SUMMATION OF CHARACTERISTICS OF EACH SONSHIP STAGE

In the New Testament, the word 'son' or 'child' may mean different things dependent upon which Greek word is used. Five distinct levels of sonship are evident from a study of these words. These words denote a progressive development from infancy to mature sonship over time.

The words are ...

- nepios / brephos
- paidon
- teknon
- neaniskos
- huios (or uihos)

As sons of God we are ‘born from above’ (John 3:6-7) through the experience of the new birth. We are in Christ and are new creations in Him. We are ‘OF’ God (1 John 4:4) – which in the Greek ('ek') means we proceed out from Him and thus have His DNA within us. The 'son is given, but the child is born' (Is. 9:6), and must grow up into Christ in the fullness of His measure and stature. We all must grow up fully in what is given to us, viz. mature sonship.

The characteristic features of each stage are discussed in my study note, 'Stages of Sonship' from the series, 'Firstborn Sonship' – Session 5. Here below is a basic summary of the main features of each stage. I encourage you to consult my website, www.randolphbarnwell.com, for the full document.

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NEPIOS SON

(a) Nepios sons have an inheritance only positionally, but due to immaturity, have not appropriated this reality subjectively, personally, practically and experientially. (Gal. 4:1,2)

(b) This child is easily influenced by various circumstances, teachings, and schemes of men. (Heb 4:11-16)

(c) He is given to jealousy, quarreling, divisions, and boasting – and thus is ‘carnal’ or ‘of the flesh’. (1 Cor. 3:1-3)

(d) He is prone to seek excellence in spiritual gifts/ministry without excelling first in love. (1 Cor. 13:8-11)

(e) He is only able to assimilate the milk and not the meat of the Word; He is ‘untrained’/’unskilled’/’inexperienced’ in the Word of righteousness; He has undeveloped spiritual faculties of discernment between good and evil. (Heb. 5:12-6:3)

(f) This child is usually self-absorbed – making sounds of selfish whining concerning his own provision and protection.

(h) He is in need of spiritual fathering to unveil the mature measure of the stature of Christ within him. (Gal. 4:12; Luke 2)

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PAIDON SON

(a) The child starts to KNOW the nature and character of the Father and develop intimacy with Him. (1 John 2:12,13)

(b) The child starts to become aware of and know the blessedness of his walk in God. (Matt.19:13)

(c) The ‘paidon son’ knows what it is to humble himself to gain entrance into particular Kingdom expressions of life – he learns to deal with pride. (Matt.18:2-5)

(e) For the first time, he really begins to enter/experience the Kingdom of Father. (Mark 10:15)

(f) During this season the child grows in strength, wisdom, and grace. (Luke 2:40)

(g) The child still needs development in his thinking, especially how to practically apply the gifts, talents and abilities the Lord has given him. (1 Cor.14:20)

(h) The child at times has difficulty in understanding the will of God attendant with his life in a specific season and revelation of Christ to him in that season. (John 21:4-6)

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TEKNON SON

(a) The son is fully conscious that his sins have been forgiven – He has no guilt and condemnation. (Matt 9:2; 1 John 2:12)

(b) The teknon has a legitimate and valid relationship with His Father. (John 1:11,12; Rom 9:6-8)

(c) The son starts to live a life overcoming of sin and expressing practical righteousness. (1 John 2:1; 3:10)

(d) The son flourishes in love for others, thereby imitating God His Father. (1 John 3:18,10; Eph.5:2)

(e) The son submits his own ambition and will in subjection to a spiritual father, who through instruction of the Word, matures the nature of Christ within him, thus facilitating his rapid progression to maturity – and a four-dimensional growth in stature, wisdom, favour with God and favour with men. (Luke 2:46-52; Gal. 4:19)

(f) The teknon must walk closely in the doctrine and ways of his spiritual father in the Lord during this time. (Eph.5:2; 1 Thess.1:6,7; 1 Cor. 4:15-17; 11:1)

(g) The teknon begins to work in active support of his spiritual father in the Lord. (Phil. 2:19-22)

(h) The teknon lives in the hope and desire of his inheritance and reception of all the promises of His Father. He becomes conscious of the fact that he, as a co-heir with Christ, cannot be joined to any element of bondage. (Gal.4:28,31; Rom.8:16-17)
NEANISKOS

(a) ‘Neaniskos sons’ exhibit a robust and consistent spiritual strength, have the Word dwelling in them in an abiding and a consistent way, and demonstrate a capacity to overcome the world and the enemy. (1 John 2:14)

(b) He has developed keen vision for the Spirit has been poured out on him and flows through him. (Acts 2:17)

(c) The son is ready to claim the victory over the largest obstacles to maturing in his life. (Matt 19:20)

