

All in the Family

Romans 8:14-15

Let's play a little game called, "name that Anderson." Some of you are getting to know our boys - this will test how well you know us! As a quick disclaimer, sometimes when we go back through old pictures we have to really look and ask - which one is that? **[Name that Anderson PPT]**

Ok, that was fun! Here's the point - ***in a family, there is a genetic resemblance.*** We look like our parents and our kids look like us. All of us who have kids know that resemblance runs much deeper than the shape of your nose or the color of your hair. **Our kids become like us** - for better and for worse.

Kristin is very structured and loves to put things in order, to plan things out - so our boys tend to like order and planning. I am a little bit into Star Wars and Lord of the Rings - the boys have picked up on that. They don't speak Elvish yet, but we are working on it.

I used to say, "Because of my dad I'm a blame shifter." It's a funny line. But do you know when I stopped using it? When my boys started saying it. And they didn't mean grandpa. They meant me. It's not as funny now.

The truth for me is - **because of my dad**, I am generous. Because of my dad, I love talking with people. Because of my dad, I know a lot of things. Because of my dad, I had a stable, positive childhood and every opportunity in this life. Because of my dad, I am who I am.

Because of him (and Mom) I know Jesus, I grew up in church, I was able to attend Bible camp and a great Christian university where I met this amazing Christian girl... ***All because of my dad.***

Did I pick up a few of his foibles? Sure. But mostly I learned from him and have been trying for 42 years to be kind and strong and brave and servant-hearted, hospitable and generous like my dad.

How are you like your parents? What resemblances have been passed on to you - physically, spiritually, emotionally, socially?

Now - here is the big question - **how are you like your Father in heaven?** What family resemblances has He passed on to you? What have you learned from Papa and experienced from Papa that you try to live out and pass on?

Listen again to Romans 8:14-15.

If you are a child of God, you are becoming more and more like Him.

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’” Romans 8:14-15

Our lesson today is very simple - **if you are a child of God, you are becoming more and more like your Papa.**

Notice I didn’t say “you will become” but “you ARE becoming” more like your Father. In the future you will be fully like Him. At the moment you die or Jesus comes back the Christian believer will be GLORIFIED - transformed completely into the image of Christ, the mortal clothed with immortality. Until that time, we are becoming, we are growing more and more like our heavenly Papa.

Let’s look at three characteristics of a child of God. A son or daughter of God is obedient, confident and affectionate.

Verse 14 shows us that children of God are obedient. **We act like our Papa.**

Children of God are:

1. **Obedient** - we act like our Papa

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” Romans 8:14

As we’ve seen over and over in this series (and the Momentum Bible Study), the obedience of walking with the Spirit of God is not how you become a Christian, it is ***what proves that you ARE a Christian.*** “The law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.” There is a new law at work in your heart and life - not because you did anything but because “God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do, by sending his own son.”

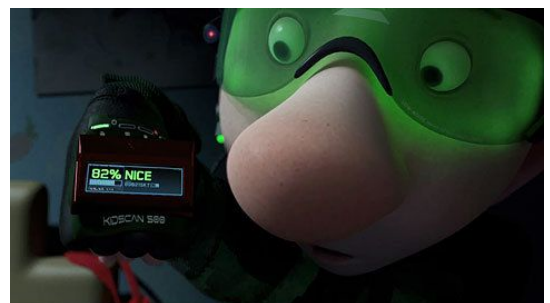
Our obedience does not earn God’s acceptance. **There isn’t some line on the “Goodness meter” like in Arthur Christmas [ELF scanner IMAGES],**



that you reach and then God says, “Ok, now you are my child. Now you deserve my love.” No. Our obedience does not earn God’s acceptance. Jesus’ obedience is what earns God’s acceptance of us. You and I could never have done enough to work

our way to heaven. Only Jesus lived the perfect life required to be with God forever.

And it is ***His perfection***, applied to your account, that brought you into the family of God at the moment you put your faith in Him. But once you were adopted into God’s



family, once the Holy Spirit took up residence in your heart, you began to change; ***you started becoming more like your heavenly Father.*** “All who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.”

It does not say, “You better be led by the Spirit of God and then you’ll become sons of God.” It says, “This is what a child of God looks like - she obeys her Papa. She acts like her Father in heaven.”

In Momentum’s session 6 we learned the blessing for those who are merciful. “The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” The more we know Him and the more we experience His grace and mercy to us the more we will extend that love and forgiveness to others. “Forgiven people are forgiving people.”

