

Becoming Who You Already Are

Series: First Things First #2
Ephesians 2:4-10

Introduction: Mike Breaux says we have a phrase for how most people live now...*the same old, same old*. "You wake up at the same old time, get out of the same old bed, go into the same old bathroom, look into the same old mirror, shave the same old face, take the same old shower, dry off with the same old towel, walk into the same old kitchen, pour the same old cereal into the same old bowl, kiss the same old wife on the same old cheek, get in the same old car, drive off to the same old job, sit in the same old chair, listen to the same old boss tell the same old jokes, laugh in the same old way, clock out at the same old time, get back in the same old car, down the same old road into the same old house through the same old door, eat the same old dinner, fall asleep in the same old chair watching the same old news, get up, get in the same old bed, ask your wife the same old question, get the same old answer, roll over, go back to sleep. And that's it from one day to the next day to the next day." **God never made us for the same old, same old.**

Illustration: Can you imagine an alien spaceship landing in a...

Who are you? I'm a primate of the animal kingdom, Homo sapiens species.

Who are you? As far as race and ethnicity: I'm Caucasian, I live in the United States, and I speak the English.

Who are you? Chemically Speaking, my body is made up of about 99% of six elements: oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, nitrogen, calcium, and phosphorus. Only about 0.85% is composed of another five elements: potassium, sulfur, sodium, chlorine, & magnesium. All 11 are necessary for life.

If you could unravel your body like a ball of yarn, there would be enough DNA-strands to reach the moon and back ten-thousand times! A hundred things are happening in your body right now that you don't even know—digesting, growing new cells, purifying toxins, maintaining hormonal balance, converting stored energy from fat to blood sugar, and repairing damaged cells.

Approximately six trillion reactions are taking place in every cell every second. Your heart will pump 100,000 times today without skipping a beat.

Who are you? Biblically speaking, I'm a spirit that lives in a body and posses a living soul that houses my mind, will and emotions. I'm made in the image of God.

Who are you? My name's Gerry, I'm a son, a brother, a husband, father, grandfather, uncle, AF veteran, Christ-follower, a pastor, etc.

Every human being who has ever walked the face of this planet will reflect on these questions...Who am I? Where do I find identity? Why am I here?

I want to let you know what the apostle Paul wrote 2,000 years ago, inspired by the Holy Spirit that tells us **who we are**, and **where we find our identity**.

READ Ephesians 2:4-10 “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. 6And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. 8For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9not by works, so that no one can boast. 10For we are God’s handiwork [workmanship], created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” [NIV]

LET'S PRAY

Your self-concept—the way you see yourself—is determined by what you base your identity on. You can base your identity on how you look...on what you do or how much you make...on titles or degrees or resumes. You can even base your identity on what you wear, what you drive, or where you live.

Driving Mr. Albert is a fascinating book about Thomas Harvey, the pathologist who performed the autopsy on Albert Einstein in 1955. It's bizarre, but Thomas Harvey kept Einstein's brain in a Tupperware bowl in his home for forty years! One of the interviewees said, "That brain is his entire identity." The book ends with Thomas Harvey giving the brain to Dr. Elliot Krauss at Princeton Hospital and it's almost like

Harvey is a free man for the first time in forty years! He's no longer defined by the brain.

We can base our identity on some bizarre things, but all of us base our identity on something. **Identity problems are simply the byproduct of basing your identity on the wrong thing.**

Romans 12:3 says, **'The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.'** (The Message).

My goal this morning is simple and straightforward — I want you see yourself the way God sees you. Last week, we began a New Year Series, First Things First and talked about priorities. **Seek First His Kingdom and His Righteousness.**

In Martyn Lloyd-Jones's expositions of Ephesians 1, God's Ultimate Purpose, he repeatedly reminded his readers that **"our greatest need is to become who we already are in Christ."**

The title of my message this morning is: **Becoming Who You Already Are.**

Let me just say that this message is just an introduction on this subject of Who We Are in Christ. I have so much to say. You're going to feel like you're drinking from a fire hydrant this morning but hang with me.

