

BELONGING TO GOD'S FAMILY

Ep 1:1-14

INTRO: ILLN The difference between fostering and adopting a child

Yesterday the Queen's birthday honours list was announced.

David and Helen Channing were appointed MBEs.

Over the past 32 years they have fostered nearly 70 children. They are now in their 60's and have officially retired but are still looking after a boy aged 13.

This is all in addition to having 5 sons of their own.

Their interest in fostering children began when David was working in a children's home.

Helen said: "Little was done in those days to help children into independence.

We taught them skills like how to budget, to cook and to look after their clothes."

She believes family life should be structured, with regular mealtimes, everyone eating together at a table with the TV off, pocket-money incentives for keeping their own room tidy and regular family trips and outings, especially to beaches and Dartmoor.

Most of the children fostered by the Channings stayed with them for a long time.

Helen said: "The people who should have loved them and looked after them have failed, so you have to build up trust, which takes a long time. We are still in touch with many of the children we have fostered and are looked on as the grandparents of their own children.

Foster-parents need patience, tolerance and understanding. It is vital to find out what the children are good at and to praise them."

David added, "Ours has been an interesting and very busy household. It's been challenging but very rewarding."

So a couple are receiving a well-deserved reward. They have had a tremendous influence for good in the lives of the children they cared for.

But the foster children never belonged to them. At the end of the day they were someone else's children. David and Helen were just looking after them for a short while.

If however someone adopts a child, that is a different situation.

A child who is adopted becomes a part of the family in a different way to a child who is fostered. In law the adopted child is looked on as the same as a natural child would be with all the privileges that go with being part of a family.

EPHESIANS 1:5 says, *“God has made us his sons and daughters”*
v.5 NIV (nearer Greek) *“adopted us as his children through Jesus Christ”*

Today we are thinking about what it means to be adopted and become a child of God – a member of God’s family.

WHAT does belonging mean?

WHY are we adopted?

HOW do we benefit?

WHO belongs?

WHAT DOES BELONGING MEAN?

- New family - same rights & obligations as natural child
- We have a loving Father who loves us and cares for us
- We have brothers & sisters who care for us + we are responsible for them

WHY ARE WE ADOPTED?

ILLN Child does nothing to deserve to be adopted. Chosen because couple want him/her, love child, want child to love them. Joy to parents & child

v.4 because God loves us. Not because we are better than anyone else

HOW DO WE BENEFIT?

v.3 “he has blessed us by giving us every spiritual blessing in the heavenly world”

v.7 “by the blood of Christ we are set free, that is, our sins are forgiven”

QUOTE Wm Barclay p.80 Roman adoption law

- Redemption price paid
- Free from all debts
- Same privileges as a natural child
- Total security – nothing can separate us from his love

v.13, 14 we have an inheritance in heaven

Have not come into full inheritance yet, but we have a **“seal”** which guarantees the inheritance

ILLN putting a deposit on an item you intend to buy (**QUOTE** Wm Barclay p.87)

v. 13, 14 *“God put his stamp of ownership on you by giving you the Holy Spirit ... the guarantee that we shall receive what God has promised his people.”*

WHO BELONGS?

God created everyone. He loves us all as a father loves his children. He cares for us all, provides for us all

Jesus said, *“He makes his sun to shine on bad and good people alike, and gives rain to those who do good and to those who do evil”* (Mt 5:45)

God wants everyone to know him as their loving Heavenly Father
No one is excluded by God. But we can exclude ourselves.

ILLN Baby adopted - no choice. Child adopted - can choose
We have the ability to choose

2 EXTREMES:

V.4 Predestination – God chooses who belongs

V.10 Universalism – everyone belongs – no choice

v.12,13 *“you became God’s people when you heard the Good News and believed in Christ”*

God says, “I want to adopt you so you can belong to my family and enjoy all the blessings I have for you”

But we have the **choice** to believe or not believe, to say “yes” or “no” to God

CONCLUSION

When we hear the Good News of Jesus

We are invited to belong to God’s family; to share the blessings he has for us.

When we put out trust in Christ:

- We can know the joy and freedom of having our sins forgiven
- We can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit
- We can experience the joy of knowing God as our loving Heavenly Father
- We can be secure in his love now and for ever.