

## introduction

The Holy Spirit brings believers into the most surprising and necessary relationship a human being can have with God: as a child to a father. The surprise is that God would love his enemies, sinners like us, and send his own son to make us his redeemed children. The necessity is that adoption by God, true sonship (a status that covers men and women, of course), is exactly why we were made and precisely what we need. We were made to know God and enjoy him forever in a perfect relationship, nothing less. Romans chapter 8 says that, by God's love, we are adopted as his children, and that we know this because of the Holy Spirit, who leads us into new life.



**What, to you, are the qualities that make a child a child?**

### read **Romans 8:14-17 (NIV)**

<sup>14</sup> For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. <sup>15</sup> 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." <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup> 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.

**Take a few moments to reflect on the Scripture. Share some insights, questions, or points that strike you. Then read what follows.**

## context

The Apostle Paul's letter to the Romans is a lengthy, theologically sharp, and richly dense argument for the gospel of Jesus Christ, and chapter 8 is not only one of the highpoints of the letter, but of all of scripture. The first half of Romans has dealt with *what the gospel is*. And in

Romans 8, Paul starts to deal with *how the gospel changes us*. How do we experience the gospel? How do we live out of salvation? Paul says that the answer is, “By the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ.”

## the Spirit you (all) received

People can often think that the leading of the Holy Spirit is something like a map on your smartphone: it tells you where to go, what decisions to make, and how to get to a destination. But the real work of the Holy Spirit is less about us and our decisions and more about Jesus. The Spirit is always making much of Jesus, showing us Jesus, and moving us to be humbled, assured, and transformed by Jesus. Being “led by the Spirit” is directly tied to being “children of God.”

One of the greatest promises of the Bible is that, in Jesus, we are adopted as sons. In fact, we are saved in order to be adopted. In the ancient world, adoption was a common practice when a man had no heir. So, he would adopt a son, assume his debts and obligations, and make him an heir of the family’s status, honor, and wealth. Adoption instantly created a new relationship. Paul says this is similar to what God does for us, and not just for individual men, but for a countless number of men and women, all of whom are counted “heirs with Christ.”

*“Men may give a charter of adoption; but it is God's prerogative, when he adopts, to give a spirit of adoption—the nature of children. The Spirit of adoption works in the children of God a filial love to God as a Father, a delight in him, and a dependence upon him, as a Father. A sanctified soul bears the image of God, as the child bears the image of the father. ”*

—Matthew Henry

## discuss

1. What does it mean to be led by the Spirit of God? How does this look in your day-to-day life, and in the regular life of the church?
2. In the context of Romans 8, what is the relational difference between a slave and a son? Which way do you approach God?
3. How do you understand adoption? If you are a Christian, what aspect of adoption thrills you the most today?

## your adoption to sonship

Becoming a son of God brings you into the heart of the Trinity. We are children of the Father. We are led by the Spirit. We are co-heirs with Christ. And the privileges of sonship are immense. Access and intimacy with God, as we cry out “Abba, Father.” The sure testimony of the Holy Spirit assuring us that we are truly God’s children. The status of sons and heirs, and the inheritance of the same glory that Jesus Christ will have. *Now, stop right there.* Paul writes that we are co-heirs with God the Son, and that we will not merely witness or enjoy but share in his glory one day. No religion promises that! When God adopts us, he doesn’t do it halfway. Meditate on this: we are co-heirs with Christ.

*“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.”*

—J.I. Packer

## discuss

4. How does the Holy Spirit testify with us that we are indeed God's children? Does this happen in ordinary ways, or extraordinary ways?
5. What does it mean that God's adopted people are sharers in Jesus' suffering? What should Christians expect to experience?
6. What does it mean that God's adopted people are sharers in Jesus' glory?

## group application

This passage is written about and to a group of Christians. How do we, as a group, live out of these amazing truths? Pick one of the following questions and think about one practical step you all as a group can take to answer it.

- How can we suffer together well?
- How can we testify together well?
- How can we anticipate glory together well?

## upcoming

- Friday, April 24 & Saturday, April 25 | **RWS Conference: Redeeming Anxiety**  
*Deadline to register has been extended to Wednesday - don't miss out! If you have any questions, contact Melanie at [conferences@redeemerws.com](mailto:conferences@redeemerws.com)*  
[redeemerws.com/anxiety](https://redeemerws.com/anxiety)
- Thursday, April 30 | **Gotham Applications due**  
*Apply to join next year's Gotham class and experience rich Christian community and intentional discipleship. Work through the calling to work for God's renewing of all things and wake up inspired, impassioned, and with joy to start a new day.*  
[redeemerws.com/gotham](https://redeemerws.com/gotham)
- Sunday, May 3 | **Congregational Meeting, 1 pm in the sanctuary**  
*RWS members are requested to attend this meeting and participate in the annual election of leaders.*