Identity is defined as "the collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a thing is definitively recognizable or known," so our new identity in Christ should be recognizable both to ourselves and to others.

My identity is not based on who I am or what I can do. My identity is based on who Christ is and what Christ has done and is doing for me.

When we first come to new life in Christ, our first instinct is **to do**. To read the Bible, attend church, give, and so on. All these things are important. But there is a first step. If we are to navigate living for Christ, if we are to cope with life's ups and downs, and the sheer pressure of human brokenness, then **the first step is to make sure that we know who we are in Christ.**

You are designed by God. You're not here by accident. Your body, your temperament, your personality, your mind, your sense of humor, your DNA, all these things were designed for you by God. **You are God's workmanship.**

Psalmist said, "***I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.***"

Paul goes on to say not only did God design you, but you were "***created in Christ Jesus.***"

Paul wrote about half the New Testament, but Paul only quotes Jesus three times. His life is turned upside down by Jesus, and Paul uses the phrase "***in Christ***" more than 160 times. For Paul, the most amazing thing about Jesus is that He lives in us and we can live in Him.

Think about how differently God treats all His children. God had Abraham take a walk, Elijah take a nap, Joshua take some laps. God gave Moses a 40-year time out, He gave David a harp and a song. He gave Paul a pen and a scroll. He wrestled with Jacob, argued with Job, whispered to Elijah, warned Cain, and comforted Hagar.

He gave Aaron an altar, Miriam a song, Gideon a fleece, Peter a name, Elisha a mantle. Jesus was stern with the rich, young ruler, tender with the woman caught in adultery, challenging with the disciples, blistering with the scribes, gentle with the children, gracious with the thief on the cross. God never grows two people the same way. God is handcrafter, not a mass-producer.

Charles Siebert's has a book called, *A Man After His Own Heart*. He observed a heart transplant at Columbia-Presbyterian in New York City and gives a fascinating play-by-play. One surgical team cross-clamped and removed the heart. Another team double-bagged it, put it into a cooler, and into the trunk of a car, and drove to where the heart recipient was waiting. The recipient's cavity was open and empty. The heart was meticulously grafted and miraculously started beating. A heart transplant is a marvel of modern medicine, but medical science is just beginning to rediscover the metaphysical significance of the heart.

The heart isn't just a pump. It secretes its own brain like hormones. It has what medical science calls "cellular memory." A heart transplant isn't just physical, it's

metaphysical. A person doesn't just receive a pump. They receive cellular memories as well.

Siebert attended an annual banquet for transplant recipients and noted their unique appreciation for life. They all spoke in reverent tones about this gift they'd received and their responsibility to honor the donor. They also talked about the new cravings and desires that accompanied the transplant. Siebert concluded, and his research is backed up by numerous studies, that transplant recipients don't just receive a physical organ. They receive "whole new sensory responses, cravings, habits."

Siebert called this group of heart recipients "**the tribe of the transplanted.**"

I can't think of a better description of Christ followers. God has given us new hearts with new desires, and habits to glorify God. You were "**created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.**"

If you base your identity on the wrong things, you're building a house of cards. To put it in biblical language, basing your identity on who you are or what you can do is like building your house on the sand. Jesus said, "**The rain came down, the streams rose, the wind blew and beat against the house, and it fell with a great crash.**"

You base your identity on school and then you graduate. You base your identity on loving someone, and they break your heart. You base your identity on a job, and you retire, get downsized or move on. Schools, jobs, and relationships are good things. But you can't base your identity on them.

Humanity was originally created in the image of God, endowed with dignity, purpose, and the ability to have an intimate relationship with our Creator (Genesis 1:26-27). However, through the disobedience of Adam and Eve, sin entered the world and marred the perfection of God's design (Genesis 3:6-7).

