

A Child of God

Discovering You:

Romans 12:1-5, 1 John 5:10-13

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Four years ago, Robbie, 12, and Brittany, 13, learned of a soldier serving in Iraq whose phone bills home reached almost \$8,000. The two children thought that wasn't right. They emptied their piggy banks and asked friends to, so they could establish a fund to pay for those phone calls. They collected \$21. Their plan seemed impossible. When they deposited what they collected, they so impressed the banker that the bank added \$500. That was the seed for raising money through selling recycled cell phones. Today, they've raised nearly \$2 million from donations and the sale of recycled phones, and they've purchased more than 400,000 prepaid calling cards. This year they hope to collect 15,000 cell phones a month and purchase 12 million minutes for soldiers serving overseas.

Robbie and Brittany illustrate a truth that we need to learn and relearn. They may be average teenagers in class, but with faith they rule the world. They don't rule it absolutely. Others rule too, but they rule it substantially. They as children thought that soldiers ought to phone home free, and now because of their faith and decisions, many soldiers do so. Their decisions control what many experience. They rule and make a difference in our world.

When God said, "Let us make man in our image," he made men and women his *chiefs* who rule the world, his *companions* who partner with him, and his *children* who reflect him. God did not make the animals or angels to rule. God made humanity to be his chiefs on earth,

and God made humanity to be his companions on earth. We were created with capacity to fellowship with God.

Jesus taught that God is Spirit, and that true worship spiritually connects with God. We were created spirit, soul and body as the projected diagram shows. The spirit is our connection with God. The soul is where we think, feel and choose. The body hosts and enables the soul. It also gives expression to the soul, so that if we are happy, the body reveals it. Before sin, Adam and Eve were companions of God through their spiritual relationship with him. However, when they sinned, they died in spirit. They acted like a spooked cat that hides from its master. Their souls became directed and dominated by their physical senses and by spiritual deception. Companionship with God was lost. That is why (in the 3rd chapter of John) Jesus told the religious scholar Nicodemus that we must be born again, born from above, born spiritually. Human fellowship with God must be reestablished. Has your faith led you into a fellowship with God? Do you have a relationship with God like Jesus exhibited? That is our potential!

I cannot imagine Robby and Brittany establishing Cell Phones for Soldiers without the encouragement and companionship of their parents. Although these two youngsters are out front in the publicity, it is apparent that there are positive parents behind them. There is a very positive parent behind you and me! God made us in his image as chiefs to rule, as companions to partner with him, and as children to reveal his love and greatness. Every one of us was created for greatness to live as a child of God, to be a revelation of God's majesty.

One time when Jesus was criticized for spending time with immoral sinners, he responded with a story that is recorded in Luke 15. He compared the immoral sinner to the beloved, lost son of a forgiving father. God wants you and me to know that he is our father! He doesn't want us to know that as a piece of useless trivia. If we are children of God, then our

potential is greater, our purpose is higher, our impact is wider, our judgment is more severe, and our redemption-restoration is more significant than of all the rest of creation.

The Bible says of Jesus:

To all who received 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. (John 1:12-13, NIV)

As we receive Jesus and reconnect in spirit to our Father, we gain the authority to live as children of God, children who demonstrate the reality of God, who are formed by the values of God, who display the glory of God. Minus a relationship, we may display some goodness and greatness, but we also perpetuate lies that increase estrangement from God.

In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:45), Jesus told his audience to love their enemies because in doing so, they showed themselves to be children of the God who blesses both the righteous and wicked.

Children reveal who influence them. They become like their parents if they don't walk away in rebellion. Since Jesus was formed by the words and work of our heavenly Father, he revealed God to the world. When the world saw Jesus, they saw God. They saw God's redemptive passion because Jesus walked as God's son.

In the eighth chapter of John, a religious group claimed that God was their father. Jesus countered their claim. Here is a shortened version:

If God were your Father, you would love me... Why is my language not clear? Because you are unable to hear... You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. Yet because I tell the truth, you do not believe me! He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God. (John 8:42-47, NIV)

Whoever misunderstood God had difficulty recognizing and welcoming Jesus, God's child. If our vision of God and life is formed by lies, then we'll have trouble seeing God, our situation, the approaching consequences and our identity. Until we reconnect with God, we are lost in deception.

Once you reconnect with God through Jesus, you still face a liar. Your soul is still assaulted with thoughts that can mislead you. In deception we can choose rebellious actions that grieve the Holy Spirit and make us deaf to God's counsel. The most dangerous deceptions rob us of our identity. The book of 1 John is all about being a forgiven child of God. God assures us that we are forgiven and born from above, not because of our works, but because we receive Jesus. With Jesus, we are forgiven and reconnected to God. It is that simple.

Since we live in a world of deception, we must surrender our vision of life to Christ. In Romans 12, we are called to do exactly that. We are called to live "sold out" to Christ *and* have our thinking renewed. We are to live as members of one another, so that together we prove the greatness of God's will and make a difference on this earth as children of almighty God.

The question is whether that will be our focus in a world that is lost and estranged from God. In these deceptive circumstances, will we live, remembering to whom we belong?

Do you all know the story of Apollo 13? How we nearly lost three astronauts in space? It was difficult for the astronauts to face the reality of their situation and focus their actions correctly. Watch this scene from the movie *Apollo 13*. (Scene 9, 1:10:00 – 1:15:00)

Jim Lovell asked his crew, "Gentlemen, what are your intentions?" Getting home demanded their focus. Living as children of God demands our focus. What are your intentions? Having been reconnected to your heavenly Father through faith in Christ, are your actions focused on living as God's child? What an adventure our Father has for us!