

LESSON 4

ANCHOR 4

Realize who I am in Christ and reject the lie that I am my character defects and sins.

2 Corinthians 5:17: - Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new.

PRAY

Ask God to speak to you as you read His Word. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a revelation of God's truth and love and give you understanding of what you are about to read. Pray that you will have an Encounter with God as you earnestly seek Him. Don't rush through reading everything and don't rush through praying. Take some time to stop and listen so you may hear anything God wants to say to you.

After you read the scriptures, ask:

- "God, what are You saying in these scriptures?"
- "God, what are You saying to me in these scriptures?"
- "God, how do You want me to apply this to my life?"

Write in your journal as you spend this time with God.

Previously, in Anchor 3, we learned that our old life and our sins are crucified, both symbolically and spiritually, when we place our trust and belief in Jesus Christ as our LORD and Savior. Living that out and allowing our new life in Christ to replace our old habits and sinful nature requires commitment, discipline and obedience.

According to **2 Corinthians 5:17** a real transaction took place. You were made new! You were forgiven. You were given a new nature, and you now have a new identity. You are a different person and you are no longer the same. You may not feel different, but you are different. You may not feel forgiven, but you are forgiven. You are born again and are no longer defined by what you do, what you did, or what has been done to you. You are now defined by whom God calls you, period!

God calls you someone different than who you call yourself. God's desire is for us to walk in that new identity and see ourselves as He sees us. God's desire is for you to be accepted, secure, and know your significance in Christ in your new identity. This new identity is one of the benefits we inherit when we trust in the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Our lives should be a reflection of what Christ did for us. God is who He says He is and we are now who He says we are. If we are to do what He says we can do, it can only be done through His power and in the new identity He has given us. God does not want us to spend the rest of our lives trying to discover who we are. He wants us know who we are today so we can walk in that new and true identity.

going. Your identity will make your purpose and where you are going crystal clear, as you live in your new and true identity in Christ.

Read **Romans 6:6** – We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives.

Read **Colossians 3:7-10** – Paul tells believers to stop living in the old sins of their past lives, since they have taken off the old self with its practices, and have put on the new self. He said, “You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge and in the image of its Creator.

Paul made a similar point in **Ephesians 4:22-24** – You were taught with regard to your former way of life, to **put off** your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to **put on** the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Romans 6:6 and **Colossians 3:7-10** teach us that this was a decisive and definitive past action that occurred the moment we received the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, when we were born again. But **Ephesians 4:22-24** teaches us to apply a continuous action on our part - to stop doing the things we did before we received the salvation of Jesus Christ and **put on** His righteousness. The old self was crucified with Christ, but, as followers, we have to do our part to be intentional about **putting off** the old self and **putting on** the new self.

Think of it in this manner. Before you knew Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you wore the filthy stained garments of sin. But, when you received Jesus Christ into your life, His righteousness washed away those filthy garments of sin. Once you have been washed clean, why would you want to put those filthy garments back on?

The death of Jesus on the cross paid for the salvation of all who believe and follow Him, so Paul is not telling us to do for ourselves what Christ has already done. Instead, Paul is saying that we are new creations in Christ and we must become, in deed and practice, what God has already declared us to be. We must have the resolve to resist our former sins and way of life in order to walk in the new life God has given us.

Read **Galatians 3:27** – For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. The phrase ‘clothe yourselves’ is the same phrase translated ‘put on’ in the above verses. It is talking about ‘putting on’ the life of Christ. To clothe oneself with a person, or to ‘put on’ a person, is to take on the characteristics of that person and become like them.

Paul tells us in **Romans 13:14** to ‘clothe’ ourselves in the Lord Jesus Christ.

As believers, we are not trying to become children of God. We already ARE children of God – children who are in the process of becoming more like Jesus!

The more you affirm who you are in Christ, the more your behavior will begin to reflect your true identity of who God made you to be. You will begin to know who you are. You will begin to know your purpose. And you will begin to know where you are going.

IDENTITY STORY:

In **Genesis Chapters 32**, there is an account of Jacob wrestling with God. Jacob's very name means "he grasps the heel". He was a twin who was born after his brother, Esau, but the implication is that he could have been trying to grab Esau's heel to get ahead of him at birth. Jacob had tricked his father, Isaac, and stolen Esau's birthright as the firstborn son. Esau had threatened to kill Isaac, so Isaac had been on the run for 20 years. He was now about to come face to face with Esau again and he was afraid of what would happen. He prayed that God would save him from his brother and he reminded God of the promises God had previously made to him.

That night on the bank of the Jordan River, Jacob wrestled with a man all night long. Jacob wouldn't quit or give up. The man told Jacob to let him go because it was daybreak. Jacob must have finally realized who he was wrestling with because He saw the face of God in the daylight and said, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." An encounter with God will change you forever. Jacob used his persistence for a blessing and God gave him a new name.