Ever since the Fall, people have struggled with a sinful nature that distorts our sense of identity apart from Christ (Romans 5:12).

In the absence of knowing our true selves in God, people often attempt to construct their own identities based on careers, relationships, ideologies, possessions, and pleasures, which all leads to despair, and hopelessness.

When we place our faith in Christ, Scripture tells us that we become united with Him in His death and resurrection (Rom 6:3-5). This means our old sinful self has died, and we are raised to new life in Jesus.

Romans 6:11 (ESV) states, we are to consider ourselves "**dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus**".

To be "in Christ" means we have accepted His sacrifice as payment for our own sin. Our rap sheets contain every sinful thought, attitude or action we have ever committed.

To enter the presence of a holy God, we must be hidden in the righteousness of Christ. To be "in Christ" means that God no longer sees our imperfections; He sees the righteousness of His own Son (Ephesians 2:13; Hebrews 8:12).

Only "in Christ" is our sin debt cancelled, our relationship with God restored, and our eternity secured (John 3:16-18, 20:31).

Because we are in Christ, God sees Christ's righteousness covering us. Only "in Christ" is our sin debt cancelled, our relationship with God restored, and our eternity secured (John 3:16–18; 20:31).

According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" There are two Greek words which are translated "new" in the Bible. The first, *neos*, refers to something that has just been made, but there are already many others in existence just like it. The word translated "new" in this verse is the word *kainos*, which means "something just made which is unlike anything else in existence."

In Christ, we are made an entirely new creation. He does not merely clean up our old selves; He makes an entirely new self. When we are in Christ, we are "**partakers of the divine nature**" (2 Peter 1:4 KJV). His Holy Spirit takes up residence in our hearts. We are in Christ and He is in us.

Our identity is not defined by our past mistakes, societal expectations, or worldly labels. Rather, it is rooted in our relationship with Jesus Christ.

In Christ, we are regenerated, renewed, and born again, and this new creation is spiritually minded, whereas the old nature is carnally minded.

We might wonder why we so often do not live in the manner described, even though we have given our lives to Christ. This is because our new natures are residing in our old fleshly bodies, and these two are at war with one another.

Now we have the choice to either feed the new nature through the Word, prayer, and obedience, or to feed the flesh by neglecting those things.

In Christ we are loved, forgiven, and secure. In Christ we are adopted, justified, redeemed, reconciled, and chosen. In Christ we are victorious, filled with joy and peace, and granted true meaning in life.

One of the greatest blessings about our identity in Christ is the grace we're given to grow into the spiritual maturity that reflects our new identity (Phil. 1:6).

Three BIG Things we become in Christ:

1. In Christ I'm Accepted:

- I am God's child (John 1:12)
- I am Christ's friend (John 15:15)
- I have been justified (Romans 5:1)
- I am united with the Lord, and I am one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17)
- I have been bought with a price: I belong to God. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
- I am a member of Christ's Body (1 Corinthians 12:27)
- I am a saint, a holy one (Ephesians 1:1)
- I have been adopted as God's child (Ephesians 1:5)
- I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:18)

- I have been forgiven for all my sins (Colossians 1:14)
- I am complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10)

2. In Christ I'm Secure:

- I am free from condemnation (Romans 8:1-2)
- I am assured that all things work together for good (Romans 8:28)
- I am free from all condemning charges against me (Romans 8:31-34)
- I cannot be separated from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39)
- I have been established, anointed and sealed by God (2 Cor. 1:21-22)
- I am confident that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected (Philippians 1:6)
- I am a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20)
- I am hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3)
- I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7)
- I can find grace and mercy to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16)
- I am born of God, and the evil one cannot touch me (1 John 5:18)

