

CHAPTER 5

Identity in Christ

KEY IDEA

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

KEY VERSE

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. — *John 1:12*

BEGIN BY RECITING THE KEY VERSE AND THE KEY IDEA TOGETHER AS A GROUP.

LESSON

INTRODUCTION:

Who are you? Trying to define yourself by possessions, accomplishments, or the way others perceive you often leads to disappointment. We were designed to live as God’s children, finding our ultimate fulfillment and contentment in His will for our lives.

Honestly describe yourself.

How do you really define who you are?

A man typically defines himself by what he does –a woman, by her relationships.

> Both use their physical attributes, heritage, possessions, backgrounds and aspirations to describe themselves.

< Over time, these become an identity.

Our single most valuable -yet least understood- treasure here on earth is our identity in Christ. Until it becomes prominent in our thinking, we remain stuck in the impossible struggle to make our flesh behave. And since it won't behave, others see us as hypocrites trying to act out the role of the Christians -failing to do what we say.

Response?



KEY QUESTION: "Who am I?"

One of the most important indicators of your happiness and quality of life will come from the answer to this key question.

A NEW NAME

During Bible times, a person's name was more than simply a reference to one's family or a way to uniquely identify someone; typically it characterized something about them. There are several instances recorded in the Bible of God giving a person a new name. When God would rename a person, he was establishing for them a new identity and marking that he was changing their mission or place in life.

Genesis 17:1-7

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."

Abram fell facedown, and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations. No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations. I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you. I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you."

The importance of names carried through to the names of God. The name of "God Almighty" in verse one is the translation for the Hebrew, "El Shadday."

> As with all the other names of God, this one addresses a particular attribute of God.

> "El Shadday" emphasizes God's power.

< Which here refers to the power to give Abram a son through Sarai.

When God changed a person's name and gave him a new name, it was usually to establish a new identity.

> God changed Abram's "high father" name to "Abraham," "father of a multitude" (Genesis 17:5) and his wife's name from "Sarai," "my princess," to "Sarah," "mother of nations" (Genesis 17:15).

< We know from history that the descendants of Abraham and Sarah formed many nations, including the Jews' and Muslims'.

Why did God choose new names for some people? The Bible doesn't give us His reasons, but perhaps it was to let them know they were destined for a new mission in life. The new name was a way to let them in on the divine plan and also to assure them that God's plan would be fulfilled in them.

Other examples of name changes include:

> Jacob – Israel: supplanter – he who has the power of God.

< Jacob rose to position by manipulating his brother into giving him his firstborn birthright and then tricking his father, Isaac, into giving him the firstborn blessing. God wanted to make it clear that it was He who gave Israel power and position, not his own conniving ways. (Genesis 32:28)

> Simon – Peter: God has heard – rock.

< On his own Peter was not a rock. He ran hot and cold depending on the circumstances. With the Holy Spirit, however, Peter became the stabilizing influence for the new church. (John 1:42)

Name changing was also a custom of the Ancient Near East. Here are a few Bible characters who went through a name change that was not ordained specifically by God.

> Naomi – Mara: beautiful – bitter (Ruth 1:20).

< After her husband and sons died, Naomi attempted to change her name to Mara, or bitterness, to reflect her hard circumstances. Neither history nor her daughter-in-law Ruth indulged her, and before long, God again blessed her with a family.

> Saul – Paul:

< Some think that God changed Saul's name to Paul after his conversion, but this isn't true. "Paul" is Greek for the Jewish "Saul." Since Paul was a Roman citizen and witnessed to the Greek-speaking world, it was reasonable for him to take a more familiar form of his own name. (Acts 13:9)

> Joseph – Zaphenath-Paneah:

< When the Hebrew Joseph came into the service of the Pharaoh, he was given a new Egyptian name. (Genesis 41:45)

> Daniel – Belteshazzar:

< When Daniel was taken into captivity to Babylon, and then taken to the court of Nebuchadnezzar, he was given a Persian name to replace his Hebrew name.

> See also Daniel's peers, Hananiah/Shadrach, Mishael/Meshach, and Azariah/Abednego. (Daniel 1:7)

> Hadassah – Esther:

> The Jewess girl Hadassah (Myrtle) was also given a new name, Esther (star), when she was taken to be in Xerxes court.

