

## Part II: Word Pictures

### Lesson Seven

## From Slaves to Sons Through Circumcision

### Introduction

Agree or disagree with the following statement (and give your reason why): All people are God's children. **Likely, many will agree with the statement, since God has created the whole world and loves all people.**

Read Proverbs 22:2 and Acts 17:28. What do you notice about the way God refers to people? **God says he's their "Maker" (not Father) and calls all people his "offspring." The leader will point out that God never refers to people in general as his "children"—a more dear and intimate term**

Throughout Scripture, God reserves the picture of "children" or "sons" only for those who know him through faith. He says we become sons of God "through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). In this lesson, we'll look at what God communicates with word pictures related to that truth.

### Studying God's Word

The thought of being God's children and part of his family was central to how the Jewish people thought of themselves in the days of Christ. But their understanding of *how they got that status* was flawed.

#### **Inclusion in God's family brings true freedom**

**Read John 8:31-35.**

1. To what did the Jews of Jesus' day attribute their place in God's family and the freedom that came with it? **They thought it was due to their physical descent from Abraham.**
2. What slavery did Jesus say that they—and all people—were living in? **Slavery to sin**
3. Compare Jesus' words to the belief that people have a completely "free will." **Jesus says that we don't have free will. We're slaves to sin. Apart from Christ, every action we perform is motivated in some way by our sinful nature and is thus sin.**
4. What does Jesus say is the only way to escape this slavery? **By being brought into God's family. Already in this section he identifies that process with holding to his teachings—but more on that in the next section.**

## The true “circumcision”

God told his Old Testament Israelites that they weren’t members of his covenant people unless they were circumcised (the surgical removal of a male’s foreskin). That physical practice—no longer commanded for God’s people today—was a picture and foreshadow of a spiritual truth.

### Read Colossians 2:11-14 and Deuteronomy 10:16.

5. The true “circumcision,” in which we become part of God’s people, isn’t the removal of a foreskin. What is put off? **It’s the ongoing struggle against our sinful nature. We have put off the sinful nature in our hearts.**
6. Who accomplishes this? How is it accomplished? **It’s done by Christ. He accomplishes it through Baptism, which brings us to faith. All of that is possible because of Christ’s crucifixion, which paid for our sins.**

## The joy of sonship

### Read Galatians 3:26-29 and 4:4-7.

7. What emotional truth is present when God refers to us as “sons” of God? **The parent-child relationship is one that embodies love, protection, provision, and faithfulness.**
8. God doesn’t just call us his children, but his “sons.” What legal truth does that emphasize? **Paul says we have the “full rights of sons.” In his culture, property and other rights were passed on through the male offspring. Paul emphasizes that all believers (men and women, regardless of age or race) have full claim to the blessings won for us in Christ Jesus.**
9. To what sort of things do people often look to find meaning or identity in life? How might these passages be a blessing when people struggle with what their identity in life really is? **We often look for meaning and identity in things such as our work, our possessions, our skills, and our families. But God reminds us that no matter what’s going on in our lives—whether we’re employed or not, rich or poor, surrounded by family or all alone—we’re dearly loved children of God through faith in Christ.**

## Summary

### Key Points:

- All people are born slaves of sin, without a truly free will.
- Through the means of grace, God adopts us into his family.
- All believers have a new status as God’s dearly loved children, heirs of the blessings Christ Jesus won for us.

May God keep his people steadfast in these truths!

## During the Week

1. Try to trace your family tree to see if you can tell when members of your family first came to faith in Christ. And examine your own heart. Don't fall into the sin of thinking you're saved because you come from "a good Christian family." Rejoice that it was faith in Jesus that brought your family members to heaven!
2. Make a list with two columns. In one column, list all the things you do or the characteristics about yourself that give "meaning" to your life. In the other column, list the unchanging truths about who you are as a child of God. Thank him for the first column, but ask him to give you true peace and confidence through what you listed in the second column.