

## Your Identity in Christ

This study was written by Paula Sulzle, a member of St. John Lutheran Church, Redwood Falls, MN and Materials Coordinator for WELS Women's Ministry.

The theological content was reviewed by Professor Lyle Lange.

*Your Identity in Christ* contains two lessons, each about 1-hour long. Our true identity is not found within ourselves, but who we are in Christ. This study of Scripture will help you see your true identity.

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# Your Identity In Christ

## Opening Prayer

### Lesson 1

#### About this study—

Too often we focus on ourselves—what we can do, what we can't do; who we are, who we aren't; what we are, what we aren't; where we serve, where we don't; what talents or gifts we have, what we don't have. Focus on self can only lead to disappointment, failure, self-destruction of soul and mind, loneliness, discontentment, and possibly even anger towards our God.

At the end of the day, and the end of our lives, all that matters is who we are in Christ. In this study, we will explore, learn and remind ourselves of the truths that God tells us—what our true identity is in Christ, His Son. Our true identity does not come from ourselves. Understanding this is key in grasping and embracing our true identity. With this understanding, we can live life to the full, confident because of who we are in Christ.

#### Introduction

Use a word or phrase to finish the sentence with the first thing that comes to mind:

"I am \_\_\_\_\_."

Now take a few more minutes to come up with several more statements, finishing the phrase "I am....".

Many statements may come to mind; statements that are positive or negative, true or false, or that deal with your vocation, occupation or traits.

Depending on your season of life or circumstances that surround you, you may begin to believe you are something that you really aren't. Many times this can be referred to as low self-esteem. The devil, the world and our own sinful flesh can make us believe these lies about who we are. Take a minute or two to make a list of the lies that at times have made it into your head about who you are or how you feel about yourself.

Some of what we believe about ourselves really is true: We are sinners who deserve only God's wrath and punishment; we can do nothing without God's help. But a problem exists if we believe only that and don't know or fail to remember who we are in Christ.

When we fail to know/remember who we are in Christ, how does this hinder our lives?

*The goal of the rest of this study is to give you the confidence in knowing who you are in Christ, what I like to refer to as "Christ-esteem".*

## **You are a loved child of God**

Love is one of the greatest human needs. A newborn baby's cries are often soothed by a loving embrace. A young child's scraped knee often feels better after a hug. A friend offers encouraging and comforting words when a trial enters our life. When we feel loved by another, this fulfills one of our greatest needs.

1. Has there ever been a time when you didn't feel loved?

What did you do?

To whom did you turn?

Why?

2. Can you think of people in the Bible who felt rejected or unloved?

Can you relate to them? How?

3. What would be some causes of feeling unloved?

On whom is the focus?

4. When bad things happen to us or others, what are we tempted to believe?
  
5. What does Satan tell you about:
  - why God shouldn't love you?
  - why you shouldn't have the blessings of being a dearly loved child of God?

And Satan is right—we don't deserve God's love!

6. When you start to believe that God doesn't love you or that you can't have his blessings, how can these lies affect your relationship...
  - with God?
  
  - with your family?
  
  - with others in your church and community?

**Read Jer. 31:2-4, 10, 11.**

7. What words or phrases tell that God's love for us is great?

**Read John 1:12-13.**

8. As you read this, what phrases jump out or are important to you?

## **THIS WORD in my LIFE**

9. From what we have studied in this section, what will you tell yourself next time you are feeling unloved or rejected by others?

10. What will God's love motivate you to do?

## **You are redeemed**

11. Would you buy something that looked as if it had no great value? Why/why not?

### **Read Ephesians 2:1-3.**

12. In what ways did we have no value? What might still lead you to feel like you have no value?

13. And yet what do we hear about our value in **1 Corinthians 6:20a**?

## **THIS WORD in my LIFE**

14. "You were bought at a price." The price was great! What was the "price"?

15. How does this lead you to treat yourself?

16. How does this lead you to present yourself to others?

## **You are forgiven**

What sins trouble you? Past sins that have already been paid for and forgiven? The guilt can weigh on you like an anchor pulling you further down into the depths of despair. Present sins that you try again and again to stay away from? But the temptation is alluring and you just can't seem to resist. And what about the many sins you don't even realize you are committing against

God every single day? Those unknown sins burden your weary soul. It is too much for us to bear. We do not bear it. Someone else did for us because none of us can live perfectly in the sight of God. We have only one place to turn...God's words to us.

**Read Romans 7:15-24.**

17. What is your reaction to reading this section?
  
18. We have this constant inner conflict. How does the specific role you have in your life magnify this conflict?

**Read 1 Corinthians 7:23 and Colossians 3:23-24.**

19. What will we want to remember?
  
20. If we based our worth on our own actions, where would that lead us?

## **THIS WORD in my LIFE**

**Read 1 John 1:9.**

21. What does God tell us to do with our sins? Then what will he do?
  
22. You may sometimes struggle to grasp this truth. In those moments, who might you identify with in the Bible that may have struggled in the same way?

Read the following to reinforce the truth of 1 John 1:9.

**Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 1:13-14, 1 John 2:12.**

Which passage would you like to commit to memory?

We can look at this from a different angle. All too often we look at the mistakes and sins of our spouse, our children, people we interact with daily, and those we serve with at church and our pride takes over. We tend not to think of our own sins. At times we think “How could they go against God’s commands? They are God’s children. They know better.”

