



# Children of God!

A SUMMER SERIES ON THE EPISTLE OF 1 JOHN

Psalms 121 1 John 3:1-11 Matthew 6:25-34

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Pastor Dave Bolte

One of the most endearing, easy to understand Gospel image is that of *God the Father*.

- ⇒ If your *earthly father* was a good man who loved you and cared for you, then this Gospel image of *God the Father* is precious to you.
- ⇒ If your *earthly father* failed you or maybe even hurt you, then think of what a perfect father would have been like --- *and multiply it by a thousand* --- and you will start to understand this gospel image of *God the Father*!

This image as *God as Father* goes back to the Garden of Eden, where Adam is referred to as a son of God (Luke 3). Marriage and Family, with Fathers and Mothers, was God's design for His Creation since the beginning: in the Garden of Eden<sup>1</sup>. Earthly fathers and mothers are to reflect *God the Father's love and care*.

This Gospel image of *God as Father* continues through the Old Testament. God rescues the Israelites from slavery to the Egyptians, and makes them His People, His Children. *God the Father*, who formed the nation of Israel, is faithful to His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. His great power and work is displayed throughout their history.

For us, in the New Testament era, the image of *God the Father* draws our attention immediately to the **Father's Son, Jesus**. The essence of the

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<sup>1</sup> It should not surprise us that the sinful world has turned even this upside down. Fathers, Mothers, Marriage, and Family are derided in vile ways in our culture; men and women are thought to be interchangeable in all things; and even gender is denied. All of this rebellion, and the immorality that inevitably follows it, is NOT FROM GOD. God declares the vocations of "Fathers, Mothers, Marriage, and Family," and the two created genders of male and female, as very good (Gen 1:31).

Gospel is that *God the Father* so loved the world, that He sent **His Only Begotten Son** into the world so that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life. *God the Father's* love for you is described as *lavish and immense*. *God the Father's* love is seen most clearly in sending **His Son** to die on a cross for you to restore your relationship with Him. It is the **Son of God** that brings you to *God the Father!*

**This is the Gospel!** When you hear this gospel good news, the Holy Spirit creates faith so that you know that it's true and that you are included. St. John highlights that through faith you are now a *child of God!* You belong to *God the Father* and live in His family!

Behold! What kind of love the Father has *lavished* on us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are! 1 John 3:1

Faith gives you a new status in God's eyes; You are His child and live in His Family. In Holy Baptism, God gave you His Name as He baptized you in *the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*.

**God's Family is all believers of all times and all places.** Believers are connected to each other -- like brothers and sisters -- through faith in Christ. There is a unity with other believers -- for instance, we are united with those who trust in Christ in South Sudan, in Sudan, and in all the other countries of the world! Heaven is going to be a multi-ethnic group of people from every century of earth history! Revelation describes God's Family as consisting of every **nation, tribe, people, and language!**<sup>2</sup>

John stresses that **right now** you are a child of God, even though from all outward appearances you look the same as unbelievers. John writes,

Beloved, we are God's children *now*, and 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.

1 John 3:2

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<sup>2</sup> Of course, this is the true and lasting answer to racism. In God's eyes, humanity is not divided by skin color, language, economics, or anything else. In Christ, there is a unity with all people. For Christians, to engage in racism is a denial of Christ and the gospel. However, for the people of the earth, who reject Christ and His gospel, their sinful nature will continually hate, envy, and contend with others for any number of reasons, including skin color, language, economics, and any and everything else. Only Christ can bring "peace on earth and good will to men!" Christ unites people from every nation, tribe, people, and language!

John is writing so that we do not get discouraged by the plethora of false teachers who twist, warp, and deny that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and the Savior of the world. John is writing so that you do not get misled and deceived into loving the world with its pride and lusts. **You are a child of God now.** You have been baptized. You have been given faith. You know the Lord Jesus Christ. Your sins are forgiven. You belong to God the Father. You are a child of God **now**, and on the Last Day when Jesus returns you will be vindicated. God will reveal your glory as a child of God; you will escape the final judgment, and you will live forever in the Kingdom of Heaven in your resurrected and glorified body. All of this proves that you are a child of God and that you belong to God the Father. *You are a child of God **now**, and what you will be has **not yet** appeared; but you know that when He appears you shall be like Him!*

**Until that happens**, *we walk by faith*, knowing and believing that God is our Father. And that impacts us in many and various ways.

