

LESSON ESSENTIALS

OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

LESSON 1: OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

We don't have to work our way into God's family by being good. This lesson highlights the fact that believing in Jesus Christ and accepting forgiveness for our sins is the only requirement for membership. In an age of desiring transformation of our appearances into someone more perfect on the outside, Jesus promises to transform you from the inside out and give you a truly fulfilling life. Read on to see how!

Everyone wants to belong to something that means something. We want our life to count and to be connected to what matters. How could anything be better than belonging to the family of God?

“For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son...” Romans 8:29

God identified us with Christ long before we identified ourselves with Him!

“And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him.” Colossians 1:21-22

It is our identity in Christ that results in us being transformed from weak and sinful to pure and holy.

It's amazing to see what lengths people will go to in order to fit in. They change their speech, habits, or clothing to become more like those around them. Some may want to achieve a physical ideal by extreme diet changes, or hide their true abilities and interests so as not to appear different. They will even waste their life struggling through a career they have absolutely no interest or skill in because everyone else is working in that field. People don't mind going through all the trouble because there is a powerful drive in human beings to belong and to have an identity.

An identity is what makes us similar to some people and different from others and it is an important aspect of how we see ourselves. However, the most privileged identity anyone can ever have does not come from this world. It is the identity we have as a child of the most High God through Jesus Christ.

We are identified with Christ because we accepted Christ into our lives. Romans 8: 29-34 says, “For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom He predestined, He also called, and those whom He called, He also justified, and those whom He justified, He also glorified. What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave him up for us all, how will He not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died – more than that, who was raised –who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”

These verses from the Bible reveal some amazing details. These verses tell us that we were identified with Christ even before we were born, in fact even before the creation of the world. God had identified us with Christ long before we identified ourselves with Him. God identifies us with Christ because Jesus Christ died for us on the cross and identified with us. Only when we are identified in the likeness of His Son, Jesus Christ, do we stand justified before God and He sees us as pure and holy. Colossians 1:21-22 says, “And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him”

So we are identified in Christ not by the family we were born into or by our good deeds, but by simply believing in and accepting Jesus Christ. It is not our works that earn our identity with Christ but our identity in Christ that results in us being transformed from weak and sinful to pure and holy. It is our identity in Christ that resurrects us to a new life, and the grace He gives us that empowers us to live in victory over temptation! The word of God affirms this in 1 John 4:4; “Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.”

But this is just the start of a lifetime image transformation. Once we accept Jesus we should surrender our lives to Christ, submitting our minds and our wills to Him. We also need to be obedient to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. It is by this submission and obedience that we apply our identity in Christ to our daily lives.

Our identity in Christ does not only make us a new person but it also gives us a new family. Every believer makes up God's family, and this family, also known as his body, is the Church. God has given us this worldwide community of brothers and sisters in Christ so that we can encourage each other to live according to our identity in Christ and bring glory to his name.

Remember the people who were willing to go through any pain or trouble to fit into various social groups? The sad thing is that none of their sacrifices guarantee that they will find love or acceptance. People are fickle. They may love you one day and abandon you the next. However, the love and acceptance of Jesus Christ is steadfast and true.

The scriptures say, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:35-39)

Why worry about the pleasing the people around us when we have a God, who loves us from everlasting to everlasting, is waiting to be your Father?

"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

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IN REVIEW

- God identified us to be in Christ even before the creation of this world
- We stand justified before God because we are identified in Christ.
- We can apply our identity in Christ by knowing and believing what the Word of God says is true, by acting on its truth, by surrendering ourselves completely to God, and by obeying Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- Because we identify ourselves with Christ, we are now a part of the Body of Christ (the church), completely accepted by God. We are closely identified with Christ and can live in victory from all temptation.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- How is your identity in Christ different from other sources of identity such as nationality, occupation, or talents?

- Can a person who is trying very hard to do good be justified before God? What does the Bible say about this?

- You are a new creation in Christ. How have you changed as a person after accepting Jesus Christ?

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