



Reclaiming
My
Identity
in
Christ

Meditations
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CLEVELAND PARK BIBLE CHURCH

To know Christ and to make him known

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Who Am I?

Who am I?

That's such a basic question and yet so crucial.

My identity determines my sense of security and significance.

My identity shapes my aspirations and goals in life.

I also have to admit that I tend to base my *primary* identity on *secondary* things:

My looks

My personality

My family and friends

What other people think of me

My abilities

My success at work

My financial status and my possessions

The visible results of my ministry efforts

My past experiences, especially bad ones

My sins and failures.

Even the good things on this list typically fail to meet my expectations.

Many of them also deteriorate over time, so that I feel even less secure.

No personal trait or experience is enough to satisfy my God-given longing for something substantial on which to base my life.

But it's not just that *I* tend to look too much to secondary things.

The people around me can reinforce my wrong thinking,

Perhaps unwittingly but still powerfully encouraging me to focus excessively on my individuality, what makes me special—or not special.

Plus the world is constantly bombarding me with wrong ideas about identity.

The ever-present media fills my mind with false promises of self-actualization, often to get me to spend money I don't have on things that will leave me hungering for more in the end.

Sadly, I also suffer from a kind of spiritual amnesia, forgetting or minimizing my identity in Christ.

So who am I?

How often I experience an identity crisis!

How I need God to fix my thinking!

How I need the Lord to open my eyes to what His Word reveals about my identity!

How I need Him to renew me every day in the glories of what it means to be in Christ!



For further study: Jerry Bridges, *Who Am I? Identity in Christ*; Ed Welch, *What Do You Think of Me? Why Do I Care?: Answers to the Big Questions of Life*

I Am a Creature in God's Image

Who am I?

I am a creature in God's image.

This is the fundamental fact about my identity, and it's something I share with all human beings.

To begin with, I am a creature, a created being.

I didn't make myself, and I didn't determine my nature or purpose—God did.

Since He brought me into existence and designed me, God has authority over me.

To disobey Him is to live a lie, to deny my creatureliness, acting as though I govern myself and as though I know better than my Creator.

The only way I can be true to who I am is to take my place humbly under God's rule and yield to His will for my life.

That includes embracing the gender He ordained for me and pursuing the role He has wisely appointed for that gender.

God also *keeps* me alive, providing everything I need, including the ability to work.

Whether or not I admit it, I am utterly beholden to God.

The only reasonable response is to depend on Him consciously.

Self-reliance is another contradiction of my identity.

It's humbling to acknowledge that I'm a creature, but what kind of creature am I?

The Bible's answer is stunning.

I am a creature *in God's image!*

This means that I have the capacity to *reflect* God's character.

When I display love or integrity or justice or patience, I am putting on display the glory of my Creator, drawing attention to His inherent goodness.

But being made in God's image also means that I *represent* God over the rest of Creation.

He appointed me and my fellow image-bearers to rule the world on His behalf.

We are kings under the Great King.

What a difference it makes to grasp my identity as God's image!

It gives my life *worth* and *dignity*.

What more compelling *purpose* could I want than to rule some part of the world for Him?

This is how I need to view my day-to-day work: as my divinely chosen way to maximize a part of Creation, to make it more productive, more orderly, more beautiful to the glory of God.

The Lord hasn't thrown me out into the world to wander aimlessly. He has put something in my hands to harness and to manage and to advance on His behalf.

And what *satisfaction* comes from pursuing my glorious calling!

To the degree that I am imaging God, to that degree I will know the delight for which I was created.



Scripture: Genesis 1:26-28; Acts 17:24-28

I Am United with Christ

Who am I?

Yes, I've been made in God's image, but that's only the beginning of the Bible's storyline.

The story degenerates into unbridled desire, willful disobedience, and hurtful blame-shifting.

The problem isn't only that Adam sinned but that I was born *in* Adam.

In His infinite wisdom, God structured the human race so that Adam's choice affected us all.

So when I came into the world I came both condemned and corrupted.

I stood guilty before the Judge of the universe, separated from my Creator and doomed to eternal condemnation.

My nature was also polluted by sin—God's image defaced by a bent for rebellion and selfishness.

What hope could there be for Adam's fallen race?

In a word, *Christ!*

Jesus came as the Second Adam and marvelously succeeded where the First Adam had miserably failed.

By faith I have been united with Christ and receive all the benefits of His saving work.

I am united with Christ *positionally*.

As far as my legal standing before God as the Judge, I have been declared *righteous*.

Jesus' life of perfect obedience has been charged to my account. And Jesus' death under God's wrath has been counted as my death.

