

WHAT IS THE DOCTRINE OF ADOPTION?

by Michael A. Milton

TO THE GROUP LEADER: This resource is designed to help you lead others to better understand one of the “Basics of the Faith” booklets published by P&R. The numbers in brackets indicate the page number in the booklet. Below each question is an answer based on what the author presents, or advice on how to discuss the question. You have the freedom to adapt the questions to best fit your group.

A good teaching technique is to distribute the questions to the group and have them write down how they would answer BEFORE reading the booklet. After reading, members can refine their answers based on their reading. As a group, members can discuss their views to affirm or modify what they wrote.

1. Most of us know someone who was adopted or who has adopted. How might each adoption experience be different from being adopted by God? How might it be similar?

Let this be the opening thought for the group. It will at least get their minds into the subject.

2. Many theology textbooks ignore the doctrine of adoption, so why is it worth your time to consider it? (6)
Dr. Milton says: “In a word, freedom...A correct understanding produces a healthy, balanced view of God, others, and self.” We are no longer “cosmic orphans” but members of the family of God as His sons and daughters.

3. What are some of the benefits experienced by someone who has been adopted?
There is the love of the new parents; the security of a new and permanent home; the feeling of being part of something bigger than yourself, and have it part of you, etc. There is also the relief of being separated from the background from which you came.

4. How should you refer to a person who has been adopted? Are they a “real” child of the adoptive parents? (7-8)

They are as real as any child born into that family. Adoptive parents should never refer to this child as anything but their child, and the child should never refer to the biological parents as “real parents.” When adoption is completed, the child is the “real” child of those parents, and the parents became the “real” parents of that child.

5. Throughout the Bible, God is referred to as *Father*. Can you think of four different ways this is expressed? (13-15)

- a. He is called the Father of Jesus (Ps.2:7) (Be careful here that no one think the Father adopted Jesus. Milton will explain this more on page 22. Jesus was, however, adopted by Joseph.)
- b. He is seen as the Father of all creation (Acts 17:28-29)
- c. He is the Father of the nation of Israel (Rom.9:4)
- d. He is the Father of all those who call upon Christ as their Lord and Savior (Gal.4:4-6)

6. The OT clearly teaches Rahab was adopted into the family of God. How? (See Joshua 2.) (15-16)

Take the class through this story. Show that she became part of Israel. (What does Rahab call God in Josh.2:9? She calls Him *THE* Lord. Not, YOUR Lord.)

7. What do you remember about the story of Ruth? How was she adopted into the family of God? (16-17)
Have the class read aloud the verses listed in the book.
8. Read Acts 16:11-24. Explain how the doctrine of adoption is evident in the lives of Lydia and the Philippian jailor. (21-22)
Although the word *adoption* is not used here, it is evident from these stories how the idea of becoming part of someone's household reflects the concept of becoming part of God's household.
9. What do you learn about the blessedness of adoption from each of the following verses? (23-25)
 - a. Romans 8:15 –
 - b. Romans 8:23 –
 - c. Galatians 4:4-6 –
 - d. Ephesians 1:4-5 –
10. The initiative for spiritual adoption lies totally with whom? (27-28)
It is totally of God from beginning to end. Think of an infant who is adopted. What say does that child have? None!
11. How does spiritual adoption make us part of a greater family? (29-30)
We are adopted into a family. And, in this case, that family is the church – both the local church as well as every church throughout the world. Many times people think being part of a church is optional. But, you cannot be adopted into nothing. Not being part of a church means you are not part of the family of God.
12. What roll does the Holy Spirit play in adoption? (30-31)
Jesus completed all the work of redemption on the cross. It is the work of the Spirit to apply this redemption to our lives, revealing the Word of God to us, and changing us more and more into the image of Jesus. He enables us to reflect our family image.
13. If God is the Father of all creation, are all people in the world adopted by God? (31-33)
Not at all! Throughout history, God has adopted only those He has chosen to put His special love upon. All others are called children of the devil (John 8:44), and are God's enemies (Romans 5:10).

After going through these questions, read the text and fill in the answers in preparation for class, noting other questions you might have. [By the way, if you do have any other questions about what you read, write them down here so you remember them at class time.]

APPLICATION

For the church:

1. The next time someone in your church adopts a child of any age, hold a party (shower) for them just like you do when they are expecting.
2. When someone comes to Christ and becomes part of your church family, do something special as a church, like throwing a party to make sure they feel welcome in their new family.

For Further Study

Pastor Milton gives several resources for you to study. Consider using one of them for an extended study on this great topic.

Find more helpful resources at www.pcabookstore.com.