**Read Acts 20:28 and Colossians 3:12-14**

23. Of what are we reminded? How will that lead us to act towards others?
  
24. Discuss: “The grace of God will exalt you without inflating you. And it will humble you without defacing you.”<sup>1</sup>

**Closing Prayer**

## Opening Prayer

### Lesson 2

#### You are complete in Jesus

“You complete me.” Famous words from the romantic comedy, *Jerry McGuire*. (*this might date me*) This underscores the need for someone (or something) besides ourselves in order to feel complete.

1. If we look to ourselves for completeness, we instead find emptiness. We will never feel filled or whole. Where else do we often look to feel complete?
2. Describe why we might try to find fulfillment in people or things?
3. Do we ever feel complete if we turn solely to them as our source? Why/why not?

#### Read Colossians 2:6-18a.

4. We are nothing without Christ living in us. In fact, God tells us exactly how “nothing” we were. What do we read in v. 13?
5. We are made whole only because of Christ. How does he complete us? (v. 9-14)
6. Can you think of other passages that give us the promise of Christ completing us?

#### THIS WORD in my LIFE

7. God’s grace makes us complete in Jesus. Now how do we live? (v. 6-7)



8. When serving in your home, church or work, how will this truth help you?

## **You are a new creation in Christ**

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:17.** *(I like NIV 2011 here)*

9. What does it mean to be “in Christ?”

10. What is the new creation?

## **THIS WORD in my LIFE**

**Read Galatians 2:20.** *(I like the NIV 2011—“now”)*

11. Explain “I have been crucified with Christ.”

12. What is the life we now live?

13. Agree or disagree. I live for Christ so that others will be encouraged to live by my example.

14. Think of your acts of service (public or behind the scenes). What temptations can ruin our proper motivation?

Song lyrics: “My heart’s desire is to be like you in all that I do, all I am. Do they see Jesus in me? Do they recognize your face? Do I communicate your love and your grace? Do I reflect who you are in the way I choose to be? It’s amazing that you’d ever use me. But use the way you will. Help me to hold out a heart of compassionate grace, a heart that your Spirit fills. May I show forgiveness and mercy the same way you showed it to me. Now I want to show all the world that you are the reason I live and breathe, so you be the one that they see when they see me. Do they see Jesus in me?”<sup>2</sup>

The Skit Guys—God’s Chisel video<sup>3</sup>

*If you are able to acquire this video and show it, take time for comments on the video.*

## **You are more than conquerors**

### **Romans 8:18-39**

15. Think about any present suffering that you are now enduring. How are you getting through it? What do you do?
  
16. We all too often try to fix our own problems; we turn to books, brownies or our besties in order to feel better. We are TOLD these will make us feel better. All of these are good things (ok, maybe not the brownies!) ...as long as they point us to Christ...and too often they don’t. We seek out self-help books instead of THE Book. We turn to unnecessary food that fills our bodies instead of the real food that fills our souls. We turn to our life’s best friends instead of our Best Friend, Jesus.

In what do we find our *real* comfort when going through sufferings? (v.25-28)

## **THIS WORD in my LIFE**

### **Read Ephesians 3:20**

17. Could someone share a time that you prayed about something, someone or for yourself. How did God answer your prayer with something far greater and better than what you were even thinking?

18. What is our greatest suffering? How has God delivered us?

19. Is there anything we can do to accomplish what God desires? Cite a passage that tells us this.

So it is not who I am, but who Christ is in me! Again those lyrics come to mind—"It's amazing you'd ever use me," the lowly sinner I am. And yet he does--whether it be supporting your husband, raising your children, teaching Sunday School or VBS students, driving for the school carpool, encouraging others, directing a choir, playing organ or delivering a loaf of bread to the new family down the block—he uses YOU! And we don't need to worry how, when or where. And we don't need to worry how challenging the task might be or what temptations lie ahead. He makes you "more than a conqueror" through Christ in all of those things.

## **You are a citizen in heaven**

**Read Philippians 3:20a.**

20. Really think about each word individually, emphasizing a different word as you read through this passage multiple times. Tell/write what this means to you.

**Read Colossians 1:12.**

21. Compare this passage with an athlete who needs to meet certain expectations in order to qualify for an event or race.

## **THIS WORD in my LIFE**

**Read Ephesians 2:19-22.**

22. How will this portion of Scripture comfort you when you struggle with rejection, sin, guilt, loneliness, anxiety or (fill in the blank)? How will this portion of Scripture help you when you struggle with who you are, why God has you where you are, or in what capacity you should serve?

## Read Revelation 7:13-14.

23. When God sees you, what does he see?

24. Armed with all these truths and promises we've studied, how will you continue to serve him?

**Activity: Write a letter to yourself from God.**

## Closing Prayer

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup>From Focus on the Family podcast, 8/15/14—Dr. Adrian Rogers, pastor at a Baptist church in Memphis, TN

<sup>2</sup>“Do They See Jesus in Me?” by Joy Williams

<sup>3</sup>The Skit Guys, “God’s Chisel”, <http://skitguys.com/videos/item/gods-chisel> purchased and used by permission

### Books Consulted/Further Reading:

The People’s Bible: 2 Corinthians. David J. Valleskey. Northwestern Publishing House, copyright 1992, second printing 1994, third printing 1998.

The People’s Bible: Galatians, Ephesians. Armin J. Panning. Northwestern Publishing House, copyright 1997.

Learning to Be You: How Our True Identity in Christ Sets Us Free. David D. Swanson. Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI. 2012.