

PROTOTYPE

"MODEL FATHER" GALATIANS 3:26-4:7

This Week's Core Competency

Identity in Christ – I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God. John 1:12, *Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.*

ould act so rudely. If he did, the entire village would know about it by morning!

The presence of a father in the life of a child is often severely underestimated. Richard A. Lewis, Program Manager for the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse states, "Today, father absence is among the most pervasive social problems challenging American families. An estimated 24 million children (34 percent) live absent their biological father and these youth are more likely to be poor, use drugs, and experience educational, health, emotional and behavioral problems."

So severe is the problem of missing fathers in the US, President Obama has developed the President's Fatherhood Pledge and provided extensive funding of "responsible fatherhood grants" in an effort "to encourage fathers, to be involved in the lives of their children, and to be positive role models and mentors for the children in their lives and

'Father' is the Christian name for God. Our understanding of Christianity cannot be better than our grasp of adoption.

– J. I. Packer

communities." (www.fatherhood.gov/pledge)

Children are at severe risk without the presence of a father. Christians are at significant risk when ignoring or misunderstanding the presence of their Heavenly Father. God as our Father is not just another meaningless title ascribed to a God who we cannot see. God as our Father may be the most important understanding we have of the Divine. J. I. Packer, in his classic work *Knowing God*, writes, "You sum up the whole of New Testament religion if you describe it as the knowledge of God as one's holy Father. If you want to judge how well a person understands Christianity, find out how much he makes of the thought of being God's child, and having God as his Father. If this is not the thought that prompts and controls his worship and prayers and his whole outlook on life, it means that he does not understand Christianity very well at all."

Our significance has more to do with whose we are than who we are.

For Discussion

Joe did not have an easy time growing up. His father was abusive to his mother and left home when Joe was five years old. Joe lost touch with his dad a few years later. Joe had a series of step-fathers, but none were involved much in his life. When Joe prays, he has a hard time calling God "Father." Joe's experiential understanding of "father" is sour. How would you encourage Joe to pursue God as "Father" when fatherhood has been a negative experience for him?

day 1

ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

Gal 3:26-4:7

26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

1 What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he owns the whole estate. 2 He is subject to guardians and trustees until the time set by his father. 3 So also, when we were children, we were in slavery under the basic principles of the world. 4 But when the time had fully

come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. 6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

REFLECT – note your initial thoughts and impressions.

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- *Circle the word "son" throughout the passage
- *Box the word "slave" throughout the passage
- *Underline the most repeated name for God in verses 26-29
- *Draw a line between the words that are similar that end vs 29 and 4:7
- *Double underline the words in 4:1-3 that are similar but different from the word "son."

- *Circle the words indicating comparison in 4:3 and 4:7
- *Box the word showing what God sent in 4:4 and 4:6
- *Number the things God's Son did in 4:4-6

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. How do you become a son of God?
2. According to verses 27 and 28 what are the results of becoming a child of God?
3. What other things are equated with being a child of God in verse 29?
4. How is "child" in 4:1 different from "son" found in 3:26?
5. When is the child no longer a subject?
6. As "children" what ruled over us?
7. When the time had fully come, what did God do?
8. What role was God playing when He did these things?
9. What is included in the "full rights of sons?"
10. **Discussion:** Talk about the significance there is to what God also made you (4:7)?

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

Old ways are hard to overcome. When your ancestors, your culture, your institutions and even your own world view inform your thoughts and actions, it is difficult and may even seem impossible to break free. New thoughts, new habits and a new outlook are not as easy as might be imagined.

As the Apostle Paul promoted the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Jewish and Gentile world of his day, he had much to overcome. From the Jewish sector he had ages of tradition and law-keeping battling for the heart and devotion of followers of God. For many in Judaism, following the law was more important than following God. New Galatian believers in Jesus were being pulled by others back into legalism, the mindset that keeping the Old Testament Law was essential for keeping faith in Jesus.

From the Gentile sector, Paul faced the powers of temple instituted idolatry and culturally instituted debauchery. To be a Greek or a Roman was to worship many gods through rituals of drunkenness and immorality. New followers of Jesus would often struggle with the dangerous entanglements of the culture around them that sought to pull them away from faith in Jesus with the worship of false gods through immoral practices.

In ministry to the Galatians, Paul argued that there is something far superior to rigid law-keeping and something far more compelling than sensual carnival. The extremes of law and license are trumped by love. Paul's solution for the evils of legalism and licentiousness is the love of God the Father. This love is demonstrated through the redeeming gift of His Son, Jesus. This love is completed through the presence of the Spirit of God, sent into our hearts teaching us to cry out "Abba, Father." The fullness of God, in all three persons, wants us to know and experience the fullness of being made His child.

