to adopt a child? (POV adoptive parent)

New Testament Greek for “adoption”: *huiiothesia*

ὑιοθεσία *huiiothesia* 5206; from a presumed compound of 5207 (son) and a derivative of 5087 (to place); the placing as a son, i.e. adoption (figuratively, Christian sonship in respect to God): — adoption (of children, of sons).

Read the following passages which reference “adoption” in the Greek:

| | |
|--------------|--------------|
| Acts 7:20-22 | Rom. 8:14-16 |
| Rom. 8:22-24 | Rom. 9:3-5 |
| Gal. 4:4-6 | Eph. 1:4-6 |

5. What do you notice about these mentions of the word “adoption” in these passages? (Who is adopting whom?)

In the OT, the word “adoption” does not appear per se, but there are stories of adoption, which we will explore in the following weeks. There is a term related to adoption that appears over and over again “fatherless”, often translated “orphan”:

3846 n.[m.] fatherless, orphan

אָתוֹם, *yātom*, **3846** n.[m.] fatherless, orphan

אָתוֹם *yathowm*, *yaw-thome* ˘; 3490. from an unused root meaning to be lonely; a bereaved person:—fatherless (child), orphan.

God’s Heart for the orphans

In the Old Testament, “fatherless”, often translated “orphan” appears 42 times.

Read each of the following references and determine if the reference:

- 1) describes an aspect of God (G)
- 2) gives a command (C)
- 3) provides a promise (P)

Exodus 22:22-24

Deut. 10: 18-19

Deuteronomy 24:19-22

Psalms 10:17-18

Psalms 68:5-6

Psalms 146:8-9

Isaiah 1:16-17

Jer. 7:5-7

Jer. 22:2-4

Mal. 3:5

In New Testament, “orphan” is used twice:

James 1:26-27

John 14:18

6. What picture of God’s heart and priorities do you gain from these passages?

7. Why do the “fatherless” and orphans have such an important place in God’s heart?

Read Exodus 34: 5-7 God’s name and description of Himself:

This phrase: “The LORD, the LORD, the **compassionate** (merciful) and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness” is used over and over again throughout the Old Testament – from the Pentateuch, to the Psalms, to the Prophets, as God’s calling card.

8. What is the first adjective that God uses to describe himself?

9. What does compassion mean? (Hint: “comp” + “passion”)

10. Why would God choose “to suffer with” as the first and foremost descriptor for himself?

Read Psalm 2:7-9 Adoption for Kingship – the Coronation Psalm

11. Why might God use the metaphor of adoption when anointing the King of Israel?

Read Galatians 4:4-7 Centrality to the Gospel

12. Who does this metaphor of adoption apply to, and why is that significant?

13. What might God be speaking to you today about adoption?

Copies of a Leader’s Guide with the author’s opinion on many of the questions may be obtained by sending the author an email at e4kwok@gmail.com

Adoption Bible Study 2 : Stories of Adoption – Moses

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This study can be broken into two sessions (Parts 1-4 and 5-8)

Part 1: Read Exodus 1:8-22 (The seeds of tragedy)

1. What is the backdrop for this story? What is the source for the injustice/tragedy? What was the purpose for Moses' eventual adoption?
2. What situation(s) today might be the closest equivalent for a cause for adoption?

Part 2: Read Exodus 2:1-15 (Moses' adoption story)

3. Describe Moses' birth family –
4. How did God provide for Moses in the midst of the tragedy?
5. Describe the sequence of custody that Moses endured as a juvenile.
6. Who did Moses play with as he grew through his adolescent years? Where were the “other Hebrew boys” his age?
7. Who gave Moses his name? What is the significance of his name and how he got it?
8. What advantages would Moses have received having grown up in the Pharaoh's court that he might not have had access to had he not been adopted?
9. What losses did Moses sustain because of his adoption at the age of his weaning?

Part 3: Read Exodus 2:11-15 (Moses is now 40 years old – Acts 7:23)

10. What does Moses killing the Egyptian who was beating a Hebrew and his intervening between the two fighting Hebrew men tell us about him? (what was important to Moses?)
11. Who (people group) did Moses identify with? (even though he grew up in the Pharaoh's court)
12. Do you think Moses felt welcomed by the people he identified himself with? (the Hebrews)
13. What kind of conflicts do you imagine Moses felt at this point about his identity?
14. What does it mean for Moses to have to leave the two people groups he could have identified with?
15. Why does Moses ultimately leave Egypt, his birthparents, his adopted parents, and his people?

