



Southwest Indian Ministries Camps

Teen Devotional

February 2023

When God's Kingdom intersects with a lost world, spiritual orphans find family.

Answer the questions and return to SIMCamps | 14202 N 73rd Ave. | Peoria, AZ 85381. Please print legibly.

First and Last Name: _____

Age: _____

E-mail Address: _____

Text Number: _____

What is your favorite thing about your family? Why?

WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT

When Jesus calls God "Abba," the religious leaders within earshot freaked out. It sounded like blasphemy! The word "Abba" indicates an intimate and close relationship between a father and his child. It's the kind of word you would hear a lonely child use to cry out for his or her dad or whisper in dad's ear while asking for permission to eat more dessert. This gave the religious leaders fits for a couple reasons. First, they thought it ridiculous that God would have children. Second, they couldn't fathom being that close with God. With this one word, Jesus shows that the religious leaders were wrong on both of those points! Jesus uses the word "Abba" to show that he is, in fact, the only son of God and that God is a loving father.



Decades after Jesus' ministry, Paul was writing letters to encourage and teach the churches throughout the Roman Empire. These letters are intended for Gentile believers who are still trying to grasp the fact that they are now able to be God's people, thanks to the death and resurrection of Jesus. In two of these letters (Romans and Galatians), Paul tells Gentile believers that they can call God "Abba!"

Think through the ramifications of that. If Jesus called God "Abba" and modeled praying to Abba for the Jews and if Paul says the Gentiles can also call him "Abba," what does that mean? It means that all believers are brothers and sisters with Jesus and with each other—one great big, happy family. How is that possible? Adoption. Does that seem too good to be true? Take a look and see for yourself.

Read Romans 8:1–17.**Life Through the Spirit**

8 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. ¹¹ And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.

¹² Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. ¹³ For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, “*Abba*, Father.” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Notes:

When Paul writes that we all become sons and heirs together with Christ, he isn't forgetting to include women, nor is he writing them off as insignificant. Paul's audience was in a very traditional culture, and in that culture, the son received everything: the most food, the whole inheritance, the most favor and attention, and so on. The firstborn son was doted upon because if he survived, the family lineage survived. So when Paul says that we all become heirs and sons, he's not being ignorant; he is showing us just how much God prizes us! We, like the firstborn son, receive the whole inheritance of heaven and all the blessings of being a beloved and treasured child.

An Adoption Story

Karen was six years old when she got a little brother. He was three, didn't speak English, and was scared. Karen's family adopted him from an orphanage on an island in the Pacific Ocean. They didn't look alike, and at first, they didn't sound alike. But over time, they became like any other siblings. They were the first to pick on each other and annoy each other, but they refused to allow anyone else to pick on the other one. They fought with each other and defended each other. Adoption made them siblings through and through.

Since Karen was old enough to remember her brother's whole adoption process, it deeply impacted her. As an adult, she began to foster kids who came to the United States as refugees without their parents.

One of those foster kids learned the language and customs of America quickly. It bothered him that his last name was different than Karen's, even though he called her "Mom." They began to talk about adoption and all that it meant. Because of the care and love Karen had shown this boy from the time of his arrival, he didn't see anything about how their relationship would change other than he would have the same name as her. In reality, he was right. There would be legal differences, but the relationship had already been established.

Eventually, Karen was able to navigate the paperwork required to adopt this little boy. Because he has a new last name, he knows that without a doubt he is part of the family. He's from a completely different continent than his mom, but they will always share a last name and a family thanks to adoption.

Questions:

- Why does adoption exist?

- What are the differences between being born into a family and being adopted into a family?

- In order for us to realize how great it is to be adopted into God's family, we have to first realize that we are spiritual orphans without God.
 - How does it feel to think of yourself as a spiritual orphan?

 - What does being adopted into God's family say about us? About him?

THE TAKEAWAY

By adopting us into his family, God has become our heavenly dad, making us all siblings.

Have you "inherited" something from a family member? It could be a physical trait (hair color, height) or a behavior (favorite hobby, a mannerism, detested food).

Paul used the concept of laws and human inheritance to emphasize that Christ has saved us by fulfilling the requirements of God's law, set us free to live by the Spirit, and allowed us to be adopted into God's family. We are now co-heirs with Christ, and we share the same concerns and joys as other believers.

Read Romans 8:1–17, then answer the following questions.

Questions:

- This passage tells us a lot about the Holy Spirit. What does the Spirit tell us about our relationship to God?
- Based on what you know about adoption, what does our adoption into God's family communicate about God's relationship to us?
- How have you been impacted by adoption in your life?
- What does it mean to be co-heirs with Christ?

APPLY IT

When we realize that God is truly our Father, it changes our prayer lives dramatically. Make a plan to spend additional time in prayer this week—for example, ten minutes a day—and talk to God like a son or daughter would. Tell him all about your day, thank him for his love, or ask him to help you think of other Christ-followers as brothers and sisters in the faith.

A QUOTE TO THINK ABOUT

"If anybody understands God's ardor for his children, it's someone who has rescued an orphan from despair, for that is what God has done for us. God has adopted you. God sought you, found you, signed the papers and took you home." – Max Lucado

