

How to Become a Child of God

John 1: 1 – 4, 9 - 14

The true light, that sheds a revealing light on everyone, came into the world—the world that he had made. As it says in verse 10: *"He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him."*

Almont, Dryden, and Detroit - everyone in them—including you and me—were made through him. As verse 3 says, *"Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."*

Therefore when he came to the world, he came to "his own." That's what verse 11 says, *"He came to that which was his own."*

He came to what belongs to him by right of creation.

He came to his own possession, his own domain, the house of humanity that he had built for a dwelling place.

But verse 11 goes on, *"But his own did not receive him."*

He came to Detroit, Almont, and Lapeer but they received him not.

We rejected him in our department stores with "Seasons' Greetings" instead of "CHRISTmas."

We rejected him in our restaurants with "Happy Holidays" instead of "CHRISTmas."

We rejected him at our gas stations with "Xmas" instead of "CHRISTmas."

We rejected him in our secular marketing exploitation of his birthday.

We rejected him with a thousand knick-knacks and baubles instead of a baby in a manger.

We rejected him in our watered-down carols and wordless tunes.

We rejected him in our public schools with Christ-less plays.

And we rejected him in our public speeches, tickling ears but saying nothing.

He came to his own and his own received him not. As says, *"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear his deeds will be exposed."*

The light came to his own, but his own were in love with the darkness so they did not receive the light.

"Yet" verse 12 says, "to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God."

This means that those who reject the light are not the children of God.

God is not everybody's Father. He created everybody, and they are his. But Jesus says in *John 8:19*, *"If God were your Father, you would love me."* God is not everyone's Father, and the test of who our Father is, is whether we love his Son.

Verses 12 and 13 are so important because they tell us how we may become children of God.

I want you to fix this question in your mind this morning: "Not everyone is a child of God; am I?"

Ask it to yourself right now, "Not everyone is a child of God. Am I?"

The difference it makes to you is this: Jesus said in *John 8:31-36*, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

In other words, if we are not children of God, then we are slaves. And the slave does not remain in the house forever. Only the children do.

What's at stake in becoming a child of God then, is eternal life.

So, we ask ourselves this question again: "Not everyone is a child of God; am I?"

And now add... "Not everyone will have eternal life; will I?"

Paul says in *Romans 8:16-17*, "The Spirit himself bears witness with our Spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him."

In other words, if you become a child of God, you become an heir of all that God owns - all that God promises – all that belongs to God is your inheritance.

In the resurrection, everything that exists will be yours, and God will care for you forever and make you infinitely happy in his presence.

But if you do not become a child of God, then there will be only judgment. There will be no slaves in the age to come, only children. Slaves do not remain in the house forever (8:35). They experience what Jesus calls "*the resurrection of judgment*" (5:29), and it will be too late for any adoption proceedings.

So, we turn to verses 12 and 13 for the all-important answer to the question: **How do we become a child of God?**

What would have to happen this morning to make you a child of God?

And if you are a child of God, do you understand how you became one?

Can you lead another person into the Father's family?

Two Conditions to Becoming a Child of God

Verse 12 sets two conditions: receiving Jesus and believing Jesus: *"But to all who received him, who BELIEVE in his name, he gave authority to become children of God."*

Receiving Jesus means that when Jesus offers himself to you, you welcome him into your life for who and what He is.

- When he comes to you as Savior, you welcome his salvation.
- When he comes to you as Leader, you welcome his leadership.
- When he comes to you as Provider, you welcome his provision.
- When he comes to you as Counselor, you welcome his counsel.
- When he comes to you as Protector, you welcome his protection.
- When he comes to you as Authority, you welcome his authority.
- When he comes to you as King, you welcome his rule.

Receiving Jesus means taking Jesus into your life for who and what he is. It does not mean a kind of peaceful co-existence with a Christ who makes no claims—as though he can stay in your house as long as he doesn't play his drum set too loud.

When Jesus preached in Nazareth in _____, the people received him gladly. It says in _____, *"All spoke well of him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth."*

But a few verses later it says in _____ they were *"filled with wrath"* and tried to throw him down from a cliff.

They were happy to receive him while his words were pleasing. But when their pride was poked, they rejected him.

Receiving Jesus does not mean a kind of peaceful co-existence with a Christ who makes no claims on your life.

Receiving Jesus means taking him into your life (your home, your school, your work, your marriage, your dreams) for who and what he really is.

So, receiving Jesus, the light of the world: This is the first condition in verse 12.

The second condition is believing in his name: *"But all who received him, who believe [present tense!] in his name, he gave authority to become children of God."*

What does believing in the name of Jesus mean? Let's do a little tour of this gospel to find out:

First look at _____ to see that believing in the NAME of Jesus is virtually the same as believing in Jesus. *"He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God."*

Here believing *"in him"* and believing *"in his name"* are used interchangeably. The *"name"* simply emphasizes the full stature and dignity and authority of the person.

Next look at [John 1:11-13](#), where "receive" and believe" are used again in close connection, the way they are in 1:12:

"I have come in my Father's name, and you do not receive me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, you who receive glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the only God?"

Do you see what verse 44 implies about believing? It implies that you can't believe in Jesus if you love the praise and glory of men.

This means that believing is so contrary to pride and self-exaltation that it involves a deep humbling.

It means abandoning the craving for human praise and caring more about the praise of God. Believing is not merely intellectual assent to the truth that Jesus is the Son of God.

Next look at [John 6:35](#). *"Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.'"*

This verse teaches that believing in Jesus means being satisfied with Jesus. It means that Jesus is the food that feeds the hunger of your soul. Believing is not merely intellectual assent to the truth that Jesus is the Son of God.

We could go on to [John 6:47-51](#) and [John 6:68-70](#).

All these texts, plus the ones we have seen, show that believing is a deep work in our heart, not a mere agreement with doctrinal facts. It includes breaking free from the craving for human praise and it includes being satisfied with Jesus as the bread of life.

So, I would paraphrase verse 12 like this: "But all who received Jesus into their lives for who he really is, and who feed upon him as the all-

satisfying bread of life, to them he gave the privilege and authority to become the children of God."

So how do we become children of God?

First, we need to be spiritually born - we need to have spiritual life. This is what God does for us according to _____ without any help from us—"*not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of a man, but of God.*"

We are born spiritually – born of God - by a free act of sovereign grace by God toward us. He chooses us before we ever choose him!

I believe that between us and eternal life there are two great obstacles:

One is that we are spiritually lifeless and dead.

The other obstacle is that which causes us to be spiritually lifeless and dead in the first place: We are guilty of sin.

We can never inherit life if we are spiritually dead and guilty of sin.

But God so loved us that he did two amazing things for us:

First, He sent his Spirit to cause us to be born again, to open our eyes to spiritual truth, to quicken us, and to cause us to see so that we might recognize the One True Savior Jesus Christ who makes us pass from death to life. And so, He overcomes the first obstacle – our spiritual deadness.

Then, in perfect harmony with the work of his Spirit, God sent his Son to die for our sin (_____) and remove our guilt.

So, the moment we believe in him, even though we are sinners, we are now able to lay hold of the inheritance that is meant for God's children alone – eternal life. And so, the second obstacle to heaven is removed – our sin.

This is the great salvation for people like you and me.

It is full and free and corresponds to our exact need and condition.

God in heaven offers it to each of us this morning in the name of His Son Jesus.

Receive him for who and what He really is: the Savior of the world

Believe in him as the all-satisfying end of your search for peace, purpose, joy, and eternal life in heaven.

Amen.