> *SIDE NOTE:* the name of the king, Ahasuerus, is a Jewish name, given in honor for Xerxes's decision to save the Jews. (Esther 2:7)

Finally, there is a name change for all believers: God says, "¹⁷ Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it." (Revelation 2:17). When we reach heaven, God will also change our names. Perhaps it will represent our own changed identity as we transition from sinful to holy.

A NEW COVENANT

In Old Testament times, God provided his people with a promise under what is termed the old covenant, which included his directions to his people under Moses' leadership. A covenant is a binding agreement between two parties, in this case God and Israel, which lays out what each side promises to do. The prophet Jeremiah, however, foretold of a new covenant — a new deal God had in the works — that would redefine the identity of God's people. This time it involved more than just a name change.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord.

"This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,'

because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the Lord. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

Not only would God bless His people nationally, but He would bless them personally by writing His will on the hearts individually.

God will finally remedy the long-standing problem of his people—worshiping God with works rather than their heart.

> The benefits that God will provide

< Knowledge of the Lord and forgiveness

> These were all offered for the OT people, but too rarely appropriated.

In Verse 34 we see there will be no need for a faithful remnant within the covenant people to teach the unfaithful majority to know God.

> All covenant partners will know God.

> This new covenant will include only those who know him.

This promise of hope was manifested in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God come to earth. Jesus is the Deliverer of this new covenant — the ultimate sacrifice, the Lamb who was slain to make this new identity possible. Jesus was fully prepared to pay this price for us.

Jesus’ death and resurrection would make it possible for people to have a personal and abiding relationship with God. People would be restored the position of oneness with God that he envisioned for us in the beginning. Jesus expressed his passionate love for us in one of the last prayers he prayed before his death in John chapter 17.

From John 17:1-26

17 After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. ² For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. ³ Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ...

⁶ “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. ... ⁸ For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. ... Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one. ... ¹⁴ I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. ...

²⁰ “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, ²¹ that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— ²³ I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

²⁴ “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

²⁵ “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”

(*) When we get to verse 20 we can see Jesus' prayer included me, us!

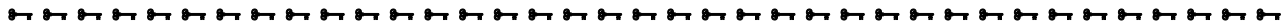
FROM THE TRANSFORMATION STUDY BIBLE

The progression of thought in this prayer (John 17:1-26) is not difficult to discover. Jesus first prayed for himself and told the Father that his work on earth had been finished. Then he prayed for his disciples, that the Father would keep them and sanctify them. He closed his prayer by praying for you and me and the whole church, that we might be unified in him and one day share his glory.

Re-read the verses above from John 17 and underline each phrase that relates to your identity in Christ. Do you recognize your identity in Christ? How?

If you are having difficulty recognizing your identity in Christ, why the identity crisis?

If you answered the key question "Who am I?" and liked your answer, you have a good foundation on which to build your life, and you have found Jesus' answer. If you did not like your answer, if life is not going well with you, or if you aren't sure yet, here is Jesus' answer to you and for you...



KEY IDEA: I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

ADOPTION

The beautiful thing about God's kingdom is that all those who welcome Jesus as their Lord are given the opportunity to accept a new identity through him.

Scripture reminds us we are welcomed into God's family as his children:

To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. John 1:12

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

The early church was richly invested in the changes that resulted from following Jesus. In Romans 3:10-26, Paul, the author of the letter, presented the full transaction of the new covenant, starting with our position in sin and moving to a graphic and overwhelming description of our new identity in Christ.

There is no one righteous...Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law, rather through the law we become conscious of our sin...But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known...This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

Our adoption into the family of God rests solely on the work of Jesus on the cross.

Romans 5:1-2} *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God.*

Romans 8:1} *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death.*

After our adoption, we receive the Holy Spirit, who guides us in this new identity.

Romans 8:9-16} *You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.*

... For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ... The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

While determining your identity an important question to ask is, "Whose voice am I listening to?"

> The answer to this question significantly impacts our view of who we are.

< Past voices can influence our thoughts about ourselves.

^ Abusive parent, angry employer, ex-spouse, bully, gossip, etc.

