

Standing in Your True Identity in Christ – Dan Hitz

This article is inspired from Chapter Ten of the 1996 edition of the Living Waters Guidebook, “The Cross: Resurrecting the True Self” by Andrew Comiskey. You can find out more information about Living Waters at <https://www.desertstream.org/#>.

Then he [Jesus] asked them, “But who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being. Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means ‘rock’) and upon this rock I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it. – Matthew 16:15-18 NLT

God places a lot of importance on names... on identities... As you read through the entire conversation in Matthew 16, you'll see that people were calling Jesus all sorts of things at that time. It's interesting to note that Peter actually had the correct answer, and it was revealed to him by the Father in Heaven. He didn't figure it out by human reasoning. Jesus followed up His affirmation of Peter by highlighting Peter's own name and its meaning. He then reveals His plans for Peter and the Kingdom. When the Lord renames people in Scripture, it reflects the transformation that occurs in their hearts. Abram became Abraham, Sarai became Sarah, and Saul became Paul. When God speaks our names, He speaks our identities. When He speaks our identities, He speaks vision and calling.



Who do you say that you are? More importantly, who does God say that you are? As Christians, if we answer that question theologically, the answer is pretty powerful. 1 Thessalonians 1:4 says we are loved by God and chosen. 1 Corinthians 6:11 says we are washed, justified, and sanctified. Romans 8:37 says we are more than conquerors. The list of our Biblical attributes and identities goes on and on. Unfortunately, if we listen to the pain in our hearts, our identities can be quite different. Just like the people in Jesus' day called Him many things, people in our day have called us many things. Some of those names were nice... some not so nice. Sometimes those not so nice names come back at us years later when we answer the question of who we are from the pain in our hearts... loser... hopeless... unwanted... and a whole lot worse.

Where did those nasty names come from? Sometimes parents in a fit of rage give us labels that sink deep into our hearts... “You'll never amount to anything!” “You're dumber than a head of lettuce!” “You're a tramp!” When words like these are spoken over us by our parents, they are written in indelible ink on our souls. **Sometimes our peers label us.** I've talked with people who were labeled “faggot” even before they knew what the word meant. It's tough to grow up and not fit a typical gender stereotype. Rough and tumble girls and sensitive, artistic boys can carry a lot of hurtful labels given to them by neighborhood kids who didn't give them a second thought.

Sometimes labels come from the shame in our own hearts. As a small child, I didn't realize that my body was built to respond to touch. My nerve endings didn't know if my abusers' touch was wanted or unwanted. I hated myself when my body responded to that touch. I carried the label of “disgusting little pervert” for years. Sometimes we've actually done perverted things by choice as an adult, yet even as a repentant Christian we still carry that label. Many of us in recovery gladly tell others in our small groups that they are new creations in Christ and that their old nature is gone (2 Corinthians 5:17), but when we listen to the condemnation in our own hearts, it's quite a different story. Even after walking with Jesus for years, we may still wrestle with some pretty nasty identities. Some of them I hesitate to even print in this newsletter. But we hear them in our hearts. We might even say them out loud when no one's around. We wonder if we're the exception to that new creation in Christ verse. After all, if I'm a new creation, why am I still struggling?

This brings us back to our need to be defined by the Father. **We need a supernatural revelation of who we are in Christ. We need the voice of the Father to speak louder than the pain in our hearts.** We need to live the truth of Galatians 2:20 NIV that declares, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” We aren’t defined by our old, fallen nature anymore. We are defined by Christ. That applies even if we’ve sinned after coming to Christ. It is then that we take refuge in 1 John 1:9 NIV, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” **Jesus doesn’t identify us by our fallen nature. He identifies us as who we are in Him.**

So how do we sincerely lay down our old identities and fully embrace our true identities in Christ? We need to take some time to get quiet with the Father and open our hearts to Him. The thought of getting quiet with God about how He sees us might sound frightening. Remember, He knew everything about us before we even came to Him. He won’t reject us. He knows everything about us and still loves us. Find peace in the truth, “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8b NIV).

Understand that Jesus took the full weight of our sin and shame on Himself when he was crucified on the cross. His death and resurrection are infinitely more powerful than our sin. Not just for our salvation, but for our transformation into mature sons and daughters of the Father. 2 Corinthians 5:21 tells us that Jesus, who had no sin, become sin for us, so that we can be transformed into the righteousness of God. Romans 6 tells us that our old, sinful natures were crucified with Christ, and that Christ now lives in us. We have Jesus’ righteousness alive and powerful in us. That is who the Father sees when He looks at us. It is time to seek God in prayer to make this truth come alive in the depths of our hearts.

At the very beginning of our walk, the Lord called us to admit who we were in our human brokenness and accept the fact that we couldn’t save ourselves. We surrendered our old lives and natures to Him and received new natures and identities in Him. **The more we focus on our true identity, the easier it will be to leave our old identity and behaviors at the cross.** When we sin after coming to Christ, it doesn’t erase our God-given identity. It is at those times that we go to the cross, confess our sins, and stand as blood washed sons and daughters of the Father. **We are identified by Him, and we stand in our true identity as redeemed and beloved sons and daughters.**

Spend some time in prayer to specifically focus on the shame in your heart. Identify the shameful labels – identities – that you are wrestling with. Then offer them up to the Father and ask Him to show you the identity that He gives you. We can participate in Revelation 2:17b NIV right now while we’re still in process. “To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.” We’ve shared this message in small groups and ministry times for years. It is amazing to hear the shameful identities that people have laid down at the cross, and the holy identities they have received from the Father. We give each person a white stone as a remembrance of their true identity in Christ. I’ll never forget when a man came up to me quite a while after I shared this message. He told me how he was still carrying the white stone in his pocket as a reminder of his true identity in Christ. His heart was revived as he embraced the truth of who he is in Christ. **It’s time for you to lay down your false identity and embrace your true identity in Christ. Who does God say that you are?**

