

Becoming the Christian God Wants You to Be

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I discovered several valuable lessons about living a Christian life as I studied about the adoption of the new Christian by God upon salvation. It left me wanting to learn more about the unity of believers and how it related to the lessons I had learned. Christian virtues came next and then a study about forgiving one another. I realized I had a series developing on a theme of Christian growth. I had not planned a series, but one topic led to the next. The series seemed complete after a studying of contentment through the peace of God.

This is a condensed summary of the studies to bring the benefits of the studies to a wider audience. I realize these lengthy studies totaling more than forty pages are not for everyone since most people do not have the time and the inclination to pursue them with a close reading. But if that sounds like you, here are the links to the studies.

1. [What does adoption mean to the children of God?](#)
2. [You Are God's Temple.](#)
3. [Virtues for Our New Selves: A study of Colossians 3:12-16.](#)
4. [A Grateful Heart Is A Forgiving Heart.](#)
5. [The Art of Contentment.](#)

But if that is not you, then this article shares the lessons with you. Check out the studies if you have questions after reading this article. I also frequently check the website for questions and comments.

[What does adoption mean to the children of God?](#)

It is nothing new that God adopts people and nations. It is not a New Testament only concept either. A person can find adoption language scattered in the Bible if they learn to recognize it. One can find phrases such as “called by My name” and “I will be his Father and he will be My son” in ancient adoption contracts as well as the Bible.

In New Testament times, adoption generally occurred after a person had reached adulthood. Families adopted people for a certain purpose. Families adopted a person to a specific position within the family such as a son, daughter, or as one to care for the parents in their old age. If a family with an existing son adopted a person as the eldest son, the adoptee replaced the eldest son as the eldest and received the rights and privileges of an eldest son. In other words, the adoptee become the eldest son and the previous eldest son became just another son.

God adopts every Christian as a son. This has nothing to do with one's gender, but everything to do with their inheritance. Generally, in Bible times only sons received an inheritance. Our inheritance is none other than eternal life.

Many regions have an honor/shame culture as opposed to our own culture of a guilt/innocence society. This is true of both ancient and modern times. Bible lands have an honor/shame

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culture. This basic difference of culture presents one of the challenges we have in understanding the Bible. We must remind ourselves to read it in view of the honor/shame culture.

In an honor/shame culture, each person has their own level of honor, but their family's honor greatly influences their honor. Their actions also affect the honor of the family. Loss of honor could affect the family in many ways including who could marry whom and who they could do business with or the prices involved when buying or selling wares and supplies.

Adoption usually improved a person's honor level above that offered by their original family. The adoption process makes a person a new creation and eliminated all debts. This should sound familiar because Christians become a new creation upon salvation, one's old life of sin has does not have a hold on them any longer. God forgives the debt of sin. One's old family no longer influences their honor level. Neither are they burdened with debts of their old family. Their honor now comes from their new family and their position in that family.

The biggest lesson from this study of adoption is that the adoptee has obligations to their new family. One must not dishonor the family. It is their obligation to bring honor to the family and the father. This creates a tremendous sense of loyalty to the father.

To summarize this section: We become a new creation with a new family when God adopts us into His family. God adopts us as sons when we become Christians which promises us an inheritance of eternal life. God forgives us of our sins. We can leave our sins behind with the devil - the father of lies, and never worry about them again. The lifting away the burden of sin provides us relief from a debt we could never repay. We have the obligations of bringing honor to God and His family. Our sense of loyalty to God is huge. This sense of loyalty becomes our strength in the face of temptation.

[You are God's Temple](#)

The Bible illustrates the unity of Christians in two ways. One is as the body of Christ. The other is as the temple of God. Just as the Bible speaks of only body of Christ, it speaks of only one temple of God made up of believers.

In this temple of God Christ is the chief corner stone by which all other temple stones align. The apostles laid the foundation of the temple through their teachings and writings. The Bible says Christians believers are "living stones." We are the stones of the temple of God. We are the temple God dwells in, for Paul says, "... the Spirit of God dwells in you." (1 Corinthians 3:16).¹

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The object of this metaphor is to show the importance of working together and supporting each other in unity. Jesus prayed that we “may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.” (John 17:23)

Christian unity is an important doctrine woven through the New Testament. The apostle Paul tells us how to achieve this unity. He lists Christian virtues as he commands us to “put on” or rather take on the characteristics of these virtues. The virtues are coming up next so I will save them for later. But he does mention “... the perfect bond of unity” (Colossians 3:14) which is love. It requires love to achieve the unity God desires of us.

