



## WEEK 1: I AM A NEW CREATION

4.19.2015

This Sunday, Pastor Andrew will provide a start to the “I am” Identity sermon series. Appropriately, his teaching will focus on God’s gift of identity to man and the resulting consequences of how we have abused, neglected, and misunderstood that identity. However, the conclusion is one of hope, and ultimately, through an identity in Christ lived out according to his teachings and in light of the grace of God, we can and will be restored.

As you listen and take notes on the sermon, notice these four key markers:

- 1) The gift of God’s created identity: **Genesis 1:26-27** “in the image of God he created them ...”
- 2) The fracturing of God’s created identity: **Genesis 3:1-8**, the fall of man as sin enters this world and distorts our identity.
- 3) The resulting struggle of God’s created identity: **1 Samuel 18:6-9**, acceptance and praise of man vs. the assurance of our God-like image and identity.
- 4) The restoration of God’s created identity: **Ephesians 2:8, 2 Corinthians 3:18, 1 John 3:1-2**, and others that point to our identity in Christ and our status as children of God.

### GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- \* How do you define personal identity? How do you define an identity in Christ? Have you considered how others (family members, co-workers) might attempt to describe your identity?
- \* How should Genesis 1:26-27 influence our identity?
- \* How does sin hamper our ability to live out the Genesis 1:26-27 identity?

- \* In what other ways do we attempt to live out our identity? How do we hope others identify us?
- \* What are the consequences of how the world looks for identity?
- \* How does the Gospel restore our identity to God's created identity for us?
- \* What are the benefits of finding our identity in Christ? What does this look like in our Monday-Saturday world? How should we be different?
- \* Beginning with the end in mind ... in the final summery of your life's journey, how would you (a) complete the following as of today, based on your current identity; and (b) complete the following in light of an identity in Christ?

a) \_\_ (insert name) \_\_ found his/her identity in \_\_\_\_\_.

b) \_\_ (insert name) \_\_ found his/her identity in \_\_\_\_\_.



## WEEK 2: I AM COMPLETE IN CHRIST

4.26.2015

This Sunday, Pastor David will continue our “I am” Identity sermon series with a theme of being complete in Christ. We saw in week one that God had originally gifted mankind an identity made in his image and in perfect relationship with him. However, because of the original sin, man was separated from God and has struggled to find identity, often choosing to do so in many things other than God (Brains, Bucks, & Beauty). Because of Adam’s sin, we have been born incomplete, apart from Christ, and searching for identity.

But there is hope in a reconciled relationship and a restored identity. In this week’s message, we will focus on that restoration. The key scriptural passage will be **Ephesians 1:3-14** where we find that “in Christ” we have:

- \* redemption and forgiveness through the riches of his grace (v. 7),
- \* an inheritance as having been adopted as his children (v. 11), and
- \* the assurance of being sealed with the promised Holy Spirit (v. 13).

All of these help to create completeness “in Him.”

As you listen and take notes on the sermon, notice what it means to be made complete in Christ:

