

# ***True You***

## **1. *Beloved Child of God***

July 22-23, 2017

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Welcome! Today we start a new series called "True You." If you have a Bible or a Bible app, please turn to Galatians 4. If you don't have one, just raise your hands and the ushers will be glad to give you one so you can follow along with us.

Did you look at yourself in one of the fun house mirrors we had at the door today? Aren't you grateful you don't really look like that??? Fun house mirrors have a warped surface, so they produce a distorted image. It is funny to look at ourselves in those mirrors because they make us look so ridiculous -- so impossibly distorted that it is funny.

Here's a guy checking himself out in one of those fun house mirrors.



He doesn't really look like that... which is why it's amusing. But what if that guy thought he *did* really looked like that? What if when he went online to order pants he would order "a 24 inch waist"? That wouldn't be funny anymore.



Here are a couple kids looking at themselves. They thought it was pretty funny because they knew they didn't look like that. But what if these kids somehow grew up believing that is exactly what they looked like? How would that affect their self-confidence? How would that affect the way they related to other people, since no one else looks like that? That would be tragic. If those were your kids and they thought they really looked like that, you would try to do everything you could to help them understand they don't really look like that, wouldn't you?

This is exactly what is happening today in the lives of many Christ-followers. Many Christ-followers have a distorted image of who they really are as Christians. They have a warped idea of what God thinks of them -- they have a deformed idea of what they are capable of doing as a Christians. As a result, they are missing out on the joy and fullness they have been created to live. Instead of experiencing victory over their habits, hurts and hang-ups, they are convinced they have to live a spiritually hobbled life. Instead of making a difference, they resign themselves to a routine of pursuing pleasure and possessions. Instead of seeing the power of God at work in their lives, they are limping along doing the best they can on their own strength; all because they have an inaccurate view of their identity as a follower of Jesus.

Those distorted images of themselves didn't come from looking into a fun house mirror. It may stem from listening to their insecurities or the voices of other people instead of God's voice. In the end, they believed lies that come from the devil instead of the truth that comes from God's word.

I hope you hear today that **the true you is what God says about you**. The truth about you doesn't come from what you feel; that can be affected by everything from the weather to what you ate. The truth about who you are doesn't come from what others say about you; the crowd is often wrong. What is most true about you is what your Creator - who is King of the Universe -- says about you. And the most reliable place to find out what he says about you is in the Bible.

The book of James reminds us of how important it is to remember what God's word says about who we really are. **James 1:23-24** *For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. <sup>24</sup> You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like.* When we forget what God says in the Bible about us, then we can't live the way God intended us to live. That is because we can never act consistently different than the way we see ourselves. We always live up -- or down --- to our self-image. If you believe you can never truly change, then you never will. James 1:24 says that if we read in the Bible what God gives us the power to do, but then we ignore what it says and don't do it, we forget who we truly are. And then we act like what we are not.

The truth about who we really are is found in the Bible. It doesn't come from our friends, or from our enemies. The truth about you doesn't come from your parents. Ultimately, it comes from God. And God's truth about us is found in the Bible. Late one night about twenty years ago, I stumbled across a televangelist. Now, I hardly ever watch TV preachers. I'm not bad-mouthing them, I'm just more of a podcast guy. But I remember coming across this preacher named John Osteen. Yes, he was Joel Osteen's father. And I saw him start his sermon by lifting his Bible and saying, "This is my Bible. I am what it says I am. I can do what it says I can do...." I don't remember what he preached on that

night, and I didn't become a regular listener. But I liked that declaration, "I am what it says I am -- and I can do what it says I can do!" That's a great reminder!

Over the next few weeks we are going to take a look at some of what God says in the Bible about you as a follower of Jesus. Now if you are here today and you are not sure what you believe about God, welcome! We're glad you're here. What I am going to be sharing applies to those who are followers of Jesus, but just know that at any time these things can be true of you too, when you choose to follow Christ.

The first core truth about you I want to look at today is this: **The true you is a beloved child of God.**

If you are a follower of Jesus, you are not just created by God -- you have become a child of the Eternal God. Not everyone is a child of God. Everyone *is* a creation of God and has infinite value. But not everyone is a child of God. However, everyone CAN become a child of God. Not everyone has, but everyone *can*.

