

**“Who Do You Say I Am? (Part 1)” (Union with Christ I)**  
**(Study 6 of “Getting Personal with God: Sonship A” Series)**

**Opening Questions (10 Minutes)**

1. What’s one image that *other people* say captures who you are?  
(This could be a memory, a family photograph, a recent profile pic, or friend’s picture)
2. Do you agree that *that* image of you captures who you are? Why or why not?
  - If not, what is an image of you or story about you that is more like who you are?

Let’s look at what the Bible says about who we truly are (and who we are not), at an identity level...

**Scripture Study (10-15 Minutes)**

Read Colossians, Chapter 3, verses 1-17 (first in the ESV, then the NLT)

1. Be quiet for 30 seconds. Think or write. Now what are your first impressions?
  - What’s your emotional, gut-reaction?
  - Ask a question you have (or can think of).
  - Volunteer a thought or comment- about a verse or the whole passage.
2. How does Paul address the harm of not seeing yourself as you truly are?
  - What kinds of things did “you used to do” (NLT)? (See verses 5 and 6, 8 and 9)
  - According to Paul, why did we do these things?  
(What does it mean that someone’s life is “still part of this world” (NLT, v. 7))?
  - If *who you see yourself as determines how you live*, how does seeing yourself on your own, without Christ (old self) lead to thinking, feeling, and acting sinfully?
3. How does Paul promote the healing power of seeing yourself as you are?
  - What kinds of things do you get to do now that “your real life is hidden with Christ in God” (NLT, verse 3)? (Pick out a few examples from verses 10-17.)
  - How does Paul describe who Christians now are in verses 10-12?
  - The Christian counselor Jim Coffield says, “*we are faithful to the images of ourselves that we carry*” [read twice]. If that’s true, how does seeing yourself in and with Christ (as a new self) lead to thinking, feeling, and acting lovingly?

**Scripture Passage (Paul’s Letter to the Colossians 3:1-17)**

Colossians, Chapter 3- English Standard Version Translation (ESV)

1 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. 3 For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. 5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming. 7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. 11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. 12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing

with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Colossians, Chapter 3- New Living Translation (NLT)

1 “Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God’s right hand. 2 Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth. 3 For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 And when Christ, who is your life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory. 5 So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual immorality, impurity, lust, and evil desires. Don’t be greedy, for a greedy person is an idolater, worshiping the things of this world. 6 Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming. 7 You used to do these things when your life was still part of this world. 8 But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. 9 Don’t lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. 10 Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. 11 In this new life, it doesn’t matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us. 12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful. 16 Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. 17 And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

**Group Discussion (25 minutes)**

Can I get one or more volunteers to read the below quote out loud?

**Chart: Have You Forgotten Who You Really Are?**

*As we believe in and follow Jesus, we are God’s sons and daughters who are dearly loved, rejoiced over, and delighted in. That is who we really are- defined by who we are in Christ, not by our sin or failures, nor by our goodness or accomplishments. You may not feel holy and pleasing, but that feeling does not have the final word over your life. You are (in fact) holy and pleasing, because you are in Christ. We are truly free in Christ. However, we often don’t live freely- the way Jesus has called us to live.*

*Look at the following chart- on the last page- to identify:*

*(1) How we often act; (2) What causes us to act this way (what we falsely think of ourselves and what we’ve forgotten about ourselves); and (3) How to act differently by remembering the truth (what God says about us).*

1. Take a moment to look over the chart. Which false identity do you find yourself most often acting like? (Eight false identities are listed in the chart's far left column.)
  - What life circumstances or internal thoughts or feelings trigger this mentality?
  - How do those circumstances, thoughts, or feelings bind you?  
(Feel free to interact with the chart's suggestion in its 2<sup>nd</sup> from the left column.)
2. According to the chart, what *did* you forget about yourself (2<sup>nd</sup> from right column)?
  - Let's interact with that suggestion. Do you think that's the case- that you forget *that* truth about yourself in your struggles? How so, or what's actually the case?
3. According to chart, what is God's truth about who you are (far right column)?
  - Let's interact with that suggestion. What will help you remember that truth about yourself in the midst of a struggle? Or its aftermath?
4. What's it look like to daily, intentionally act out of God's truth about your identity?
  - Think about the different areas of your life and imagine living as if what God says about you is the most true thing about you.
  - What's another way of saying who you truly are- at work? at home? at church?
  - [If this is difficult, it might help for the leader to ask a more mature member of the group, to share what he or she thinks Jesus would say to others in those moments]

### **Group Prayer** (15 Minutes)

Ideas for communal and personal prayer

- "Share for yourself, and pray for the person sitting at 1 o'clock from you"
1. What's one *burden* you need prayer for- for relief or healing?
  2. What's one *sin* you'd like to (re-)confess to God?
  3. What's one *deed* in your life or community you'd like to praise God for?
  4. What's one *desire* stirred by this time together with God that you can pray for?

| You're acting like...     | You're in bondage to...   | You've forgotten that you're...  | What God says about you:  |
|---------------------------|---|--|---|
| <b>a slave?</b>           | <i>"the rules"</i> - yours for you, others' for you                                   | <i>free</i> (to stop and rest as well as to work and love, <u>in Christ</u> )  | "you are <u>no longer</u> a slave" (Galatians 4:4-9)  |
| <b>an orphan?</b>         | <i>fear-</i> of rejection, failure, or punishment                                     | <i>adopted</i> (God is your caring, safe Daddy, <u>in Christ</u> )   | "Beloved, we are God's children <u>now</u> " (1 John 3:1-3)   |
| <b>a hypocrite?</b>       | <i>appearance, pretense, or criticism</i>   | <i>justified</i> (you're "all good" and "alright" with the universe and with God, <u>in Christ</u> )                                       | "not having a righteousness of my own...but [ <u>a righteousness</u> ] which comes from God" (Philippians 3:8-11)   |
| <b>a prisoner?</b>        | a specific, habitual <i>addiction-</i> a relationship, behavior, thought, or feeling  | <i>being sanctified</i> (God is changing you from the inside-out, for the better- holy and holier, <u>in Christ</u> )                      | "you <u>have been</u> set free from sin" (Romans 6:12-22)   |
| <b>a loner?</b>           | <i>self-interest, individualism</i> (consumed with hobbies, work, or a virtual world) | <i>united with others</i> (you are part of something bigger than yourself, a world-changing team, <u>in Christ</u> )                       | "we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually <u>members of one another</u> " (Romans 12:4-10)   |
| <b>a pessimist/cynic?</b> | <i>death</i> (everything unravels, is hollow, or just "phony")                        | <i>resurrected</i> (you are dead to death and alive to lasting, deep-seated purpose and meaning, <u>in Christ</u> )                        | "For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be <u>united with him in a resurrection</u> like his" (Romans 6:3-11)                          |
| <b>a hoarder?</b>         | <i>material possessions, the good life</i> ("not enough," "keeping up," "making it")  | <i>an heir</i> (the entire Kingdom of God, all of creation is always yours- to enjoy, steward, <u>in Christ</u> )                          | "In him we <u>have obtained</u> an inheritance"(Ephesians 1:11-14)  |
| <b>a tyrant?</b>          | <i>manipulation, anger, power, or control</i>   | <i>under authority</i> (we don't determine success; we get to be faithful to the circumstances & tasks we're given by & <u>in Christ</u> ) | " "I <u>too am</u> a man <u>set under authority</u> , with soldiers under me' ... When Jesus heard these things, <u>he marveled at him</u> ... 'such faith' " (Luke 7:1-10) |