

SESSION 1

Identity in Christ

Session #1 Teaching: Identity in Christ

Who are you and what defines you? What is your identity? That's a question many people struggle to answer. Too often, people base their identities on what they do (from their jobs to their roles in relationships), defining themselves by those pursuits. Unfortunately, by doing so, they significantly limit their lives. The truth is that God intends for all people to find their identity in Christ. If you're a Christian, your identity encompasses all the abundance of being a beloved child of God. Here's how you can start living your life fully in Christ, keeping in mind that your identity is found in Christ. Use this list of things God calls you and how He identifies you to remind yourself who you are in Christ. The world identifies you according to your actions. God identifies you for who He sees you to be. The world says your actions determine your identity. God says your identity should determine your actions.

As a Christian, you've been adopted into God's family. The work of Jesus, on the cross has made it possible for you to become one of the sons or daughters of God the Father. So, make your main goal of life learning how to know, love, and trust God as your Father. While the people who love you can't do so completely unselfishly, continually, or perfectly, God does. As a Christian, nothing can ever separate you from God's great love for you. Jesus has given you the power to ultimately overcome evil, sin, and death. Use the spiritual weapons at your disposal as a Christian (truth, righteousness, the Gospel, faith, salvation, scripture, prayer, and the strength to stand) in spiritual battles, trusting that you can always emerge victorious.

One of the richest passages about identity in the Bible is found in ***Ephesians 1:3-14***. In this passage, Paul addresses the church in Ephesus, explaining the new identity given to a person when they are in Christ. According to Ephesians 1, we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing; we have been chosen, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, and unconditionally loved and accepted. We are pure, blameless and forgiven. We have received the hope of spending eternity with God. When we are in Christ, these aspects of our identity can never be altered by what we do.

Often, however, a gap exists between intellectually knowing these truths about who God says we are and living them out. This can be affected by how we see ourselves, life experiences and the ways we allow the world to define us. In order to live out of the fullness of our new identity in Christ, we must determine what hinders us from doing so. That varies from person to person. In the coming sections, we will be doing a deep dive into some practical obstacles that hold us back from fully living out our inheritance as children of God. The goal is to live out what Ephesians 1 says and STOP seeing ourselves as:

- ***Rejected instead of accepted.***
- ***In chains, instead of set free.***
- ***Under the law instead of covered by grace.***
- ***Orphaned instead of adopted.***

I pray that this study allows you to see yourself as God sees you. If we live out of an identity based on how God sees us, we no longer feel the need to find our worth in our external circumstances. It frees us up to live confidently and stably instead of changing who we are based on the opinions of others, our professional success, how we see ourselves, and all the other ways we define our significance. It gives us the opportunity to experience God's unconditional love in new and fresh ways. And it allows us to confidently and boldly share His love with others. It is certainly a battle as we live in a world that seeks to define us by its own standards.

The battle is worth it because as we fight it, the world around us changes.

Discuss or Ponder and Review Scripture:

- In an average day, what percentage of your energy and time and worry is devoted to non spiritual things?
- What keeps you busy and commands your attention?
- When you consider experiencing more of the spiritual realm, are you eager, excited, optimistic? OR...Are you anxious, confused, overwhelmed, unsettled and skeptical?
- Discuss how skeptical you are right now about the spiritual realm and your ability to come into contact with it. If you're skeptical, what is the source of doubt? Dig deep and spend some time discussing this as a group. Can you identify a particular experience of influence in your life that may hold you back from getting all God wants you to get out of this class?
- Throughout your day, and week, what are some of the things that you do, or things you are involved in that you allow to define you.

•How would believing the truth about your new identity in Christ change the way you live?

•Do you want to change? Are you curious? What is stopping you?

•Read 1 Peter 2:9

Talk about what it really means to have an Identity in Christ...When we accept Christ into our hearts, the person we were before dies, and we are reborn as a “new creation.” We lose our old identity and receive our new one. We no longer identify with the world and all its lies. We identify with Christ, and we become set apart. Our faith in Him distinguishes us from others (or at least it should).

Your identity is in Christ ... Even when you fall back into sin.