Part 4 Read Exodus 2:16-22 – Moses escapes to a third party kingdom (Midian)

16. How is Moses' rescue of the shepherdesses similar to the two interactions just before this?
17. What people group do the Midianites identify Moses with? How do you think that made Moses feel?
18. What must be going through Moses' heart and mind to realize he would start a family not with one of his kinfolk, but of a foreign people?
19. What is the significance of the name he gave his son? (What are the three “protected classes” of people from last week's study?)

Part 5 Read Exodus 3:1-6 – Moses' first encounter with God at the burning bush (Moses' call)

20. What is Moses' first words to God?
21. How does God introduce himself to Moses?
22. Why would God linking himself to Moses' ancestors be significant to Moses?
23. What is Moses' initial reaction to God's call to send Moses to bring Israel out of Egypt?
24. Why do you think Moses responded with this? How does "Who am I" illuminate Moses' greatest struggle/need at this point in his life?
25. What is God's immediate answer to Moses' identity crisis?
26. How does God's presence solve Moses' identity problem?
27. How does Moses' quest for "Who am I?" relate to Israel's quest for identity? For every person's (believers and non believers quest for identity?)
28. How did Moses' family history contribute to his sensitivity to this foundational question? If he had not been adopted, would he have such a strong attachment to the question of "who am I?"

Part 6 Read Exodus 3: 7-12 God's Name

29. What do we learn about God' name and identity?

Part 7 Read Exodus 5:22-6:8 God's promises

30. God doesn't tell His name to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but He does to Moses. Why is this significant, that God would reveal His name to Moses?
31. What promises does God give to Moses/Israel? List the "I wills" ... that God promises to do for Israel/Moses
32. Why might these promises be important to Moses ? to Israel? How do these promises speak to their identity?

Part 8: Read Exodus 33:12-34:9 Identity

33. God tells Moses He knows Moses by name. What does that mean, and why might that be important to Moses?
34. How is God's name an illustration of God's glory?
35. What is Moses' chief concern as he contemplates departing for the promised land?
36. What are the repeated themes here?
37. What do we learn about the meaning of God's glory and His name? What are the first descriptions that God gives of Himself?
38. Why would God choose compassion as the first descriptor for Himself?

(Compassionate and Gracious....Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nah 1:3)

39. What does Moses ask for after He finds out God's name and primary characteristics?

Recap

40. Why do you think God chose Moses, an adoptee, to be the first person to whom he revealed His nature, His glory, the meaning of His name?
41. What is/was Moses' legacy to the generations after him?
42. Looking back at Moses' life, how did God redeem and transform Moses' injury of adoption into a story of calling and mission?
43. What hope can this give to those who have experienced the loss of their birth family and are living under the reality of adoption?

Discussion: (after listening to Tommy Walker's Song: He Knows My Name)

44. Why would God choose Moses to lead the people of Israel, not someone who had a more traditional upbringing?
45. What advantage does an adoptee have in understanding their need and responding to God's call?
46. How can we leverage the redefining of identity from birth circumstance and cultural heritage to proximity with God to help our children deal with their issues of identity?

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Adoption Bible Study 3 : Esther

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1. What do we know about the Persian Empire and the place of Israelites within this empire 4-500 BC?

Read Esther 1:16-18

2. What kind of behavior got the queen of Persia, Vashti into trouble?

Read Esther 2:2-11

3. What do we learn about Esther's family history? What losses has she experienced in her life?

4. What are the three protected classes of people that God has made special provisions for? (How many of these classes does Esther fall under?)

5. What does it mean to be made a concubine in the King's harem? What kind of future would a concubine have?

6. What special instructions did Mordecai give Esther? Why do you think he gave this instruction?

Read Esther 2:15-19

7. What type of ongoing relationship between Mordecai and Esther do we see even after she becomes queen?

8. The name Esther means "hidden". What was hidden about her?

Read Esther 3:5-9

9. What is the modern name for what Haman proposed to do to the Jewish race? (And was agreed to by the king)

Read 4:11-5:4

10. What is the significance of Mordecai's perspective on the situation?

11. What risk was Esther taking in approaching the king?

12. What was at stake? (If Esther was not successful, what were the implications?)

13. Esther requests that all Jews (through Mordecai) engage in fasting for three days. What component usually accompanies fasting, but is omitted in this account? (why might it have been omitted?)

Read Esther 7:1-5

14. How would you describe Esther's tone and posture with the king? How did that compare/contrast with the ex-Queen Vashti's?

15. Where did Esther learn/acquire this posture?

16. Esther reveals her ethnic background at this time. What would have happened if this information came out sooner?

Read Esther 7:10-8:11

17. Esther's life was spared after her first audience with the King. Now she approaches the King again, with a second request, to countermand Haman's edicts to carry out genocide against the Jewish people. How is the future of the Jewish people secured?

