

Human Identity Revealed and Fulfilled by God

Key text: Colossians 3:1-11

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old humanity with its practices and have put on the new humanity, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

1. Jesus Christ, Creator and Redeemer
2. Our Lives Hidden with Christ in God
3. The Reconciliation of All Things to God
4. Jesus’s Identity and Human Identity

Questions for Discussion:

1. Share your own understanding of your identity—who or what makes you who you are?
2. What are the various sources of experience that inform your personal identity?
3. Which aspects of your personal history and experience have a greater influence on your self-understanding than others (family, work, hobbies, church)?
4. How does knowing Jesus Christ reshape your personal identity?

Holiness, Faith, and God’s Work

Key Text: Hebrews 10:19-25

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

1. Drawing Near to God with Confidence
2. Forgiveness of Sins and Jesus’s Work as High Priest
3. The Holy Spirit’s Sanctifying Work in Our Hearts and Minds
4. Being Conformed to God’s Presence

Questions for Discussion:

1. Describe your understanding of how God is making you holy. Is this primarily a moral concept?
2. Does it affect the way you think about prayer and Bible reading?
3. How about work and community involvement?
4. Why is it a challenge to draw near to God without wavering?
5. Holiness is related to integrity. Does God’s holiness tend to make you feel fear? Or joy?

Made for Union with God and God’s People

Key Text: Genesis 1:26-28

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

1. Made to Know and Love God, One Another, and the World
2. Sin’s Affects on Knowing and Loving
3. Love for the Body of Christ
4. The Mind of Christ

Questions for Discussion:

1. Knowing and loving God might seem abstract—what does knowing and loving God look like in someone’s life?
2. How do we cultivate a growing knowledge and love of God?
3. How do we cultivate growing knowledge and love of others in our lives (family members, fellow church members, colleagues)?
4. What are some of the goals in life that tempt us to orient our lives around those other goals rather than around God’s goals for us?
5. How do we demonstrate Christian love in tangible ways?

Called as Ambassadors and Witnesses for Christ

Key Text: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1. Human Identity, Reflection of God’s Character, and Christian Witness
2. Serving as Ambassadors of Jesus’s Kingdom in Our Local Communities
3. Serving as Ambassadors of Jesus’s Kingdom Through Global Missions
4. The Joy of Bearing Witness for Christ

Questions for discussion:

1. Sustaining faithful witness for Christ is difficult. Why is it difficult?
2. What are the challenges we face in our local communities that keep us from being ambassadors for Christ?
3. How does thinking about our work theologically help us to see our workplaces as places of ministry?
4. How can we participate in our local communities in ways that point people to Christ’s kingdom?
5. How can we participate in global missions even if we do not have opportunities to travel around the world as missionaries?