

SERIES: THE DAY OF MERCY
PART 6: ADOPTION: THE HEART OF GOD

Good Morning (Welcome), and welcome home, friends. Here at CVCHURCH we are a multi-cultural and intergenerational family. One of my favorite sayings we have is **YOU CAN COME AS YOU ARE**. No matter what you're experiencing in your life, whether you're doing extremely well and you're loving life, we welcome you. If you struggle with hurts, habits and hang-ups, you are welcome here. We believe in the power of the love, forgiveness and acceptance of Jesus Christ, and, as each one of us have an open heart to receive from God's mercy and grace all that He wants to lavish upon us as we gather on Sundays and during the weeks with all that we offer--as you come as you are with an open heart and mind, you allow God to change and shape your life in such a way that you become more and more alive with His Hope, Love, Joy, Creativity, and Passion. So you're in good company this morning (afternoon).

I am really excited to share my time this morning with Jeff and Mindy Harrison. They have been on a great odyssey for the last 12 years since they got married. They have twin boys, Wesley and Samuel, and they are just phenomenal boys. Jeff and Mindy are doing a superb job of parenting these boys. I am excited to watch them grow and to see what God's purposes and plans are for them. I am excited for all of your children, and I am deeply grateful for our Kids' Place! Ministry and our EPICC Youth. Recently, they have just adopted their 3rd child. She is so precious. Her name is Rosie. You will hear more about their story. While they have asked me to walk with them through this entire process over the last three years, I have been impressed with them both, and, specifically, Mindy's passion about how, as Christians, it is our privilege and responsibility to engage in children's lives who are not given the opportunity to have a loving family and church family to support them, so they can grow up feeling loved, accepted, forgiven, and that God has a purpose and plan for their lives. I want to share quickly with you **ADOPTION/FOSTERING: THE HEART OF GOD**. I want to share two verses with you as I start that are foundational to thinking about engaging on the behalf of children who, in no fault of their own, don't have someone they can call their family. I want to look at with you **FOUR KEYS TO OPENING YOUR HEART TO CHILDREN WHO NEED GOD'S LOVE**. And specifically, four similarities between what God did in adopting you and me and when Christians adopt children who need a

family. Psalm 68:5-6a says, **“Father to the fatherless, defender of widows--this is God, whose dwelling is holy. 6 God places the lonely in families.”** The Bible is emphatic that God wants people in families, and we get the privilege of being family for those who don't have family. James 1:27 says, **“Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.”** True relationship with Jesus demonstrates itself in helping those who are alone and lonely. Let's quickly look at the four similarities between what God did for us and what happens when we intervene in a child's life--or an adult--and include them in our families.

I. Adoption was costly for God and is costly for us

Galatians 4:4-5 says, **“But when the right time came, God sent His Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. 5 God sent Him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that He could adopt us as His very own children.”** The phrase, “to buy our freedom,” is what the word “to redeem” means. Jesus Christ set us free from our own sin and satan by paying the price. Because of our sin, we actually belong to satan. We were his slaves. We were purchased by Jesus' blood. For God to adopt us, the price was His Son's life.

There are huge costs in adopting children. Some are financial, some are emotional, some are relational and physical. There are costs in time and stress for the rest of your life. You never stop being a parent till you die. And the stresses of caring about adult children can be as great, or greater, than the stresses of caring for young children. There is something very deep and right about the embrace of this cost for the life of a child. God loves us enough He has done it for us, and He wants us to do it for those that need us.

II. Adoption invokes the legal status of the child

There were legal realities God had to deal with. His own justice and law demanded that we experience the punishment and be excluded from His presence for our sins. To maintain a right relationship with God, consequences demanded God had to satisfy His justice in order to adopt sinners into His family. He did this by the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ. This is incredible, because, biblically, it means

that the standing of being a son and daughter of God came before the experience of God's Spirit in our lives, so we could experience the affection and compassion of being His child. In other words, spiritually and legally we are sons and daughters before we experience the joy of being His child. The work of Salvation on the Christ's cross comes before our subjective experience of Salvation and the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. This is also true with our adopting children today. The legal transactions precede and undergird the growth of family feelings and experience. As John Piper writes, "If the legal red tape seems long and hard, keep in mind that this tape is not red with your blood, but Jesus' blood, because He satisfied all the legal demands of redeeming us so that we could call God our Father and Jesus our brother."

III. Adoption is seriously planned by God and by us

Ephesians 1:4-6 says **"Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes. 5 God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure. So we praise God for the glorious grace He has poured out on us who belong to His dear Son."** Adoption was not God's plan B. God chose us for adoption before He created the world. Plan A was not lots of children who never sin and never need to be redeemed. Plan A was creation, the fall, redemption, and adoption so that the full range of God's love, grace and mercy could be known by His adopted children. Adoption was not second best. It was planned from the beginning. There is something uniquely precious about having children by birth. This is a good plan and God's plan. There is also something different, but also uniquely precious about adopting children. Each has its own uniqueness. Your choice to adopt children may be sequentially second, but it is not secondary. God is able to make adoption an A+ plan in our lives.

IV. Adoption for God—and, for the most part, for us—comes from very bad situations

Ephesians 2:3-5 **"You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil--the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. 3 All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very**

nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else. **4 But God is so rich in mercy, and He loves us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, He gave us life when He raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved.)** John Piper writes, **"God did not find us like an abandoned foundling bundled on the front step and irresistibly cute. He found us ugly, evil and rebellious. We were not attractive. We would not be easy children to deal with. Therefore, all of God's adoptions crossed a greater moral and cultural divide than any of our adoptions could. The distance between what we are, and what God is, is infinitely greater than any distance between us and a child we might adopt. God crossed the greatest cultural barrier to redeem and adopt us."** I love the story of the Brewers, Buddy and Krista. They both said that they had God lay on their hearts to adopt a Latin, Down Syndrome boy in their own private times with God. They were amazed when they shared their story with each other. When they went to Child Services, there was only one Latino Down Syndrome baby, because the others had been aborted. The pressure families go through if the medical field detects there might be an aberration in a pregnancy to abort is incredible. When Kathe was told that Whitney in the womb had a chance of 1 out of 10,000 she could be a Down Syndrome, the talk of abortion came up to us, and certain relatives raised the issue, and Kathe and I said, "No." To make a long story short, God not only gave precious Jose to Buddy and Krista, they were able to adopt his half sister. There is not a better example of demonstrating God's heart than to be willing to adopt a child who has no home or to be willing to foster a child who is in transition. Would you welcome Jeff and Mindy as they tell their touching story of how God has truly revealed His heart to them through their adoption of Rosie.