- 1) To be made alive spiritually: **1 Corinthians 15:22**, “so also in Christ shall be made alive”
- 2) To be one in spirit with him: **1 Corinthians 6:17**, “he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.”
- 3) To be a new creation: **2 Corinthians 5:17**, “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation ...” Think also to the Colossians study and old self / new self.
- 4) To be a part of his spiritual body: **1 Corinthians 12:13**, “... we are all baptized into one body ... all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- \* How does someone come to be “in Christ?” Asked another way, how does a person receive redemption and forgiveness in order to transform their identity and find completeness in Christ?
  - Have you helped to lead someone to Christ? If so, share how you communicate the Gospel- Scripture verses, personal testimony, and/or any examples / analogies you use.. Finding completeness in Christ begins with accepting Christ into our heart and making him Lord and Savior. This week is a good week to discuss the subject of becoming a Christian. Talk through Romans 10:9.
- \* What does it mean to be “blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places?” (Ephesians 1:3) Perhaps it speaks to the fact that every blessing we can possibly desire has been granted to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. What does that do to our perspective?
- \* If in Christ we are a new creation, complete in him, why do we still struggle with sin? Talk about the consequences of original sin on us today? Is there a difference in willful sin and the sin Paul writes of in Romans 7:15, “I do not understand my own actions ... I do the very thing that I hate ...”
- \* How can we overcome sin? Read Romans 6:5-10
- \* What role does the Holy Spirit play in our living out our identity in Christ? If we are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, what does that mean?
- \* What practical ways can we apply the idea of living out our identity in Christ? What practical ways can we live out the idea that we desire to be complete in Christ?
- \* Retro Question: Have you thought back over the concept of personal identity from week 1? Perhaps asking yourself what activity, material possession, title, or object of security, that if gone tomorrow you just couldn't live without? That question can go a long way in determining where you find your identity. If Christ were removed from your life tomorrow, would it be the most tragic moment of your life? Would it strike you as having lost your identity?



## WEEK 3: I AM SET APART

5.3.2015

This Sunday, Pastor David will address the culturally relevant, especially timely, and biblically important subject of sexual immorality. This message, and resulting discussions, will focus on the idea that living out our identity in Christ should clearly move us from a life of willful disobedience and sexual sin, and into a life that is spiritually alive.

A key point to this week's study will be the understanding that our identity in Christ is an acknowledgement that we are no longer what we once were. But rather, we have been *Washed ... Sanctified ... Justified* in the name of Jesus - **1 Corinthians 6:11**. And because of that transformation, we are specifically instructed in regards to sexual immorality that:

- \* Our body is the Lord's, not our own – **1 Corinthians 6:13**
- \* Our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit – **1 Corinthians 6:19**
- \* Our body is a vehicle for giving glory to God – **1 Corinthians 6:20**

This point is made even more emphatically in **1 Corinthians 6:15**, *"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!"* When we expand our view of "prostitute" to consider all acts and attitudes derived from ungodly lust and self-pleasure, then to participate in any of them as "members of Christ" should give us great pause and conviction.

Throughout God's Word there is a consistent warning against two types of sin; sexual immorality and idolatry. There are no exceptions and they are linked to direct consequences. Why is that? One of the reasons that most resonates with me is that both of these sins break our intimate fellowship with God as we give our heart to the most godless of devotions. We see in **1 Corinthians 6:19**, that sexual immorality, like idolatry, has a spiritual component. We are not only sinning against our physical bodies, we are directly sinning against Christ. And since unity with Christ is not compatible with sin, we are breaking unity; this same unity, or fellowship, from which we find our identity.

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

\* Notice the list of sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

- What do these sins look like today? Can one be living in these sins and expect to find unity with Christ?
- Discuss the difference between “living in these sins” and one who is convicted by the Holy Spirit and genuinely repents of one of these sins.
- Does the Apostle Paul think people can change from these practices?

\* What does Paul mean when he says that *“the body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body?”* **1 Cor. 6:13**

\* Why is sexual sin noted as different than other sins? **1 Cor. 6:18**

\* Read the following scriptural passages; **Ephesians 5:31-32, Hebrews 13:4, Matthew 19:4-6, Genesis 2:24-25**. What do these verses say about God’s gift of sexual intimacy and of the occasion for which it is not immoral?

\* What does it mean to find our identity in the fact that we have been *“washed, sanctified, and justified in Christ”* **1 Cor. 6:11**. It might help to consider the following:

- **Washed** refers to the cleansing of guilt and the dominating power of sin that occurs at regeneration, or when we receive Christ into our lives. This is symbolized in the “washing” of baptism – **Acts 22:16**

- **Sanctified** refers to the ongoing process of becoming more Christ-like and the break with our love of sin that occurs at regeneration.

