

Adopted

Taking Your Place in the Family of God

CHAPTER ONE

Born Into a Family

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CHAPTER 1

Born Into a Family

"Our Father in heaven"

No baby in a maternity ward has ever filled out a membership application form. A baby born in your town this morning did not apply to join the family, sit an interview or pass a probation period. She arrived, she cried, and she was family. Her position came with her birth, not her behaviour. She will spend the next twenty years learning how to live in that family, but she will never spend a single day earning her place in it.

That is exactly how Jesus described becoming a Christian. Not joining. Not improving. Being born.

> *Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"*
>
> John 3:3 to 7 (NKJV)

Nicodemus was a religious professional, a teacher of Israel, and Jesus did not tell him to try harder. He told him to start again, from a new birth, by the Spirit. Look at the two words Jesus uses. Unless you are "born again" you cannot see the Kingdom, and unless you are "born of the Spirit" you cannot enter it. Birth gives you sight and birth gives you access. Nothing else does.

John had already said the same thing in his opening chapter.

> *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*
>
> John 1:12 and 13 (NKJV)

Read that slowly. To those who received Him and believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. Not a chance. Not an invitation. The right. And it is a right that comes by birth, and the birth is of God. You did not decide to be born the first time and you did not produce the second birth either. You received. You believed. God birthed.

You were not recruited into a religion. You were born into a family.

Three Persons, one household

When you are born again you do not simply get a ticket to heaven. You get a family, and a family has people in it. From the moment of your new birth three things are true, and I want to name them plainly because this whole book hangs on them.

First, the Father God is now your Father. Jesus told the disciples to open every prayer with two words, "Our Father." Not Our Judge. Not Our Employer. Not Our Distant Creator. Father. The One who spoke the galaxies into being invites you to address Him with the word a small child uses at the kitchen table. That is not casual. It is astonishing, and we will spend Chapter 3 exploring it.

Second, Jesus is now your King. Paul says the Father has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Colossians 1:13). Jesus does not join your life as a consultant. He arrives as a King, with all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18), and He brings His Kingdom with Him. A family with a King in it has order, protection, provision and purpose. We will unpack that Kingdom in Chapter 2.

Third, the Holy Spirit is now with you and in you. Jesus called Him another Helper, one who would abide with you and dwell in you forever (John 14:16 and 17). He is your power to live this life (Acts 1:8), your comfort when it hurts (2 Corinthians 1:3 and 4), your wisdom when you do not know what to do (John 14:26) and, in the plainest words I can find, God with you. Chapter 8 is His.

Before we go any further, let me say plainly why any of this is possible, because a family book that forgets the cross will end up training people to admire the house without knowing how they got in. You are in the family because the Son was condemned in your place. Paul says God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). Your sin was real, God's judgement on it was real, and Jesus carried it to the cross, died, was buried and rose from the dead on the third day. Because He rose, you are justified, declared not guilty at the Father's court bench, and because you are justified, you are adopted. Sonship is the fruit of the gospel, not a substitute for it. The cross is not one door into the family and sincerity another. There is one way in, and it is blood. Nobody is born into this family by deciding to live like family, any more than a stranger becomes your brother by pulling a chair up to your table. You are born again, and the birth cost Jesus His life.

Paul calls Jesus the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8:29). He is the Son by nature, eternal, beloved, at home with the Father before there was a world. You and I are sons by new birth, and the new birth was purchased. The Son by nature was slain so that sons by grace could be born. He walked out of the grave into His Father's house and He did not walk out alone. Everyone who receives Him is born into the same house He rose into.

So your sonship does not rest on your resolve. It rests on His resurrection. He was slain and He is alive, and because He lives before the Father as Son, you stand before the Father as one too.

In Mere Christianity C.S. Lewis put the whole thing in one sentence: "The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God." That is the gospel viewed through a family frame. The eternal Son took on flesh so that people like you and me, with our histories and our failures and our ordinary weekdays, could be brought into the very relationship He has always had with His Father. Lewis went on to say that God does not want to merely make us nice people, He wants to make us new people, "little Christs", sharing His kind of life. That is what a family does. It shares a life.

Religion or family?

Here is the contrast that will run through every chapter. Religion says perform and you will be accepted. Family says you are accepted, now grow. Religion asks, what must I do to get in? Family asks, now that I am in, how do we live? The one who lives by religion ends up exhausted and anxious, always checking the scoreboard. The one who lives as family ends up secure, and from that security becomes far more fruitful than the anxious performer ever will.

Myles Munroe, the Bahamian pastor whose teaching on the Kingdom has shaped a generation of leaders, used to say that Jesus never came to start a religion. He came to announce a Kingdom and to bring people into the family of the King. When I first heard this, it rearranged my furniture. I had grown up thinking Christianity was something you attended. But it is a Kingdom and a family you are born into.

So let me ask you the question I ask most times I preach. Do you know Him or only know about Him? Have you been born again? Not, do you go to church? Not, are you a good person? Have you received Christ and believed in His name, and has God done in you what no amount of effort can do? If the answer is yes, then everything in this book is already yours. If you are not sure, you can settle it right now. Turn to Him. Receive Him. Believe in His name. He gives the right to become a child of God to everyone who does.

And if you have been born again for forty years and have still been living like a tenant, this is your notice. The lease is not up for renewal because there is no lease. There is a birth certificate. Take your place.

A closing prayer

Father, thank You that I did not join a religion. I was born into a family. I receive Your Son and I believe in His name. I take You at Your word that I am Your child. Teach me to live from acceptance rather than for it. I am not a visitor in Your house. I am home. Amen.

Reflection questions

1. In your own words, what is the difference between joining a religion and being born into a family? Which one has shaped how you have related to God until now?
2. Read John 1:12 and 13 again. What does it mean that God gives the right to become His child? Who did the work in that verse?
3. Of the three Persons named in this chapter, Father, Son and Spirit, which do you relate to most naturally, and which do you tend to leave out?
4. Where in your life are you still performing for acceptance rather than growing from it?

That is chapter one. There are nine more.

Adopted: Taking Your Place in the Family of God releases on 1 November 2026 in paperback and ebook. Every chapter ends the way this one did, with questions to sit with, a prayer to pray, and the plain declarations Ken says over his own life each morning. A ten session small group guide is included.

Get the book at adoptedbook.au

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