Children of God are:

1. **Obedient** - we act like our Papa

“The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.” Psalm 145:8

“You’re never more like God than when you forgive.” John Macarthur

John Macarthur has said, “You’re never more like God than when you forgive.” This is how God relates to us - so it is how we should relate to one another. If someone asks about your earthly parents, “What is your dad like?” You might have a variety of answers. Oh, my dad - he’s super talkative and real into politics and computers. If someone asks what your heavenly Father is like what would you say?

“Oh, let me tell you about my Father in heaven. He is so merciful and patient - so gracious and understanding. I was a mess when He adopted me. But He forgave me and paid for all of my mistakes. He treats me just like all of his other children - He is the best Dad ever. He is always there - always available to listen. And He helps me with everything. My Papa is amazing.”

Are you like your heavenly Father? Are you quick to forgive, or are you faster to judge?

I’m not being flippant here. I know there is a price to pay for forgiveness. Consider these four promises:

The Four Promises of Forgiveness

1. ***“I will not dwell on this incident.”***
2. ***“I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you.”***
3. ***“I will not talk to others about this incident.”***
4. ***“I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.”***
(From *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande)

God has no ability to forget. Being omniscient has its downside. God cannot forget an offense against Him but He can and does choose to forgive. Psalm 103:12 is one of the most comforting verses in

Scripture: ***"As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us."*** Psalm 103:12

This does not say that God FORGETS our sins, it says that He removes them from us. The only way He is able to do this is by applying our sins to His own Son. Sins are removed from the believer and nailed to the cross. We no longer live under the threat of condemnation, with our sins weighing on our shoulders and God's wrath hanging over us - because all of the wrath for all of our sins, the full price of our condemnation has already fallen on Jesus on the cross.

That is how God was able to make these promises to everyone who calls on Jesus in faith: I will not dwell on these sins anymore. I will not bring them up ever again or use them against you. I will not talk with others about these things. And I will not let these sins stand between us or hinder our relationship. That is powerful and wonderful gospel truth! That is how our Father has loved us.

Now think about someone you need to forgive. Is there a price to pay? Of course. The more severe the harm the higher the price. But Jesus gave up his very life for you! The Father gave up His only Son for you! He made those four promises to you and will keep them for all of this life and all of forever. Draw on that gospel truth to move you to be like your Papa. Follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. That's what children of God do. We obey. We act like our Father. We forgive. We are merciful.

Second, children of God are confident. We trust our Papa.

Children of God are:

1. Obedient - we act like our Papa
2. **Confident** - we trust our Papa

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" Romans 8:14-15

Some people think of God as a harsh and even cruel tyrant - a slave driver who demands strict obedience to an impossible standard. That is the spirit of slavery and it leads inevitably to fear. That is not a relationship of trust and love but a relationship of fear and power and submission. That is Islam. Fear is actually embedded in every religion except Christianity.

Think about it: every other religion is based on what you have to DO to earn God's favor or entrance into paradise or nirvana. It's all about YOU and your work, your discipline, your effort.

We had neighbors in Chicago who are Hare Krisnas. I didn't know that branch of Hinduism still existed - I thought they were only in airports in old '80s movies. But there they were right next door to us. We invited them over for dinner but they couldn't come to our place because they have strict dietary rules they have to follow.

First of all, as with all Hindus, you can't eat meat. But the bigger principle with your food is that before you eat anything, you have to offer part of your meal at your Krishna shrine. You literally have to place some of the food in front of your little Krishna statue, say a prayer and leave it there. The statue doesn't eat it, of course. (You have to clean it up later.) But Krishna doesn't want you to eat until you have first presented some of your food to him in worship.

But there's more tied up in the ***Hindu concepts of Karma and Dharma***. Our friends HAD TO spend 3 hours every day praying through their Krishna beads - saying over and over again the same sentence in worship of Krishna. I'm not going to say the words because they are blasphemy, proclaiming Krishna as Lord.

There were lots of other rules - and our neighbors felt that if they didn't stick to their daily prayers and their weekly 8 hour worship service and their other duties and rituals then bad things would happen to them. **Karma is based on fear.** If you don't do the right things or enough of them, then bad things will start happening to you.

That is not how we know our Father in heaven. We have not "received the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear."

But that is exactly how it is for so many Christians. They live in fear. They see God as a harsh dictator hovering over them with His finger pointed down, just waiting for them to step out of line so He can squash them with His power. And if anything bad happens they automatically conclude that they must have failed in some way. That is Karma, not Christianity. That is the spirit of fear from which we have been delivered by Jesus.

