

Identity in Christ

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

Ephesians 2:10

Who Am I, Really?

On just about every social media platform, we are given the opportunity to describe ourselves in an “about me” section. What does yours say? Does it list your hometown, hobbies, job, political views, ambitions, or favorite quotations? What do you choose to write in order to tell the world who you are? How you define yourself speaks volumes about the source of your identity.

Who am I? This question is universal, and the answer is highly sought after. It reveals our purpose, our value, and our sense of belonging. Mark Driscoll addresses the question of true identity in his book *Who do You Think You Are?*. He writes that the question, “who am I?” is “far-reaching, belief-revealing, life-shaping, and identity-forming... This world’s fundamental problem is that we don’t understand who we truly are – children of God made in his image – and instead define ourselves by any number of things other than Jesus. Only by knowing our false identity apart from Christ in relation to our *true* identity in him can we rightly deal with and overcome the issues in our lives.”

Who I am Not

There are two equally flawed perspectives we can have with respect to our identity. The first is thinking too highly of ourselves, and the second is thinking too lowly of ourselves. Both are dangerous because they maintain the focus on *ourselves*.

When we think too highly of ourselves, the focus of our life is taken from living to glorify God to living to glorify ourselves. We become proud of our accomplishments, virtues, or skills – comparing ourselves to others instead of humbly comparing ourselves to God.

Conversely, when our lives are characterized by self-abasement, we are not living in the freedom Christ has won for us. Rather, we are blatantly rejecting God’s gifts of acceptance, security and significance. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, “For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.” Fear is not of God. Thinking too negatively of ourselves robs us of the ability to truly trust God to do transforming works in our lives.

Both of these flawed perspectives – thinking too highly or too negatively of ourselves – spring from a misguided focus. The key is not to think higher or lower of ourselves, but to think of ourselves less. Instead of finding our worth and value in who we are in Christ, we look elsewhere in an attempt to find out who we are. We place our identity in things like our reputation, in other people, in material things, in success, in financial security, and so on rather than recognizing that we are not defined by what we have done or what has been done *to* us, but by what Jesus has done *for* us.

So...Who Am I?

The middle ground between these two erroneous extremes, and the way God instructs us to live, is with *humility*. Humility is recognizing our rightful place before God. Author and theologian Andrew Murray writes that “Humility is the displacement of self by the enthronement of God...it is nothing but the disappearance of self in the vision that God is all.” Humility requires us to

understand that, on our own, we cannot possibly succeed. We are sinful and broken before a perfect God. We deserve death. But there is unceasing hope for those who are in Christ! Because of the sacrificial life, excruciating death and redeeming resurrection of Jesus, we have been rescued from slavery to sin and death into a life that reflects our true identity as an adopted child of God. What, then shall our response be but to wholeheartedly worship our merciful, loving, powerful Savior with a thankful heart?

The words of a Caedmon's Call song capture this well: "I'm so thankful that I'm incapable of doing any good on my own." Our understanding of our utter depravity and sinfulness, coupled with knowing of God's infinite love and sacrifice, should lead us to a life of immense gratitude. We have done *nothing* to deserve God's favor, and yet because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, He chooses to see us as worthy.

Who am I Becoming?

One of the most defining aspects of the Christian life is transformation. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we are made into new creations. 1 Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!". We are adopted as children of God (1 John 3:1) because of His great love for us. This is not because of what we have accomplished, nor is it because of our own greatness. We are saved by God's infinite grace and given new life!

Because of this truth, if we trust in God to change us and mold us as He sees fit, we can rest in the security of our salvation and the glorious inheritance that awaits us in Christ. Our greatest joy comes from honoring God in all we do, say, and think. Becoming like Christ in every way requires that we know Him intimately through interacting with the Bible and listening to His voice through prayer. This is why we can have "blessed assurance," as the hymn suggests:

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine;
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

Truth from God's Word

The Bible gives us many promises about our true identity in Christ. We are children of God – we belong to Him, and He loves us and accepts us. We are eternally alive in Christ, identifying with Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, ascension, life, power and inheritance. We are new creations. We are free from the powers of sin and death!

Read aloud the following Biblical truths about your identity as a follower of Christ. Contemplate the meaning of each statement, and answer the discussion questions below. (This list of truths about our identity in Christ is taken from Neil T. Anderson's book *The Bondage Breaker*.)

In Christ...I am ACCEPTED.

- John 1:12 – I am a child of God.
- John 15:15 – I am Christ's friend.
- Romans 5:1 – I have been justified.
- 1 Corinthians 6:17 – I am united with the Lord and one with Him in spirit.
- 1 Corinthians 6:20 – I have been bought with a price – I belong to God.
- 1 Corinthians 12:27 – I am a member of Christ's body.
- Ephesians 1:1 – I am a saint.
- Ephesians 1:5 – I have been adopted into God's family.

- Ephesians 2:18 – I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit.
- Colossians 1:14 – I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins.
- Colossians 2:10 – I am complete in Christ.

In Christ...I am SECURE.

- Romans 8:1-2 – I am free from condemnation.
- Romans 8:28 – I am assured that all things work together for good.
- Romans 8:31-34 – I am free from any condemning charges against me.
- Romans 8:35-39 – I cannot be separated from the love of God.
- 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 – I have been established, anointed and sealed by God.
- Colossians 3:3 – I am hidden with Christ in God.
- Philippians 1:6 – I am confident that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected.
- Philippians 3:20 – I am a citizen of heaven.
- 2 Timothy 1:7 – I have not been given a spirit of fear but of power, love, and a sound mind.
- Hebrews 4:16 – I can find grace and mercy in times of need.
- 1 John 5:18 – I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me.

In Christ...I am SIGNIFICANT.

- Matthew 5:13 – I am the salt and light of the earth.
- John 15:1-5 – I am a branch of the true vine, a channel of God's life.
- John 15:16 – I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit.
- Acts 1:8 – I am a personal witness of Christ to the world.
- 1 Corinthians 3:16 – I am God's temple.
- 2 Corinthians 5:17-20 – I am a minister of reconciliation.
- 2 Corinthians 6:1 – I am God's coworker.
- Ephesians 2:6 – I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realm.
- Ephesians 2:10 – I am God's workmanship.
- Ephesians 3:12 – I may approach God with freedom and confidence.
- Philippians 4:13 – I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Discussion Questions

1. Which are you more prone to do: to think too highly of yourself, or to think too lowly of yourself?
2. What needs to change about how you view yourself?
3. How does knowing you are accepted, secure and significant as a child of God impact your understanding of how He sees you?
4. How should knowing who you are in Christ affect the way you live each day?
5. In what areas other than God do you look for security? Acceptance? Significance?
6. Which of these truths about your identity in Christ is the most difficult for you to believe? What is a practical way you can apply this truth this week?
7. In light of your true identity, how should you view others? Do you see others from a human point of view, or from the way God sees them – as His children, made in His image?
8. Is there someone who comes to mind that you can share this with?