

# Are We Adopted for Us or for God

by John Piper

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*This sermon delves into the concept of adoption by God, drawing parallels between earthly adoption and divine adoption. It emphasizes that God's ultimate goal in adopting us is for us to glorify Him by finding our greatest joy and satisfaction in Him above all else. The speaker highlights the importance of hallowing God's name, being happy in Him, and making much of Him as the central pursuit of our lives, rooted in the truth that God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in Him.*

**Scripture:** Romans 8:14, Matthew 5:16, John 4:23, Psalms 86:11, Philippians 4:19

**Topics:** "Divine Adoption", "Glorifying God"

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## Description

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## Transcript

Thank you, Brad, and thank you all so much for the invitation. This is really a high privilege and a high topic. Let me pray that God would help us.

You have taught us, Father, that everyone who has the Holy Spirit is a child of God. Everyone who is led by the Spirit is a son of God, because we haven't received a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but a spirit of sonship, adoption as sons, by which we cry, Abba, Father, the Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with Him in order that we might be glorified with Him.

And so I'm praying now that in this room and across these campuses, those who are your children would feel in an unusual and precious way the witness of the Holy Spirit through this message that they are the children of God. And that those who stand outside looking in wondering what is that would be quickened by the Holy Spirit and drawn through Christ into your family. I ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen. There are some precious and powerful parallels between my adoption of my daughter Talitha 23 years ago and God's adoption of me 66 years ago. Very precious, very powerful.

And there are some amazing non-parallels. I'm going to talk about one of those mainly, but let me summarize this series on the no ordinary father with the parallels. Number one, she calls me daddy.

I love to be called daddy, especially by a 22-year-old. And I call God daddy. That is, in my most painful, desperate, intimate moments, I need you way more than I need something else.

I need you, Abba. Two, Talitha bears my name, Talitha Ruth Piper. And I bear God's name.

I'm a Christian because Christ is God. Number three, I disciplined Talitha. I spanked her.

Not as often as I spanked my four sons, but I did. And she remembers to this day. She reminds me that I did.

And God has spanked me. In fact, I believe that under the sovereignty of God, every hardship, every trial, every loss is a spanking from my father in my life. Everyone for my everlasting good.

Number four, I provided for her all the way along. If she gets in a pinch today, I'll be there to provide for her. And God has provided for me everything I've ever needed because he said he would.

My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches and glory in Christ Jesus, Philippians 4:19. And he never has failed. Not every want, but every need.

Everything I have ever needed to do his will, honor his name, it's been there, and it will be for you. Those are the four parallels between my adoption of Talitha and God's adoption of me and you if you are in Christ. Now, what I want to talk about is one of the non-parallels.

No ordinary father, because of the non-parallels as well as the parallels, he is adopting us differently than the way we adopt our children. And you could say on this one, it is infinitely different. So I'll tell you what it is.

Then we'll go to the Bible to see if it's there, because if it's not, you should not care. I hope that's the way you feel about everybody who stands here. I know I have a pulpit.

They never have pulpits here. They just kind of walk around. And you shouldn't care what they say at all unless they can show you in the Bible that it's God's word.

So just hold them to that wherever you are. Hold them to that and hold me to that now. So I'm going to tell you what the non-parallel is.

I'm going to go to the Bible and show you, I hope, that it's there. And then I'm going to try to persuade you that it's good, because there are so many Christians who hear what is different between my adoption of Talitha and God's adoption of me, and they don't like it. They want it to be more human, more like the ordinary stuff that we deal with.

They don't like this. My main reason for coming here is to persuade you that what I'm about to say is good, because I think you're going to see it in the Bible, and some of you are not going to like what you see. And so I need the last half of the message to try to persuade you that it's good.

Okay, what is it? What's the non-parallel between human adoption and divine adoption that I want to unpack? And it's this. I did not adopt Talitha at eight weeks old in order that she might spend the rest of

her life, let alone the rest of her eternity, making much of me. But God did adopt me and you for that.

Ultimately, God is forming a family precisely for the ultimate purpose that we, the family, would make much of our Father. Magnify our Father, glorify our Father, hallow our Father, extol our Father, admire our Father, treasure our Father above everything, including life itself, in case you get shot. So that's the difference.

