

The background of the entire page is an abstract composition of overlapping, semi-transparent shapes in various shades of orange, red, and brown. These shapes create a layered, organic effect, reminiscent of flames or a sunset. The colors range from deep, dark reds and browns to bright oranges and light yellows.

GRACE-LOVE-TRUTH COURSE.

LESSON 6A: WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD

PART 6A. CHILDREN OF GOD- OUR NEW IDENTITY

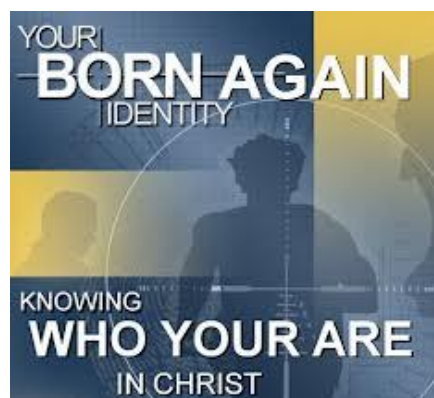
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INTRODUCTION

Grace is about what Jesus earned for us on the cross and how He has established us in our new identity as God's beloved children. Jesus removed the sin barrier that divided a holy God from his children. Jesus reconciled us to our Father (Ro.5:10). Restoration of our identity and position as God's children is the key issue of Jesus' work on the cross.

Understanding our identity as children of God is one of the most important aspect of

Christian living. One's identity determines how one see life and how one lives life. Our identity affects both our world view and our belief system. If we identify ourselves as sinners, we act like sinners. If we believe we are slaves, or servants, we act like slaves or servants. On the other hand if we see ourselves as saints and children of a king then we will live holy lives, act like children of the Father and reign like royalty. Firm and unshakable foundations of identity are crucial to stability in both life and faith and our ability to accept the blessings of God's grace. Many people are insecure in their identity. Most people link their identity to what they do - their performance determines their



sense of well being. Others base their identity on many varied things including; social status, family, titles, wealth, work, ministry, family names, friends or education etc. Although many of these are good and important at the end of the day, these are all uncertainties as they are temporal and will, pass away, changes in value, or simply not prove strong enough when tested. There is only one enduring eternal and unshakable identity that we can all rely on; who we are in Christ. As believers it is crucial that our identity be firmly established on the scriptural truth that we are God's beloved and precious children. This part of the course will take us deeper into the wonderful truths of Abba's love for us and his adoption of us as his children.

LESSON 1: CHILDREN OF GOD

1. GODS IS LOVE

1.1 GOD' S LOVE FOR US

1Jn 4:9-10 This how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

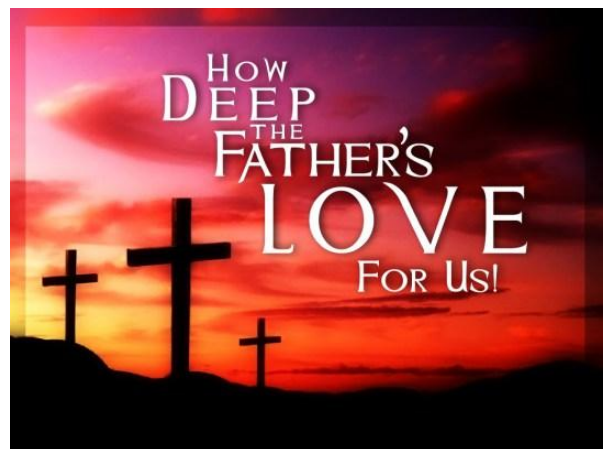
1Jn. 4:16-19 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love.

God is love! God doesn't just love, He is love. Our Abba Father wants us to be immersed and consumed by His love for us. Abba wants our focus to be on His love. Under the Law the focus was that we must love God with all our being. Under grace the focus is that God loved us with all His being and proved it by sending His Son to die for us.

1.2 OUR FIRST LOVE

Re. 2:4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love.