- **Justified** refers to the declaration of our righteousness as a result of Christ’s perfect righteousness becoming our own – **1 Cor. 1:30**. In other words, Paul is reminding the Corinthians of this verdict / status and insisting that they live in a way that is a reflection of their being declared righteous.

Wherever the discussion this week might take you, attempt to bring it back to the point that our bodies, as believers, are not our own. We have been bought with a price and we are to glorify God in all that we do. As we approach the blurred lines of cultural sexual liberties, we need to do as Joseph so famously did in **Genesis 39:12**, **“RUN”** back from that line and remind ourselves of the identity for which we find in Christ.



## WEEK 4: I AM LOVED AND CALLED TO LOVE

5.10.2015

This week's message, marking the midpoint of our *Identity* series, is an incredibly important truth in regards to living out our identity in Christ. So critical is the principle that we are loved and are called to love, that I believe it is central to developing an entire theology of who God is and how we fit into his plan.

Beginning with the idea that God is fully sovereign, yet he is most glorified and revealed to us in his love for us, we start to understand his character. God's emphasis on relationship with his creation is first seen in the garden and continues to this day. He doesn't have to love us, but he does. Therefore, our response of love towards him and others, is by far the greatest expression of our worship and is the basis for all obedience.

Key Scripture this week will include **1 John 4:16** "*God is love, and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God in him.*" In other words, if we are truly abiding in God, love will be a natural response. Also, to consider is **John 13:35**, as we see a primary identifier as believers is our ability and desire to love others; "*by this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another.*" He doesn't say people will know you are a disciple by how much you know, how much you give, how much you work, but in how much you love.

It is also important to view love from a Christ-like perspective, otherwise there might be temptations to twist this message into one based on works-based love and a secular slant to 'peace and love.' A Christ-like love, the kind that we should demonstrate as a result of our identity in Christ, is one that is selfless, sacrificial, and pure. It's a love that transforms those around us and points others to Christ. At its core, it is one that is founded on the ultimate display of love, in which Christ died for our sins in order that a loving relationship with God may be possible.

A final point of discussion might involve looking at **Matthew 22:36-40**, the greatest commandment, "Love God – Love Others!"



## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

### I am loved ...

- \* Why do some Christians struggle with the idea that God loves them?
- \* What Scriptural examples can be found that demonstrate God's love?  
**Romans 5:8, Ephesians 2:4-5, Psalm 86:15**
- \* How can our understanding of being loved by God become more firmly grounded and less dependent on temporary feelings? What role does the Holy Spirit play in this?
- \* Can God have a righteous wrath toward sin and still love the sinner?

### I am called to love others ...

- \* Why does it often seem more difficult to love those closest to us? To fully love, as Christ loved; compassionately, selflessly, patiently.
- \* **Matthew 5:44-46** says, *"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you .... For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?"* What did Jesus mean in this teaching? Who are your enemies? How do you love them?
- \* How can we increasingly live lives of love? What contributes to a growing maturity in love?
- \* If our identity is in Christ, do we have a choice when it comes to loving others? Perhaps consider the answer to the once-popular WWJD bracelet as simply being "love others."
- \* Notice the fruit that is developed in us through the Holy Spirit; listed first is a fruit from which all others are more fully lived out – **Galatians 2:22-23**.
- \* Thinking back to **John 13:35**, what evidence is there in your life at this moment that would identify you as a disciple of Christ?





## WEEK 5: I AM SET APART - PART II

5.17.2015

This Sunday, Pastor David will address part two of the culturally relevant, especially timely, and biblically important subject of sexual immorality. There will be a continued emphasis on God's design for sexuality, as well as a period of Q&A – both live online and previously submitted.

