



# Adoption

One of the blessings for which Christians praise their Father is the blessing of adoption: “He predestined us,” Paul writes, “for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:5).

## 1. Our need for adoption

In ancient Roman culture, adoption was not primarily for the purpose of caring for a son (although this was important), but so that the son would become the legal heir to an estate. This is why Caesar Augustus, at the age of 67, adopted Tiberius at the age of 42. Tiberius would become the next emperor.

Human beings are by nature “children of wrath,”—more specifically, our spiritual father is God’s enemy, the devil (John 8:44-45). We need to be adopted by God to secure our relationship with him, and be assured of a future of love instead of judgment.

## 2. The nature of adoption

Roman adoption involved two steps: the biological parents would relinquish their claims on the child; the adoptive father would promise to maintain the right of the son so that the son would be his legal heir. Our adoption as God’s children is both *already* and *not yet*. We *already* are God’s children, but do not yet enjoy the fullness of our inheritance: perfect likeness to Jesus, the joy of being in God’s presence, and the privilege of reigning with God (Revelation 23).

## 3. The means of adoption

We are adopted “through Jesus Christ.” Jesus is God’s true Son, and by trusting in him become his “brothers and sister” (Romans 8:29), who share his glorious inheritance (see Ephesians 1:18). In order to achieve this, Jesus had to suffer and die for our sins.

## 4. Living adopted lives.

Adoption is both a privilege and responsibility. As adopted children, we should love God’s other children (Ephesians 5:1-2), and expect God to discipline us in love. We should pray to God as our Father and rest in his care for us.

## Discussion

1. How does understanding the ancient Roman context of adoption deepen our appreciation of God's adoption of us as His spiritual children?
2. In what ways does our natural state as "children of wrath" contrast with the spiritual inheritance offered through adoption into God's family?
3. How does the concept of adoption challenge our modern notions of freedom and identity?

4. Discuss the tension between the "already" and "not yet" aspects of adoption. How does this tension shape our understanding of our current identity as children of God?
5. Explore the significance of adoption taking place "through Christ Jesus." How does Jesus' role as the true Son of God facilitate our adoption into God's family?
6. Discuss practical ways to live out the adopted life, such as loving God's other children, expecting discipline from our Heavenly Father, praying to God as our heavenly Father, and resting in His care. How can we apply these principles in our daily lives?