Read Esther 9:24-28, 10:1-3

18. How is Mordecai's standing before the king now changed?

19. Where is God in this story of providence and redemption not only for Esther, but also for Mordecai and for the Jewish people?

20. Why did God use Esther, an orphan, and not someone else?

21. How did God use Mordecai, Esther's adoptive guardian, to prepare her for the role she eventually would play in God's redemptive plan?

22. Who else, besides Esther, was hidden in this story of redemption? How might that relate to the stories of all children of adoption? (Esther is the only book in the Bible that does not mention God's explicit presence)

23. What was Esther (and Mordecai's) legacy to the history of the Jewish and Christian tradition?

Did You Know?: Purim is one of the national holidays celebrated in Israel by Jews even until today. Esther is most widely known of the books in Jewish culture because of its story of God's preservation of the Jewish nation against certain annihilation.

Discuss:

24. How can we as adoptive parents use the story of Esther to give context and hope to our adoptive children who may some day question their self worth because of their family history?

25. How can Mordecai's example of raising Esther guide us as adoptive parents in demonstrating to us the importance of the charge God has given us to raise up our adoptive children?

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Adoption Bible Study 4: Samuel

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Read Part 1 - I Samuel 1:3-7,11, 15-17 Hannah's Problem

1. What do we know about Hannah and her family situation?
2. What was the main cause of Hannah's afflictions?
3. What was Hannah's promise/bargain with God
4. Eli was the top priest of Ephraim (one of the largest tribes of Israel, the other being Judah). Who would most likely succeed him as Ephraim's spiritual leader (top priest) after he passed away?

Read Part 2 - I Samuel 1:20, 22, 27-28, 2:11, 18-21 Samuel is born -

5. What does this passage tell us about Hannah's attachment to this gift from God? (If you had been lacking something that has been greatly desired and finally receive it, what is your natural inclination to do with this object/gift once it is yours?)
6. What losses did Samuel suffer through his foster adoption?
7. What did Samuel gain through his foster adoption?
8. What type of relationship did Samuel have with his birthmother after the foster-adoption? What could/would Samuel learn about/from his mother through this?

Read Part 3 - I Samuel 2:22-3:1 Eli's Problems

9. Compare Eli's son's activities with those of Samuel
10. What does God promise to do to Eli and his family?

Read Part 4 - I Samuel 3:2-13, 19-21, 7:3, 15 Samuel's Call

11. What key lesson did Eli teach Samuel as a young boy? Why is this a significant lesson for Samuel's role later in life?
12. Where have we heard this phrase, "Here I am" before? Why is this significant? (See Genesis 3:8-9, and Exodus 3:3-4)

Read Part 5 - I Samuel 8: 4-9, 17-21, 9:15-17 Samuel the King Maker

13. What do we learn about Samuel's sons? Why do you think Samuel's sons did not walk in his ways? Where have we seen this pattern before? (sons not following their father's Godly ways?)
14. What implications does that have for adoptive parents?
15. Why do the people cry out for a king? Was this a good idea?
16. How does God use Samuel to accommodate the people's demands?

Read Part 6 - I Samuel 12:19-25, 16:1, 7, 10-13 From Saul to David

17. After God rejects Saul as King, he sends Samuel to anoint another king, someone after God's own heart. How does Samuel choose the next king?
18. How does Eli's training serve Samuel in this process of choosing the next King of Israel?
19. What are the blessings and curses Samuel received from his adoptive father?

Review

| | Significance of time in Israel's History | Role in shaping Israel's History | Role Adoptive parents played in shaping Adoptee |
|--------|--|---|--|
| Moses | Slavery | Lead Israel out of bondage to Egyptians | Taught Moses leadership skills |
| Esther | Genocide | Becomes queen of Persia, boldness and humility prevent genocide | Taught obedience and humility. Gave perspective to life circumstance. |
| Samuel | | | |

Discussion:

20. Why is an adoptee the key player in so many critical junctures in Israel's history?
21. What are the blessings/ skills / life lessons that God has uniquely built into you as an adoptive parent that He would want to impart into your adoptive child?
22. What are the family baggage that your adoptive child may need to deal with as a result of being grafted into your family?