We don't become children of God by achieving certain moral standards of goodness or working hard to serve other people. It is not a title we earn. You didn't become a child of your parents by working hard or showing yourself worthy, did you? No, all you did was show up in the delivery room! You were born to your parents, and you didn't do anything to earn that status as their child.

In the same way, we become children of God by being born again from God. And that happens when we put our faith in Christ. ***John 1:12 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.***

"The right to *become* children of God..." That means we weren't children of God before, and then something happened and we became what we weren't. And what was that something that happened? We believed and accepted Jesus. An amazing thing happens when we respond to the good news of Jesus by saying yes to him: not only do we become alive inside spiritually, we also become *adopted* into God's family as his children! That's why Jesus taught us to pray, "Our *Father*, who art in heaven..." Until Jesus came, people didn't pray to God as Father. Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we are able to call God our Father, because he is! That is revolutionary, and it changes the way we understand ourselves and relate to God forever.

But if the truth that we are children of God doesn't sink into our hearts, or if we forget it, then we will fall into thinking about ourselves in a distorted way. If we don't realize we are children of God, then we will act like religious slaves with a distorted image of ourselves. Until Jesus came, people related to God like a slave relates to a master. And a master-slave relationship is much different than a parent-child relationship. If you are a parent, how would you feel if your child acted like a slave? You would do everything you could to help them understand they are your kids, not your servants. In Galatians 4 the Apostle Paul

tried to show the Galatians who they really were: that Jesus made them children of God and not slaves. **Galatians 4:4-7** *<sup>4</sup> But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law,<sup>5</sup> to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.<sup>6</sup> Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."<sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but God's child; and since you are his child, God has made you also an heir.*

This says that before Jesus came, we were slaves to the law. That meant our relationship with God was based on how well we obeyed the law. Now, by "law", Paul is not talking about being a law-abiding American citizen. He's talking about a different kind of law. When Paul refers to the law, he is talking about a religious system that existed before Jesus was born that said, "If you obey the religious rules really well, God will accept you and you'll go to heaven. But if you don't obey, God will reject you and you will not go to heaven." When you and I think about religious law we might think of the 10 Commandments like, "Don't murder, don't lie, don't steal, don't commit adultery." And so on. These are important ways to live out our relationship with God.

But in Paul's day there were hundreds of other laws people were taught to keep, like observing certain festivals, not eating pork, not walking around town on the Sabbath and so on. And the religious leaders taught that if you kept all the hundreds of rules, then God accepted you. But if you didn't keep all the laws, then God rejected you. If you broke a law and did something wrong, you had to offer a sacrifice to keep God from punishing you. So the system of the law was that you had to work really hard to keep all the laws and be religiously good so that God will accept you. **Galatians 4:3** - *And that's the way it was with us before Christ came. We were like children; we were slaves to the basic spiritual principles of this world.*

Work hard to be a good enough person so that God will accept you -- that is what Paul calls "the basic spiritual principles of this world." That idea is religious slavery. That idea still has a strong hold on many of us today. Many believe that they have to be morally good in order for God to accept them. That if you do bad, God rejects you, and if you are good he accepts you. But is that how good parents deal with their children? No. That is a slave mentality. And Paul emphasizes, **v. 7** *So you are no longer a slave but God's own child.*

When we see ourselves as slaves, it is a distortion. If we put our faith in Jesus, the true you is that you are a child of God. Today do see yourself as child of God, or do you live like a religious slave? I'm going to contrast three ways the difference shows up in us. As I do, will you put a check mark next to the line which is true most of the time for you. We don't consistently live like just one or the other - we can move back and forth at times. But check which one is true most often of you.

