



OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST, Part 1

A Case of Missed or Taken Identity

February 5, 2022

1 PREPARING

A. THE SOURCE

Romans 6:11 (NIV) • “In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 1:6 (NIV) • “Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Romans 8:1 (NIV) • “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

1 Peter 2:9, 10 (NIV) • “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) • “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”

Ephesians 1:13 (NIV) • “And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit.”

Romans 8:17 (NIV) • “If we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

Revelation 2:17 (NIV) • “To the one who is victorious, I will . . . give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.”

Galatians 2:20 (NIV) • “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.”

Genesis 1:26, 27 (NIV) • “Then God said, ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.’ . . . So God created mankind in his own image . . . ; male and female he created them.”

1 Thessalonians 5:4-11 (NIV) • “But you, brothers and sisters, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be awake and sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we

are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

John 1:12, 13 (NIV) • “To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”

(See additional passages in student material.)

B. WHAT’S TO BE SAID ABOUT “OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST”

As children develop into young men and women their sense of identity takes up much of their thinking. The experience of discovering “who they are” is often based on a variety of input—from parents, friends, classmates, even strangers. Some say, “You are what you think you are.” Most teens aren’t that secure, and it is more likely that their perceptions of themselves have a lot more to do with what others think than what they believe. In fact, many teens base how they see themselves on what they think others think of them. What is surprising is how teens (and adults) will let people who don’t know or love them shape their identity and behavior. They base who they are on the perceptions of others. This lesson is focused on finding our identity in our relationship to Christ, and defining our identity by what He did for us and declares about us rather than what we think others think about us.

Relationship, rights, responsibilities. What God says about you as a citizen of His kingdom is a legal, binding declaration of your identity—just like a birth certificate, driver’s license, passport, or adoption papers. This lesson is a look at how to develop a sense of your identity as a citizen of the kingdom. Your identity as citizens is in Christ. What He declares about your past, your present, and your future is what you are, no matter what Satan tries to whisper in your ear. (And you better believe he will try to talk your ear off!)

C. WHERE WE’RE GOING WITH “OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST”

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Deepen their awareness of their needs as young adult humans.
2. Encounter the identity crisis that occurs as the two kingdoms compete to claim them as children.
3. Discover that what God declares about them has power to shape who they are today and eternally.

D. MATERIALS NEEDED

Beginning • (Activity A) examples of documents that verify a person’s identity; (Activity B) pictures of famous and unknown people; paper, pens or pencils; whiteboard or chalkboard; Bibles.

Connecting • Bibles; paper; pens or pencils; whiteboard or chalkboard; student lessons.

Applying • Bibles.

2 BRIDGING

A. WHERE WE’VE BEEN

Allow 10 minutes at the beginning of class for students to:

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage in a discussion about the topic of the lesson in connection to the belief highlighted this week.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for Adventist *Mission* for youth and adults)

3 BEGINNING

NOTE TO TEACHER: Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Gather several examples of documents that verify a person's identity—birth certificate, adoption papers, driver's license, passport, Social Security card, school ID card, marriage certificate, lifesaving or first aid certification, and so on.

Get set • If you have enough items to provide one to each of several pairs/groups, give them a sample of identification and ask them to answer the following questions about each one. If the group is small, work through each of the ID's together.

Go • (1) What does this certificate declare about a person? (That you are human. That you were born. To whom you were born. Your name, date, place and time of birth.) (2) What does this certificate fail to say about a person? (Their personality; what people think of them; what they are like; their character; their hobbies.) After they have answered the questions they are to share their answers with the class.

Go deeper • Pose these questions about each of the certificates: What relationship does this certificate define, describe, or represent? What rights do you receive from this form of ID? What responsibilities do you have as a result of having this ID? Why do you think forms of identification are important? (So people don't forget who they are, the wise guy will say. So you can make sure

people don't misuse their rights and privileges.)

B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

Get ready • Cut out pictures of famous people and seemingly unknown people for students to identify. Give students paper and pens or pencils.

Get set • Give each student a picture and have them respond to some identity questions.

Go • Ask the students to make a short list of all they know about their person. Then ask them to make another list of what they might ask the person to get to know them better.

As a class, decide the top five questions needed to find out who someone really is. List the five where all can see.

Debriefing • **Ask:** How is it that we so easily form impressions of people while knowing very little about them?

You have heard the saying "First impressions are the most important." What are first impressions mostly based on? (Looks, dress, behavior, etc.) How is that a fair assessment of who a person really is?

