

7/30/17 Adoption Parenting Class Handout – The Gospels and Identity in Christ

Paul Tripp, Helping Your Adopted Child: Understanding Your Child's Unique Identity: 'What looks like selfishness and rebellion in your adopted child might simply be the way she is coping with her fears and insecurities about her identity and place in the world... You might wonder why it seems like you have to deal with these issues of identity and belonging with your adopted child over and over again. This is because your adopted child's struggle with his place in life is taking place at the same time as his development. You might deal with a particular struggle when your child is 5 and think that it's solved. But...a 10-year-old is able to feel and understand things that a 5-year-old can't. Perhaps that same struggle will rear its head at age 12 and again at age 17... your child has to deal with old issues in new and different ways... she will be tempted to deal with her fears of identity and belonging in a negative way. She might test your love by challenging your authority. Because she struggles with where she belongs, she might become domineering and controlling... it's very important that you learn how to deal forthrightly with the sinful responses, while demonstrating a loving and patient awareness of the profound struggles underneath. You want your adopted child to be aware that you understand what he is dealing with, but also to know that you will require him to deal with them in a right way... Thankfully, God, in the Bible, has much to say about our identity as his children and our place of belonging in his family...'

Gospel Truths to Help Find Belonging, Understanding, Sympathy and Identity in Christ

1. Jesus knows what it's like to have an adoptive parent (Joseph, Mt 1:20-21; Lk 1:27, 33; Jn 6:42)
2. Jesus knows sibling tensions from growing up with Joseph's biological kids (Jn 7:3-5, Mk 3:21)
3. Jesus knows rejection and neglect by His own kinsmen who refused to take Him in (Jn 1:11)
4. Jesus knows identity questions, temptations of food, trust, testing Father's love, etc. (Mt 3:17-4:7)
5. Jesus knows anguish and feelings of overwhelming sorrow in a father's separation (Mt 26:37-39)
6. Jesus knows abuse and abandonment greater than we'll know (Mt 26:67-68, 27:30, 39, 46, etc.)
7. Jesus has compassion for those who are hurting or from hard places or in need of shepherding:
Mt 9:36 '*Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd* [NASB, or the other translations have 'troubled and abandoned' or 'cast away...cast aside...hurting...helpless...confused...dejected...faint,' etc.]
8. Jesus has a special concern in His heart for those adults mistreated as little ones (Mt 18:5-7, 14)
9. Jesus has special care for the fatherless (ex: His first resurrection was a fatherless son in Lk 7:12)
10. Jesus died and rose so we would be adopted and loved as God the Father loves His natural Son:
 - He promises not to abandon believers as orphans (Jn 14:18), but to make us a home (14:23), and that just as the Father loves Jesus, God loves us and puts the same love in us (17:23, 26)
 - He calls sinners '*my brothers*' after He rose, as His redeeming adopting work is done (20:17)
 - Despite their sin (abandoning, denying, lying), He related to His disciples as '*children*' (21:5)
 - Despite our sin, we're Christ's *real brothers*. He understands a child's temptation, weakness, and sympathetically and mercifully has grace to help in time of need (Heb 2:11-17, 4:15-16)
 - We can cry to God as '*Abba*' as our Brother Jesus did (Mk 14:36, Rom 8:15, 29; Gal 4:4-7)
 - Jesus is His Father's natural '*beloved son in whom [He] is well pleased*' but in love the Father chose to adopt us and sees us as in Christ the same way, '*accepted in the Beloved*' (Eph 1:4-6)

Learning from the 'Wonderful Counselor' in the Gospels to be our child's counselor

Linda Rice, *Parenting the Difficult Child: A Biblical Perspective on R.A.D.*, p. 75-76: 'Attachment Disorder is a man-made label for a constellation of behaviors. For each of those behaviors, we can find Scriptures that counsel how to respond in a way that pleases the Lord and leads a child with grace to God's transforming solutions... When considering how to parent the angry, alienated, rebellious child God's way, what better role model could there be than God Himself? We can learn from how He related to His people Israel... Israel was abandoned and abused [Ezekiel 16:4-5] ... adopted by God [Romans 9:4, Hosea 11:1], she was committed to autonomy and absolutely determined to reject God's love from infancy to adulthood (2 Kgs 21:15). Often driven by fear and anger, she digressed into reckless and manipulative behavior [that included demanding, efforts to control, theft, violence and acts destructive to self and others]. Discomfort and fear of attack were triggers to rebel. She wanted safety, but only on her terms. Judges, Kings, and Jeremiah record how she was indiscriminately affectionate to the strange nations around her, hugging them in political alliances [superficially engaging while refusing to look to her Father, resisting His affections, not asking His help]. She grew calloused...hardened by deliberately thinking wrong thoughts (Ps. 78:11) and denying God's kindness (Ps. 78:32). She lied, charmed, tried manipulation, dared God (Ps. 78:19-20), and back-stabbed Him (Ps. 78:56-58) ... counsel on guiding alienated children is based on lessons from God's parenting of Israel and Jesus' responses [to Israel].'

Weary Burdened Parents Are Called to Learn from Christ's Interactions in the Gospel

Matt. 11:28-29 *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and **learn from me**, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

1. Jesus knows what it's like for a mom wanting to gather little ones who are unwilling (Mt 23:37)
2. Jesus knows difficulties (frustration?) of bearing long with stubborn children of Israel (Mk 9:19)
3. Jesus has special care for parents struggling to help their children (Mk 5:22-24, 9:21-24, etc.)
4. He spoke of disabilities that are not a parent or child's fault, but are for God's glory (John 9:1-3)
5. He had compassion for physical needs He knew weakened people and their kids (Mt 15:32, 37)
6. Jesus made sure physical needs of little children were met along with the spiritual (Mk 5:41-43)
7. He taught the anxious and fearful using visual aids (Mt 6:26, 10:31) and His presence (Mt 8:26)
8. He spoke to those He loved as '*son/daughter/child/dear children*' (Mk 2:5, Lk 8:48, 54, Jn 13:33)
9. He calls parents to love their children in the same way Christ loved God's children (Jn 13:33-34)
10. He emphasized attachment and connecting to Him in love, even when correcting (Jn 15:2-5, 9-11)
11. He allowed and granted respectful appeals (Mt 15:24-28) and gave second chances (Jn 21:15-17)
12. He commands we forgive our child before he or she asks for it (in prayer, in our heart: Mk 11:25)
13. Christ's Spirit convicts our children even before they're saved (Jn 16:7-9, all have a conscience)
14. He looked beyond sinful behavior and speech to the heart (woman at well, disciples, Pharisees)