

IDENTITY IN CHRIST #1

PURPOSE: To create in the students the desire to apply principles of their identity in Christ to all areas of their lives.

OBJECTIVES: By the end of this lesson the students will:

1. Be able to explain the meaning of their identity in Christ.
2. Have a quiet assurance that they are completely accepted by the Lord because of being identified with Christ.

I. Introduction:

(Start off with an illustration, like the one following, that shows how people imitate others that they would like to be like.) All of us are trying to find an identity in life. Picture in your mind a young boy. He desperately wants to be a great basketball player. Every waking moment he is thinking about the sport. Every free moment he has is occupied with practicing. He reads about the great basketball players. But his dream is to be like the greatest basketball player of all time. His dream is to be “Just like Mike.”

We need to have the same attitude as that young boy. Just as he wanted to be like his idol, Michael Jordan, so we as Christians need to set our dreams on being like Christ. We need to find our identity in Christ. The Apostle Paul told believers to follow him as he followed Christ.

Identity has to do with becoming more like Christ. It is of utmost importance in the Christian life. There are three very important questions that need to be answered in life concerning our identity. First, who am I? Second, why am I here? And third, what will be my future destiny? This is the quest of every person. Let’s look at a passage that talks about our identity in Christ.

II. Our Identification with Christ

Read Romans 6:1-7.

A. Our identification and sin: vv. 1&2.

The first verse begins with the question about continuing to sin that grace might increase. In other words maybe we should sin a whole lot since that causes grace to increase. Paul answers with an emphatic “No, don’t even think of it.” Then he goes on to tell us why that is such an absurd thought.

B. Our identification with Christ’s death: vv. 4a&5a.

First he states that we died to sin. This once for all act happens when we trust in Christ’s death to save us. Water baptism is a beautiful picture of the baptism of the Spirit that takes place when we first believe (Ephesians 1:13; Acts 11:15-17). The word baptism means “to dip or to dye.” A cloth was dipped or immersed in a dye. As a result the cloth took on a

new look. Its color has been changed. It has a new identity. This is the idea of verse three. We were dipped into Christ when we were born again by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3-8). We come out as a new Creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

C. Our identification into His life: vv. 4b&5b.

We come out with a new identity. Our new identity is Christ. As the verses explain: “When Christ died, we died. When Christ was buried, we were buried. When Christ rose, we rose.” All of this happened to us as a result of our being baptized or placed into Christ. This opens up a completely new life for us.

D. Our new-found freedom because of our death with Him vv.6&7.

Verses six and seven continue to explain what happened to us and what resulted from our new identity. The NIV translates the beginning of verse six in this way: “For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that our body of sin might be done away with.” The last part of the verse could also be translated, “rendered helpless.” The idea is that because the **old man** or **old self** died with Christ, it is completely powerless in ordering us to sin since it is dead. Dead people do not have the ability to control others. I take the “body of sin” to be our fleshly body where sin resides. Sin is an evil force that lives within us but is not us. Sin’s power does not hold us in its grasp like it did before our new life in Christ. Then verse seven concludes this wonderful passage. It explains why sin is no longer our master. We died to sin once for all time. Therefore sin cannot ever control us again. Dead people do not respond to anything. We are completely dead in our relationship to sin. Therefore we are free to not sin.

Freedom is not being free to sin, but rather being free not to sin. Jesus said in John 8:34, “He who sins is the slave of it.”

Does this mean that we will never sin? Experience and other passages in the Scripture tell us that this is not true. But in this passage we see that we have the capacity to not sin because of what Christ did for us and also what happened to us at the cross. Our old man, who was completely under the dominance of sin, died when we received new life in Christ. Our new identity is Christ. He is our **Life**. (Colossians 3:4)

III. The consequences of being identified with Christ

A. We know who we are in relation to sin.

Let’s think through together what this means for us. First, I have the capacity to not sin in any situation. Second, I am going against who I really am if I sin. Why? Because my new nature is one of being in Christ. He is my real life. He has given me new desires. Our feelings will tell us differently. Our minds will deny this fact. But if I am a new creation in Christ, then it only stands to reason that my true desires will be to serve and love and obey Christ who is my life at all times. This gives us real freedom. We know that deep down inside ourselves we really want to do what is right in all situations. We can tell the temptation to cease since we will be going against what we really want to do.

B. We know that we are complete in Him.

Knowing who I am is possibly the most important thing for me to know. Since I died with Him, was buried with Him and rose with Him, I am a completely new person. I have been declared righteous by Christ, and made righteous in Christ. I still have the capacity to sin but I am no longer under its dominion. Let's live out our new position in Christ by faith and remember that we died with Him, we were buried with Him and we now live in Him. What a wonderful truth this is. Praise Him for doing this in us. Hallelujah!

C. Think Rightly About Ourselves

Right thinking about myself is the beginning of right thinking. If I think that I am just a sinner saved by grace I will live that way. If I realize that I am a completely new person in Christ then I will begin living that way. Because of our identification with Christ, we are saints (notice how Paul addresses Christians as "saints" in Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; etc.). We are set apart for His glory and praise. Let's begin to look at ourselves in this way.

IV. Application

Take a few minutes and evaluate how you look at yourself. (*Add a couple of suggested areas for them to consider: e.g., relationships, work, abilities*). Are you thinking rightly about yourself in these areas or are you thinking wrong thoughts about yourself? Find a couple passages of Scripture that deal with these areas specifically. Memorize them, meditate on them when you feel attacked. Next time you begin to think that you are only a sinner saved by grace, think back on this passage of Scripture and remember what happened to you. You are a saint, that sometimes sins. You are a new creation in Christ Jesus. Amen.

You've been dipped!