Being made a child or "son" of God is so much more than just getting a new nametag or a new license plate. Galatians 3:26-4:7 outlines many of the benefits of becoming a child of God. First, becoming a child of God means that we have a new position. We are now "clothed" in Christ. This references the custom of sons becoming of age and fully representative of family wealth and prestige. To wear the family "clothes" is to put on the

authority of the father (Gal. 3:26-27).

As a child of God, we also gain freedom from the condemnations of society. Each of the couplets of Galatians 3:28 are contrasts of greater verses lesser. A child of God is not to feel intimidated in his or her station in life. As a child of God, our spiritual station as child of God is grander than our current social designation. Neither is a person of faith to use his social standing as a position of privilege as an excuse to abuse others or exclude himself from others (Gal. 2:11-21).

Being a child of God also means belonging to Him and becoming part of His ancient promise (Gal. 3:29). As a child of God I am an heir. This means I am part of the inside track. I have value and meaning. God wants to give to me and wants me to enjoy his goodness. As a child of God, this all comes through simple faith. Keeping laws and performing rituals are not required.

Being a child of God most importantly means that we have rights or privileges. I can try all I want, but I will never have the right to claim any wealth from a Rothschild or a Vanderbilt. I am not part of these wealthy families. But God has worked in history to provide a legal and loving way to purchase me away from whatever slavery I was in to make me a member of His family with full rights as a son (Gal. 4:5). The phrase "full rights as sons" is translated "adoption of sons" in many translations. Becoming God's child means that we have been adopted, whether Jew or Gentile, into the full rights and privileges of the family of God. All of this through faith, not ritual or tradition.

J. I. Packer comments on the immense privilege of being adopted by God stating that adoption "is the highest privilege that the gospel offers: higher even than justification...Adoption is a family idea, conceived in the terms of love and viewing God as father. In adoption, God takes us into His family and fellowship and establishes us as His children and His heirs. Closeness, affection, and generosity are at the heart of this relationship. To be right with God the judge is a great thing, but to be loved and cared for by God the Father is a greater" (*Knowing God*, 186-188).

When we become a child of God, our Father is so full of love, that He fills our heart with His Spirit

and helps us to cry out to Him with full admiration and emotion (Gal. 4:6). When a child is in need, he or she rarely is shy to make his or her needs known. Crying out "Abba Father" is an idea full of emotion, passion and power. God as our Father is something visceral and tangible something that touches our emotions.

Finally, becoming a child of God means my world is not the same. I am free. I am liberated. I no longer have to live in fear, domination or drudgery (Gal. 4:1-3). "You are no longer a slave (Gal. 4:7)." You are not stuck with your lot in life. God wants to free you from anything that is controlling your life and keeping you from joy

lived with Him. No longer a slave, but an heir. No longer one who can be bought and sold. No need for fear of want or abandonment ever again.

The battle against the old habits of legalism and licentiousness is not won with more legalism or license. Victory is found in vibrant, active "sonship." Living and praying as a fully adopted child of God makes legalism seem so petty and worldliness seem so cheap.

If God is truly our Father, through the redemption of His Son and the fullness of His Spirit in our hearts, why are we prone to mope around like orphans and captives?

The Message of the Passage

Through faith in Jesus, God is your Father; He has made you fully His child. Stop living like a slave to law or lawlessness. Cry out to Him as your loving Provider. Trust that He will be the Father He claims to be.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