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Steve Jobs 60 Minutes Interview with Biographer Walter Isaacson

Steve, P. Jobs, founder of Apple Inc. : His personality: not warm and fuzzy... petulant, brilliant, could be mean to people – waitress, to programmers who coded all night. Why did you treat them so poorly ? “I really want to be around people who demand perfection”

A. Birth History

- Born out of wedlock, given up by birthparents (biological father’s age 23), adopted by working class couple
- Paul Jobs – adoptive father – taught him how to make great things . Fence: Got to make the back of the fence nobody will see just as good as the front of the fence – you will know.
- Playmate about adoption: Does that mean your real parents didn’t want you?
- Parents: We specifically picked you out. – SJ:“From then on, I realized I was not abandoned, I was chosen, special”

B. Growing Up

- SJ was gifted child tested off the charts.
- Early 70’s counter culture, rebel against authority. Hippie.
- Became friends with Wozniak in high school, created Blue Box to make illegal phone calls : with Woz as engineer, Steve as marketing, this was the beginning roots of Apple.
- College dropout (Reed College in Oregon)
- Worked at Atari making video games (one of first 50 employees)
- Goes to India for 7 month on spiritual pilgrimage – learned value of intuition and simplicity
- Found Apple computer in mother’s garage.
- At 25 years old – was worth 50 million dollars via Apple success

C. Blessings and Curses

- SJ fathered daughter Lisa (at age 23) and denied paternity – “Steve’s Reality Distortion Field”
- He could drive himself by magical thinking, believe something the rest of us couldn’t possibly believe. Some times it worked, sometimes it didn’t. At the core of this was the belief that he was special, chosen. The rules didn’t apply to him.
- Every day acts of rebellion – no license plate, parking in handicapped spots – disregard for establishment – led to some of his successes, seeing things products and applications others couldn’t imagine. (such as mouse and GUI interface)
- 1984 introduced Apple Macintosh – revolutionary product but didn’t go over well in sales at first.
- Jobs loved those arguments (with management team), but not everyone else did. Some of his top people began defecting from Apple. He was always upending things, throwing things into turmoil. Led to good products, but not a good management style.
- Got kicked out of his own company. He always had that feeling of abandonment. There was nothing worse than being abandoned by Apple.

D. Impact

- Steve Jobs was saved by Pixar Studios, purchased from Lucas for 5 million. (made him a billionaire when later sold to Disney)
- Returned to Apple 1997 – Revolutionized 7 industries: 1) Computers, 2) music players, 3) animation/movies, 4) cell phones, 5) tablet computing, 6) digital publishing, 7) retail sales
- Stood at the crossroads of technology and liberal arts (science and the humanities)
- iPhone unveiled - January 9, 2007 only company with end to end control of hardware and software. Something only a complete control freak could pull off.

E. Adult Identity (as an Adoptee)

- Normal house in Palo Alto “Did not want to live nutso lifestyle that happens when others get rich” Promise – I’m not going to let this money ruin my family.
- SJ biological daughter Lisa Brennan Jobs – neglected for more than a decade. She moved back in as a teenager. Family became very important for SJ
- 1986 – searched for his biological mother –
- Mona Simpson, biological sister – separated at birth, immediately bonded together
- Jobs decides not to meet biological father, learned things that he did not like about him, remains anonymous. Father used to run one of best restaurants in Silicon valley, remembers a good tipper, SJ. Steve never wanted to meet his father, even on deathbed.

F. Terminal Crisis

- 2004 Pancreatic cancer diagnosis. SJ tries to treat it on its own through diet, doesn’t get operation at first, “didn’t want body to be opened”, 9 months later finally agrees, but cancer has already spread.
- How does such a smart man do something so stupid?
- He believed magical thinking – if you ignore something you can have magical thinking and it doesn’t exist.
- 2008 – lost weight, looks frail at iPhone 3 introduction.
- Claimed hormonal imbalance, denied truth of cancer to himself, as well as others.
- Took medical leave, received liver transplant in 2009. Doctors could see cancer had spread.
- Last 2.5 years of life were his most productive. He also focused on his family.
- Saw life as an arc, it would end, and compared to that nothing mattered.
- Still held out hope there might be one last drug that could cure him in August.

G. Spirituality and God

- Sometimes I believe in God, sometimes I don’t. Sometimes I find myself believing it a little more. Maybe I want to believe in an afterlife, experience isn’t all lost. Sometimes, I think its just like an on/off switch, click.
- That’s why I don’t like putting on/off switches on Apple devices.