## Differences between living as a slave and a child:

### 1. How does God see me?

- A. A slave hears “you should do better”** When you picture how God looks at you right now, how do you see him responding? A religious slave hears God saying, “You could serve more, pray better, be purer.” You see him shaking his head in disappointment. The bottom line for a religious slave mentality is that my acceptance by God comes from my performance.
- B. A child hears “I delight in you” (v. 6)** When God looks at you, he smiles. And when you think of Him you smile. ***Galatians 4:6*** *Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “Abba, Father.”* The word “Abba” means “Daddy!” It expresses a great Father-child intimacy. You are not an employee of God. Jesus didn’t die on the cross for you because he needed more workers! He died and rose again so you could live and live with him forever! When we know this, we like to spend time with God -- because we like hanging out with one who loves us! No one I know likes to hang out with their judge. We know we are not perfect, but God still loves us like a good father loves his children. We know we are all “special needs” adoptions, and that God delights in us.

OK, put a check mark next to the line which is true most of the time for you. Do you believe in the core of your being that God delights in you and enjoys spending time with you, or does he look at you with a furrowed eye brow and vague sense of disappointment that you are not doing better? (Put a double check mark next to it if you are feeling bad about feeling bad!)

### 2. When I fail:

- A. A slave expects punishment** When slaves do something wrong, they can expect to get punished. The penalty is meant to keep them in line. That’s the point of a penalty. Everyone slows down when they see a state trooper on the highway - they don’t want the penalty. I don’t check my speed because it gives me joy, I do it to avoid a fine. Believers who see themselves as spiritual slaves expect a penalty when they sin. When they look at porn, tell a lie, or refuse to give, their response is to hide from God. They don’t feel like praying or worshiping. They hide from God. When bad things happen they will ask, “What have I done wrong?” They expect a penalty. This slavery mindset leads to a relationship with God that is based on fear.
- B. A child expects discipline (v. 5)** There is a big difference between punishment and discipline. Punishment is about penalizing you for the

wrong you did in the past. Discipline is about preparing you for the good you will do in the future.

I really don't remember too many times that we had to discipline our boys when they were growing up. It's not that they were perfect; I just block unpleasant memories from my mind. It's a coping mechanism. But there's one incident I will never forget. Jonathan was about four years old at the time. He and I were outside washing our brand new car when Linda called me in to take a phone call. When I came back out I saw these dents in the front passenger door. I asked Jonathan what happened. He said, "I threw rocks at it-- I wanted to see what would happen." Well, he found out that nothing good happens when you deliberately dent dad's 3-week old car. Actually, I was too stunned to do much of anything. I'm sure I was angry with him for a while. I'm sure I let him know in clear ways never to do that again. But I didn't reject him, I disciplined him. You fire an employee who does something like that. But you don't fire your kid for messing up. Big difference. What Jonathan did wasn't OK, but it didn't make him an exile from the family.

*Hebrews 12:5-6 And have you completely forgotten this word of encouragement that addresses you as a father addresses his son? It says,*

*"My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline,  
and do not lose heart when he rebukes you,  
<sup>6</sup> because the Lord disciplines the one he loves,  
and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son."*

When you know you are a child of God, you know that God will discipline you but not reject or punish you.

OK, put a check mark next to the line which is true most of the time for you. Do you fear punishment from God when you fail, or do you expect discipline from God so that he can shape you to be like Jesus?

### **3. When it comes to eternity with God:**

- A. A slave is unsure** If you ask someone who was raised in the church if God accepts them, or if they will go to heaven, many will say "I hope so." They hope they have been good enough, but they can't say for sure. Many people say they are spiritual and not religious. And most will say something like, "It's really all about being a good person -- all religions teach basically the same thing -- just be a good person and don't get caught up in the organized religion that causes problems." That is a slave mentality -- a performance-based relationship with God. The problem is, how do we know how good is good enough? How do I know that I have hit the mark? I can't.

**B. A child knows (v. 7)** A child doesn't hope that when they go back to their house the parents will let him in; the child knows the parents' house is their house. In fact, someday they might inherit the house!  
*v. 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.* When we are living as children of God, we know our eternity with him is secure. It's not because we think we have been good enough. It is because we have put our trust in Christ and we have experienced him daily as our father. And we know that Daddy will welcome us home at the end of this life.

Which is most true for you?

If you have checked off "slave" more than "child", there is great news for you! Today Jesus invites you to put your trust in him instead of yourself. When you do, you are adopted into his family! Don't let other voices distort the way you see yourself. God loves you more than you can know!

***Romans 8:14-15** For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. <sup>15</sup>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."*