

## Identity in Christ

### 1. Why is knowing who you are so important?

- a. Some of you might have seen the movie “Overboard” in which Goldie Hawn stars with Kurt Russell. She is a wealthy woman who has a boating accident and is thrown overboard and suffers amnesia. Kurt Russell is a single father with a bunch of kids, living in the Louisiana Bayou. He rescues her and then convinces her that she is the mother of his kids.
- b. The point is, **if you don’t know who you are, then you can be convinced you are something that you are not.**

### 2. Review

- a. You may recall last week that we learned that **our original identity was the “Image of God”** The word “Image” *“means a reflection that so resembles the original that onlookers might say, “gee that looks like him.”* I don’t necessarily mean that we looked like God, because God is Spirit and we are flesh beings. But that Adam and Eve when they were first created, acted so much like God that creation itself would have said, “wow, they look like God.” ‘
- b. I also used the illustration of looking in a mirror. **What you are supposed to see in a mirror is a reflection of yourself, right? Imagine looking in the mirror and finding either someone else’s image there...or worse yet, you moving your arm and the image not!** This is the problem that mankind possesses now. Sin entered the world with Adam’s rebellion in the garden. We stopped looking very much like God, in fact, we stopped acting like Him too.
- c. So while our original identity was “image of God,” once Adam sinned, the identity of every human being born since was that of a sinner. **That means every person who is born is born into sin, they act like sinners, because that is what they are.**
  - i. *“As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 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. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.”* (Ephesians 2:1-3)
    1. At one time, our nature was to sin, and our identity **was** that of a sinner.
    2. I want you to notice that this statement is written in the past tense: “you were” “used to live” “at one time” “we were.”
    3. Because when you become a Christian, when you become a child of God, when you are born again, you not only get a brand new nature, you get a brand new identity.
    4. **Knowing who you are will affect how you will live.** Just like Goldie Hawn living as a swamp mom to a shack full of boys, never knowing she had vast riches that were her’s by her identity...we live far below what God intended his children to live...we live as slaves instead of sons (but that’s another sermon).

### 3. All throughout the bible God demonstrates that He is in the Identity changing business.

- a. Not unlike the informant who gets a new I.D. for helping put the bad guys away, God gives each of us a new identity because of what His Son did on the cross.
  - i. He changed Abram’s name (and thus his identity) from a meaningless name to Abraham (which means father of nations).
  - ii. In Genesis 32, Jacob becomes Israel and changes from a man with twelve sons (and a daughter) to a nation consisting of twelve tribes.
  - iii. Every time a person’s name is changed, it signifies that something else has changed in their life as well: Saul became Paul after meeting Christ.
- b. The bible even tells us that every redeemed person possesses a new name in heaven. In Revelation 2:17 *“To him who overcomes, I will give him a white stone and a new name written on the stone..”*
- c. So...what is the purpose of this? God is in the identity restoration and destiny design business.

- i. He calls you and I by name. He knows our names. He lavishes His love on us and makes us perfect by His Son's blood.
    - 1.
    - 2. I find statements like the following all the time in Christian writers and teachers. "God sees you as righteous because the death of his Son cleansed you from your sins."
      - a. This is a true statement. It is a foundational statement of the Christian life. But there is a statement that is even more true.
      - b. "You are righteous because the death and resurrection of Jesus and the indwelling Holy Spirit has made you so."
      - c. *"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."* (Ephesians 4:22-24)
      - d. *"He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become (be) the righteousness of God in Him."* (2 Cor 5:21)
  - ii. The problem is that we have been so brainwashed by the devil into believing that we are still sinners, is that we cannot wrap our heads around the fact that God actually has made us righteous. We cling to a false humility, "oh, what a wretch I am...just a sinner saved by grace." **You WERE sinner, but when you were saved by grace, you became something else. You became the righteousness of God in Christ.**
4. **The devil will focus his lies and temptations in the arena of our identity.**
  - a. Why? Just as we have been talking about all day today...so that you will live below the level you were called to. So that you will be no different than the world in which you reside, because you see yourself as a sinner.
    - i. Romans 12:3-4 "For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you"
    - ii. This passage immediately follows the statement in which Paul tells us to live with a renewed mind and not our old way of thinking. So many of us are likely to think "don't think of yourself more highly than you ought" as meaning "think badly of yourself." Why? Because we all know our own failures...all too well. Yet, God says you are righteous, God says you are His child, God says you are a saint!
  - b. The bible says, *"as a man thinks in his heart, so he is."* (Proverbs 23:7)
    - i. Do you think the devil is stupid? He knows that if you will believe a lie about yourself, it will be more effective than persecution, and even more effective than any physical or emotional affliction, in deterring you from fulfilling God's destiny and plan for your life!
5. Understand that even **Jesus was tempted in his understanding of His Identity**
  - a. The devil attempted to trick Jesus into denying His purpose in this world and to forfeit His identity as the Son of God. If he could get Jesus to doubt who He was, or to tempt Him to act in a way where he "sought to prove who he was" then he could keep the redemption of mankind from occurring.
  - b. . Look back at Luke 3:21-22. *"When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."*
    - i. YOU ARE MY BELOVED WHAT?
    - ii. What do you think the Father was telling His Son? He was clearly delineating both His identity and His pleasure and love for Him.