Adoption Study 5 - Steve Jobs' Life Case Study

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| | Adoption Story | Role in shaping History | Role Adoptive parents played in shaping Adoptee |
|---------------|---|--|--|
| Moses | Weaned by birthmother, raised by Pharaoh's daughter, exiled | Lead Israel out of bondage to Egyptians | Taught Moses leadership skills |
| Esther | Orphaned, raised by uncle | Becomes queen of Persia, boldness and humility prevent genocide | Taught obedience and humility. Gave perspective to life circumstance. |
| Samuel | Mother consecrated Samuel to Eli's care and upbringing | Chose/anointed the first two kings of Israel (Saul & David) | Eli taught Samuel how to listen to God's voice. / Curses of son's disobedience |
| Steve P. Jobs | | Created personal computing and revolutionized 7 different industries | |

Part A: Birth History

1. What were the circumstances around Steve Jobs' adoption as newborn?
2. What significant lesson for life did SJ learn from his adoptive father?
3. How did SJ and his parents respond to the first time SJ's adoption history was pointed out in public as an adolescent?

Part B: Growing Up

4. How did SJ's adoptive culture influence him?

Part C: Blessings and Curses

5. What happened to Steve Jobs at age 23 that reflected on his biological parents?
6. What was the source of SJ's "magical thinking"?
7. Was Steve Job's propensity for magical thinking a blessing or a curse?
8. What made Steve Jobs' exile from his own company, Apple, devastating?

Part D: Impact

9. Did SJ's second abandonment crush him, forever limiting his ability to thrive?
10. What 7 industries were disrupted, upended, and revolutionized by Steve Jobs?
11. How did SJ's adoption history shape his personality which set the stage for this level of impact in the world. (How were the wounds of a tragedy the root for some later successes?)

Part E: Adult Identity

12. What are some signs that SJ began to come to terms with his birth story as he matured?
13. What role did family (nuclear and biological) play in his twilight years?

Part F: Crisis

14. How did Steve Job's "magical thinking" lead to his death?

Part G: Spirituality

15. What were Steve Job's view on God?
16. Did he have any hope at the end of his life?

Discussion

17. Adoptive family's gift/blessing to Steve
 - A. From his adoptive father:
 - B. From his adoptive parents:
18. Curses
 - A. From biological father:
 - B. From adoptive parents:
19. What are the relative contributions to SJ's story (assign a percentage):
 - A. biological parents
 - B. adoptive culture
 - C. response to wounds
20. As adoptive parents, does this give you hope or pause?
21. How might SJ's story ended differently had he known and entrusted himself to God?
22. How might knowledge of this story help our adoptive children as they grow up?

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Adoption Bible Study – 6 : From David to Jesus

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Context: Up until now, Old Testament stories of adoption:

Moses – first leader of Israel

Esther – Hebrew girl turned Persian queen saves Hebrew from genocide

Samuel – Chose and anointed Israel's first King, creating the nation of Israel

(Steve Jobs Interlude/case study)

1. Who did Samuel anoint as Israel's first (and second) King?
2. What do we know (or did we learn) about David's life history prior to his anointing?
3. What is the life potential for the youngest of 8 siblings, a shepherd boy?

Part 1 - 2 Samuel 7:8-16 David's Kingship (What God tells the prophet Nathan to tell David)

4. What are the promises God makes to David?
5. Why is it significant that David's offspring will share in God's provision and favor?

Part 2: Psalm 2:2-9 The Coronation Psalm – note : “**Anointed One**” in Hebrew is “מָשִׁיחַ *māšiyah*” from which we get Messiah. The greek translation of this word is “**Χριστός**, Christos” from which we get Christ.

6. How does this Psalm describe the relationship between the King and God?
7. What does “today I have become your Father” [אֲבִי *yālad*] imply? (What are the two ways one can become someone's father?)
8. Based on the promises of part 1 and 2, what are the “blessings” of adoption into sonship?

Part 3: Acts 13:32-3 Paul proclaiming the Good News of Jesus the Messiah

9. How does Paul link Jesus to David and the Messiah/Anointed One?

Read Psalm 16:8-10

10. Why is Jesus the true culmination of the promise made to David?

Read Matthew 3: 16-17

11. Compare Jesus' “baptism” (Matthew 3:16-17) with the promises made to David's offspring in 2 Sam 7 (v14-15). What similarities do you see in these two passages?

Review

God adopts David as son/king, anoints him via Samuel, Spirit comes on him with power

God proclaims Jesus is His son (baptism by John with Spirit descending on Him like a dove)

Paul says that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promises made to David and forefathers.

Read Part 4: Matthew 1: 12-24 Jesus' adoption – the word for birth and genealogy are the same in Greek - $\gamma\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$, - "genesis".

12. According to the genealogy in Mathew, How is Jesus related back to King David?

13. How could this be true if Joseph was not Jesus' biological father? How was Jesus grafted into Joseph's lineage?

14. Do we have any indication as to whether Mary was Jesus' genetic mother? (what are the possible mechanisms that the Holy Spirit could have used to cause Mary to conceive?) –

If "b" was the case, then in some senses, Mary also was an adoptive mother, rather than genetic/biological mother of Jesus. At the very least, Jesus was adopted by Joseph into Joseph's family line.