There is an order to Christian love. Love must have its source in God, not in our self-life. The love with which we are called to love God, ourselves and then others, first has to come to us from our Abba Father, who is love (1Jn.48). We can only give, or live out, what we are able to receive from Him. Grace living is based on a dependence on God as our source and our supply. We draw love from Him so that we may love others unconditionally, just as He loves us unconditionally. All love that is not sourced in the Father will always be conditional love and therefore, lacking. Christian grace living is about focussing on God's love for us and not our love for him. Through the first commandment, the Law has taught to focus on our love for God, but grace calls us to return to our first love - God's love for us. It is God's love that drew us to Jesus - let us not forget that no one can come to the Lord unless God's love has enabled him (John6:65). The correct order is that we love God because he first loved us - not the other way around.



1.3 THE FIRST COMANDMENT TO LOVE

Deu.6:5-6 (Mat.22:36-38) Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.

Telling people to love God more is Law preaching. The first commandment, like all the Ten Commandments leads to condemnation and guilt. Who can really love God with all their heart, mind and soul? No one! We may all want to but none of us can or do. In this life there is always part of our love reserved for other people and other things. We cannot focus on, or boast about, our love for God as it will always fall short. The Law teaches that we are not blessed because we don't love God enough. Grace says that we are blessed because His love is more than enough and flows with great abundance into our lives.

1Cor.13:4-13 list the characteristics of God's love to us , which will then flow out of us by his Spirit.

1.5 BELIEVE YOU ARE LOVED

1Jn 4:18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.

We have to trust in God's first love only. Do you believe that God loves you - all the time? Sometime in life we are loved but we don't believe it. It's not the truth that sets us free but the knowledge and receiving of the of the truth. In other words; the truth is that we are unconditionally loved by God, however, if we don't believe it we can't be free from condemnation, guilt and rejection. We must choose to believe we are loved by God. When we know how much we are loved by Abba then fear of judgment, punishment and rejection leaves our lives (1Jn.4:18).

1.4 THE BELOVED SON

Luke 3:22 and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

Before Jesus performed any miracles or started any ministry, God proclaimed His love and approval of Him as a beloved son. "*You are my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*" said for all to hear.

It is the same for us; God's love is not based on our performance or obedience. Under the Law God's love was conditional, under grace we are loved unconditionally and we are not just sons, but beloved sons (this applies to both male and female). Abba Father wants to affirm us as beloved because we are in Christ. Jesus qualifies us for all the love that He has from the Father. We are no longer slaves or servants but Abba's beloved children, just like Jesus. Those who see themselves in Christ, who know they are unconditionally loved, are the ones that in turn can truly love.

1.5 PETER BOASTED OF HIS LOVE FOR JESUS

The Scriptures show us a bleak contrast between two disciples Peter and John; one boasted of his love for Jesus and the other simply knew he was loved as Jesus knew he was loved by the Father.

Luke 22:31-34 I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." Jesus



answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me."

Through this incident we see the consequences of boasting in our works of our love for God instead of his love for us. Peter boasts of his love and commitment to the Lord, but when his love was tested he quickly fell away and denied Jesus three times. Despite boasting of his love and commitment, Peter ran away and unlike the Apostle John, Peter was not present at the cross to comfort Jesus in his hour of need. We have seen elsewhere in this course that Peter struggled with legalism and Law. Peter kept reverting to Law living instead of relying on grace. Peter represents believers who mixes Law and grace; people who follows Jesus but trusts in themselves and boasts about what they have done, or will do for the Lord, instead of focussing on what the Lord has done for them.

Thank God that because of grace Jesus restored Peter, but Jesus did question Peter about his love, three times, just to get home the point (John 21:15-18). Peter is a good lesson for us all:

i) We cannot trust in our ability to love God. ii) Trusting in self will always lead to failure. iii) Peter was a giver but found it hard to receive. iv) Many like Peter find it hard to receive love from Jesus (John.13:8).

1.6 JOHN BOASTED OF JESUS' LOVE FOR HIM

In contrast to Peter there was another disciple John, who also teaches us a good lesson of love.

John 13:23 One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him.

In the gospel written by the Apostle John, John refers to himself three time as "*The disciple whom Jesus loved*". John declared in writing for all the world to see that he was the most loved of Jesus' disciples. These statements are not found in any of the other gospels, because the truth is that Jesus loved all his disciples equally. The difference is that John absolutely believed and practiced Jesus' excessive love personally for himself, on a very intimate level. John, unlike the other disciples knew that he was loved and was not ashamed or shy to proclaimed it openly. John boasted in the Lords love for him, he never boasted in his love for Jesus. Now it is interesting that while Peter ran away, it was John who stayed behind and was found at the foot of the cross comforting Jesus in His death. Jesus even entrusted his own mother, Mary, to John (John19:26).