(d) The son learns to serve valid Apostolic ministry practically and spiritually. (Acts 5:17)

HUIOS SON

(a) The huios son is led by the Holy Spirit. (Rom.8:14)

(b) The huios son knows internally that he is a mature son because he has a witness from His Heavenly Father within. (Matt.3:17)

(c) The Huios son has demonstrated consistent submission and obedience to his spiritual father. (Luke 2; Book of Ruth)

(d) The huios son excels in PEACE, LOVE and FORGIVENESS. (Matt.5:9,44; Luke 6:35-36)

(e) The huios son is not offended by the discipline of his father, but receives it as a son who is loved, and so matures, producing evidence of fruits of righteousness in his life. (Heb.12:7-11)

(f) The ‘huios’ son embraces suffering or life experiences as an essential part of his fashioning as a mature son, who has learnt and become a standard of OBEDIENCE. (Heb.2:10; 5:8)

(g) The ‘huios’ son overcomes sin, the flesh, self, etc. demonstrating maturity and his nature as a son of His Father

(h) Huios’ sons are often described in various ways to highlight certain characteristics associated with maturity, examples:

- Sons of the Kingdom (Matt.13:38)
- Son of Peace (Luke 10:6)
- Sons of the Day and ‘Sons of Light’ (1 Thess. 5:5; John 12:36)
- Sons of the Resurrection (Luke 20:36)
- Sons of the Highest (Most High) (Luke 6:35-36)

(i) The huios son activates his FIRSTBORN status, privilege and function (Rom. 8:29)

(j) The huios son can represent His Heavenly Father accurately.
EXERCISE GREAT CARE IN OVER-APPLYING THE ‘TEKNON–HUIOS’ DISTINCTION:

One cannot solely rely on the etymology of a word to isolate its spiritual meaning. The general use of the word in a variety of contexts must also be considered. Together with etymology, the context might decide a particular shade of meaning. In these instances, spiritual interpretation and application of the word rests with the Spirit of God within us, and not solely with the grammarian. (A grammarian is ‘one who is an expert on grammar’)

‘Teknon’ stresses the new spiritual relationship of life we enjoy because of our acceptance of Christ as Saviour and Lord (e.g. John 1:11,12), whereas ‘huios’ stresses the development of spiritual character in keeping with the nature of God, our Father (Matt. 5:44,45 –‘Love your enemies’). But this distinction denoting a progression in development is not uniformly maintained throughout Scripture, so one must exercise care in over applying the distinction.

NOTE THE FOLLOWING:
[I have interspersed my thoughts and insights here amidst some general principles from ‘The Complete Word Study Dictionary’, by the Greek scholar, Spiros Zodhiates]

- ‘Teknon’ denotes the more general designation for offspring indicating one that is born to another. It refers generally to posterity (Acts 2:39; Gal 4:28,31).
- ‘Huios’ refers to a legal heir, thus implying maturity or adulthood.
- We as sons are called ‘tekmons’ of God. It is used many times as a general descriptor of our technical status as sons of God, who have issued forth from Him and who are a part of His family (see for example: John 1:12, Rom. 8:16,17,21; 9:8; Eph. 5:1; 1 John 3:1,2,10; 5:2).
- We are also called ‘huios’ sons of God, denoting our mature state as His sons. (Rom 8:14,19; Gal 3:26; 4:6,7, Heb. 12:7).
- ‘Teknon’ is often used by spiritual fathers to denote and identify their spiritual sons in the Lord. Timothy is often referred to as Paul’s son in the Lord. The word ‘teknon’ is used here (2 Tim. 1:2; 1 Tim.1:2; 1 Cor. 4:17; Phil 2:22). The same applies to Titus and Onesimus (Titus 1:4; Phil 1:10). The use of ‘teknon’ then in this regard alludes to the fact that the spiritual son issues forth from his spiritual father – in a symbolic sense, and that he is the one as a pupil/disciple under the training and mentorship of his father in the Lord. The word is also used to describe corporate sons (1 Cor. 4:14; 2 Cor. 6:13; 3 John 1:4; John 11:2).
- ‘Huios’ is used by Peter as a descriptor of John Mark as his spiritual son (1 Pet. 5:13).
- ‘Teknon’ is often used as a term of great affection and endearment – a tender term of address as in “my son’ or “my child” (Matt 9:2).

The above is highlighted to indicate that ‘teknon’ need not be necessarily viewed as a stage of development in sonship that is inferior to higher stages. It can also be a legitimate expression that can be used to denote various aspects of sonship as is highlighted above. However, it must be borne in mind that the measure and stature of CHRIST, the Son to which we must all be conformed, is a ‘HUIOS’ son – a mature, perfected son (Rom 8:28,29).
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