

1 John 3:1 – What do you call God? Sermon-based Discussion Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To understand how our view of God profoundly shapes our faith and lives. To help us grow in viewing God as our heavenly Father and ourselves as his beloved children.

Sermon Refresher: What comes to our minds when we think about God might very well be the most important thing about our faith, about us. God wants us to think of him as our heavenly Father and learn to relate to him and trust him as such. All of us know what it's like to have flawed, imperfect fathers, but God is our perfect heavenly Father.

Icebreaker: What is one characteristic that you received from your parents that you want to keep, and one that you wish you could change?

Discussion:

1. In the beginning of his sermon, Keith mentioned several ways that we tend to view God. Which one or two of these ways do you tend to view God?
 - Cop around the corner: always ready to bust you
 - Credit card: pay God back to keep him off my back
 - Genie in the bottle: give me what I want
 - Talent show judge: evaluating and criticizing you
 - iTunes: customizable, pick and choose, make him what you want
 - Grandparents: always and only supportive, you can do no wrong
2. Read Romans 8:15. Here Paul describes two ways that we might tend to relate to God: the “spirit of slavery” and the “spirit of adoption.” According to this verse and your own experience, what would relating to God in a “spirit of slavery” look like?
3. In what ways do you sometimes relate to God more like a slave?

4. Looking back at Romans 8:15-17, what do you think relating to God out of a “spirit of adoption” would look like?
5. In what ways would you like to grow in relating to God as a beloved child of God?
6. When it comes to living the Christian life, we all have trust issues. We are afraid to trust God or follow his ways for our lives because we aren’t sure he has our best interest in mind. Read Matthew 7:11 together. How is Jesus encouraging us to think of God here?
7. All of us have experienced imperfect and flawed fathers, and many of us have experienced very conflicted and hurtful relationships with our earthly fathers. Because of this, we sometimes struggle to experience the love of our heavenly Father and trust him. How would you describe your relationship with your earthly father?
8. In contrast to our experience with our earthly fathers, Matthew 5:48 says that “your heavenly Father is perfect.” In what specific ways do you need to remember that your heavenly Father is different and perfect in comparison to your earthly father?
9. How can remembering that God is our perfect heavenly Father change the way we think about trusting and obeying him?

Sharing and Prayer:

When we remember that God is our heavenly Father and we are His beloved children, this will help us fight against anxiety and worry. Read Matthew 6:25-34.

What have you been anxious about recently? How could remembering that “your heavenly Father knows that you need them all” (v. 32) help you?

Take time as a group to pray about the anxieties that were mentioned and seek to trust God as your heavenly Father.

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Exercise

As we talked about this week, we all tend to drift back into relating to God as slaves instead of beloved children of God. This is an exercise to help us actively and continually put our faith back onto Christ so that we can continue to experience the joy of our heavenly Father's love.

Take some time this week to reflect on these promises of God's adoption of you in Christ. After reading the verse(s), write a paragraph about what you learn about how you can relate to God as your heavenly Father. Take a few moments to thank God for being your heavenly Father and relating to you as His beloved child. We recommend you do this on seven different days in order to regularly remind yourself of these truths.

Day 1: Romans 8:14-15

Day 2: Romans 8:16-17

Day 3: Ephesians 1:3-6

Day 4: Psalm 103:13

Day 5: Matthew 6:25-34

Day 6: Matthew 7:11

Day 7: 1 John 3:1