John represents the believer who lives in grace and who's focus and trust is in the Lords love. We all need to be like John and believe we are God's beloved and favoured children. When we believe and accept this truth we can be used in mighty ways by the Lord as we will have complete confidence in the Lord and his willingness to back us up, no matter what. His love and grace guarantees it!

2. WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD

John 1:12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God - children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

Those who believe in Jesus as Lord and saviour are children of God. This is the foundational truth of our new identity. Grace has totally changed the way we see, and the way we relate, to God. This amazing truth is something we need to look into in more detail.



2.1 GOD IS OUR FATHER

Jer. 3:19-20 "I myself said, 'How gladly would I treat you like my children and give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful inheritance of any nation.' I thought you would call me 'Father' and not turn away from following me. But like a woman unfaithful to her husband, so you, Israel, have been unfaithful to me," declares the LORD.

Mat 11:27 "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Since Adam's choice to rely on his own ability and knowledge instead of believing God, God's heart has always been for a people who would turn to Him, put their trust in Him, and rely on Him as a loving Father, a people who would be childlike in their dependence on Him instead of relying in their own strength and abilities. Abraham was one such as this, he knew grace and confidently talked with God. But his offspring Israel turned away from a relationship with God. When God gave Israel the Law at Sinai, the response God was looking for was; *"Father show us grace, love us as your children, help us, we cannot do these things you command of us"*, instead Israel's arrogant response was *"Just tell us what to do and we will fully obey. But don't talk with us, talk with Moses because we are afraid of you"* (a paraphrase of events around Sinai. Ex.19.8, 20:19). Needless to say that within days of these prided filled statements Israel totally disobeyed all God's commandments and turned to other Gods (Ex.32:1). Israel totally lost the concept that God was, or could be, their loving Father. In fact to imply such in Israel was considered blasphemy (Jn.5:18). This was one of the reasons that the Jews wanted to kill Jesus for - that he dared to refer to God as his Father. Part of Jesus grace mission was to bring Israel and the world to an understanding that God is first a loving Father (Jn.8:19). Jesus instructed us to pray to *"our Father"*. Such familiarity was unheard of in Israel and also actually in all other religion - even today.

God wants you to know him as a loving and caring Father whom you can trust like a child (Mk.10:15), this is what grace and the kingdom of God is all about.

2.2 GOD IS OUR ABBA, DADDY

Mar 14:36 "Abba, Father," Jesus said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Rom 8:15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

Gal 4:6 Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

God is our Father. However the title father can be rather formal and cold. Therefore Jesus went a step further and called God "Abba" Father. The word Abba is only used three times in the whole Bible, all three times are found in the New Testament. Abba is the Hebrew word for daddy. It is still used by little children in Israel today. Go to a pre-primary school in Israel and you will hear all the little children crying out "Abba, Abba!" when they see their daddies. Jesus was the only one who ever called God his "Daddy". One can imagine what an affront this would have been to the Jewish religious leaders. The Holy Spirit goes even deeper and reveals that we, who are in grace, are to call our heavenly Father "Daddy". Now that's intimate, that's radical and that's definitive of our new relationship with God.

Sadly many of people find it difficult to relate to God as a daddy due to their own natural fathers inadequacies and inability to express love. This block can be overcome through the revelation that Jesus is the



exact likeness of the Abba Father as they are one (Jn.14:1) and that deep down most of us have a God given idealized picture of what a loving father should look like. When sin and circumstances have warped our understanding of Abba Father we need to be set free and repent i.e. change our minds and fix our eyes on Jesus and see him as the perfect representation of God the Father (Heb.1:3).

2.3 THE OLD COVENANT PRODUCED SERVANTS AND SLAVES

Gal 4:24 These things are being taken figuratively: The women (Sarah and Hagar) represent two covenants. One covenant is from Mount Sinai and bears children who are to be slaves: This is Hagar.... Gal 4:30 But what does Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son."