If I adopted Talitha with the ultimate aim that she would devote her life to treasuring me above everything and magnifying my name and praising me and making much of me, I would be like the devil incarnate. Because that's what he did in the wilderness with Jesus, right? Bow down and worship me. So if I adopted her and said, now, that's why I adopted you, so that you would bow down and worship me, I would be demonic and you would be too.

So I didn't. That was not my goal. So here's the question.

Why isn't God demonic? I mean, it sounds more like a deranged egomaniac. Goes around trying to find kids and adopt them so they spend the rest of their life making much of him. It's exactly what he does.

That's true if it's in the Bible. So let's look at some texts. I've got three.

We'll spend a little more time on the first one. It's the Lord's Prayer. You all know it, and maybe you've thought about it the way I used to think about it.

It's Matthew 9 to 13. Let's read it. Pray then like this.

Our Father in heaven. Notice. Our Father in heaven.

Jesus is teaching us how to pray to our Father. It's amazing. The creator of the universe is our Father.

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

So he's teaching us how to pray to our Father. Not to God in general, but to God as our Father. Now, I used to read and pray the Lord's Prayer with this conception.

The first three statements I felt, didn't really articulate it to myself, were acclamations or praises, not requests. And then it was followed by four requests. So here's the way I used to think.

I praise you, Father, that your name is hallowed. I praise you that your kingdom is coming. I praise you that your will is going to be done on earth.

And I have four things that I need to be a part of that. I need food every day. I need forgiveness for my sins.

I need freedom from temptation that would destroy me. And I need you to deliver me from the evil ones so that I can be about these amazing things that I've just acclaimed. That's not right.

That's what I used to feel. I never even computed, what am I saying in these first three? Hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done. Those are requests.

Those are petitions. They are just as much, I need and I want, and I want you to do this in me and through me as the other four are. So that was a huge change.

And when I saw that, which is really there, I mean, you can see it, that's what they are, they're requests, they're petitions. Then I had to ask, okay, how do all these seven petitions relate to each other? And I'm going to suggest to you, and you just look at it and see if you think this is right, the hallowing of God's name, and I'll get to the meaning of that word in a minute, but let's hang, the hallowing of God's name is first because it's ultimate and all the others are going there. So let me re-pray it the way I pray it now and see if you don't think that's the way Jesus wants us to be thinking when we pray it.

Father, cause, this is a petition, cause your kingdom to come because when everybody is gladly bowing down to your kingly authority, the central act of every human heart in that kingdom will be the hallowing of your name. Father, subdue all rebellion to your will, bring every human will on earth into submission to your will, the center of every human will then will be the hallowing of your name. Father, grant me enough food, I don't want to be rich, guard me from riches, grant me enough food so that I have life and breath in order to hallow your name.

Father, forgive my sins because if I don't have forgiveness from you, I'm going to be swept away in condemnation, spend the rest of my life blaspheming you in hell rather than hallowing you in heaven. God, please forgive my sins and make me a forgiving person. Father, keep me out of destructive temptation that would ruin my life and take away every inclination I've ever felt to hallow your name.

Father, guard me from the evil one who wants more than anything that I would live for my name. And not yours. That's the way I think he wants us to pray.

I think hallowing his name is number one because it's ultimate and the goal of everything, everything, forever, for everybody, that's the goal. So hallow it be your name, that is cause your name to be hallowed right here first, right there next, and through us, all of Anderson County, all of South Carolina, all of America, all the world until Jesus comes as far as we can make it happen. Now here's the question, what does hallow mean? The word is literally sanctify.

Used all over the New Testament for sanctify or make holy or regard as holy. We don't make God holy, we regard him as holy, see him as holy, sense him as holy, stand in awe of him as holy. So that's behind the word hallow.

Not sure why all the modern translations keep it. I do know why because it's a sacred, we've prayed the Lord's Prayer in English for 500 years and so you can't change the wording, everybody would get all goofed up. But nobody knows what the word hallow means.

That's not helpful, but I'm trying to make this what it is. Sanctify your name, cause your name to be regarded as holy, that is cause me to see it as sacred and revered and esteemed and honored and valued and cherished and treasured. I think those are words that unpack hallow, hallow your name and not just see it.