My sinless Substitute entirely satisfied the law's demands and paid its penalty.

As far as my relationship to sin, in Christ I have been *freed* from sin's *authority*.

Christ triumphed over sin on the Cross, and I triumphed with Him.

Christ arose to a new life, and I arose with Him.
Yes, the flesh keeps alluring me, but it has no claim on me
anymore.
Sin is a deposed tyrant I no longer have to obey.

I'm also united with Christ *vitally*.

Christ supplies me with the *life* and *energy* I need in order to love,
obey, and serve God.

I am a branch, and Christ is the Vine that feeds with me with
enabling power.

He does this through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

What an identity!

I am the dwelling place of the Spirit of Christ!

Why should I be downcast?

Why should I live in defeat?

Christ lives within me—Christ *is* my life.

These are just the starting points of my identity in Christ.

My union with Him forms the center of God's redemptive work in
my life.

From this center flows an abundance of stabilizing identity truths.



Scripture: Ephesians 1:3–2:10; Romans 5–6; John 15:1-11

I Am a Saint

Who am I?

Knowing what I know about myself, it sounds blasphemous to say that I'm a saint.

Yet that's exactly what the Bible teaches—in Christ I *am* a saint.

Being a saint doesn't require that I be unusually godly or that I perform miracles or that I impress the pope.

If Paul could call even the *Corinthians* “saints,” then I shouldn't fear to claim the title.

But what does it mean to be a saint?

It means to be *separated unto God*.

That includes being separated *from* the realm of sin and the category of people dominated by sin.

More broadly, it includes being separated from the category of the common or the ordinary.

Being a saint means that God views me as *sacred*.

He has pulled me out of the mass of humanity and has placed me in the group of people that belong to Him in a unique sense.

I am God's special, treasured possession.

How can this be?

It's because of my union with Christ.

Remember, because of Jesus I've been declared righteous before God's court.

And because of Jesus I've been delivered from sin's authority.

Those blessings put me in the category of the sacred.

That's not because I'm inherently better than anyone else.

I enjoy this special status only because God has chosen to show me *grace*.

The Lord hasn't let me go my own way, away from His presence and blessing.

He has distinguished me, setting me apart for Himself.

It's hard to fathom, but it's true—God views me as His *treasure!*

That doesn't make me proud; it makes me *humble*.

It moves me to marvel at the depths of His love for a hell-deserving rebel.

It also moves me to take seriously my responsibility to live a holy life. Because God has separated me unto Himself, I want my choices to reflect His character.

Because He has separated me from sin, I want to stay away from sin.

My positional sanctification leads to progressive sanctification.

As I grow in holiness, by God's grace what's happening is that I am becoming who I *already am* in Christ.



Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 Peter 1:13-16; 2:9-10

I Am a Child of God

Who am I?

I have no higher identity than being *a child of God*.

Through justification I am pronounced righteous and free from condemnation before God as Judge.

That's a thrilling reality, but it doesn't necessarily assure me that I'm a member of the Judge's *family*, that He is my *Father*, that He claims me as His *child*.

Yet in Christ I enjoy this added, ultimate blessing of *sonship*.

How did I become a child of God?

Actually, there's a double basis for my sonship, so I'm doubly secure within God's family.

First, I'm God's child through *regeneration*, the new birth.

This is a mystery, a miracle of grace.

Through the Word, the Spirit has given me spiritual life, the life of God in my soul.

I am God's child in that I partake of His nature.

Because of the new birth, I have new *desires*—just like a baby longs for milk.

I increasingly experience my identity as I nurture these Godward desires and put away whatever diminishes them.

Because of the new birth, I *imitate* my Father's behavior.

I increasingly experience my identity as I display the family likeness.

Because of the new birth, I also have *hope* for eternity.

The Father is not going to abandon the new life He has created within me.

Second, I'm God's child through *adoption*.

This means I enjoy the legal position of adult sonship, with all the rights and privileges that entails.

What are these rights and privileges?

For one, I enjoy *divine leadership*.

The Spirit's work of prompting, warning, and convicting me might be uncomfortable, but it's actually a blessing.

It means my Father cares for me and doesn't want me to do anything that would damage me or interrupt my fellowship with Him.

And *fellowship* with God is another enormous privilege of sonship.

I enjoy free access to the God of the universe.

I can approach Him with confidence and lay before Him my needs and struggles.

I can call Him "Abba!"

Adoption in God's family also gives me *assurance*.

One of the Spirit's ministries is to bear witness with my spirit that I am indeed a son of God.

What a comforting, thrilling experience!

No matter what my earthly family may be like, no matter who may reject me, God the Father embraces me as His child.