As a reminder from part one, we are specifically instructed in regards to sexual immorality that:

- \* Our body is the Lord's, not our own – **1 Corinthians 6:13**
- \* Our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit – **1 Corinthians 6:19**
- \* Our body is a vehicle for giving glory to God – **1 Corinthians 6:20**

This point is made even more emphatically in **1 Corinthians 6:15**, *"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!"* When we expand our view of "prostitute" to consider all acts and attitudes derived from ungodly lust and self-pleasure, then to participate in any of them as "members of Christ" should give us great pause and conviction.

The word used most often in Scripture for sexual immorality is **porneia**; a reference to all sexual practices outside the bounds of God's design. See the following passages as examples of **porneia**: **Matthew 19:9, Hebrews 13:4, 1 Corinthians 7:2**. See the following passages as examples of God's design: **Genesis 2:24, Ephesians 5:31, Matthew 19:1-6**.

Overcoming the temptations of sexual sin can be achieved by:

1. When we find our greatest fulfillment in our relationship with the Lord; **1 Corinthians 7:35** says to *"secure your undivided devotion to the Lord."*
2. Realizing that 'singleness' (including abstinence from sex) can be a good gift from God; see **1 Corinthians 7:7-8**
3. **The Power of Divine Displacement**: By turning to our passion for God over other passions. By finding contentment in the Lord over our desires. By holding fast to God's Word and his truth over our impure thoughts. By developing fellowship and accountability with others that builds up.

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Make note of the Q&A responses during the message this Sunday. It is likely that they will make good discussion topics for your group. Other questions to consider might be:

- \* Why is the issue of sexuality so prevailing in our culture? How might it be viewed in regards to identity?
- \* Why do you think sexual sin is such a prominent part of God's Word? In discussion, think about it in terms of idolatry, relationships, authority, God's gifts, and / or impact on the heart.
- \* Is there evidence in culture (current or historical) that an increase in sexual immorality results in a decrease of Christian values and commitment to faith? Is this overstated? Is this under-appreciated? What is the root of the problem?

**As one living out your identity in Christ, what would you say ....**

- \* to someone that asks you why pornography is such a big deal to Christians; it's really not hurting anyone.
- \* to a fellow believer who says homosexuality is more of an Old Testament law since Jesus never specifically taught against it?
- \* to a friend, family member, or co-worker who asked you to attend their same-sex ceremony? Would you attend? Why or why not?
- \* to someone who asks you how to show grace and truth, compassion and conviction, to someone struggling with *porneia*; internet addiction, adultery, homosexuality, cohabitation outside of marriage, or any other act outside of God's design.

Similar to part one on this subject, wherever the discussion this week might take you, attempt to bring it back to the point that our bodies, as believers, are not our own. We have been bought with a price and we are to glorify God in all that we do. As we approach the blurred lines of cultural sexual liberties, we need to do as Joseph so famously did in **Genesis 39:12**, "***RUN***" back from that line and remind ourselves of the identity for which we find in Christ.



## WEEK 6: I AM GOD'S WORKMANSHIP

5.24.2015

This Sunday, Pastor Brian will teach on a topic that will be encouraging to both students and adults; the idea that we have been created as a masterpiece by our almighty God. Believing that we truly are a masterpiece of God's own workmanship should influence our relationship with God, our responsibility towards others, our image of ourselves, and our desire to live out an identity in Christ.

Looking at the account of creation in Genesis 1, we often overlook that God created the universe and all that is in it (minus humanity) in what the Bible refers to as the first 5 days. With each of these days, "**God saw that it was good,**" **Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, & 25.** However, on day 6, "God said, **Let us make mankind in our image.**" When God saw all that was now made, notice how **"behold, it was very good"** **Genesis 1:31.**

In John Calvin's commentary on Genesis, he notes that verse 31 is intentionally distinct from the previous pronouncements of approval on days 1-5. The Hebrew word **טַמַּם, meod** (very) has been added, emphasizing that "now, after the workmanship of the world was complete in all its parts, and had received, if I may so speak, the last finishing touches, he pronounces it perfectly good ... the highest perfection." You and I are those finishing touches for which God could rest and take pleasure in his perfection.