The devil sees it. Remember the demon said to Jesus, we know who you are, you're the holy one of God. So they regard him as holy, big deal.

It's so much utterly crucial that we not just regard him as sacred and holy and revered and cherished and honored and treasured, but that we feel it. Hallowing happens in the heart. Hallowing happens in the heart, not in the hands first.

The hands may go up as the fruit of hallowing, but if the hands go up without the heart, Jesus has some nasty words to say about that. This people hallows me, honors me with their lips. Their heart is far from me.

He holds his nose at that worship. So if you're lifting your hands and your heart is not hallowing, cherishing, esteeming, honoring, treasuring him above everything, those hands are hypocrite's hands. The hallowing of his name is an act of the heart, not just a regarding of the head like the demons do and not just the lifting of the hands like the Pharisees did, but the cherishing of his name above all things like Christians do.

So here's my conclusion from the Lord's prayer in the Sermon on the Mount. God's ultimate goal for us as our Father, the goal for which every other blessing in your life is given, is that we would revere and honor and esteem and value and treasure him, his name, above everything and everyone else. So I did not adopt Talitha that she would hallow my name.

God adopted me that I would hallow his name. That's the ultimate difference. I said there were three texts.

The other two, if I spend that long on, I won't get to the crucial applications at the end that I want. So let's deal with two more very briefly. Number one, Matthew 5.16. This is a few verses earlier in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus says, let your light so shine before others so that they may see your good deeds, your works, good works, and give glory to your Father.

Give glory to your Father who is in heaven. God has adopted you so that you would devote yourselves to good deeds, to make God look good. That's what he said.

You have been brought into the family of God so that you would let your light so shine that people would see your self-sacrificing others serving good deeds and recognize that's no ordinary family. They are living to make much of their Father, and I am drawn to make much of their Father because good deeds are so prominent in their lives. So, Matthew 5.16, you have a Father because your Father intends to be made much of by your good deeds.

Number three, last text we'll look at, John 4.23, Jesus is talking to the Samaritan woman, you may know the story, at the well, and he says this, the hour is coming and now is here when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. For the Father is seeking such people to worship him. The Father is seeking such people to worship him.

So, God the Father has sent God the Son into the world. His name is Jesus, and by his death that we sang about, and by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit after his death and resurrection, God is gathering a family out of the world, and he's doing it because he's seeking worshipers. God is seeking people to make much of him, worship him, hallow his name, glorify him.

I don't know if the text could be any clearer than that, the aim of God in the coming into this world and sending out his spirit to proclaim his Son and gather a family is because he's seeking to be worshiped. Those are my three texts. If you don't see it in those three texts, then the rest of this sermon will probably be irrelevant to you.

We are adopted very differently than I adopted Talitha. We are adopted by a Father who intends us to spend all our days 24-7 into eternity making much of him. Is that good? Is that good? That's my next question, because for 45 years I've been trying to say this in one form or another, and I know that there are many Christians who don't like it.

It shifts the center of gravity in their lives in an uncomfortable way, and I would like to persuade you not to be uncomfortable with God's God-centeredness. The Father has gone to great lengths to make a family, to gather children whose ultimate end is to hallow his name, glorify his greatness, and worship his perfections. That seems to a lot of people like he's in a deranged egomania.

He's demonic. Piper preaches a demonic Father. Who would want to call him Daddy? My aim now is to persuade you, having a Father like that who adopts you so that he would be made much of forever, having a Father like that is the best thing that could ever happen to you, the best thing that you could even conceive happening to you.

That's what I would like to persuade you of. So to do it, I'm going to just look at one brief half of a verse in Psalm 5, 511, and one story about Talitha that I'm going to make up about this Thursday, this coming Thursday. And the text and the story I'm praying will make you have an aha moment that turns an egomaniac into the best person in the universe.

And his pursuit of your making much of him forever to be the best news you've ever heard. Okay, the text is just a half of a verse. And if we had time, we'd look at some other verses that, here it is.