15. If Jesus was indeed adopted into Mary and Joseph's household, what are the blessings of sonship he received from them?

16. Adoption appears to be the mechanism for the transference of identity. David's identity changed from shepherd boy to king, Jesus's identity changed from God of the universe to human. We tend to think / feel that those without a clear sense of their identity (orphans) are worse off than those who have a strong sense of who they are. Yet those it appears that God uses adoption to affect a significant change in the identities of the two most important people in the Bible. Was adoption plan "B" or a fallback plan in either of these cases?

Discussion

If God used the mechanism of adoption to bring David into his kingship/sonship, and Jesus into our world, could He be providing us precedence on how we are to enter his family?

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Adoption Bible Study 7 – NT Predestined Adoption – Ephesians

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| | Adoption Story | Role in shaping History | Adopting Parent(s) | Role parents played in shaping Adoptee |
|--------|--|---|--------------------|--|
| Moses | Weaned by birthmother, raised by Pharaoh's daughter, exiled | Lead Israel out of bondage to Egyptians (Exodus 2-3, 5, 33) | Pharaoh's Daughter | |
| Esther | Orphaned, raised by uncle | Becomes queen of Persia, boldness and humility prevent genocide (Esther) | Mordecai (Uncle) | |
| Samuel | Mother consecrated Samuel to Eli's care and upbringing | Chose/anointed the first two kings of Israel (Saul & David) | Eli (High Priest) | |
| David | Coronation of King = Adoption by God | Israel's most significant king, a man after God's own heart (2 Sam 7, Psalm 2) | God (YHWH) | |
| Jesus | Adopted by Joseph (and Mary), recognized as God's son at baptism | Jesus is the culmination/fulfillment of God's promises to David (Acts 13:32-35) | Joseph (& Mary) | |

(Adoption appears to be the mechanism for the transference of identity. David's identity changed from shepherd boy to king, Jesus's identity changed from God of the universe to human. We tend to think / feel that those without a clear sense of their identity (orphans) are worse off than those who have a strong sense of who they are. Yet those it appears that God uses adoption to affect a significant change in the identities of the two most important people in the Bible.

Key Question from last study: If God used the mechanism of adoption to bring David into his kingship/sonship, and Jesus into our world, could He be providing us precedence on how we are to enter his family?

1. How would you describe the circumstances that typically precede an adoption?
2. How often is adoption the original/ideal plan in building a family?

Read Part 1 - Ephesians 1:3-10

3. Who is adopting whom in this passage?

4. What are some of the words used to describe the intentionality of this adoption?
5. Why is it significant that this adoption was planned for even before we were made? (How does this differ from our normal/typical view of why adoptions come about?)
6. What is the mystery of God's will, the ultimate plan that this adoption serves to promote? (The meaning of life...)

Read Part 2 - Ephesians 1:11-23

7. What is the main benefit of being an adoptee described in this passage?
8. What is an inheritance? (Who is normally entitled to an inheritance?)
9. What qualifies us (the adoptee) to gain/receive this inheritance?
10. What is the nature of this inheritance as described by Paul?

Read Part 3 - Ephesians 2: 1-13

11. How does this passage describe our condition or family lineage (family association) and what was our inheritance before we were adopted into God's family?
12. How well do you identify yourself or recognize ownership of this lineage before following Christ?
13. Describe your own personal adoption experience in being adopted into God's family line.
14. What was the family lineage and inheritance that our adoptive children had before we adopted them?
15. What is the inheritance that our adoptive children are entitled to now that they are a part of our family? (there are two potential inheritances)

Read Part 4 : Ephesians 2:18-21

16. What is the mechanism by which all believers go from being strangers and aliens to becoming fellow citizens and members of the household of God?
17. What is our role as parents in helping our adoptive children progress through two adoptions? (adoption into our family line, and adoption into God's family)
18. Why does God choose adoptees throughout Biblical history to accomplish his most significant purposes? (Moses, Esther, Samuel, David, Jesus....)

Discussion:

19. To what degree will an adoptee's (our adoptive children) experience of adoption and being grafted into a new family give them a deeper understanding of being adopted into God's family?
20. If we as believers are all adoptees into God's family, how might this knowledge help us to relate with our adoptive children, or help them to relate to us?

