

PRAYER | *Children Of God*

I posted a picture on Facebook recently of a big family dinner from 35+ years ago. A friend of mine decided she'd be hilarious so she zoomed in on my little-kid face, cropped it out, and has since been repeatedly sending it back to me over text. And at first I was horrified, and then I laughed. But then it unexpectedly kinda caught me 'in my feels', you know? There was something about looking into the eyes of little-kid me, that made me remember a state of innocence/lightness that all these years later often feels long gone. There were things that had not yet happened in life, to dim the light in that little girl's eyes. And I could feel it. There was something about looking at that image and really seeing her, seeing me, in that childlike light that I'd forgotten, that has been working to re-connect something in me.

Tom mentioned earlier the verse from 1 John 3:1 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 mess of life – starting right in childhood – often writes all kinds of stories about who and what we are onto our hearts and minds. Those stories are often filled with negative (untrue) things. If your life and childhood have held a lot of trauma that's likely especially true. And yet... our core identity, our base foundation, is that we are the absolutely cherished, loved beyond measure, designed in brilliant light and unending goodness children of God. ***That*** is who we are. Stunning, pure, whole and holy. At your core. ***That*** is who you are.

I don't know if that's what you think every morning when you wake up and look in the mirror. It should be! It *could be* if we learned to practice filling our minds with the truth that comes straight from God's heart, instead of the stories that come relentlessly from the world. So ***that's*** what we're going to practice doing, right now.

I want you to start by closing your eyes. Take a few slower deeper breaths, try to tune out any distractions around you. This is how we start to enter a contemplative space.

And then I want you to try to summon in your mind an image of yourself from childhood. One that feels good. I don't know how far you'll have to go back for that. I know many of our stories have childhood pain – mine does too – but we're not looking for that right now. Right now look for an image of yourself where you can see and sense joy and lightness. It might be from your own memory, or a photo you've seen. Maybe all the way back to a newborn baby. Try to pull an image up in your mind and then let yourself really look into the eyes of childlike-you for a minute. Let yourself feel that state of inherent, pure goodness. Let yourself feel delight in that spunky, or shy, or sweet, or strong kid you were.

Now keeping that child-you in focus, I want to read some of God's words about how loved you are. As I do, notice how hard or easy it feels to believe them about the *child*-you. Maybe even say a quiet "yes" to yourself after each one, to help yourself get it.

Psalm 139:13-14 For you created my inmost being, you knit me together in my mother's womb.

Jeremiah 31:3: I have loved you with an everlasting love, I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.

Psalm 17:8 [You] keep close watch over me as the apple of Your eye; [You] shelter me in the shadow of Your wings.

Romans 8:15 You have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God's Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, "Abba, Father."

1 John 3:1 "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!"

Amen.

Now there aren't really two you's; the child-you is the very same you that you see every morning in the mirror. All of you is still in there! And our conscious minds need to be reminded of that true inner goodness on a more regular basis than we're used to doing. I'd encourage you to go home today and actually FIND a picture of yourself from childhood, one that speaks to you of that child-of-God pure innate goodness, and set it out somewhere that you will see it every day this week. Take a minute each morning to pause, look at it, and remind yourself that you are God's cherished kid, and that nothing in this world can separate you from that fierce parental love.