Those who love your name, and I chose that because like hallow your name, those who love your name may exult in you. The huge question is the loving of the name and the exulting in the person, how do they relate? The exulting, the loving, the extolling, the esteeming, the cherishing of the name, and the exulting in you, the person, God, how do they relate to each other? And my suggestion is that the loving of the Father's name is expressed and experienced in the exulting in his name. Hallowing is experienced in finding happiness in God's name, above all things.

Admiration for the name, exultation in the person, admiration, that's hallowing. Exultation, not ex-all-tation, exultation is what you do in your heart when you're thrilled with something, you exult in it. And when this exulting in him happens, hallowing happens.

That's the way hallowing in the heart is done. So our joy in the Father is the way we experience his worth and beauty and greatness. Being satisfied in the Father makes much of the Father.

Being satisfied in the Father makes much of the Father. The Father's name is hallowed in his children when his children are happy in him, more happy in him than health, more happy in him than marriage, more happy in him than children, more happy in him than money, more happy in him than success, more happy in him than life. Oh, how good he looks in the lives of people who find more satisfaction in God than anything, especially in moments of loss and suffering.

Now here's the story from, here's the story. So what I just gave you there in that effort to unpack the relationship between hallowing the name and exulting in him and saying that they're one, satisfaction in him and the sanctifying of his name are one, which is the key to why he's not an egomaniac, may come clearer if I give you this story. So Teltha turns 23 on Thursday.

She's at home now for a little while. And suppose I go to my favorite little podunk florist on Chicago Avenue across from Abbott Hospital and buy 23 long stem red roses, which I've never done. And just at the right moment when we have our birthday dinner on Thursday night, I go to the closet where I'm stashing them and I bring them to the table and I hold them out and I say, happy birthday, Teltha.

Now this is unusual. I don't do this. This is expensive.

She might say, why'd you do that? Now, if I answer her because it's my duty, it's what I am expected to do. Fathers of daughters are supposed to do nice things for their daughters, especially adoptive fathers. And if I don't do it, I might have a guilty conscience.

And so I am doing my duty. Everybody intuitively knows that's a bad answer. You know that's a bad answer, but you may not know why.

And if you could explain why that's a bad answer, this sermon would not be necessary. Probably. Why is that a bad answer? What's wrong with duty? For goodness sakes.

We glorify soldiers who do their duty. What's wrong with sacrifice? Like I didn't want to do this, but I forked out the 23 times 4 or whatever it is and paid 90 bucks for these roses because that's what you're supposed to do if you're a good adoptive father, lest you have a guilty conscience. What's wrong with sacrifice and acting against your pleasures? Well, what's wrong with that is joyless duty doesn't honor her.

Joyless duty doesn't make much of her. You know that. So what's got to change for her to be honored, for God to be honored? What's got to change? This has got to change.

You got to stop doing stuff out of that motive. You got to be new. You got to love.

So what will be the right answer to that question? Why did you do that, daddy? The right answer would be something like, because I just enjoy spending time with you and kind of showing you in that time that it's special. I'm a hedonist. I do stuff to make me happy, like you.

I love to be with you. You make me glad. How would she feel? Would she feel, oh, you're so selfish? No, that's not what she would feel.

She would feel honored. She would feel my daddy prizes me. My daddy loves me.

My daddy is making much of me because he delights to be with me. That's the story. So my conclusion is finding joy in another person honors that person.

Being glad in another person glorifies that person. Enjoying a person is a form of esteem for them and they feel it. Being satisfied in someone's person, satisfied in someone's person magnifies their significance to you.

That's the way it is with our father in heaven. These are all just shadows, right? These texts, not all the way it works at the horizontal level at a birthday party are just shadows. They're just pointers to what God is like and how we glorify him and hallow his name and magnify his worth, namely by delighting in him and enjoying him and being satisfied in him above all things, finding him to be our supreme treasure.

Here's one of the most important life altering soul satisfying truths I have ever discovered. Our father's name is most hallowed in us when we are most happy in him, especially during cancer or the loss of a

husband or the flooding of our house. Our father is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in him.