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Adoption Bible Study 8 – Mechanism of Adoption : Galatians 3-4

by Enoch Kwok ©2012

We saw in the last lesson, which focused on Ephesians 1, that adoption is at the very core of the Gospel – that all believers are adopted into the family of God. Adoption is the method God uses in the Bible to transfer identity – we saw it with Moses, with David, and with Jesus. Therefore, every believer has an adoption story, a story of how their identity got transferred to a new family – God’s family. Our adoptive children will hopefully have two adoption stories.

In today’s lesson, we are going to dive a little deeper into the mechanism by which all believers are adopted into the family of God. It goes to the heart of how each person who follows Jesus finds or derives their identity.

Context for the Paul’s letter to the Galatians: (modern eastern Turkey)

Paul is writing to address a conflict between Jewish believers in Galatia and Gentile converts. The Jewish believers are insisting that the Gentiles adopt Jewish traditions based in Jewish law in order to prove their faith as “real” believers (circumcision). In a sense, they were saying, “real Christians circumcise”. In essence, Gentiles need to adopt Jewish practice in order to receive the promises God made to Abraham.

Part I. Read Galatians 3: 5-14. IDENTITY 1 – Sons of Abraham : Blessings vs. Curses

1. What is the “blessing of Abraham” that is at the core of the issue for the Galatians? (Gen. 12:3) Hint: there are 3 parts.
2. What is it called when one receives some benefit passed on from his ancestors? (recall this blessing described in Ephesians 1 from the last study.)
3. So the operative question is, “what makes someone a real ‘son’ of Abraham?” and eligible to receive the blessing of Abraham (his inheritance, or promises made to him)?
 - a. How would a traditional Jewish person (not converted to Christianity) answer that question?
 - b. How did the Jewish Christians in Galatia answer that question?
 - c. How does Paul say one becomes a son of Abraham?
4. Why did Paul focus on part 3 of the Abrahamic promise (blessing to the world) when speaking to the Galatians?
5. What word is repeated more than any other in this text? What does it mean to believe in Jesus (have faith in Jesus)?

English:

Greek: pisteuo
6. In contrast to Abraham’s blessing / promise, Paul describes a curse from the law. How is the law a curse?
7. What was the thing of greatest value to the Jews in Jesus’ day?
8. What are the things of great(est) value and concern in our lives and what does it look like for us to entrust them to Jesus? [have faith in Jesus?]
 - a. Issues of identity
 - b. Issues of security
 - c. Issues of relationship

- d. Issues of accumulation of things
- e. Issues of justice (vengeance or forgiveness)

Read Part II. Galatians 3:21-4:7. IDENTITY 2: From Slaves to Sons

9. What are the two ways we are “enslaved” according to Paul? (Hint: one way for Jews, one way for Gentiles)
 - i. For Jews...
 - ii. For Gentiles...
10. How does Paul describe the transformation from being enslaved (a slave) to being a son?
11. What do all newly adopted sons of God receive and what effect does this have on them?
12. What is the significance of being able to call God “Daddy”? How does this illuminate the type of relationship we are to have with God? (compare to one of a slave, or one with a judge)
13. In Paul’s scenario for the Galatians, how does one/everyone become an heir to the blessing/promise of Abraham? (in contrast to how the Jewish converts thought)

There are two pitfalls in identity that Paul addresses in today’s passage of his letter to Galatians:

- a. one receives their spiritual identity and rights (inheritance) through their ancestry
- b. one can earn prove their spiritual worthiness/identity by following the appropriate laws and traditions

Both pitfalls are addressed through the mechanism of faith [entrusting] being the mechanism by which anyone becomes a son of God and receives their identity and inheritance from Jesus.

Reflection and Discussion:

14. How do the two pitfalls relate to your own faith journey today?
 - a. To what degree are you riding on the coattails of your parent’s/your community’s faith tradition
 - b. What are the ways you would finish this statement, “Real Christians do ___xyz___” and therefore strive to complete ___xyz___” ... leading to either
 - i. relief or pride that you have accomplished ___xyz___
 - ii. or judgment against those who don’t complete ___xyz___
15. How do we help our children navigate the two pitfalls?
 - a. To what degree do your children ride on the coattails of your faith instead of learning to entrust themselves to Jesus?
 - b. To what degree are we training our children to equate obedience to certain rules and behaviors to sufficiency in their relationship to God?
 - c. How might we address our adoptive children’s sensitivity to identity issues and their adoption story with us to illustrate and reinforce their need to be re-adopted into God’s family by entrusting themselves to Jesus?

16. The sign that we have received “the adoption as sons” of God is that we are able to call God, “Daddy”. How evident is this sign in your own life, in the lives of your adopted children?
17. What items of value/significance do you (or your adoptive children) need to entrust to Jesus so that it will become easier to call God “Daddy”?