C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

In your own words, tell the following story:

There was once a young man who wanted more than anything to take a cruise aboard a luxury liner. He did not have much money, but eventually he saved enough to purchase a ticket.

As he packed, the young man knew he would be traveling with no money for food, so he carefully packed some bread and cheese for his meals. Although he truly enjoyed the cruise, as he walked around and watched people eating in the dining and banquet halls of the ship, his joy diminished.

After two weeks, his bread and cheese molding, the young man was starving. As he walked around, people noticed how painfully thin he had become. A man approached and asked the young man if there was anything

wrong. Slightly embarrassed, the young man explained that he did not have enough money for food. The gentleman took the young man by the shoulders and explained to him that the food was all paid for in the price of the ticket. The young man was astonished—all this time he could have been eating at the wonderful banquets, but he hadn't known it!—Jim Burns and Mike DeVries, *Intense Illustrations* (Gospel Light, 2002), pp. 53, 54.

Debriefing • Ask: Is it possible that Christians might not know their rights and benefits of being a child of God? Have the students find and read **John 1:12, 13**. **Say:** The difficult part is believing that in a moment of “believing and receiving” a person can go from being lost to found, orphan to heir. It seems unrealistic doesn't it? Why do you think it is so difficult for people to imagine God is giving you a new identity with so little effort on your part? (Just like the young man on the cruise ship, they don't understand. They jump to conclusions based on their limited knowledge.) Is it possible that Christians might not know their rights and benefits of being a child of God? Refer to the text again.

Say: What God believes about you and what God says about you is what defines who you are as a person. What God promises to do with you is what enables believers to accept their new standing. It is possible that for some, this new identity is too good to be true.

4 CONNECTING

A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Say: In any country, becoming a citizen involves accepting your rights and responsibilities as a citizen of that nation. There is usually an oath you take and a declaration of your citizenship. In the moment the declaration is made, you have all the rights and

responsibilities as a citizen—a new identity.

Share the following oath from the United States with your students, or if you are in another country, find one that applies to you.

“I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty, of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen; that I will support and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I will bear arms on behalf of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform noncombatant service in the armed forces of the United States when required by the law; that I will perform work of national importance under civilian direction when required by the law; and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God.”—uscis.gov.

Say: The same is true for a family. Whether you are born or adopted into it, you have rights and privileges simply because of who you are.

Ask: You are a citizen by birth or by an application process. Some grow up as citizens and some become citizens as adults. Describe how you think the two groups are different in their approach and appreciation of their citizenship?

Say: Paul was adamant that believers should get the message that upon becoming a Christian they attained a new identity in Christ.

Have students find and read **Ephesians 2:19-22**. **Ask:** In what way does a foreigner feel and act differently from someone who is a citizen?

B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Refer to the illustrations in the student lesson in your own words.

On a whiteboard or chalkboard, make three columns: (1) My Relationship as a Child of God, (2) My Rights as a Child of God, (3) My Responsibility as a Child of God. In a fourth column, list the following texts: Ephesians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:4-6; Ephesians 2:19-22; Philippians 3:18-21; 1 Peter 2:11, 12; 1 John 5:18-20; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; Ephesians 2:6-10; 2 Timothy 1:6, 7; Matthew 5:13-15; John 15:5; John 15:15-17; Romans 8:17. You may also choose to use: Galatians 3:26, 28; Galatians 4:6, 7; Colossians 3:3, 12; 1 Peter 2:5; 1 John 3:1, 2; Romans 5:1; 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; Ephesians 1:3-5; Colossians 2:11, 12.

Distribute paper and pens or pencils. Have students work in pairs, groups, or all together to find in which column each belongs. Conclude by sharing all the results and completing the chart at the front.

Conclude with the Application Activity in the next section of this teacher guide.

C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

Karla is 12 years old and, sadly, she has been an orphan all her life. She has accepted the reality that she will probably not be adopted. So she helps to care for the other children and waits to be old enough to leave and start life on her own.

But Karla doesn't have to wait anymore because a family has decided to adopt her. She can't believe it! A normal family! They are not wealthy, but they have everything they need. There are brothers and sisters who seem interested in her and two loving parents.

1. What do you think some of her newfound joys would be?
2. What do you think would be difficult for her in adjusting to this new identity?
3. What changed as the adoption papers were signed? What didn't change?
4. Did she change when her name changed? How and in what way? In what way is she the same person?
5. When you receive Christ into your heart

and accept Him as Lord in your life, what can you expect to be different and what can you expect to change?

Have students find and volunteers read **2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 8:17; and Philippians 1:6.**

5 APPLYING

A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY

Say: Clearly, being in a relationship with Christ affects our identity, not by what we can do, but by the way God values us.

