

Confidence We are God's Children

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 August 2022

Preacher: Vijay Henderson

[0 : 00] It's great to see you. Welcome. My name is Vijay. I'm one of the pastors if I haven't met you, but I think I've met everyone, so that's good. If you could please keep your Bibles open at 1 John, that would be really good.

And the handout is particularly helpful today as well. That's in the insert of your bulletins. I was wondering if we could start with a game today. Is that okay? Can we start with a game?

On the screen, please, Tim, can you tell which one of these kids is mine? As a game. Can you tell just by looking which one's mine?

Correct. All of them are mine. It's not that I have nine children, but if three kids times three, that's nine. It was a sort of a trick question, isn't it? But couldn't you tell already just by how sweet they seemed that they were mine?

Wasn't the cuteness and good looks a dead giveaway that they're Vijay's kids? It's easy, isn't it, to make little kids look cute, but one day they'll inherit this nose.

[1 : 07] They'll get this receding hairline. They'll have this truculent personality. And then they'll really need your prayers. What about you?

What feature did you inherit from your parents? Sometimes it's a good thing, isn't it? Like your mother's eyes, your father's height. Maybe it's a sense of humor or a strong work ethic.

But sometimes it's things we're not so grateful for. So did the women in your family all have the same hips? Did you inherit your mother's stubbornness?

Perhaps you inherited your dad's early baldness or his impatience and quick temper. However, our verses today are full of family language, in particular about inheriting the family likeness.

Can you please put on the screen verse 10? This is at the end of our reading. This is how we know who the children of God are and who are the children of the devil. Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother or sister.

[2 : 15] The verse is very clear, isn't it? There are children of God. They do what is right, just like their dad. There are children of the devil. They do not do what is right, just like their dad.

It's the same idea as the game we played with my kids. You can tell whose child someone is. You just need to look at who the parents are. Thanks. You can take that down.

Throughout 1 John, this letter, there's a series of tests that show whose family we belong to.

In John's time, the Christians were being led astray because false teaching had gotten into the churches. And the Christians were doubting their place with God. And John says, OK, then, here are some tests that show whose family traits you have.

So you can have confidence that you're really one of God's children. Very broadly, the tests are the sin test, the love test, and the belief test.

Sin, love, belief. These false teachers, they claim to know God, but also deny that they've got a problem with sin. They fail the sin test. They claim to be in the light, all the while hating their brother and sister in Christ.

[3 : 29] They fail the love test. They claim to have the father, all the while denying his son is the Christ. They fail the belief test. Sin test, love test, belief test.

They're designed to expose whose family a person belongs to. For false teachers, for liars out there, they're a worry. But for us, for Christians, they're there for our confidence.

Today, we'll circle back to the sin test. We say test, but really, it's like evidence. So if you were on trial for being a Christian, what evidence could the prosecution produce to lay a charge against you?

They might present your record of church attendance, maybe a baptism certificate. Perhaps they get their hands on your bank statements and they can see direct debits to HTD.

Maybe they get a hold of our YouTube live stream. And once a month, they can see you appearing up to do a reading or some prayers in church. John thinks the best evidence that you're God's child is verse 29.

[4 : 36] If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him. Righteousness here, it's not the technical idea of God's declaration on us.

It just means the opposite of sin. In 1 John, righteousness is about loving your brother and sister in Christ. In other words, it's just about being like Jesus.

Are you your father's child? You must be. I can tell by your big ears and your pointy chin. Are you God's child? I can tell by how righteous you are. You always try to do the right thing, just like Jesus.

And bearing God's family resemblance is really important because one day there'll be a great family reunion. Can you see verse 28? Chapter 2, verse 28.

And now, dear children, continue in him so that when he appears, we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. You see, the end of the world is the return of your big brother, Jesus.

[5 : 42] And we can be confident, unashamed before him at his coming because we made a lifelong habit of practicing righteousness, just like he did.

If you're bearing this family likeness, it's evidence, it's confidence of whose child you really are. It's so kind of God, isn't it? That he would take people like us, sinners and enemies.

He would forgive us. He would clean us up and bring us into his family. Chapter 3 says, See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God.

And that is what we are. The world might not think we're that special. That's okay. They didn't think Jesus was that special either. Verse 2. Dear friends, now we are children of God.

And what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him. For we shall see him as he is. This verse, verse 2, it talks about a now and a not yet.

[6 : 44] Now we're the children of God. The Holy Spirit, he's like a seed who plants a Jesus tree within us. Every day it's sprouting roots and growing more and more and more.

But when Christ appears, not yet, but when he appears, that's all it will take for the seed to sprout a fully mature Jesus tree from within you.

And then we will be like him. You see, the Apostle Paul says that we are adopted as sons of God, which means we're fellow heirs, legally inheriting everything that Jesus has alongside Jesus.