Under the Old Covenant people saw themselves as God's servants. Their relationship to God was one of master and slave, or master and servant. Under the Law humankind was enslaved by sin and our lot was to perform and obey in the hope of appeasing the wrath of an angry and fearful God. This is not what God wanted but this is what Israel chose. Gal. 4:22-31 makes it clear that those who live according to the Law are slaves. The Law enslaves people. However God is not looking for slaves or servants. God has enough angels to serve him in every way. We are no longer called to be God's servants or slaves, we are called to be God's sons and daughters. The New Covenant and the grace that has come through Jesus has changed our standing, we are now in right standing with God and that right standing, or right relationship, is one of family.

Slaves and servants have no right to live in their master house, know their masters business, nor enjoy their masters assets or wealth. Sons and daughters on the other hand, do! Things have completely changed, slaves and servants have now become sons and daughters of the King.

Likewise because our Father is holy, those who identify themselves as "sinners" cannot live in the house hold of God. We are saints by the grace of God and we are His children. We need to get rid of the old slave, sinner and servant mindset.

2.4 ABBA HAS ADOPTED US AS HIS CHILDREN

Rom 8:15-16 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

The difference between grace and mercy can be expressed in the following story: There is a mighty judge who is called to pass sentence on a young homeless boy who it turns out murdered the judges one and only son. Despite the boys obvious guilt the judge forgives the boy and pardons him, declaring him to be "Not guilty" - this is mercy.

The judge however goes a step further and decides to adopt the homeless young murderer as his own son. Not only that but he makes him heir to all his wealth - this grace.



And that is exactly what God has done for us. He has forgiven us for the sins that killed his Son and He has adopted us into his family and made us heirs, we are now family to God. We have His very Spirit within us, something absolutely unique to his children only. It is the Holy Spirit that seals and guarantees our adoption. Those that do not have the Spirit of God are not children of God. They, like

all mankind, are created in God's image but they are still servants or slaves bound by sin and unable to live in the Father's house or enjoy the privileges of the family.

The wonderful thing about knowing that you are God's child is that you are free to talk to your Dad at any time. Every dad wants to help his children, every dad wants what is best for his children, how much more so with Abba. From now on when reading Scripture if we want to know what God's attitude or instruction is, we simply ask, "What would my loving Dad do or want for me".

2.6 ABBA HAS MADE US HIS HEIRS

Gal 4:7 So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.

In Jewish culture it was the first born son who inherited. That is why believers are all, male and female, referred to as "sons". Sonship is a legal position of inheritance. We are co-inheritors with the firstborn Son, Jesus. We receive because Jesus has received and we are now part of him. Abraham and Isaac are a picture of this truth. In grace, represented by Abraham, Isaac, the son of God's promise, inherited everything (Gen.25:5) despite the fact that Abraham had numerous other children. In this case Isaac represents believers in Christ. It is through Jesus that we, like Isaac, inherit all the promises God and the full benefits of God's kingdom; eternal life, abundant life now, health, wealth, love, joy, peace etc. Jesus has been given all things by the Father and as part of Jesus we too share in this inheritance. As God's co-heirs with Jesus we have a right to draw all the riches and resources of God. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords and as son's of God we are kings and lords under Christ, who are called to reign and rule on the earth using all the power and riches of the kingdom that we have inherited in Christ. We are blessed to be a blessing.

2.7 WAITING FOR THE SONS

Rom 8:19-21 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

God is longing for believers to take hold of their identity as His sons. Son's who know that they have His favour, sons who will represent Him, sons who are full of love and grace and who will act and rule in His name. Sons who will serve Him as ambassadors (2Co.5:20), no longer as servants.

We see this in the story of the prodigal son (Lk.15). The wayward son was happy to return and be a servant in his father's house, but the father would have none of it. He restored him to his full position as a son and even gave him his ring of authority, which in those days was the family seal and guarantee. Our Abba Father wants the same for us. Not only is Abba longing for his sons to take authority upon the earth once again, but the whole of creation is also longing for the sons of God to take their place in reigning and ruling over creation so that it too may be liberated from the effects of sin and death. This aspect of sonship is something that we all still need deeper revelation of by the Holy Spirit - how Lord do we live this out and change the world?

