

You are God's Children

1 John 3:1-7

Family Name

I believe that all of you must have your own name. Then, **do you know the meaning of your names?** Our names say about us. I know your names but I do not know of the meaning behind them so I googled some of your names on internet. Carl means “strong man” and in our church, we have two strong men. The meaning “Jan” is “God is gracious.” The meaning of Andrea is “courageous.” Of course, many of us have biblical name like David, Stephen, and John.

As you all know, my name is ‘Yohan Go’ and Yohan means “John.” My parents wanted me to be like Apostle John so they named me after him. In Korea, your family name comes before your given name. So in Korean, my full name is “GoYohan,” which sounds exactly like the word “Silent” in Korean. I don’t know whether or not my parents wanted me to be a silent person but they named me as such. When I grew up, my friends often teased my name as it sounded like an adjective. Anyway, our names say a lot about who we are, our family lineage, possible national origins and parents’ wishes for whom we want to be. People identifies us by our names.

We are God's children

Along with our name, we identify ourselves in many different ways. We identify ourselves by our roles or relationships as a husband, wife, son, mother, grandparent, and friend. We also identify ourselves by the groups we belong to such as Christians, Americans or the Boston Red Sox fan. How we identify ourselves affects our behaviors and character. It also influences how we react to certain circumstances, pressures or frustrations we experience in our everyday lives.

There is a story. A mother went to wake her son for church one Sunday morning. When she knocked on his door, he said, “I’m not going!” “Why not?” asked his mother. “I’ll give you two good reasons,” he said. “One, they don’t like me. Two, I don’t like them.” His mother replied, “I’ll give you two good reasons why YOU WILL go to church. One, you’re a 47 years old man. Two, you’re the pastor!”

If a 10 year old boy did the same thing, the conversation would be different. The way people identify us and the way we identify ourselves would guide our behaviors and shape our characters. So the question of identity is an important for all of us. How do you identify yourselves? Do you see yourself as a mother or Grand-mother? a Husband or wife? What is your primary identity?

Today's scripture reminds us who we really are. "Look at the love that God has lavished upon us that we should be called the children of God." And that is what we are, God's children. No matter what you have done, no matter where you come from... once you accept Jesus Christ as your savior, you become one of God's children. That's it. God loves you!

We forget who we are

Unfortunately, we often forget who we really are and we live as if we are not the children of God. Instead of living as the children of God, we live as what the world says who we are. In a competitive world, everything is graded. School performance is graded with letter grades from 'A' to 'F.' Schools, universities, and even divinity schools and seminaries are also graded according to certain criteria. Even people are graded.

I don't know how professional matchmaking agencies are doing in the United States, but in Korea, matchmaking agencies collect detailed information of their clients such as their education, income, debt, height, body weight, religion and even their family backgrounds, including the parents' occupations and education. Then, companies grade each individual from 1 to 15. Do you know where pastors belong to? 15th, the lowest grade. That is why I always appreciated my wife, Juhee for being my wife. But am I really the 15th grade? No one can rate one's value in terms of what they have and what they have achieved. However, our society keeps grading people's value in terms of their appearance, income and usefulness. It keeps telling us... that is who you are. You are what you have. You are how you look like. You are what you can do and you are what you have achieved.

Is it really true? Because our society has a strong tendency to define people in terms of their usefulness and productivity, we often feel shame or guilty when we are not able to be independent enough or strong enough. But you are not what you can produce. You cannot be identified with your usefulness or productivity. You are more than what you can do. You are more than what you have. You are more than what you have achieved.

Don't make the world define who you are. But remember how God says who we are. Let me read today's scripture again. "What marvelous love the Father has extended to us! Just look at it—we're called children of God! That's who we really are." We are God's children. We are God's children and no one can take away our identity from us because it is given by God. Trust God's word. The whole Bible reminds us God's word that "You are my children. You are my beloved children." Once we reclaim our identity as the children of God, then, it will change our lives.

Who's Your Daddy? (Fred Craddock story)¹

Do you know Ben Hooper? He was a governor of Tennessee from 1911 to 1915. Hooper was born to an unwed mother in 1870. Back then, it was a big scandal in town and Hooper had a hard time growing up, because every place he went, he was always asked the same question, 'Hey boy, Who's your daddy?' "Whether he was at school, in the grocery store or a drug store, people would ask the same question, 'Who's your daddy?' He would hide at recess and lunch time from other students. He would avoid going in to stores because that question hurt him so bad.

"When he was about 12 years old, a new preacher came to his church. He would always go in late and slip out early to avoid hearing the question, 'Who's your daddy?'

But one day, the new preacher said the benediction so fast he got caught and had to walk out with the crowd. "Just about the time he got to the back door, the new preacher, not knowing anything about him, put his hand on his shoulder and asked him, 'Son, who's your daddy?'"

The whole church got deathly quiet. He could feel every eye in the church looking at him. Now everyone would finally know the answer to the question, 'Who's your daddy'.

This new preacher, though, sensed the situation around him and using discernment said the following to that scared little boy,

'Wait a minute!' he said. 'I know who you are. I see the family resemblance now. You are a child of God.'" With that, he patted the boy on his shoulder and said, 'Boy, you've got a great inheritance. Go and claim it.'

With that, the boy smiled for the first time in a long time and walked out the door a changed person. He was never the same again. Whenever anybody asked him, 'Who's your Daddy?' he'd just tell them, 'I'm a Child of God!'"

We are God's children. Claim that great inheritance and live as God's children. Also, someone in your life today needs a reminder that they're one of God's children! Go and tell them who they really are! Tell them that they are God's children and so we are. Isn't it wonderful to have God as our Heavenly Father? Thanks be to God. Amen.

¹ <https://storiesforpreaching.com/youre-the-son-of-god/>