But John goes much further than adoption. He says we won't just be with Jesus. We will be like Jesus. Our Old Testament reading, that was the classic from Genesis 1, that we're made in the image of God.

But did you know that the Spirit is gradually transforming you into the image of the Son? And the reason why is so that people like us can take our place in the family.

[7 : 53] Born of the Father, transformed by the Spirit into the likeness of the Son. We talked about family traits being passed down.

I suppose I've got a big nose. They're different for all of us, aren't they? But the one trait we all have passed down came from our greatest grandfather, Adam. It's that we sin and we die.

But when Christ appears, we can finally shed off everything that is sinful and dying. And we can be wrapped up in the family reunion, being like Jesus.

And if that sounds exciting to you, then verse 3, you will purify yourself now just as he is pure. The logic is very easy.

You look forward to future things by preparing for them today. Purity, righteousness, same idea. We show our excitement at Christ appearing by practicing to be like him today.

[8 : 53] Years ago, young Christians, they would wear these rubber bracelets. It was all the rage, rubber bracelets. And on the bracelet, it would say WWJD. Do you know what that stands for?

Jeff, you know what it means. What would Jesus do? The idea is young Christians would get into a bit of a pickle and they wouldn't know what to do. They'd look at their wrist. What would Jesus do? Ah, I know. I'll do this.

Very helpful. The more our mindset is what would Jesus do, the more evidence, the more confidence of whose family we belong to.

False teachers, they deny that he is the Christ. They will be humiliated when he comes again in glory to judge the living and the dead. They will be excluded because it's Jesus kingdom that will have no end.

But not us. Because every day we try to be less like ourselves and more like him, practicing righteousness and purity. That way, verse 28, we can be confident and unashamed before him at his coming.

[9 : 59] Here's the test. Are you exhausted by your own sin? Do you work hard at loving brothers and sisters in Christ? If you saw Jesus, would you run to him or shrink away from him?

Does heaven sound exciting or boring? The answers to these questions are evidence of whose child you really are. They give confidence that you bear the family likeness.

And it really matters because the final event, the huge event in God's diary is the return of big brother Jesus. And only one family is hoping for this reunion.

The devil dreads it. The world denies it. But we long for it. The rest of our verses, they hammer home why bearing this family likeness is a non-negotiable for the Christian.

So verse 4 to 6, verse 8 to 9, they're a repeated flow. I put them as a table on your handout. And on the screen, I think, is the most helpful. I hope you can read that from where you're sitting.

[11 : 10] These verses are very black and white, like verse 10 was. Very black and white. The bit in white. Everyone who sins is a criminal.

That is, they break the law. The one who does what is simple is of the devil. It's very strong, isn't it? Very strong language. What's more, can you see an orange in the middle?

No one who lives in Jesus keeps on sinning. No one who's born of God will continue to sin. Can you see down the yellow in the bottom right?

They cannot go on sinning because they've been born of God. These verses are so strong, they seem to evaporate all our confidence.

Because I know, verse 6, that I will keep on sinning. I know that I will continue to sin. They seem to evaporate all our confidence.

[12 : 07] But I think what John is doing is exaggerating. I think he's using hyperbole, a strong language, to emphasize his point. He doesn't mean that Christians won't ever sin or it's impossible to sin, but rather how out of place it is for those who've been born of God.

You cannot sin. You won't keep on sinning. It's just not what this family is about. It's an exaggeration, a hyperbole to emphasize the point. What's more, can you see the green verses there?

To carry on sinning, to have a casual approach to sin, it doesn't just go against the family likeness. It goes against the family business.

Jesus appeared so that he might take away sins. The Son of God appeared to destroy the devil's work. That's the family business. To have a casual approach to sin doesn't just fly in the face of a family likeness.

It undermines the family business. Here are some illustrations to help you think about it. When my mother used to take us out in public, my brothers and I, when we were growing up, she was very, very strict on being well-behaved.

[13 : 21] You know, children should be well-behaved in public, that sort of thing. And obviously, my brothers and I misbehaved. It was not impossible to misbehave. But mum was so strict about it because it's just not what her family was about.

Rachel and I, we have a similar thing with telling the truth in our family with our kids. We say to our children, and I hope this is true, we say, listen, we don't care what you do, just tell us the truth.

Obviously, it's possible for my children to tell fibs. And when they do, they do get a smack when they tell fibs. I know this is being recorded. We're still good parents.

But in the Henderson family, telling the truth, that's just what we're about. Fibs and lies, that's just not who we are. Did you have, you must have had similar non-negotiables in your family.

Here's another one. Around churches, like a lot of public buildings, there are no smoking signs. But in 100 years, has anyone lit up a cigarette in a church?

[14 : 29] Has anyone ever done that? Yet the signs are still lit. Don't smoke a cigarette in church. It's not physically impossible. Look, see, I can take these matches here.

It's not allowed, but it's not impossible, is it? And I can light a match. And what's more, my hands are going to burn.