Secret: The degree of our entrusting valuable things to Jesus is proportional to the influence and transformation of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Paul’s emphasis on the promise of Abraham, the inheritance of being in God’s family is the third part of the promise: to be a blessing to the world.

18. In what ways are you (and your children) a blessing to the world? (The reason to receive God’s blessing is to transfer that blessing to the world around us – part 3 of God’s promise to Abraham.)

Next lesson is the last lesson and will focus on the implications of our new identity and inheritance in Christ.

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Adoption Bible Study – 9 Implications of Adoption: Romans 8

by Enoch Kwok ©2012

Read Part 1: Galatians 3:21 – 4:7 substitute “entrusting” for faith.

Remember,

- a. Everyone is a slave / captive
 - 1) Jews - a slave to Hebrew law
 - 2) Gentiles (and Jews) - a slave to elementary principles of the world
- b. Faith (entrusting) is how one goes from being a slave to being adopted as a son
- c. God sends his Spirit into the hearts of his sons (and daughters)/heirs which causes them to refer to Him as “Daddy” (instead of a judge)

Once we are heirs, we have full rights to the three fold promise first made to Abraham

- a. prosperity (“I will bless you”)
- b. justice (“I will curse those who dishonor you”)
- c. world impact (“I will make you a blessing to the world”)

In summary, ALL believers are adopted as sons and daughters of God, and receive His Spirit into their hearts which changes the dynamic of their relationship with God. (Daddy vs. Judge)

Read Part 2: Romans 8:9-13

1. Paul paints a picture of the tension between living in the flesh vs. living in the Spirit. What is the problem of being in the flesh?
2. What is the difference between someone “in the flesh” vs. someone “in the Spirit”? (How does one go from being in the former to being in the latter category?)
3. If we are debtors, but not to the flesh, then what are we a debtor to (what are we obligated to do)?
4. Is there any way to avoid going through a process of death? (compare living by flesh and living by spirit)
5. Then what is the operative mechanism that makes living by the spirit different in regards to death ?
6. We just celebrated Easter this past month. We remember and commemorate that Jesus himself chose to die. How is our choice in approaching death the similar to Jesus’? Is our entrusting to God any different than the entrusting that Jesus needed to do when he died on the cross? (Did Jesus need salvation from death in the same way we need salvation from death?)

Read Part 3 - Romans 8:14-17

7. How does this passage relate to the one in Galatians? How do we obtain this Spirit?
8. What does it mean that we are heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ? What are the full rights and benefits that we receive as heirs? Adoption = full rights of inheritance.
9. What is the condition attached to being a fellow heir with Christ (and by extension, being adopted by God)?

10. What do you think it means to suffer with Jesus? Why do you think this condition was made for being an heir with God and Christ?
11. Where else have we heard about "suffering with"?

Read Part 4 – Romans 8:18-25

12. Why do you think suffering-with leads to glorification?
13. Paul says that creation is waiting/longing for the revealing of the glory of the children of God. What do you suppose this would look like when that glory is revealed?
14. The whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth, but who else is groaning inwardly? What do we need to do as adopted children of God do to address this pain?
15. If we are found to be compassionate – "suffering with", how does that reflect God?
16. How is the glory of a son of God related to God's name for himself?

Did you know that Easter is defined according to the first full moon of Spring? There is a correlation between the full moon and Jesus' death and resurrection.

The moon's glory comes from the sun, it does not generate its own light, but is dependent on the light from the sun. The moon gives light to a dark world, while providing a glimpse of what is to come when the sun will soon be allowed to shine with the coming of dawn. We live in a world where everyone wants to be a star – giving off their own light, but Jesus shows us the way to glory is to be a reflector of God's glory. God's defining characteristic is that he is Compassionate. If we are to reflect God's glory, if we are to demonstrate the inherited quality of our parent, the most visible quality that we would exhibit would be His most visible quality, compassion.

Remember the three fold promise made to Abraham?

- a. prosperity ("I will bless you")
- b. justice ("I will curse those who dishonor you")
- c. world impact ("I will make you a blessing to the world")

The first two promises are fully taken care of by God. Only the third blessing involves us, and it defines our impact on the world.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion:

17. What are the groanings of creation that are around us?
18. Who can we demonstrate compassion to - to suffer along side with? Who needs our "moon light" reflection of God's compassionate glory
19. If by adoption we are to inherit God's greatest quality (that of compassion), how do we pass that on to our children who will hopefully get a double portion of that inheritance (once through being adopted into our family, and again through being adopted into God's family)?

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