Paul warns of dire consequences for those who harm the Temple of God. That is, those who destroy the Temple of God by disrupting the unity of the members, the stones, of the Temple of God.

To summarize this section: Christians are living stones used to build the temple of God. The unity of these living stones working together as the temple of God serves as a testimony of God’s love for us and the world. Love is essential because it is the perfect bond of unity. God dwells in us as His house since we are the temple of God. God will destroy those who destroy the temple of God. (1 Corinthians 3:17)

[Virtues for Our New Selves](#)

Paul commands us to put on a new character that includes compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, and love. The expectation of every Christian becoming Christ-like in their life’s journey requires one to take on this character consisting of these virtues. The study explains each of these virtues in detail.

Paul says we must also tolerate others, “bearing with one another.” It is our responsibility to have the willingness to generously forgive those who offend us. This keeps one from destroying the unity among the believers. We are to also put on Love which is the perfect bond of unity.

Paul further commands us to let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. That means keeping the harmony among believers as a deciding factor in the choices we make. God calls Christians not only to be an undivided body of believers, but to live as a unified body of believers letting the “word of Christ” within us.

With strong imperatives and emphasis Paul tells us to do everything in the name of Jesus. That means to function as a representative of Christ all the time. And do it while thanking God through Christ.

To summarize this section: Paul gives us a list of virtues to “Put on.” This means to integrate them into our character and nature. In doing so, we become more Christ-like. We must make an earnest effort to tolerate others and forgive them to maintain the unity among believers because God intends for us to function as a single body of believers. Keeping harmony among believers is an important guiding factor for us as Christians as this brings honor to God the

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Father. We are representatives of Christ in everything we do. We are to thank God through Christ in we do everything.

[A Grateful Heart is a Forgiving Heart.](#)

This study is an easy read of only 4 pages. The Law of Moses in the Old Testament directed people to practice forgiveness. Jesus also told a parable in Matthew 18:23-34, The Parable of the Unforgiving/Unmerciful Servant. Many people misunderstand the lesson of this parable. The error of this cruel servant is not so much that he was unforgiving, or unmerciful, or did personal wrong to someone, it goes much deeper than any of that. His error is in the condition of his heart.

In the parable, the king's forgiveness of the large debt kept the servant, his family, and all his belongings off the auction block. The servant remained free, retained his family, and kept his stuff plus the forgiven debt no longer existed. He may have felt relieved or lucky, but he was not grateful. Had he been grateful, compassion would have flowed out of his heart to the servant that owed him a debt. His treatment of the other servant only revealed the ungrateful contents of his heart. This explains the reaction of the king in the parable. Jesus gave a warning to those who miss the lesson of the parable.

The Bible tells us to reconcile every issue we are aware of that someone has against us. Romans 12:18 says, "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men." This places considerable responsibility on us to maintain good relations with others. It can be difficult at times to reconcile with a person we have trouble with and to forgive them.

To summarize this section: It is one thing to know God forgave your sins. It is another thing to be grateful for it. Christ forgave our sins when we came to Him through the grace of God. No questions, no penalty, and no payment required, just forgiveness of an extremely large debt of sin that one could never pay. If our hearts are grateful for God's grace and love toward us, surely, we can forgive others of much lesser things than the tally of our own forgiven sins.

It exposes our hearts as ungrateful when we cannot forgive others, just as it revealed the heart of the ungrateful servant. Christ's strong warning applies to us when we are ungrateful for what God has done for us.

[The Art of Contentment](#)

Both Job and Paul serve as examples of people who were content in any circumstance. The articles already covered in this overview of the series prepare us for contentment. Contentment is a learned trait that comes from the experience of trusting God and knowing He is in control of everything. This contentment also enhances the benefits of godliness. (1 Timothy 6:6)

Once we are willing to entrust even our lives to God, our priorities fall into their proper places. The higher priority we give God in our lives the more content we can become. In Philippians 4:6-9 Paul guides us to the peace of God and commands us to turn our worries over to God rather than be anxious about anything. We do this through prayer with thanksgiving in

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everything we do. Thanksgiving is not something we just tack on to the end of our prayers. It is the expression of our gratitude to God for His salvation as a way of life. If gratitude to God becomes our way of life, the “peace of God ... will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”