Finally, I will receive an *inheritance*, the culmination of my adoption.

Because I'm united with Christ, I'm a *co-heir* with Him.

My inheritance includes a perfect world and a perfect body, forever enjoying the warmth and presence of my Heavenly Father.

What more could anyone want?



Scripture: James 1:16-18; 1 Peter 1:3-9; 1:22-2:3; Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 8:14-25

I Am a Pilgrim

Who am I?

From one standpoint, I am a citizen of an earthly nation.

I'm deeply grateful for all the good things my country affords me, and I want to do whatever I legitimately can to honor, support, and defend it.

I treasure much of our history and many of our values, and I also enjoy many of the traditions of our culture.

But ultimately, with respect to the entire present world, I am a *pilgrim*, an expatriate, an exile.

This fact doesn't make me forlorn and gloomy—I'm a citizen of the *heavenly* kingdom!

That identity needs to shape my overall *mindset*.

This earth isn't my main frame of reference.

I enjoy whatever material blessings and pleasures God gives me, but those things aren't my god.

I don't want to be so taken up with the joys of this life that I lose sight of the greater joys of the life to come.

Indeed, I was saved in order to await the return of Christ my King.

Naturally, my pilgrim identity affects my *lifestyle*.

I abstain from the passions of the flesh that drive the people of this world.

In fact, those passions are at war against my soul, so to be a pilgrim is to be a soldier.

As a pilgrim I devote myself to *honorable* conduct: submissiveness, patience under trials, love and kindness, purity.

These are some of the values of *heavenly* culture.

Pilgrim living is going to require *faith*.

Like the patriarchs of old, my posture needs to be forward-looking,

Trusting God's Word even if I see relatively little of His promises being fulfilled at the moment.

Delayed gratification is worth it in view of the *eternal* gratification
my Father has in store for me.
A Christian can afford to wait.

What is my *inspiration* as a pilgrim?
Not a *what* but a *Who*.

I fix my eyes on *Jesus*, the supreme Pilgrim.

He was willing to be different from this present age.

He didn't seek ultimate satisfaction here.

He suffered the agonizing rejection of the world because of
the joy set before Him.

He went "outside the camp," and He inspires and enables me
to do the same.

I can embrace my identity as a pilgrim because my Savior was
a pilgrim first.



Scripture: Philippians 3:17-21; 1 Peter 2:11–3:12; Hebrews 11:13-16;
13:8-14

I Am a Slave

Who am I?

It's shocking to respond that I am a slave.

It *should* be shocking.

The Bible tells me that there are certain ways in which I am *not* a slave.

For one, Jesus doesn't just order me around without disclosing to me His thoughts and motives.

He calls me His *friend*, and He draws me to intimacy with Himself.

Furthermore, since I'm God's child I don't need to cower before Him or be anxious about whether He accepts me.

My Heavenly Father won't ever shun or demean or abuse His children.

Finally, I don't live during the period of humanity's infancy—the long centuries of waiting for the coming of Christ.

That was a kind of slavery because redemption hadn't been accomplished yet, and God's people were still anticipating the blessing of adult sonship.

I live under the New Covenant, and I've entered into the sublime blessing of adoption.

And yet, there are other ways in which I *am* a slave.

Jesus purchased me with His own blood.

He paid this extreme price so that I would be devoted to His service.

As with any slave, this requires *humility* and *obedience*.

More than that, the only reasonable response to Christ's self-sacrifice is to be *obsessed with pleasing Him*.

Specifically, I am a slave of *righteous conduct*.

I was delivered from bondage to sin so that I would become a slave of righteousness.

Every day I need to remind myself that I am a slave of Christ, and many times a day I will need to reflect that

identity through concrete choices that are in keeping with His expectations.

I've also been called to be a slave of *other people* for Jesus' sake.

Devotion to Christ entails devotion to meeting the needs of others.

This includes helping with their physical and spiritual needs, especially their need for the gospel message.

Indeed, like Paul, I am a *debtor* to the nations.

But all this talk about slavery isn't burdensome and degrading.

It's a delight to serve my Master Jesus!

That's because of the kind of Master He is.

Before calling *me* to serve, *He* came and served *me* in the most condescending way imaginable.

So His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

His grace motivates and empowers me to serve.



Scripture: John 15:15; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:1-10; Colossians 3:22-4:1; Romans 6:15-19; Galatians 5:13; Philippians 2:8-9; Matthew 11:28-30; 1 Peter 2:16

I Am Communal

Who am I?

I am an individual, but I don't live in isolation.

I'm surrounded by many other people.