In this perspective, it is easier to see a loving God concerned with reconciling his initial creation back to him, and back into a perfect relationship with him. When our identity is lived out in light of our creation, we can't help but be filled with gratitude, praise, humility, and devotion to our creator for what, who, and how he made us.

Brian will also speak to **Ephesians 2** and **Titus 3:5-8** to help us see how we can seek to return to our created image and not stay in our fallen one. We are God's workmanship, but because of the fall of man, and our sinful selves, we must allow God to continue his work on us daily.

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- \* When you read or discuss the account of creation (Genesis chapter 1) what are your thoughts on God's creation of mankind? Do you see humanity, in its originally intended state, as the pinnacle of God's work? Why or why not?
- \* Have you, or anyone you have known, struggled with self-image? From where does that self-image originate? From the world or from the Word?
- \* Do you believe that God is a relational God who “*delights in his people*,” **Psalm 149**? How does that make you feel? believe? act?
- \* How does God continue to work on us?
- \* If we are God's workmanship, his masterpiece, what do you expect that God would expect from such a masterpiece? Is there purpose to his creation?
- \* This might help to address the previous question; **Ephesians 2:10** says, “**For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**”



## WEEK 7: I AM COURAGEOUS & CONFIDENT

5.31.2015

We conclude our IDENTITY sermon series this week with a charge to live out the “I AM” truths of the previous six weeks. As a quick review, the following should be the primary characteristics of our life in Christ, and should be central to how we view our purpose, our priorities, our identity.

- \* I AM ... A New Creation (**2 Corinthians 5:17**)
- \* I AM ... Complete in Christ (**Ephesians 1:13-14**)
- \* I AM ... Set Apart (**1 Corinthians 6:13**)
- \* I AM ... Loved By God and Called to Love Others (**John 13:35**)
- \* I AM ... God’s Workmanship (**Ephesians 2:10**)

The message Sunday will speak to two powerful components of God’s promises that enable us to more consistently live out this identity; ***Courage & Confidence***. When understood in the context of God’s presence, his equipping, and his desire to do his work in us, then there is strength to be had that should encourage us in the day to day.

**COURAGE:** We will look at the transitioning of leadership from Moses to Joshua (**Deuteronomy 31 / Joshua 1**) to see that courage is a result of God’s presence, but it comes by way of our mediation on, belief, and commitment to God’s Word. As a final point, the idea of encouraging one another is seen in the example of Joshua; note **Joshua 1:18** where it is the people who instruct Joshua, for what would have been the sixth time that he would have heard a call to courage and strength.

**CONFIDENCE:** Looking at one of the most misapplied verses in the Bible, **Philippians 4:13**. The risk is not so much that using this verse to motivate is a bad thing, but that we miss the more critical and transformational points in, ***“I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me.”*** This verse should inspire confidence in God for all that he asks us to do.

## GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- \* What would a typical week look like for you if you could consistently live out your identity in Christ, 24/7? What it be drastically different – how?
- \* Where do we have the most difficulty living as a new creation in our new self, putting off our old self? Where do have most difficulty being set apart? Where do look to the horizontal and not the vertical to determine our worth? Are any of these a matter of courage or confidence?
- \* Why do you believe Joshua was told to be “Strong and Courageous” so many times? Do you ever remind yourself to be strong and courageous? Does anyone else remind you?
- \* Do you see the relationship between time in God’s Word and courage?
- \* What has been your understanding of Philippians 4:13? Is it ok for others to use it to lose weight, or improve their piano skills, or make an A on the test? Why or why not?
- \* Have you found the opportunity to be content in your present situation? Do you thank God for the strength to do this? Do you pray for the confidence in Christ to enable you to do these things?
- \* Pray **Ephesians 3:20** for one another this week – maybe close out your group time reading it together.