I already told you that I am who I am because of my dad and mom. They are wonderful parents who raised me in a good Bible-teaching, Gospel-preaching Evangelical Free Church. I asked Jesus into my heart at a very young age and, no doubt, heard the gospel over and over again in church, Sunday School and our weekly Awana club. But there was a cloud that hung over parts of my childhood - ***a dark shadow of fear that loomed over me and sometimes made me cower in fear.***

I knew God was holy and righteous. And as I grew up I knew more and more that I was not holy or righteous. So my primary feelings toward God were guilt and fear. Finally I went to my youth leader, spilled my guts to him, sharing my struggles, temptations and sins. I seriously thought I might be the first 12 year old to be excommunicated from the church.

Instead, Andy - one of the heroes of my faith and a Moody student at the time - took me out to Arby's and bought me a Jamocha shake. Instead of excommunication I was given a Jamocha shake! Andy spent the next several weeks meeting with me and talking with me about God. I later learned that what he was doing was helping me understand and believe the gospel.

I can still picture the cartoon drawing in the Navigator booklet we were using - a distressed teenager next to a car that was wrecked, wrapped around a telephone pole. Andy asked me: "If you wrecked your Dad's new Ford Mustang, would he be made at you?" I nervously nodded my head vigorously. "But would he still be your dad?"

The light started to come on for me. I knew dad would be upset about something like that - especially his shiny new Mustang. But I also knew that NOTHING could change my relationship with my dad. He was always there. He was Dad. I knew I could trust my earthly dad to be there for me no matter what. Why wouldn't I trust my heavenly dad in the same way?

Through that insight, trust began to drive out fear in my heart. That's how it is for the child of God. We trust our Papa. We know that He is a loving Father, not a harsh slave driver. We know that we are in a permanent, eternal relationship with Him - and nothing can ever change that.

The difference between Christianity and every other religion: Assurance.

Your relationship with God is not based on Karma - on your performance or efforts. Your relationship with God is based on the blood of Jesus - His performance. That's why you are secure in Christ.

You know the one word that separates Christians from people of all other religions? **ASSURANCE**. No one else but Christians can ever know for sure about their eternal destiny. No one else. Because every other religion is based on what you DO. They are based on the efforts of their followers. So you can never be totally sure you've done enough. Apart from Jesus, you can never have assurance. There will always be doubt. There will always be fear.

But not with Jesus. In Him there is no condemnation. Perfect love drives out fear. And the love of Jesus is the only perfect love! And that's our final characteristic of the child of God - affection. We love our Papa because He first loved us.

Children of God are:

1. Obedient - we act like our Papa
2. Confident - we trust our Papa
3. **Affectionate** - we love our Papa

"For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" Romans 8:15

The Holy Spirit is not the Holy Spirit of fear and judgment and condemnation. He is the Spirit of love, acceptance, grace and ADOPTION. By the Spirit we are enabled to cry out to God, "Abba! Father!"

That is the language of personal, direct access and intimate family relationship. It was practically unheard of in Judaism. In Jewish practice in Jesus' day, the name of God - Yahweh - was held in such reverence that the scribes and rabbis would not pronounce it out loud but instead would substitute the more general term for Lord, "Adonai."

And **the whole Temple system [Temple Image]** was in place to keep people at a distance from the holy presence of God. It would have been unthinkable for the average Jewish man or woman - much less a child - to stroll up to the temple and knock on the giant, gold-plated door, requesting access to the most holy place for a chat with the Lord. Unimaginable. People had died for less impudent actions.

You can see how the Temple area was set up - not just with lines you couldn't cross, but with huge walls and gates and signs threatening death if you went where you weren't supposed to go. Here is what one such sign said:

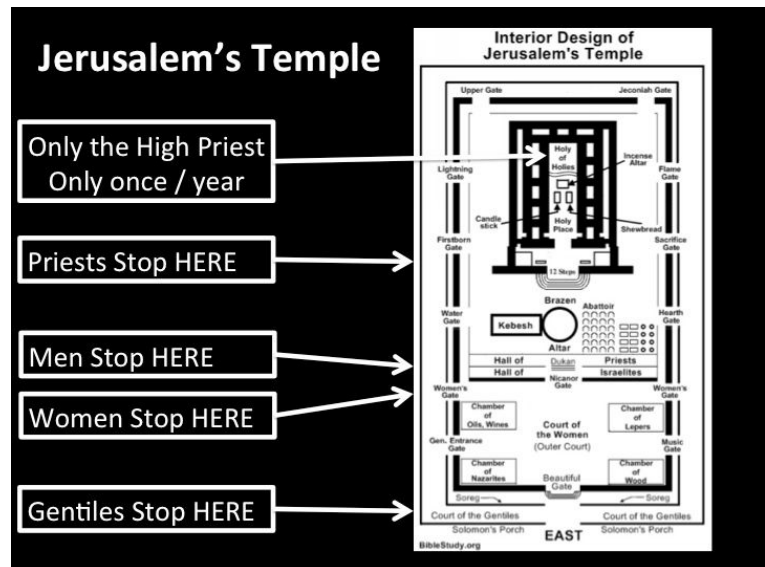
**NO FOREIGNER
IS TO GO BEYOND THE BALUSTRADE
AND THE PLAZA OF THE TEMPLE ZONE
WHOEVER IS CAUGHT DOING SO
WILL HAVE HIMSELF TO BLAME
FOR HIS DEATH
WHICH WILL FOLLOW**