2.8 WE ARE NOT ORPHANS

John 14:17 the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will



come to you.

Since the fall of mankind we have suffered with a sense of rejection and loneliness. Sin separated us from our Father and deep down we have all felt it, there is an orphan spirit within ALL those who are lost. The unsaved are desperate to find meaning, identity and acceptance and will resort to any means available to fill the emptiness within, thus man's propensity to emotion numbing addictions and lusts. Everyone is looking for love and acceptance, that is why the good news of God's love and grace is so powerful. Jesus recognized this. Thus His emphasis on God as a loving Father. Jesus knew the big empty inner void needed to be filled so that the orphans spirit could be broken. Jesus has filled the void with his Spirit, the Spirit by which we call out "Abba Father". Grace frees us and heals us from the heart break of being spiritual orphans.

On the other hand, the Law simply emphasises why we deserve to be rejected and orphaned. Here is the difference between the two positions. We need to repent of an orphan mindset and accept our new position and status as sons of God.

THE ORPHAN HEART		THE HEART OF A SON
Sees God as master	IMAGE OF GOD	Sees God as a loving Abba Father
Independent and self reliant	DEPENDENCY	Dependant on God
Lives by the love of law	THEOLOGY	Lives by the law of love
Insecure and lacks peace	SECURITY	Living in rest and peace
Strives for praise, approval and acceptance. Performance driven	APPROVAL	Feels totally accepted and loved by God. Justified by grace
A need for personal achievement, seeking to impress God and others, or passive & full of self doubt	MOTIVE FOR SERVING	Service motivated by the Spirit from a heart of love and gratitude for Gods unconditional love
Duty, fear, a need to earn God's favour, or simply no motivation at all	MOTIVE FOR SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES	Pleasure and delight
Must be holy to have God's blessings, thus increasing sense of condemnation	MOTIVE FOR PURITY	A deep desire to live out holiness, a inner sense of purity & God's presence
Self rejection, self critical, judgmental, unworthiness	SELF IMAGE	Positive & affirmative. Confidence because of identity in Christ
Counterfeit affections; addictions, compulsions, busyness, religiosity, escapism	SOURCE OF COMFORT	Quietness, solitude & rest that leads to times of intimacy with God & an experience of his love
Competition, rivalry, jealousy, critical	PEER RELATIONSHIPS	Humility, love & unity. Valuing others & their success
Accusation & exposure in order to make oneself look good	HANDLING OTHERS FAULTS	Forgiving, gentle & loving. A desire to restore others
Difficulty in receiving correction. A need to be right. Feelings easily hurt.	VIEW OF CORRECTION	Welcomes feedback & correction. See it as a chance to grow.
Rebellious, distrustful, unwilling to submit. See it as a source of pain	VIEW OF AUTHORITY	Respectful, honouring, wanting good oversight & discipling
Guarded & conditional. Based on performance. A need to get one's own	EXPRESSION OF LOVE	Open, kind, patient & affectionate. Laying down of self to try to bless

needs met		others
Conditional & far off	SENSE OF GOD'S PRESENCE	Close & intimate
Bondage & slavery	CONDITION	Liberty & freedom
God's servant or slave	POSITION	A child of God
Spiritual ambition: Striving for spiritual importance & position. A desire to be seen & counted as important	VISION	To daily experience God's love, intimacy & grace. To be his representative

2. 9 THE PRODIGAL SON

We looked at the parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk.15) in the first part of the course. It is probably one of the most important parables that reveals the grace and the love of the Father. Now you are asked to reflect on it in more depth both in your personal time and group time. Please remember that there are two sons in the parable and one represents the sinner saved by grace, the other the self-righteous religious man who depends on his own works.

The father gave the prodigal son gifts. Any idea what these represented or signified? Can you relate them to anything in the Old Testament?



- i. The best robe: _____
- ii. The ring: _____
- iii. The sandals: _____
- iv. The fatted calf: _____
- v. The feast: _____

The eldest son's comments were full of bitterness; 'Look I've been slaving for you all these years'. Who does the eldest son represent. Write down some reflections on this.

Discuss the father and his attitude. Is this how you see God? Discuss and write down some points.

How does this parable contrast grace and law? Discuss and write down some points.