- ⇒ We know that *God the Father* loves us and watches over us. He carefully provides for us and gives us our daily bread. He faithfully provides everything we need to support this body and life. His care extends to the smallest detail of our lives --> He has even counted the hairs on our head<sup>3</sup>!
- ⇒ We boldly approach *God the Father* in prayer, even using Jesus' own prayer as our prayer! The Son of God gave the Children of God His own prayer: *the Lord's Prayer*. You know that the Lord's Prayer begins with, "*Our Father who art in heaven.*" With these words God tenderly invites you to believe that He is your true Father, and that you are His true child, so that you may ask of Him with all boldness and confidence.
- ⇒ As children of God, we get an inheritance for being part of God's family! God's "last will and New Testament" that went into effect when Jesus died, means that you get gifts from *God the Father*: specifically the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

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<sup>3</sup> I encourage you to memorize Psalm 121 in this regard. Its only 8 verses, but in those 8 verses, the Lord promises 6 times to "watch over / keep" your life!! If you want to see a formatted version of Psalm 121, email me and I will send it to you. Psalm 121 is well worth the time to memorize!

⇒ We understand our lives through the eyes of *God the Father*. When hardships, trials, difficulties, and suffering occurs, we understand these things as *God the Father* at work in our lives for our good. He is never at work to hurt you nor harm you. Everything He allows into your life is for your good, to help you; it is all allowed under His watchful eye, loving care, and mighty power. He makes everything work for good ... that's His promise to you.

One of the things that John highlights is that as God's children, we are to love others as He has loved us. Love for other people is the chief sign that you are a child of God.

Beloved, *let us love one another*, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.  
1 John 4:7-8

### **Love is the sign that you are a Child of God.**

This love for other people is a gift from Christ and a fruit of the Holy Spirit. It is not a worldly kind of love; it is a Gospel kind of love. This kind of love is patient and kind towards others. This kind of love serves and helps others as Christ has served and helped you. This kind of love gets involved in serving others – it is busy and active. Jesus describes this love in the “Golden Rule” when He taught: *“do unto others as you would have them do to you.”* Jesus also said, *“My command is this: ‘Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.’”* John 15:12-13  
Love for others is self-sacrificing; it is getting involved in people’s lives; it is loving with no strings attached.

### **Love is the sign that you are a Child of God.**

Your status in God's eyes is that of His child.

You are part of His family.

He takes the responsibility to be your Heavenly Father.

*Behold! What kind of love the Father has lavished on you, that you should be called children of God; and so that is what you are!* 1 John 3:1 paraphrase

**Amen!**

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God the Father in Heaven,  
in Jesus' name, and by the power of the  
Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers to you  
today.

We praise and thank you for your lavish love  
and faithful care in our lives.

Help us to live as your dear children in this  
evil and corrupt world.

Give us a clear confession of Jesus our  
Savior so that others make here and believe  
in him.

Empower us to do good and to love our  
neighbor as Jesus has loved us.

We rejoice that we are your children  
and ask that you keep us ever mindful of  
that until we are revealed on the last day.

Amen!

# Psalm 121

- <sup>1</sup> I lift up my eyes to the mountains—  
where does my help come from?
- <sup>2</sup> My help comes from the Lord,  
the Maker of heaven and earth.
- <sup>3</sup> He will not let your foot slip—  
he who watches over you will not slumber;
- <sup>4</sup> indeed, he who watches over Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- <sup>5</sup> The Lord watches over you—  
the Lord is your shade at your right hand;
- <sup>6</sup> the sun will not harm you by day,  
nor the moon by night.
- <sup>7</sup> The Lord will keep you from all harm—  
he will watch over your life;
- <sup>8</sup> the Lord will watch over your coming and going  
both now and forevermore.

# 1 John 3:1-11

3 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

3 All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

4 Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness.

5 But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin.

6 No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.

7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

8 The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.

9 No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.

10 This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.

11 For this is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another.

# Matthew 6:25-34

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? 28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.