<http://www.bible-history.com/archaeology/israel/temple-warning.html>

This is not the language of family and affection - but the language of exclusion. That was the climate in which Jesus said, ***"Didn't you know I had to be in my father's house?"*** (Luke 2:49). He was just a young boy when he went to the temple courts and asked questions of the rabbis and scholars there. Jesus knew His Father in heaven in a way no one else did. That is what he came to teach about.

Jesus came to replace the exclusion of the Law with the affection of the Spirit. He came to open the door into the most holy place of the temple.

In order to accomplish this, a sacrifice had to be offered. And unlike all the other sacrifices the Jews had offered since Abraham and Moses, there was no need for another sacrifice after Jesus. He gave up his life as the once for all sacrifice to make a perfect and eternal atonement for us. And so he



became the doorway to the most holy place, giving us access to the Father - not as slaves but as children.

We have not been given the spirit of slavery, but the spirit of adoption. We are sons and daughters of God. And we are free to cry out to him - Daddy, help us! We are free to go to him any time of the day.

If you or I tried to call the white house and **get through to President Trump**, there is no way we would reach him. Only a small handful of his closest friends and advisors have ready access to the president. Everyone else is kept at a distance by well armed and well trained security personnel.

But there is one eleven year old who can get through to the President any time, day or night. His name is Barron and he is Donald and Melania's son. **[Picture of the Trump family.]**



Barron has a direct access that you and I do not have. The reason he does is that he is in the family and we are not.

But with God, you and I have been adopted into the family. We are sons and daughters of the King - and because of that relationship ***we DO have direct and open access to the Lord Himself.***

So as God's children, we cry out to Him, "Abba! Father!" We call to Him, asking for help. We come to Him for comfort and strength. We sit with Him, simply to be in His presence, because He is Papa. Kids don't need an excuse to be with their Dad - they just are. In a healthy family in which Dad is present and loving toward His kids the natural response is for the kids to be affectionate and loving toward Dad.

God could not be more perfectly loving toward us - so the natural response for us as His children is to spend time with Him; to enjoy Him; to be with Him; to talk with Him.

How crazy would it be for an adopted child of God with direct access to the Father to NOT spend time in prayer? We have this crazy cat's in the cradle thing that we get so busy running around that God says, "When you comin' home?" We say, "Dad, I don't know when - but we'll get together then. You know we'll have a good time then."

Brothers and sisters - fellow children of God - hear this passage of Scripture as a wonderful, open invitation:

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We don’t act like and trust and love our Papa IN ORDER TO be adopted, but we do those things ***because we HAVE BEEN adopted into the family of God.***

Make some appointments in your schedule this week to meet up with your heavenly Papa.

Not just a passing call or text, but a real appointment to hang out. Let’s open our Bibles and listen to the voice of our loving, gracious and merciful heavenly father. Let’s grow in our love for Him as we experience His love for us. Let’s grow in our trust in Him as we experience His faithfulness to us over and over again. Let’s grow in our obedience to His Spirit, growing more and more into the image and likeness of our God and Father.

Remember, we are never more like God than when we forgive someone else. This week as we finish the Momentum Bible study we are looking at the blessing for those who are peacemakers. ***“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God”*** (Matt. 5:9). We have the privilege and opportunity - really the birthright - to be like God and serve as agents of reconciliation - to be peacemakers.

This is precisely what God did for us. When we were rebels, at war with Him and deserving the full wrath of His irresistible Empire, instead of sending His angelic warriors to wipe us all out, God sent an ambassador of peace. In fact, he sent dozens of these ambassadors, called prophets. And then He sent His only Son as the ultimate peacemaker.

Jesus came in peace, to offer peace with a holy and righteous and wrathful God. We are His children and we have been commissioned by Christ to do the very same thing - to be peacemakers with those closest to us and to go out as ambassadors in our city and world, preaching the gospel of peace.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons and daughters of God.” Let’s keep growing up into the image and likeness of our God and Father! Let’s keep walking in obedience to the Spirit’s leading. Let’s celebrate our confidence that we belong to the Lord! Let’s enjoy the direct access we have to the Father and continually express our affection for Him. And let’s live as peacemakers - ambassadors of reconciliation!

Let’s pray.