< Present images can cause us to have faulty identity.

^ Successfulness of friends and family that seems to allude you.

^ Images on media that cause a negative self-image.

We must identify the voice telling us who we are.

> God's voice will not only whisper to us each day we are his, but will also silence the voices that have lied to us about who we are.

> The moment we profess faith in him, we receive a new identity.

Believers are adopted into the family of God. As believers there are five points to consider:

1- AS A BELIEVER IF JESUS CHRIST, YOU ARE A CHILD OF GOD AND HEIR TO HIS KINGDOM.

As children of God in sharing our identity in Christ we become heirs with Christ.

If we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. Romans 8:17

HEIRS OF GOD

Paul not only wrote to the Romans about their significance due to their new identity in Christ, but he also laid out this magnificent heritage eloquently to the believers in Ephesus (1:1-3:21). Note all the incredible things God has done to make our status as his children possible. Underline or highlight as you read through the passage.

Ephesians 1-3:21

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus: ² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸ that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, ⁹ he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰ to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

¹¹ In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, ¹² in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. ¹³ And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, ¹⁴ who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

¹⁵ For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, ¹⁶ I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. ¹⁷ I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is the same as the mighty strength ²⁰ he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, ²¹ far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. ²² And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

2 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ² in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³ All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴ But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵ made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. ⁶ And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, ⁷ in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

¹¹ Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)— ¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

³ For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—
² Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, ³ that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. ⁴ In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, ⁵ which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. ⁶ This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

⁷ I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸ Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, ⁹ and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. ¹⁰ His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, ¹¹ according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. ¹² In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. ¹³ I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory.

¹⁴ For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

How many phrases did you find regarding the incredible things God has done to make our status as his children possible? _____

As heirs of God, we need to take seriously this family responsibility. Paul wrote often to the Church to help them understand their new identity and to call them to live up to it in their daily lives.

> In this new identity we become the Body of Christ.

< Our bodies become God's temple and we need to witness to that habitation. [1Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:19; 12:12]

- < The Holy Spirit gives gifts for us to use in edifying this Kingdom Family. [1 Corinthians 12]
- < We need to have love for the members of this Kingdom Family. [1 Peter 1:22-23]; 1 John 4:7-21]
- < We are part of a priesthood, which makes us special possessions of God. [1 Peter 2:9-10]

Our time on earth is to be spent loving our Father and building his kingdom, which he freely shares with us — now and in eternity.

> He has given us full access to himself, his character, his gifts, and his qualities.

2 - AS A BELIEVER IN JESUS CHRIST, YOU ARE A TEMPLE OF GOD'S DWELLING.

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? 1 Corinthians 3:16

Being the temple for God's dwelling means we have a responsibility in taking care of our bodies, minds, and spirits.

> Our new motive in caring for ourselves is not to be loved and accepted by people on the outside, but rather to care for ourselves because of God, who lives on the inside.

> This should challenge us in our daily behavior, because we now take God with us everywhere we go.

3 - AS A BELIEVER IN JESUS CHRIST, YOU ARE A NEW CREATION.

If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 2 Corinthians 5:17

God sees us as totally different beings — new creations — because of his Son, who now resides in our souls.

> We need to start seeing ourselves as God sees us, and living up to his vision for us.

4 - AS A BELIEVER IN JESUS CHRIST, YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE BODY OF CHRIST.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 1 Corinthians 12:27

As a member of the body of Christ, you now belong to the largest family in existence.

> This great family, led by our Father, gives us a unique sense of eternal purpose and calling.

< Our talents and gifts take on significant meanings to the people around us, as well as to the kingdom as a whole.

< There is no greater purpose than to be associated with the purposes of God through his body, his family.

Ephesians 4:15-16 states:

Speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

5 - AS A BELIEVER IN JESUS CHRIST, YOU ARE A CITIZEN OF HEAVEN.

Our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. Philippians 3:20

As followers of Christ and citizens of heaven, it does not matter what nation we are from.

> When the day of the Lord comes, we have access to heaven because Jesus has officially declared us free to pass into his kingdom.

Ephesians 1:13-14

13 And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.

We now have a higher standard as citizens, because we are called not only to abide by the laws of the land, but also to adhere to the laws of heaven.