The 'man' asked Jacob, "What is your name?" When Jacob told him, the 'man' said, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome." And He gave Jacob the blessing he requested.

Throughout the bible, God gave people new names to mark the changes He had made in their lives and to give them new direction for the future. Jacob had come a long way from the younger man who had tricked his father and stolen his brother's birthright. Jacob's persistence had once been used for selfish gain. But, God had changed him and his persistence had become something that he used to fulfill the promises of God to his nation, Israel.

Can you identify with this story? Think about your life. Think about times when you may have been selfish. Think about the changes God has made, or is making in your life. Can you look at your life before you came to know and follow God and honestly think that He wants you to be that same person and to do those same things for personal gain or selfishness?

Just like Jacob, God calls you someone else now. He wants to continually transform you so you can live for His purposes and not your own. God wants you to recognize that He calls you to be someone other than you used to be, someone new, with new and right desires, someone who has a past but is no longer identified by that past. You are made in the image of God and He delights in making you into what He intends for you to become – His masterpiece.

You may not even realize this, but there's a spiritual war going on over your identity. Satan spends most of his time taking what God has created for good, which includes you, and he perverts it, distorts it and ultimately tries to destroy it.

Satan knows, if he can keep you from being *you* - the person God made you to be, if he can hide or distort your true identity 'in Christ', if he can hinder what God intended for you to be, then he has succeeded in creating an identity crisis that will keep you in chaos and eventually destroy your life. How does Satan keep you from knowing your true identity? He uses a lot of different tools. Satan uses hurts and he uses pain in your life to deceive you and to disguise your true identity. Because, if he can get you to be resentful, if he can get you to stay bitter, if he can get you overwhelmed with guilt, shame and regrets, then he knows you're going to miss your true identity from being so obsessed with all of those things.

This is a huge issue because unresolved pain and resentments create character defects. A lot of people think that, because they have a certain tendency, a certain lust, a certain attraction, a certain fault or a certain habit, that it is who they are. That is how Satan deceives us and keeps us stuck. Our identity gets messed up because we have identified ourselves with a particular behavior, a way of acting, thinking, attracting, desiring, lusting, etc.

The world often tells us that the first step of facing our denial is to admit that we have a problem. There may be some measure of truth to this, but don't be fooled into thinking you 'are' your problem. They may tell you to introduce yourself by identifying your problem; for example, "My name is Joe and I am an alcoholic." That may sound like you are admitting that you have a problem, but it is also self-defeating. The misconception is that you are your sins, that you 'are' what you do and that your bad habits are your identity.

But you **are not** your defects. You **are not** your faults. You **are not** your sins. They may be something you have done or even still do, but they are not your identity; they are not who you are.

If so many tools are being used against you to conceal who God really made you to be – things others have said or done to you to distort your identity – how can you even begin to know the real you? It helps to look at God's Word and the life of Jesus to know the truth.

One of the benefits to studying the life of Jesus is that He was no stranger to people distorting His identity.

His life could easily be summarize by these three statements:

1. He knew who He was (His identity)
2. He knew His purpose
3. He knew where He was going

If you take a deep look at His life, you will find that His identity was under attack from the moment He was baptized up until the moment He died on the cross. He had to deal with a barrage of insults, lies, temptations and voices (much like what we hear on a daily basis) challenging His identity.

Satan knew that, if he could get the Son of God to doubt His identity, he would stop the purpose of Jesus (**1 John 3:8** - But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil). Ultimately, Satan could NOT stop the plan of God, the plan that would eventually defeat him.

Read **Matthew 4:3-6** - The tempter came to Him and said, "***If you are the Son of God***, tell these stones to become bread." Then, in verse 6, "***If you are Son of God***," he said, "throw yourself down." 'If you are the Son of God' - Satan attacked Jesus at the core of His identity and the attacks never stopped. Even when Jesus was on the cross, the attacks intensified because of what was at stake and what was to be gained for all of mankind.

Read **Luke 23:35** - The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at Him. They said, "He saved others; let Him save Himself, ***if He is God's Messiah, the Chosen One.***" Again, they were attacking Jesus at the core of who He was.

The bible says that Jesus was tempted in every way. But Jesus never sinned because He knew who He was, He knew what His purpose was and He knew where He was going. If Jesus was tempted and challenged in His identity to the maximum degree, then we can likewise expect to be tempted and challenged in the same way. That is why we have to know the truth of God and His Word. 29

Defeated Christians typically have one thing in common: They don't know who they are in Christ, and they don't understand what it means to be a child of God.

The last thing the enemy wants you to know is who you really are in that new and true identity. Because, if you really believed what God says about you—you might just start living that way!