With the students in their groups or as a class, **ask:** From each of the categories of relationship, rights, and responsibilities, choose one verse that you appreciate the most or that you most want to experience in your life. Which of the verses in each category speak to you and why? (I like the idea of being chosen! I think the responsibility of being a child of God is seen in the idea of being "the salt of the earth.")

Ask: Which of the ideas in these verses do you think would most appeal to someone who has not yet decided to accept the identity Christ offers them?

B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. Who do you think has had the most influence on who you are today?
2. Agree or Disagree: "You are what you think others think you are." How might this be true/false?
3. What is the most difficult part of being a child of God?
4. Whom do you know that has made what God says about them the foundation for their sense of identity?
5. What Bible characters do you know that clearly based their sense of identity on what God said about them rather than on what others thought?

6. How has Satan, through the kingdom of this world, made finding our identity in Christ so difficult? What are some road-blocks/obstacles that clearly stand in the way?
7. How much of what defines people today are first impressions? Give some examples.

6 CLOSING

SUMMARY

In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:

“I am who I am” can be either a positive or negative description of our sense of identity. By far one of the most difficult things to do is to go against the flow of popular opinion and rest in God’s opinion of you. Everything has to do with the kind of ruler you use to measure your value in this world. Will you trust a short-sighted, superficial glance and a first impression, or will you consider the opinion of someone who really knows you? The choice that you make about who you are has to do with what you value—God’s opinion of you or what the world might say? The more we know about what God thinks of us, the more we are enabled to strengthen our resolve to be who He made us to be.



STUDENT LESSON

OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST, Part 1

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Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth’ ” (Genesis 1:27, 28, NKJV).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 7, The Nature of Humanity:** “Man and woman were made in the image of God. . . . When our first parents disobeyed God, they denied their dependence upon Him and fell from their high position. The image of God in them was marred and they became subject to death. Their descendants share this fallen nature and its consequences. They are born with weaknesses and tendencies to evil. But God in Christ reconciled the world to Himself and by His Spirit restores in penitent mortals the image of their Maker.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 76-78

A CASE OF MISSED OR TAKEN IDENTITY

Story 1. “Name Shouldn’t Be Sold.” Mark Cuban, owner of the NBA’s Dallas Mavericks,

recently offered WGN Chicago radio sports-talk host David Kaplan \$50,000 to change his name legally to “Dallas Maverick.” When Kaplan politely declined, Cuban sweetened the offer. Cuban would pay Kaplan \$100,000 and donate \$100,000 to Kaplan’s favorite charity if he took the name for one year. After some soul searching, and being bombarded by emails from listeners who said he was crazy to turn down the money, Kaplan held firm and told Cuban no. Kaplan explained: “I’d be saying I’d do anything for money, and that bothers me. My name is my birthright. I’d like to preserve my integrity and credibility.”—Skip Bayless, “Radio Host Prefers Class Over Crass,” *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 10, 2001.

Story 2. FBI agents conducted a raid of a psychiatric hospital in San Diego that was under investigation for medical insurance fraud. After hours of reviewing thousands of medical records, the dozens of agents had worked up quite an appetite. The agent in charge of the investigation called a nearby pizza parlor with delivery service to order a quick dinner for his colleagues.

The following telephone conversation took place and was recorded by the FBI because they were taping all conversations at the hospital.

- Agent:** Hello. I would like to order 19 large pizzas and 67 cans of soda.
- Pizza man:** And where would you like them delivered?
- Agent:** We’re over at the psychiatric hospital.
- Pizza man:** The psychiatric hospital?

Agent: That's right. I'm an FBI agent.

Pizza man: You're an FBI agent?

Agent: That's correct. Just about everybody here is.

Pizza man: And you're at the psychiatric hospital?

Agent: That's correct. And make sure you don't go through the front doors. We have them locked. You will have to go around to the back to the service entrance to deliver the pizzas.

Pizza man: And you say you're all FBI agents?

Agent: That's right. How soon can you have them here?

Pizza man: And everyone at the psychiatric hospital is an FBI agent?

Agent: That's right. We've been here all day and we're starving.

Pizza man: How are you going to pay for all of this?

Agent: I have my checkbook right here.

Pizza man: And you're all FBI agents?

Agent: That's right. Everyone here is an FBI agent. Can you remember to bring the pizzas and sodas to the service entrance in the rear? We have the front doors locked.

Pizza man: I don't think so.

Click.