What's more, I can take my cigarette here and I can light it. See that? And I can puff away all day and hope Eric Smith doesn't tackle me.

I'll just put that out, shall I? There's my cigarette. You see, it's not impossible to smoke in church. It is illegal. There are signs that say you can't.

But it's more than that, isn't it? It's like, it's so out of place for what this building is. How could you possibly light up a cigarette in a church? It's not impossible, but it's worse than breaking the law.

[15 : 29] It's just not who we are. You see, for years now, I've been saying, I've been talking about the battle with sin. You know, stay in the battle with sin. Pray for God's help in the battle with sin.

Stay in the battle. But Christians who have a casual approach to sin are not clear what God's family is all about. In the middle of the table is verse 7.

It says, Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. I don't need the screen. It's okay. Verse 7 says, The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

You see, it's quite common to be led astray when it comes to sin. There are lots of lies and false teaching out there. The devil, he's been at it from the beginning. Did God really say you cannot eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

You will not surely die. The devil's been at it from the beginning. False teaching and lies, it tries to redefine what the Bible says is quite clearly sinful.

[16 : 36] It says that we're all God's children, that he loves you as you are. But when people hear that, they think, oh, I don't need to amend my life or repent of my sins because God already loves me as I am.

He's already chosen me just in the state that I'm in. Do not let anyone lead you astray. Here's the truth. God does not want us as we are.

He wants his son. That's why we need to purify ourselves and practice righteousness. When we when Jesus appears, I'll finally be less like myself and more like the son.

That's who God wants. Of course, we're going to sin in the meantime. Jesus appeared to take away our sin by his spirit. The seed. I'm enabled to stay in the battle, have daily victories, put sin to death in my life.

But our approach to sin should be like our approach to something that is totally out of character, out of place in God's family and non-negotiable.

[17 : 42] Verse seven says the one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous, which leads us to talk about repentance. I wonder if today there's some confusion about what repentance is and isn't.

Repentance is a 180 degree turn away from everything that's sinful. Repentance is the attitude that says I will never do that ever again.

Of course, it's physically possible that we will. But repentance says I've strayed so far beyond the boundaries of God's family that I never want to be in that position again.

See, a lot of people think repentance is remorse. But even non-Christians feel remorse the next day. Remorse, it's a feeling of guilt. It's an expression of regrets.

It's a legitimate human emotion. But it never turns 180 degrees away. Nor is remorse so decisive that says I'll never do that again.

[18 : 46] And so here is the test. After we sin, are we taking real action to ensure we never do that again? Are we putting real behaviors in place, asking God to help us to minimize the chance of our sin ever happening again?

When we confess our sins, are our minds already looking forward to the next time we can indulge in that sin?

Or is it saying I never want to be in that position again? Verse 6 says no one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who's born of God will continue to sin.

In fact, they cannot go on sinning. It's not that it's impossible. It's not that we won't be forgiven. It's just that a casual approach to sin is out of place for people who are God's children.

That is the sin test. Let's finish with verse 10. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are.

[19 : 53] Anyone who does not do what is right is not God's child. Nor is anyone who does not love their brother or sister. When you read this verse, on one hand, it seems like it's giving us license to walk around church on a witch hunt.

Child of God, child of God, child of the devil, child of the devil. And we can hand out in and out badges, you know, for everyone. But that's not what this verse is about.

This verse is actually so clear because it helps to reassure us. It's very black and white because it asks us in broad terms, which would you rather?

Whose family would you rather? Righteousness or sin? God's family or the devil's family? Who is the real you? Is it a child of the devil or a child of God?

If you could only take one thing on a desert island, would it be sin or would it be righteousness? And like me, if you say, I'm a sinner, but I'd love to be part of God's family.

[20 : 56] I'm so sick of my sin and would love to be more like Jesus. That is the evidence. That is the confidence of whose child you really are.

He loves you like a father loves a daughter or a son. And so get busy with the family likeness. Loving brothers and sisters in Christ.

Practicing righteousness. Practicing purity in your public and private life. Putting sin to death wherever you can find it in your life. Your big brother Jesus is on the way to collect you for the ultimate reunion.

Only one family is looking forward to it. The world denies it. The devil dreads it. But we hope for it. And so let's pray that we'd be like Jesus.

Do join me. Father God, thank you so much for lavishing your love upon us.

[22 : 05] That you would take sinful people and make them your children. Thank you so much. Father, please would we practice the family likeness. Please would we be like Jesus.

Who was always righteous and pure. Please help us to properly repent. To put sin to death in our lives. Thanks, Father, that even when we fail to do that, that you'll forgive us in Jesus.

But please buy the spirit in us. Enable us to live for you. To put sin to death wherever we find it. Thank you for the confidence that this passage gives us.

That we can know that we really are your children. That we can have confidence on that final day. And we pray all these things in Jesus name. Amen.