For example:

- If you really believed you were forgiven, you wouldn't walk around with all that guilt and shame
- If you really believed that you are accepted by God, you wouldn't look for your acceptance from other people
- If you really believed you are secure, you wouldn't be so consumed with the things of this world
- If you really believed you are significant in Christ, you would live your life with confidence and not succumb to codependent behaviors
- If you really believed you have the mind of Christ, you would start thinking like Christ—you would start taking your thoughts captive to the obedience of Christ more. You would be better equipped to resist temptations
- If you really believed that God Himself lives in you, you wouldn't feel so alone and you would let Him guide your life more
- If you really believed that God calls you Holy, Redeemed, Sanctified, Perfect, Justified, His Friend, Highly Loved, Highly Favored, a Chosen Generation, A Royal Priesthood, Complete, Free from Condemnation, the Object of His affection, a Saint, His Daughter, His Son---if you really believed that—you would actually start living that way

Satan tells you that you are a sinner because you sin. God actually calls believers 'saints', declared righteous by God. A believer is a saint who still sins, but hopefully one who sins less and less. Sinning is something you may still do, but that sin is not who you are!

When you see the words "sinners" and "saints" in the bible, they are identity statements. A sinner refers to someone who is not a follower of Jesus. Followers of Jesus are called saints. Those are identities, not behaviors. We are not sinners saved by grace. We *were* sinners that were saved by grace. We are *now* saints that still sin and who still need grace.

Satan will convince you that your identity comes from what you do. God says that your identity comes from what He has already done for you. You are the person He calls you, not who the world calls you or even who you call yourself! Therefore, tragically, many Christians will spend an entire lifetime trying to become someone they already are.

If you are a follower of Jesus, God doesn't say you have to wait to become who He made you to be. He declares that this is your identity 'in Christ. You are who God says you are, even if you don't think you are. When you start believing who you really are, then, you will know what your real Identity in Christ is. Then, you will know the truth that sets you free!

Maybe the biggest obstacle to knowing our true identity in Christ is the fact that we look for acceptance, security and significance in all the wrong places. We have looked for these in every place other than looking for them in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The three basic psychological needs of every person are acceptance, security, and significance. When we look for those three things in other people, in this world, and through ourselves and our individual accomplishments, we end up in an identity crisis.

There are approximately 140 scriptures in the New Testament that validate our *acceptance*, *security*, and *significance* in Christ.

The following verses refer to our *acceptance in Christ*:

John 1:12 I am God's child.

John 15:15 I am Jesus Christ's friend.

Romans 5:1 I have been justified before God by Christ.

I Corinthians 6:20 I have been bought with a price. I belong to God.

Ephesians 1:1 I am a saint.

Ephesians 1:4 I am holy and blameless in his sight.

Ephesians 2:18 I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit.

Colossians 1:14 I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins.

Colossians 2:10 I am complete in Christ.

This is where your identity starts – by realizing you are accepted by God 'in Christ'. Your salvation in Christ, and what He has already done for you, makes you acceptable to God when you receive that salvation.

The following verses support the validity of our *security in Christ*:

Romans 8:1 I am free forever from condemnation.

Romans 8:33 I am free from any condemning charges against me.

Romans 8:39 I cannot be separated from the love of God.

II Corinthians 1:21-22 I stand firm in Christ and have been established anointed and sealed by God.

Colossians 3:3 I am hidden with Christ in God.

Philippians 3:20 I am a citizen of heaven.

Your security is not found in your career, your marriage, your ministry, and certainly not from someone else. Your security is found in Christ, alone.

Significance is a huge issue for most of us. We want our lives to count for something and we want to be a SOMEBODY!

The following verses tell us how *significant we really are in Christ*:

Matthew 5:13-14 I am the salt and light of the earth.

John 15:1, 5 I am a branch of the true vine and a channel of His life.

John 15:16 I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit that will last.

Acts 1:8 I am a personal witness of Jesus Christ.

I Corinthians 3:16 I am God's temple.

II Corinthians 5:19 I am a minister of reconciliation for God.

II Corinthians 6:1 I am God's coworker

2 Corinthians 5:20 I am an ambassador for Christ.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.

Ephesians 2:6 I am seated with Jesus in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 2:10 I am God's workmanship – appointed to do good works – which He has prepared in advance for me to do.

Ephesians 3:12 I may approach God with freedom and confidence.

In Christ, you are significant. You will find significance when you believe and really live out the scriptures above.

Journal an identity statement about yourself based on the scriptures you have just read on finding acceptance, security and significance in Christ.

Read 1 John 3:1 out loud with conviction - "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is who we are!"

So, the next time you introduce yourself to someone, instead of leading with the sin that so easily entangles you, why not lead with the truth of who you are by saying something like, "Hi. My name is _____. I am the one who Jesus loves and I am a child of the King!"

QUESTIONS FOR YOU:

1. What are some of your patterns of thinking and acting in your "old self?"
2. What are some of your patterns of thinking and acting in your "new nature?"
3. How have you looked for acceptance, security, and significance outside of a relationship with Jesus Christ?
4. How have events, people, and society shaped and distorted your identity?
5. Share your identity statement you wrote about yourself based on the scriptures you studied.