—Go to <http://www.snopes.com/medical/asylum/fbipizza.asp> to get more details of this true incident.

Sunday RESPONDING

- » Read 1 John 4:7, 8, 11, 20.
- » Carlos is known for being funny, even though his jokes come at the expense of others. Nobody really gets close to him personally, but many want to be around him. How would a kingdom citizen go about reaching out to someone who seems “untouchable” and communicate what God thinks about him? How would you show Carlos his identity in Christ?

- » Share the specific problems in reaching people like Carlos. You may want to ask someone older what they think and share what you like about their answer or how that response may not be realistic.

Monday BIBLE ANSWERS ON THE NATURE OF HUMANITY

- » Read Genesis 2:7; Jeremiah 17:9; 2 Corinthians 5:19, 20.
- » It is important that we realize we belong to God. We were created in His image, and He loves us more than we can realize. When our first parents sinned, the propensity [tendency, inclination] to sin became a part of us. However, God did not leave us in sin. He sent His Son to save us. When we accept Him, we are covered in Christ's righteousness [perfection]. When Jesus comes, God's image will once again be fully seen in us.
- » When you look in the mirror, whom do you see?

- » What can you do today to reflect God's image in your life?

- » Can you match the concepts below to the correct verse?

Genesis 1:26, 27
Psalm 8:4-8
Romans 5:12-17
Acts 17:24-28
Psalm 51:10

We are sons and daughters of God

God's grace is a gift that gives us eternal life

We are made in God's image

God crowned humanity with glory and honor
and made him a little lower than the angels

A prayer for God to make us clean
and committed to living for God

Tuesday REFLECTING

- » Read Ephesians 1:4-14.
- » Have you ever tried to join a conversation but not been able to get a word in? It's frustrating to have something to say and not be able to say it because everyone is talking. Imagine how God feels watching His children wander around wondering who they are and whom they belong to.
- » First of all, it's not easy to listen to what God thinks about you when the world is screaming at you. Also, if your identity is based on what you can do, how you look, or who likes you, then you have more than enough to keep yourself extremely busy.
- » Think about a world where you are valued simply because you are alive. What would it be like if we lived in a world where everyone focused on our potential instead of amplifying our mistakes? Can you imagine how loneliness and hatred and despair would just fade away? It's a world where we are valuable simply because the King died for us and claims us; not only claims us, but makes us children; not just children, heirs!
- » Back to the real world. Maybe our real world is in desperate need of a change in the way we think about ourselves. It seems as if we have an identity crisis on our hands. And our

making it through the crisis is based on the choice of to whom we listen. Don't you think it is time we gave God a chance to tell us who we are to Him?

Wednesday BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Consider your identity, from God's point of view.
- » Read Psalm 139:13-18 (NIV) and answer the following questions.

1. What phrase in Psalm 139:13-18 shows you what God thinks about you?

2. Is there something in this text that tells you God is always with you?

- » What about our relationship, rights, and responsibilities? Read Paul's letter to the Ephesians 1:4-14, NIV, and answer the following questions.

1. According to this passage, what is our relationship to God?

2. Because of our relationship to God, what rights do we have?

3. What are our responsibilities?

Thursday CONNECTING

- » Read Luke 12:7.
- » Review the memory text.
- » Try to stump God! Ask Him a question about you that He doesn't know. Give it a try. He knows things you don't even know: how many hairs are on your head, what you are most afraid of, what you wish your friends liked about you, what you want your parents to be able to say about you, and so on. And what God thinks about you has everything to do with "who you are."
- » For professional ball players to become famous, they have to become the best at playing ball. For musicians to get noticed, they practice and practice and hope for someone to notice them. Sometimes they get it; most of the time they don't; but ultimately "who they are" is defined by what they can do.
- » Not so with God. Who you are is defined by what Jesus did. You have a legal and undisputed relationship to the King of the universe through His Son. You have rights as His child to live joyfully without fear, worry, or anxiety about anything, even death. You have the right to call upon God anytime for anything in Jesus' name.
- » You also have a responsibility to expand the family name beyond yourself. You have the responsibility to wear your family name proudly in the open. Think of it as a citizenship oath. Raise your hand and pledge allegiance to God.

Friday APPLYING

- » Read 1 Peter 2:9.
- » If you think about the stories of your life, can you come up with a few incidents that have made the most impact on you for better or for worse (spiritually or emotionally)? Think of five to 10. Fill in a very short description of that event in one of the body parts in the person on the right. In the boxes that surround the figure place Bible passages from this lesson that you feel define you. Write a paraphrase of the verses, starting with the words "God says I am . . ."