When God adopts us into his family and he makes the ultimate goal that he would be made much of forever, that his greatness, his beauty, his worth would be treasured above all things, when he does that, he's not a deranged egomaniac. He's a loving father because he is setting at the center of the family the one reality with a capital R. He's setting at the center of the family, the one reality in all the universe that would satisfy our souls forever, himself. He is summoning us not just to regard him as supremely valuable, but to enjoy him as supremely valuable forever.

Our father in heaven seeks the hallowing of his name because that hallowing happens through our being happy in him. If you find your father ho-hum, test yourself. If you find your heavenly father ho-hum, really it's the game, it's Clemson football or your Vikings are playing this afternoon and or it's your girlfriend, boyfriend, it's pizza, diet coke.

If you find that your father is ho-hum, these are my treasures. You cannot hallow his name. You can say things, you can go to worship services, you can do this, but you cannot hallow his name because your heart is in another place.

Where your treasure is, where your heart be. Our father seeks our praise because the essence of praising is prizing or our father seeks our praise because the very heart of praise is finding pleasure in his supreme value and if that is missing, praise is empty. The ultimate aim of your adoption into God's family through Christ is his glory through your gladness in him.

Say it again because that's the main point of the message. The ultimate aim of your adoption into God's no ordinary family is that you would bring glory to your no ordinary father through being glad in him more than you're glad in your life or anything in it. Come what may, come what may because that gladness is the only soul-satisfying gladness in the world that lasts forever and is full.

If you lose everything, the goods and kindred go, this mortal life also, the body they may kill, God's truth, God's value, God's beauty, God's worth abide is still, his kingdom is forever. God is still God, he's still my father. Not one bird falls to the ground apart from your father's will.

The hairs of your head are all numbered. If I die, I die. If I live, I live.

God never changes, his value never changes, his worth and beauty and all satisfying centrality never changes. Live or die, I'm satisfied. That's what it means to be a Christian, to hallow his name above all things.

So, let me close with three quick illustrations or applications. Number one, there are two ways, not just one way, the Bible says you come into God's family. One is adoption with all the legal papers signed by the blood of Jesus.

God, you're a legal father forever. Warrant Jesus Christ. The other is new birth, worked by the Holy Spirit.

And the reason both are necessary, this hasn't been a message on new birth, but the implication is there, namely, the reason you got to be born again as well as adopted is because to be a Christian is not only to have a new legal father, but a new DNA spiritually, meaning you love different things, you enjoy different things, namely him. If you don't love him above all else, you may not be born again. And if you're not born again, we can talk till doomsday about adoption and you're not in.

Because when you're in, you come through adoption and you come through new birth, you get a legal standing with the father forever and in an inheritance, namely the universe. And you also have a new spiritual DNA, which simply means my heart is new. I love him, delight in him, treasure him, and satisfied in him more than life.

Number two, you never need to struggle with what I struggled with in college to get my way to where I am today in this. You never have to struggle between, okay, will I live with a passion for the glory of God or will I live with a passion for my everlasting joy? You not only don't have to choose, you dare not choose. Does that make sense after this message? You dare not choose.

If you try to choose between your everlasting happiness and God's everlasting glory as the goals of your life, both of them vanish forever out of your life. You dare not choose between God's glory and your joy because he's glorified in your being, satisfied in him. Ultimate things are at stake here.

This is not a clever sermon. This is life and death. Last application.

Therefore, the central pursuit of your life, I hope this lands on you with freedom, the central pursuit of your life should be the pursuit of your passion for satisfaction in God. Every morning, your goal should be, Father, through Jesus and his work on the cross and by the Holy Spirit, I am now seeking in you that I would begin this day and live this day full of restful satisfaction in all that you are for me in Jesus so that I can act out of the fullness of your all-satisfying beauty and worth and greatness. It's not selfish to want to be happy in God.

It's necessary. It's the number one pursuit of your life. At least I'm leaving you now with the admonition that it should be.

It should be because God is most glorified. Your Father is most glorified in you when you're most satisfied in him, so don't waste your life. Go for it.

Father, come and by your spirit, awaken hearts, quicken new life in hearts that have no delight in you, no pleasure in you, no satisfaction in you, for whom my language is a foreign language. I pray that that miracle would happen for many and that those of us who have tasted what it is to have you as our Father, as our supreme treasure, would be made stable and strong and unshakable in the days to come. I ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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