

Children of God

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Much of our unhappiness can be traced back to a single thing: *failing to recognize who we truly are*. We get so engrossed in what *happens to us* that we lose sight of what *Christ done for us*. We become so preoccupied with what we don't have that we fail to appreciate what we do have. Do you want to be happy, truly, deeply, eternally? Then you must consider: *What We Are, What We Do, and Why We Will Be*.

What We Are

What are you? One way to respond to this question is to describe *what you do*: a mom, a teacher, musician, salesman. But that's not what you are; it's a role you fill. What are you? A less guarded response might be: a failure, an undesirable, an intellect, leader, good guy. But that's not what you are; *that's how you perform*. What are you? John says, here's what you are: [See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are](#) (3:1). Child. of. God. That's what you are, if you are in Christ. What does it mean to be a child of God? It means to be loved beyond your wildest dreams; to be cherished more than any family member could ever cherish you; to belong to the eternal Father and enjoy infinite worth. Now, what would life be like without that? I think of people who work so hard to matter. The man who

overworks coming home late constantly because he's desperate for the approval of his peers or boss. I think of woman who can't say no to others. She says yes to every request because she doesn't want to disappoint the people who give her worth. Without the love of God, you've got to belong somewhere. But you, saints, already belong, are already loved and cherished, and have infinite worth. So say no, come home early. Be free. I also think of the person who is a constant critic of the church. Since they don't enjoy the Father's love, they have to squeeze perfect performance out of everybody else. But what does it say? *We are called children of God. The Father's love has been given to the person who disappoints, whom you dislike, or despise as much as it has been given to you. We are the children of God. What is his love like? It was given not earned; bestowed not constrained. And not just given once. The word "given" means to give with lingering effect. The Father's love gets us in his family and keeps us in his family. How do we get in the family? For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son.* In this we see the love of God. It cost him his *only* Son. My wife recently reminded me that after WWII the US Military enacted the Sole Survivor policy, exempting a sole surviving son from enlistment to prevent the family line being wiped out if he died. The Father gave up his *only* Son. Now, did it wipe out the family? No. Did the Father know he would get his Son back? Yes. Did that make less hurtful or sacrificial. Not at all. In fact,

it was *more* painful because his Son was innocent in every way. He heard his Son's cries: Father, let this cup depart from me. There's a special kind of pain that surfaces when your child is hurt. When a kid was bullying my son, I felt deep sadness and anger. I wanted to knock that kid out. But in this story you and I are the bullies, belittling Jesus, snubbing him for peers and bosses, insisting on better circumstances instead of enjoying the love of Jesus. So he entered the playground of our broken world and was knocked out cold for us. The Father *and the Son* embraced the anguish of *sacrificial love* to make enemies, children. Behold [what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are](#). I love those three words. It's God's highlighter. Doesn't need to say it again, but he does, because he wants us to absorb it. I don't want you to just *believe* my love; I want you to *live* in it. When I get around my parents for extended time, I make a lot more jokes, goof off, let my hair down. My family tells me I'm a lot more carefree. Why? Not just because I *believe* I'm their beloved son but because I *live* in their unconditional love. *And so you are, children of God.*

What We Do

What does a child of God do? A child of God abides in him and acts like him. **Abides** in him: [abide in him \(2:27\)](#) [And now, little children,](#)

abide in him (2:28); No one who abides in him keeps on sinning (3:6). The word abide means to *commune*, linger over. It's sharing choice time, live thoughts, and taking in words, presence. Most of us do this quite well, with our phones: linger, share live thoughts, absorbs others' words. But our phones aren't our fathers. They can't love us. The person who abides with the Father has to learn to be *lazy*. To not squeeze productivity into every second, but to relax in God's presence. Just this weekend I had some time to be lazy, and the thought came to mind: you should do something, knock out some email, work on a new book, improve the sermon. But the Lord said just step outside and be lazy. So I sat in a chair and reflected in his presence, let my hair down. Some of you need to be more lazy. Abide also means: stay, remain. A child of God doesn't receive his adopting love and then move on as though no longer part of the family. She remains with him throughout the day. She doesn't shove social networking into every liminal moment, but allows her thoughts to wander back to the Lord she met in those lazy moments. He prays in-between meetings. A child of God remains in him. He also **acts** like him. *Everyone who hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure*. If you really are a child of God, you'll take the family name name seriously. You won't move through life simply wherever your feelings or schedule takes you. You'll eliminate moral impurity because it threatens abiding in God. If a sin was going to take you

out of the faith, which one would it be? Do you know your top three areas of temptation? Who else knows these? Who have you invited to challenge and correct you on these sins? Proverbs: [he who hates reproof is stupid](#) (12:1). It's not only dumb to go it alone and refuse correction; it's ungodly. Everyone who hopes in God purifies himself. If you can't answer these questions, and if you don't have people asking you about them regularly, it's very likely you don't take abiding in God seriously. This week would be a great week to have those conversations with a friend or discipleship group. To be really honest and invite input, accountability, and encouragement. Perhaps you need to refresh those conversations. If you are already doing this, way to go! Let's keep abiding in the father's love and purifying ourselves.

What We Will Be

What are you?—children of God. What do you do?—abide in him and act like him. But why? Why should we make the effort? John grounds his command to purify ourselves in *what we will be*: [what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is](#) (3:2). We purify ourselves in the present because of the future. Because of what we *will* be. What we believe about the future shapes the present. If you hear the weather forecast it's going to rain, you pick

up an umbrella or rain jacket before you head out the door. It isn't raining but because you believe it will rain you change your behavior in the present. This future-present dynamic is all over the New Testament. We are raised up with Christ seated in the heavenly places (future reality), now keep seeking Christ (Col 3). Eschatology shapes our ethics. What future is John telling us about? When Jesus appears, [we shall be like him because we will see him as he is](#). When Jesus returns, our perception of him will be transformative in some way. How will we see him? In the *flesh*? Yes, but didn't the disciples also see him in the flesh and remain relatively unchanged? What about in *resurrection* form? Didn't the disciples behold the risen Christ, and as Matthew says, "Some doubted" (28:17)? What then will we see about Christ that will be so transformative? How will we see him? As *glorified*. When Jesus ascended to heaven we're told that everything was placed under his feet and he sat down at the right hand of power, glorified over everyone and everything. No one has seen his glorified state. In Revelation when John has a *vision* of this Christ he falls at his feet as though dead. When Paul encounters the glory of Christ on the road to Damascus, he's blinded for three days. You see we will need new eyes to take in the new glory of Christ. His unhindered glory is blinding to the naked eye because of his unmatched moral purity, celestial beauty, and ontological omnipotence. His immensity. And when Jesus returns his children

will see him *glorified* and become like him! All concern about what others think, and what we think of others, will fall away as we behold the glorified Christ and receive *new eyes* to take in his glory, *new bodies* to inhabit his new world, as consummated new creations, to live lazily in his undying love forever, unhindered by sin and temptation. Total, embodied, Christ-centered happiness, forever. So, with that future in view lets purify ourselves in the present. Let future glory motivate present godliness. Let's keep an eye on what we are, *children of God*, what we should do, *abide in him and act like him*, and what we will be, *glorified together with Christ*.