

Identity In Christ (1)

How do we see ourselves? How do we describe ourselves? Most of us tend to identify ourselves primarily by name, by what we look like, and by what we do (or don't do). We take pride in the good things we have accomplished and we feel shame for the negative things that we have done. The shame is often reinforced by parents, teachers, bosses, friends, etc. who do not hesitate to point out our flaws and shortcomings.

Shame has kept many of us in hiding. We don't want people to know the "truth" about ourselves. We believe that admitting our sins and revealing our past actions will cause people to reject us. After all, how could anyone love us if they knew the whole truth about us? Our identity is wrapped up in our mistakes and failures. But God can turn our shameful experiences into meaningful lessons if we will submit to Him. Our challenge is to take our sins and shame to God and allow Him to forgive us and heal our heart.

In the Bible, we read of how the teachers of religious law brought a woman forward that they had caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd. *"Teacher," they said to Jesus, "...the Law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?"...Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with His finger. They kept demanding an answer, so He stood up again and said, "All right, stone her. But let those who have never sinned throw the first stones!" ...When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one...until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman...Then Jesus stood up again and said to her, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you? No, Lord, she said. And Jesus said, "neither do I. Go and sin no more" (John 8:3-9).*

On our own, separated from God, our lives are a mess and we do all kinds of things that break and ruin what God created in love and beauty. God created us for beauty, for love, for joyful relationship, but it is only activated when we live in relationship with God. A life of joy and purpose and dignity is still God's plan for us today, no matter what has happened to us or been done by us. All of us are well aware of our mistakes and how badly we have messed up our lives. We are ashamed of the things we have done. But our mistakes are not who we are. This is not our identity. We lose sight of our identity when we live as though we don't need God because the devil whispers lies in our ears and our circumstances are so full of pain and chaos that we cannot focus on the truth. The Bible tells us that we live as children of the father of lies, the devil.

But, when we confess our sins and repent, we receive God's forgiveness and cleansing. He removes our sins *"as far as the east is from the west" (Psalm 103:12)*. God clears away the layers of dirt and shame that have covered us. He give us a new heart, a new name, a new identity, and a brand new life. We become the adopted children of the Living God, the Creator of the universe. We become children of the king.

We become someone special because of who we are related to. Our new Father is the God of heaven and earth.

When God forgives and washes away our past mistakes, we need to let the memory of them go as well and begin anew. We need to stop thinking of ourselves as failures but rather see ourselves as beloved children of God who happen to have a problem with money, kids, relationships, education, alcohol, drugs, or food, etc. We have to tell the devil (the father of lies) that we no longer belong to him. We have to reject all his lies and begin to tell ourselves the truth. For a while we will simply be "hanging on" to new truths. Our feelings will still be raw and won't quite understand the new relationship. It will take a while to "live in" to this new family. But it's true the moment we choose to live as children of God through Jesus Christ.

How do we allow all of this to become reality for us? It's a simple act of giving God permission. It's a choice. It has three parts: **REPENT, RENOUNCE, RECEIVE.**

God forgive me for messing around with my life and breaking the wonderful creation you made. I want to live as you intended. I surrender my will and my life to the direction and control of the Living God. Jesus, come into my life and completely remake me. I receive your Holy Spirit who says I am adopted as your child.

And now because I am your child, I agree with you about who I am. I may not feel differently immediately but I choose to believe what you say. I renounce the lie that I am rejected, unloved, dirty, or shameful. I renounce the lie that I am a failure and doomed for no good. I renounce the lie that I am horrible and hateful.

In faith I receive God's new life for me and announce that IN CHRIST I am completely accepted by God right now and forever. God delights in me. God calls me His very own child. God sees me just as if I'd never done anything wrong. I have great value and have been bought with the high price of Jesus' blood. I belong to God. I am a pure and holy person who is united with the Lord. I am redeemed and forgiven of all my sin. I am complete in Christ. (John 1:12, John 15:15, Romans 5:1, 1 Corinthians 6:19,20, Ephesians 1:1, 1 Corinthians 6:17, Colossians 1:14, Colossians 2:10)

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

What do I need to do in order to actually live as an adopted child of God today?

- Do I need to surrender my life to God?
- Do I need to give up my own way of doing things?
- Do I need to renounce false thoughts about me that the devil throws at me?
- Do I need to announce God's truth about me over my own thoughts?