> If Christians will walk in obedience to both, we will impact the world more deeply for Christ.

The above statement is quite powerful, if you take time to think about it seriously. What did you think as you read it? Is it true?



FROM THINK, ACT, BELIEVE LIKE JESUS by Randy Frazee

KEY APPLICATION: What difference does this make in the way I live?

If you truly embrace in your heart your new identity in Christ, a significant difference will be seen in the way you approach each day.

BECAUSE OF OUR NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST, WE ARE FREE FROM CONDEMNATION.

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. Rom. 7:24-8:2

Many people struggle with accepting God's grace and mercy. But Paul's declaration of "no condemnation" means judgment, accusation, and bondage to sin are no more. We must believe in the work of Christ and walk into his freedom.

When Satan tries to condemn us, Jesus acts as our advocate, our attorney. He stands before the Father to say, "I object. They have already been acquitted of these charges." Rom. 8:34

When another human tries to tell you that you are insignificant or treat you like you are worthless, don't listen to them. In Christ, this is simply not true.

BECAUSE OF OUR NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST, OUR WORTH COMES FROM OUR POSITION IN CHRIST, NOT OUR PERFORMANCE.

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” Matt. 11:28-29

Notice Jesus is not talking just about being physically tired, because he expressly says, “You will find rest for your souls.” It is exhausting work to try to prove our worth and perform to gain significance, and it causes us to be “weary and burdened.” Christ alone offers the freedom from the tyranny of any demands for approval.

BECAUSE OF OUR NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST, WE LIVE TO EXPRESS WHO WE ARE IN CHRIST, NOT TO PROVE WHO WE ARE.

One of the most mystical, yet amazing ways we know we are truly expressing who we are in Christ is by using the gifts he gives and tapping into the heart of God to “feel his pleasure.” It’s feeling deep down that this kingdom activity I’m engaged in is a gift from my Creator and the reason I’m on this planet.

Because of our new identity in Christ, we can focus on building others up, not tearing them down.

If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God. And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus.

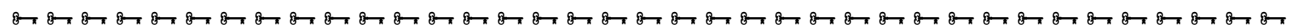
1 John 4:15-17

The more we know and accept who we are in Christ, the more our behavior will begin to reflect our true identity. It will translate into not allowing anyone or anything to devalue who we are in Christ.

We will be set free to use our words for building bridges, not burning them. To use our hands to hug, not hurt. To use our feet to bring to, not take away. To our hearts to inspire, not conspire.

As we love God and grow deeper in our love for him, we will then, anywhere and everywhere we go, be Jesus with skin on. This is truly thinking like Jesus!

So let me ask you: **If you have received Christ as your Savior, do you believe and rest in your new identity in him?** If not, why not? When you received Christ, such a decision wasn’t just meant for the age to come; it was meant to give you a life of immense freedom and rest now as well. Grab hold of it!



A little something extra:

Embrace Your Identity in Christ By Rick Warren

“He has identified us as his own by placing the Holy Spirit in our hearts.” (2 Corinthians 1:22a NLT)

Your faith will grow stronger as you focus on your identity in Christ (Galatians 2).

What this means is that you abandon any image of yourself that is not from God. You stop accepting what others have said about you, how others have labeled you, and how others have defined you.

You start believing what God says about you, that he is pleased with how he created you, and that God defines you.

You're not defined by your feelings. You're not defined by the opinions of others or by your circumstances. You're not defined by your successes or failures. You're not defined by the car you drive, the money you make, or the house you say you own when the bank really does. You are defined by God and God alone. He identifies you as his own (2 Corinthians 1:22).

The thing is, if you don't know who you are, then you're vulnerable to other people telling you who you are. But the concrete, solid, gospel truth is that you are who God says you are, and no one else has a vote in the matter.

This "identity issue" is an important part of living the abundant life. Jesus was able to face the incredible demands of his mission because he knew exactly who he was. He knew that he mattered to God, and that gave him confidence to move purposefully in faith.

You are now identified with Christ and have the power of the Holy Spirit within you. You are God's precious child, and he created you in a way that pleases him.