

Living FROM THE CROSS

LESSON NOTES

John 1:21, 22—"Who are you? What do you have to say about yourself?"

These are fundamentally important questions for us all, because how you identify has a direct effect on how you conduct yourself in the world. What you say about yourself reveals what you think about yourself, and what you think about yourself will be expressed by how you behave.

Pr. 23:7—"As a man believes in his heart, so is he."

Q. Who are you? What do you have to say about yourself?

1. CORE IDENTITY

What is your core identity? Identity is who you are in the world, and your identity establishes your place in the world, your place in society and your place in relationship to God and others. Identity is what we commonly use to determine a person's significance and worth.

There are different types of identities. Functional identities define what we do. Positional identities define our level of authority or power. Ethnic identities define our racial heritage. Performance identities define our talents.

a. Many Types of Identifiers:

- Gender—"I am a man/woman."
- Religious—"I am a Christian/Hindu/Muslim."
- Ethnicity—"I am European/Asian/African"
- Profession—"I am a Pastor/Doctor."
- Social—"I am blue collar/white collar/middle class."
- Family—"I am a Harbridge/Smith/Jones."
- Nationality—"I am a Canadian/American/German."
- Race—"I am white/black/yellow."
- Generational—"I am a Baby Boomer, Gen X, Y, Z/Senior."

Comment on this statement: "Behavior and identity change, are often linked, such that changing one's identity changes one's behaviors and vice versa." ~ Psychology Today

- People tend to rise to the level of their core identity. (Examples?)

2. CORE NATURE

- None of the above identifiers define one's core nature—Lower self/body and soul. They define what you do, what you have, where you're from, what class or tribe of people you belong to, but not "who you are".
- **Nature is** "the inherent essence of a person or thing." Who or what you are in your DNA.

Q. What is the human nature when you strip away all these external identifiers?

Q. What is our core identity in Adam?

a. You are not what you do, you do what you are.

- You are not what you have? You are not what others say you are? No one—not even you— has the power to change your core nature or the right to determine your personal worth.
- E.g., An Apple tree—"I am shade from the sun, or I am a resting place for the birds, or I am a tree in the orchard, or just I am apple." Apples produce according to their core nature.

Q. But, what if you could change Apple's core nature to orange? What two things would immediately change as a result?

- A. _____ and _____.

b. Regeneration effectively and immediately changes one's identity and core nature.

- 2 Cor 5:16, 17—"So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new creation. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"

- New Identity & New Nature
 - Compare: The Message translation.

“Our firm decision is to work from this focused center: One man died for everyone. That puts everyone in the same boat. He included everyone in his death so that everyone could also be included in his life, a resurrection life, a far better life than people ever lived on their own.

Q. When do we receive this “resurrection life”?

Because of this decision we don't evaluate people by what they have or how they look. We looked at the Messiah that way once and got it all wrong, as you know. We certainly don't look at him that way anymore. Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life emerges! Look at it! All this comes from the God who settled the relationship between us and him, and then called us to settle our relationships with each other. God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins... How you ask? In Christ. God put the wrong on him who never did anything wrong, so we could be put right with God.

- **Metamorphosis:** The “caterpillar” no longer identifies as such. Its new identity becomes “butterfly”. Metamorphosis is a process of complete transformation of identity, nature, behaviour and subsequent worth.
- Read: Col 2:11—15—NLT
- Read: Col 3:9, 10—“Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old evil nature and all its wicked deeds. In its place you have clothed yourselves with a brand-new nature that is continually being renewed as you learn more and more about Christ, who created this new nature within you.”

Q. But what if you don't believe this and continue to identify as “sinner” and live from your sin nature?

3. DISCOVERING SONSHIP

- • “For **you are all sons** of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For **all of you** who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for **you are all one** in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, **heirs** according to promise...” ~ **Gal.3:26-29** (NASB)

a. Biblical and Cultural Context

- Two Greek words used in the New Testament to describe our new relationship to God.
- teknon translated "child"—anyone living in full dependence on their Father and its used irrespective of gender. E.g. John 1:12,13 ; 1 John 3:1
- huios (hwee-os') translated "son,"—used to distinguish a male child from a female child.
- In middle eastern culture "huios/son" carries a higher identity and worth than does teknon/child.
- To be the "child" of a man was one level of honor, but to be the "son" of that man carried a higher identity. And to be the "first born huios/son" carried the highest identity and worth.
- "Huios" describes the distinct identity and significance which a son has in the household, and the privileges resulting from that identity, which included the legal right to the Father's inheritance (See ch.4:7)

b. Kingdom "Sonship" is not gender specific....you are ALL sons...

- Vs.26, 27—you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus...there is neither male nor female...
- The "new creation"—spirit, higher self—has no gender identity.
- In eternity there will be no ethnic, social, positional, functional, or even gender differences—only one identity "sons of God".
- Cf. Matt 22:30—"At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.

c. Sonship restores the Kingdom Culture of Equality.

- Vs.28—"for you are **all one** (same, equal in worth & significance) in Christ Jesus
- The Message - "In Christ's family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ. Also since you are Christ's family, then you are Abraham's famous "descendant," heirs according to the covenant promises."

d. Sonship is the invitation of the gospel.

- The gospel of Christ and the early church was an invitation to become "sons of God". John 1:12,13
- Not servants of God...not members of the church...not even "Christians" (Acts 11:26).

- John Calvin—"The Son of God became the Son of Man, that the sons of men might become the sons of God."
- Vine's Dictionary of New Testament words: **Huios**—"is the identity and significance where into men AND women are brought by the Holy Spirit when they are born again."

e. Sonship is Your New & Highest Identity.

- **1 Jn 3:1-3**—"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that **we should be called children of God!** And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, **now we are children of God**, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, [a] we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure."
- We start at sonship and go down—not up—from there.
- This new identity is a gift of God; therefore it can never be taken away by people. If people can't take away your identity, neither can they take away your significance.
- Consequently, your personal worth cannot be increased or diminished from what it is today, by ethnic, social, gender or functional differences.

CASE STUDY: The Story of the Two Sons—Luke 15:11-32 **CLOSE:** Galatians 4:6,7

"**Because you are sons**, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore, you are no longer a slave, but a son; and **if a son, then an heir** through God."

CONFESSION OF TRUTH:

Possessions, positions, and the acceptance of others, though they would please me, do not define me. My identity rests on this one unchangeable fact...I am my Father's son!