notes STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 26 **sons of God** The focus of this passage is to show the superiority of being a child of God through the redemption of Jesus compared to being a follower the law, trying to earn or maintain a level of righteousness that we think might impress God.
- v.27 **clothed** "In the Roman society when a youth came of age he was given a special toga which admitted him to the full rights of the family and state and indicated he was a grown-up son. So the Galatian believers had laid aside the old garments of the Law and had put on Christ's robe of righteousness which grants full acceptance before God. Who would want to don again the old clothing?" (*Bible Knowledge Commentary, Galatians 3*)
- v.28 **Jew nor Greek** "Just why these three couplets, and not others, were incorporated into the confession of early Christians is impossible to say. Perhaps their inclusion was a conscious attempt to counter the three *berakat* ("blessings," "benedictions") that appear at the beginning of the Jewish cycle of morning prayers: 'Blessed be He [God] that He did not make me a Gentile; blessed be He that He did not make me a boor [i.e., an ignorant peasant or a slave]; blessed be He that He did not make me a woman' (Richard Longnecker, *Word Bible Commentary: Galatians*, 157)
- v.1 **child** "In Paul [child] usually signifies immaturity in the Christian life (cf. 1 Cor 3:1; 13:11; Eph 4:14; I Thess 2:7; see also Heb 5:13). Here, however, Paul uses [child] literally to mean an infant or minor (cf. Rom 2:20)." (162)
- v.2 **subject** "Minors were required to be under legal 'guardians' even if their father was deceased; this guardian was normally chosen from the father's will, or, if this were unspecified, the role fell to the nearest male relative from the father's side of the family. The 'managers' (NASB) or 'trustees' (NIV, NRSV) or 'stewards' of estates were often slaves or freedmen but wielded considerable power. (*IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* by Craig S. Keener)
- v. 3 **basic principles** Simply "the ABCs or basic elements of living." Jews were 'slaves' to the law in that they were judged by the law. So the law, while it did not make people righteous, served (1) a condemnatory function as the revelatory standard of God, thereby bringing about an intelligent and realistic act of repentance, and (2) a custodial function as a religious system instituted by God until Christ should come, thereby supervising the lives of God's people as they responded by faith to divine mercy." (Longnecker, 177). Basic principles for Gentiles could also include the rituals and rites of pagan religion.
- v. 4 **born** Shows the humanity ("born of a woman") and the Jewish background ("born under the law") of the Son who was sent by God. As a man, "born of a woman" he could redeem all men. As a Jew, he could release all those under the "guardians" (4:2) of the law. This dual mission of Jesus to the Jews and Gentiles saturates this passage as well as the book of Galatians (2:14-21;3:14, 26-29, 6:12-16).
- v. 5 **redeem** See Galatians 3:13 for a clear description of what Christ did to redeem us.
- v. 5 **full rights** Simple meaning - "the adoption." God is our Father through the work of Jesus, paying for our adoption, giving us full rights as sons of God. "In Paul's day it [adoption] played an increasingly important part in Roman life; for example, from the late first century to the mid-second century AD and beyond successive Roman emperors adopted men not related to them by blood with the intention that they should succeed them in the principate . . . Once adopted into the new family, the son was in all legal respects on a level with those born into that family." (F .F. Bruce, *Epistle to Galatians*, 179)
- v. 6 **Abba, Father** "Abba"- Aramaic word for Father. "Pater," the Greek equivalent. "So far as can be ascertained, Jesus was unique in applying this designation to God—not the "abinu" ('our Father') of synagogue prayers nor yet the more personal "abi" ('my Father'), but the domestic term by which a father was called in the affectionate intimacy of the family circle" (Bruce, 199). The presence of both a Aramaic/Hebrew word along with the Greek translation fo this word also hints at the Jewish/Gentile scope of the completeness of God's adoption and its evidence by the Spirit of God.
- v. 7 **heir** (also 3:29) Here we observe the distinctively Greek touch that the term 'heir,' used by Paul, is almost convertible with 'son.' The same term is often used in the inscriptions of Asia Minor and elsewhere in precisely the same way as here to indicate 'a son after he has succeeded to the inheritance' as the representative of his father, undertaking all the duties and obligations of his father." (William M. Ramsay, *Galatians*, 391)

Family Time

Family time will help you take a break from your busy schedule and spend time connecting with your family.
Tips for your Family Time: Keep it simple! Be flexible! Do it often! HAVE FUN!!

Prep: Gather family photo albums or organize your pictures on the computer. Include any old pictures from grandparents if you have them. Have a camera on hand.

This week's Family Time will be a walk down memory lane. Plan a "build your own pizza or sub sandwich" meal and gather the family to look through your family pictures. Kids of all ages enjoy seeing pictures of their parents when they were younger or baby pictures of themselves. Use this time to talk about things that make your family special. Don't worry if your family looks different than others. Celebrate the family God has given you. Remind kids that God created families and wants us to be a part of His family. He is our heavenly Father and wants a growing relationship with us. Finish by creating some new pictures for your album. Take serious and silly photos! Be creative! Let your kids take some pictures of you! Have fun!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Galatians 3:26-4:7
 *What does a person become through faith when he asks Jesus into his heart?
 *What was God's purpose for sending Jesus to the world?
 *Where does the Holy Spirit live if you are a child of God?
 *What does Holy Spirit call God?

What Do You Think

*Why do think it's better to be God's child than His slave?
 *What are some rights (special privileges) you receive as God's child?
 *Why do you think it's good to be able to call God your Father?

What R U Going To Do

The word "Abba" is a special word that really means "daddy." As you pray this week, try ending your prayer by saying to God, "I love you daddy!"

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Identity in Christ—I believe I am special because I am a child of God.

Memory Verse

Matthew 6:10 "Your kingdom come your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.
 Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.