3. In Christ I'm Significant:

- I am the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-14)
- I am a branch of the true vine, Jesus, a channel of His life (John 15:1-5)
- I have been chosen and appointed by God to bear fruit (John 15:16)
- I am a personal, Spirit-empowered witness of Christ (Acts 1:8)
- I am a temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16)
- I am a minister of reconciliation for God (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)
- I am a fellow worker with God (2 Corinthians 6:1)

- I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:6)
- I am God's workmanship, created for good works (Ephesians 2:10)
- I may approach God with freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12)
- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me! (Philippians 4:13)

Here's why it's so important to know who you are in Christ and to Become Who You Already are. Ephesians 2:6 says God **"...raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus."**

Illustration: Watchman Nee has a book called, *Sit, walk, and stand.* In this book, he notes how a Christian must start his journey with Christ by sitting--resting alongside the Savior who has done all the work.

I. Sit - Sit means rest. A Christian must start his journey with Christ by sitting; knowing that everything was done for us by Jesus finished work on the cross.

II. Walk - Walking comes from being seated in Christ and living out the Christ-like life by claiming our place seated alongside Him. The Christian's entire life is to be founded and lived out from the finished work of Jesus. **You cannot walk the Christian way if you are not seated with Christ in heavenly places.**

III. Stand - Stand means, standing your ground against Satan. If you know your position in Christ, he cannot gain ground in your life.

Ephesians 6:11 says "Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil".

In chapter 1 of Ephesians, Paul emphasizes the wealth of spiritual blessings we have because we are in Christ. **In chapter 2 he emphasizes our position in Christ. Our position in Christ determines our spiritual possessions and authority.** **Being Made Alive with Christ means we are sitting together in heavenly places and that means we have been given Spiritual Authority.**

Our identity is no longer "in Adam" but it is "in Christ." We are no longer ordinary; we are by God's Grace extraordinary. The whole work of the enemy is to get you to disbelieve who you are in Christ.

The power and benefits that Jesus received as He was exalted at the right hand of God were given to the Body of Christ as a gift.

The first statement that God made to the human race is found in Gen. 1:26-28:

"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion...over all the earth...God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over...every living thing that moves on the earth."

David contemplated this and said: ***What is man that You are mindful of him...You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet. (Ps. 8:4-6)***

What went wrong? We gain a little understanding of what happened in the Garden of Eden from Luke 4 when Satan is tempting Jesus in the wilderness. ***5The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6And he [devil] said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. [who gave it to him?]***

When God gave the governing authority of the earth to Adam, he had the right to use it in any way that he chose. He did the unthinkable and turned it over to the devil, and Satan became ***"the god of this world."***

Now where Adam failed, the second Adam, Jesus, has succeeded. ***"Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it [His death and resurrection]. (Col. 2:15)***

Jesus displayed a remarkable level of authority. Jesus is in the lakeside city of Capernaum, the home of Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Jesus is in the synagogue one day and a man who was possessed by an evil spirit cried out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

"Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" The evil spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him."

The word for "amazed" speaks of the people being blown away by Jesus' teaching. But the word for "amazed" when he cast out the demon carries with it the idea of fear. What frightened the people was not the presence of the demon, but Jesus' power over it.

Story: A government man was taking geological readings for the Department of the Interior. He approached one farmer and said, "I've been authorized by the government to go out into your pasture and take some readings. Do you mind?" The farmer said, "You can't go out in my pasture."

The government man got a little perturbed and brought out a piece of paper signed by the Secretary of the Interior that gave him the authority to take his readings anywhere he chose. He showed it to the farmer and said, "There, see? I have the authority to go into your pasture."

As the government man started climbing over the fence the farmer said, "I'll tell you again, you'd better not go out into my pasture."

The government man arrived in the middle of the pasture and was setting up his equipment when the ground began to shake. He looked up and saw a mean old bull running toward him with his head lowered. The government man forgot his equipment and started running as fast as he could for the fence. He cried out to the farmer, "Help me! Help me!"

The farmer said, "**Show him your papers!**" He might have had the authority, but he didn't have the power to be safe in that field.