1. He also empowered Him with the Holy Spirit. (Jesus operated as a man while upon the earth, empowered by the Holy Spirit, just like you and I did. To do anything differently would have negated his mission to be our perfect sacrifice).
- iii. Do you know what happens immediately after this? Turn over to Luke 4:1-2 *“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.”*
  1. He was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness where for 40 days (not just the 40<sup>th</sup> day) he was tempted by the devil. Again, operating in full humanity, laying his claims to his divine nature aside, he is tempted. (If he operates in his divinity, he cannot be tempted.)
  2. Look what the devil says to him. v3 *“The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”*
    - a. “If you are” – I believe that this was not only a temptation to doubt his identity but also to act in his divinity to “prove something” to his accuser. If Jesus acted in any way apart from the Holy Spirit he would have sinned (acting in the flesh) or he would have disqualified Himself as the perfect man (fully human) by acting in His divinity.
  3. v5-7: *“The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours.”*
    - a. The devil is acknowledging that Adam had “given the authority over the earth” to Satan through his disobedience. The only way it will be taken back will be through the perfect obedience of the Savior. Jesus wants nothing to do with lesser gods. He worships the Father alone.
  4. v9-11 *“The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. For it is written: “ ‘He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”*
    - a. Again, “If you are the Son of God...prove it!”
    - b. Jesus will have to live his entire life by faith. He has heard the Father speak and now lives by faith in that identity. Every action from here until the cross will be expressions of that unshakeable faith that He is the One who the Father says He is.
  5. The devil wants you to give up your identity (sons and daughters of the living God) and your purpose in life.
    - a. **Our temptations will most often test our identity as sons and daughters of God.**
    - b. They will lead us to be tempted to ask ourselves, “If God really loved me, why is this happening to me?”
- iv. Jesus is fully man. He doesn’t “feel like God.” In fact, He grew up in favor with God and man. How does one who is perfectly aligned with God grow in favor with God? How does one who is perfect “become obedient through the things he suffered?”
  1. These are questions you need to ask, because the unveil not only the Identity of Jesus but yourself as well.
  2. Understand, when you saw Jesus you saw God. That was the original plan for Adam. It was the original plan for mankind, but sin got in the way. But Jesus restored our identity, and now, we are to live so people see God. Are you seeing it yet?

3. Ya, you say, Jesus WAS God. But Jesus didn't act in his role as God, but in his role as the perfect man, the Second Adam.
  - v. Lets place ourselves in Jesus sandals for a minute. He knows He is the Messiah. He has perfect communion with the Father. He hears His Father's voice. He feels His Father's presence. He lives in both realms (spiritual and physical realms) simultaneously. Yet there is that critical juncture that the devil says, "prove it." Or "*if you are the son of God would you really be hungry?*"
    1. Jesus, who set aside His claims to divinity, choosing to operate on earth as a man, so as to accomplish our redemption. (to choose to operate as Divine would negate His ability to be tempted, to be tested, and to even suffer *on our behalf*). So he operated as a perfectly related man to God (the second Adam). And all of His miracles were the result of His relationship with the Father, not because he was God, but rather, precisely because He was fully human, rightly related to God.
    2. He exemplified what a Son of God would do. He being the only begotten Son, but then birthing many "adopted sons and daughters." Jesus stood fast in His identity and we must likewise, learn and stand fast in who we are!
  - c. Can you say with me, "I am the righteousness of God in Christ?"
  - d. Can you say with me, "I am a redeemed, blood bought saint?"
  - e. Can you say with me, "I am a child of God."
  - f. Can you say with me, "I am the light of the world, I am the salt of the earth"
  - g. There are so many more we will talk about in the days ahead. But do you want to live like a slave or a Son? Do you want to be just like the world around you or do you desire to be a light that so shines that it illuminates the world you walk in?
  - h. Take your identity and walk in it! Speak it out every time you fail, every time you are tempted, speak out the truth that God says about you. Renew your mind with the truth and let the truth set you free!
    - i. When you are tempted...remind yourself who you are! And remind yourself that old guy is dead!

6. Temptation doesn't determine our identity. Just because you are tempted in a certain area, doesn't mean that defines you. Imagine a person who is tempted to cheat but resists it. Is he a cheater? Of course not. What if he has succumbed to that temptation several times but now resists it successfully? Is he a cheater? What if he has temptations to act on a homosexual impulse? Does that make him a homosexual?
  - a. God's Word says in Proverbs 23:7 says, "...as he [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he." When I allow myself to think of myself in ways other than God thinks of me, I have sinned. When I allow myself to use my mind in a manner other than the way God would have me use my mind, I have sinned. You get the idea.
  - b. The enemy's main goal is to get us to take our eyes off of Jesus and to place our focus on our own needs. If he can keep us self-focused and self-centered, he has us by the balls, boys! What do I do when that happens? When tempted, I begin to take my eyes off of me and my own needs and to focus on the needs of others. When I am tempted to be depressed, I look for someone who is depressed and seek ways to encourage them. When tempted sexually, I look for my wife or call a buddy and ask for prayer. When tempted to worry about my financial needs, I look for someone who is in financial need and secretly bless them in a financial way. You get the idea! Often, I sing my prayers for that person to God and in the process have a song that I then turn around and use in ministry to millions of others! Temptation becomes an opportunity to be intimate with God and to bless others...and the enemy is defeated in my life!
  - c. Jesus knew who He was and was confident in His identity. When we are convinced that we are who God says we are, we are not so likely to be swayed by every little temptation that the enemy throws our way.