I won't fully understand my identity unless I understand my relationship to them—unless I understand that I am communal.

I am communal because of that fundamental fact about me: I am made in God's image.

When God created man in His image, He created *two* kinds of people: male and female.

He also said that it is not good for man to be alone.

And He told Adam and Eve to reproduce.

This all reflects the fact that God Himself is a community of Persons.

Before the world was created, before human beings existed, God was giving and receiving love.

For all eternity past, Father, Son, and Spirit delighted in one another's fellowship.

So when God made man in His image, He made us for *community*, Designed for relationship with other image-bearers as well as with God Himself.

And when God sets out to restore fallen man, He targets our communal nature.

In fact, Jesus prayed that His disciples would be one just like the members of the Trinity are one!

He also said that this unity is vital to witnessing effectively to the world.

This reminds me that my identity isn't just about my being secure but about my reaching out to the lost from a position of security.

Community is not an option.

It's a basic component of human identity that is restored by the gospel.

God creates a Body through which I am restored not only to Himself but also to other believers.

By being united with Christ, I am united with everyone else who is united with Christ.

Indeed, redemption makes us *members* of one another.

What does membership in the Body of Christ look like?

The Church reflects *diversity*.

It brings together people who would not otherwise come together.

The more I relate to people who are different from me, the more I'll experience my communal identity.

The Church displays *inter-dependence*.

I need other believers, and other believers need me.

This isn't a threat to our identity; it's actually the way God made us.

The Church ministers *edification* and *accountability*.

Sanctification is a "team sport," so fellow believers work together for the growth of the whole Body.

We *all* speak the truth in love to one another, encouraging our brothers and sisters to keep following Christ.

Finally, the Church functions through *spiritual gifts*.

It's not just about gathering together once a week to listen to one man preach.

It's about *everyone* using their God-given abilities and playing their God-ordained role.

Part of understanding my identity is identifying my spiritual gift and using it.

I was created and redeemed so that I could belong to and contribute to something much greater than myself.

"Finding" myself includes "losing" myself in service to the Body of Christ.



Scripture: Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18; John 17:20-23; Romans 12:3-5; Ephesians 4:11-16

I Am a Worshiper

Who am I?

At the core, I'm a worshiper.

That's true of all human beings, not just Christians: by nature, *all* people are worshipers.

We're all seeking someone or something great to impress us, to draw out our admiration, to satisfy our hearts with glory.

I know worship is at my core because I'm *made in God's image*.

For all eternity the members of the Godhead were admiring and delighting in one another.

God created me with that same inclination and desire.

I know worship is at my core because of *the nature of sin*.

The Bible defines sin not merely as disobedience but as a refusal to honor and thank God.

As Augustine taught, sinful actions arise from "disordered loves." That's how Adam and Eve fell, and that's how I fall as well.

I know worship is at my core because of *the nature of conversion*.

In the New Covenant God is seeking true worshipers.

Conversion is about turning from idols to worship the one true and living God.

It's about seeing and being drawn to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

I know worship is at my core because of *the centrality of the heart*.

Out of the heart flow the springs of life.

My heart has "treasures," things I esteem as valuable, that determine the direction of my life.

My heart affections drive my decisions.

I know worship is at my core because of *the two greatest commandments*.

Loving God with my whole heart is obviously a matter of worship.

And love for people expresses love for the God in whose image they're made.

These two commands aren't just the most important.

They are the *essence* of *all* the commands, the summary of everything God requires.

I know worship is at my core because of *the effects of worship*.

I come to look like what I worship.

The Israelites worshiped deaf and blind idols and became spiritually deaf and blind themselves.

That's a fearful prospect, but it's not the only option.

As I adoringly gaze on the glory of Christ, I am transformed more and more into *His* image.

If I'm fundamentally a worshiper, I need to view all my choices as matters of worship.

Worship doesn't happen only on Sunday mornings; it's happening all the time.

When I sin, I'm not just breaking a law—I'm rejecting God personally and giving to someone or something else the adoration that He alone deserves.

So I must evaluate my heart regularly, asking God to show me my disordered loves and to redirect my affections toward Him.

Mostly, I need to *commune* with God.

The more I know of His glories and the more I experience fellowship with Him, the more I'll love Him, the less I'll pursue idols, and the more I'll become like my Savior.

I am a worshiper at heart, and only as I am worshiping the Triune God am I expressing my true identity.



Scripture: Genesis 1:26-28; John 17:24-26; Romans 1:21-23; Genesis 3:1-6; John 4:23-24; 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Proverbs 4:23; Matthew 6:19-21; 22:34-40; Isaiah 6 (see G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship*); 2 Corinthians 3:18