A distinction between power and authority is shown in this story: "All the people were amazed and said to each other, 'What is this teaching? With authority and power, he gives orders to evil spirits, and they come out.'"

Authority is the capacity we have due to our position. I have the authority of God in me due to my union with Jesus Christ. Authority is delegated power. Power is the capacity I have due to my posture.

A police officer does not direct traffic and stop cars by his power. To do that he would have to physically stop a car like superman. He stops a car by the authority of his uniform and badge representing the police department, and the laws of the land. He doesn't have the power to do his job, but he has the authority to do it.

We don't have the power to stop one thing that the devil does, but we have authority because we are seated in the heavenly realms in Christ. And the bible says that all power and authority in heaven and earth has been given to Him.

We have both the authority to do God's will because of our position in Christ, and the power to do God's will if OUR POSTURE IS RIGHT. Are we walking in the Spirit, abiding in Christ, etc.

Israel's army saw Goliath in relation to themselves and trembled; David saw Goliath in relation to God and triumphed. When you encounter the spiritual enemies of your soul, remember: You plus Jesus equal a majority.

You can't exercise authority unless you are under authority.

Jesus gave the disciples authority in Luke 9:1. He called his twelve together, and he said, I'm giving you authority and power. I want you to drive out demons. I want you to heal the sick. I want you to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom.

This same thing happens to 72 people that Jesus sent out in Luke 10. Luke 10:17 says the 72 "returned with joy." They were elated. They said, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name."

He said to them, "I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning." Every time they carried out a spiritual transaction, made a declaration, or spoke out in faith, Satan fell like lightning out of heaven. He goes on to say, "Behold, I have given you authority to tread upon serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy." What does it "all" mean? It means all!

The work of the enemy is to keep you from understanding who you are in Christ. Because when you know who you are, you know what you can do.

Satan has lost his place of authority, but he will continue to exert his authority wherever he can. He seeks to steal, kill, and destroy. The trouble is that many Christians don't realize who they are in Christ, and the authority they have. **If we don't understand our authority in Christ, we will live defeated lives.**

OUR SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY IS BASED ON JESUS' VICTORY and our union with Him. *We are seated in Heavenly Places with Christ. We have been given authority and must exercise it in Christ to release the victory that Jesus secured on the cross. God's Word is our weapon. His spirit is our guide.*

In Genesis 1, the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters in the darkness; but nothing happened until God spoke. God created us in His image and gave us His Word to release His will on earth.

So, then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Rom. 10:17)

Jesus said, 'The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.' (Jn. 6:63)

Death and life are in the power of the tongue... (Prov. 18:21)

13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak. (2 Cor. 4:13)

'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' (Mt. 16:19)

'They overcame him (Satan) by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.' (Rev. 12:11)

CLOSING: Identity is the door to your destiny. It determines how I act. It determines what I do. Your choices and my choices are always based on who I think I am...and in our case – who we are in Christ.

Jesus understood that identity is related to destiny. Matthew 3:17 "***Behold a voice from heaven says, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased."***

The next thing, Jesus is lead out to the wilderness and tempted in Matthew 4. **Do you realize what those temptations were about?**

Temptation #1 Matthew 4:3 "***if*** you are the son of God tell these stones to become bread."

Temptation # 2 Matthew 4:6 The devil says ***if*** you are the son of God throw yourself down and have the angels catch you.

Temptations are primarily a challenge to your identity. Do you know who you are?

Temptation #3 vs. 8 ...Satan says, "All these things I'll give you, if you bow down and worship me."

Satan is now saying I want to see if you are willing to compromise your identity and forfeit your destiny. What could Satan give that Jesus didn't already have? What can this world give that you don't already have in Christ? You are seated in heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. **When you know who you are in Christ, you'll know what to do and have the authority to do it.**

If you haven't already, start becoming who you already are in Christ.