

CHAPTER 2

OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

ASSIGNMENTS:

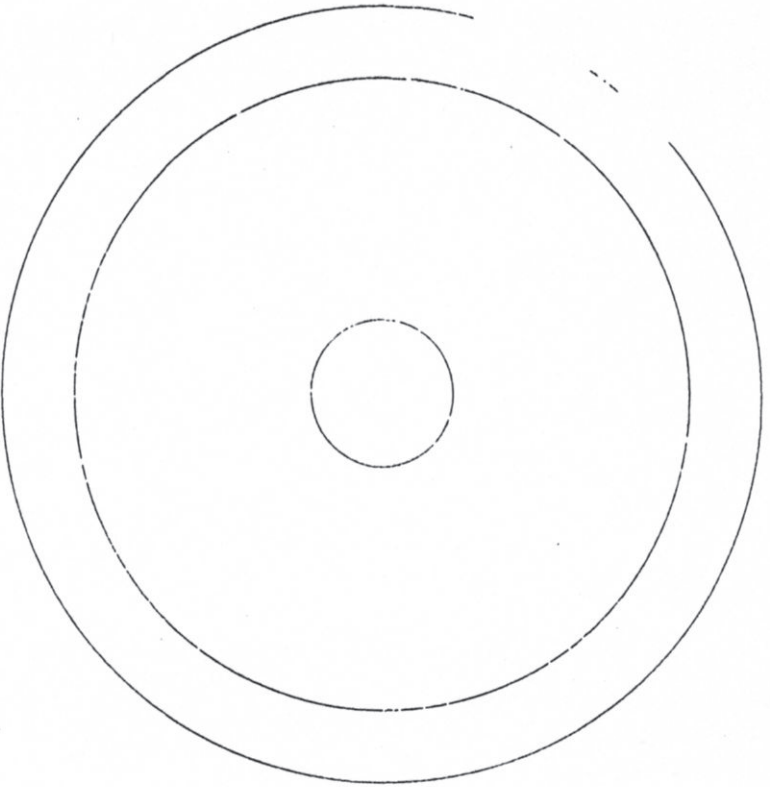
1. Scripture Reading - Ephesians 1-6
Read one chapter each day.
2. Prayer - Use the prayer list page to record your requests and answers.
3. Memorize - Ephesians 1:3
Additional verse - 2 Corinthians 5:17
4. Study and complete the material in the chapter.
5. Outline the pastor's Sunday sermon.

Outline your daily progress below:

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat

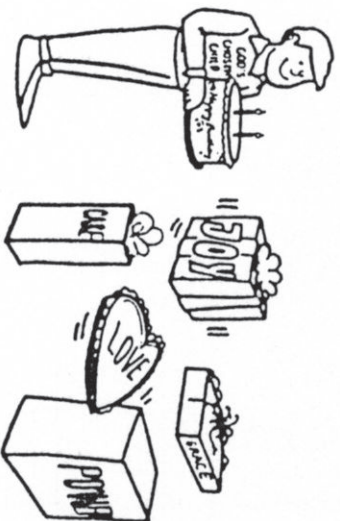
CHAPTER 2

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What is a Christian? "One whose sins have been forgiven," might be a common definition. But Christ did not die on the cross just so our sins could be forgiven. God had much more in store for us. Ephesians 1:5 expresses this, "In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will." God planned that in Christ we would experience the honored position of sonship with all the special privileges

and blessings that accompany being a part of God's family. This may be illustrated by comparing the celebration of our physical birth to our spiritual birth.



Ephesians 2:4-6 states, "But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions ... it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus."

What does it mean to be "in Christ"? This is our position as a child of God. Too often Christians don't realize what it means to be "in Christ" and therefore they don't experience the family heritage. Based on these scriptures, what are some of our riches in Christ?

1 Corinthians 1:30

2 Corinthians 5:17

Identity In Christ

Philippians 3:7-11

Colossians 2:9-10

1 John 5:20

God has these riches and many more awaiting us when we become part of His family. However, we may not realize how much God has to offer us. Therefore we miss out on appropriating and enjoying His riches for us.

The experience of evangelist Peter Dyneka's journey across the Atlantic illustrates this Biblical principle of our riches in Christ. The trip by boat from Russia was to take 14 days. Peter's mother had packed enough black bread and garlic for the whole voyage. Every day at mealtime Peter would look longingly at the wealthy people who were able to eat in the ship's dining room in luxury. Some of the sailors noticed this and offered Peter the meals in exchange for helping them with their chores. He accepted and worked dutifully for the rest of the trip only to discover on the last day that the three daily meals in the ship's dining room were included in the price of the ticket.

Likewise, many of us on our heavenward journey look forward to our destination. However, we may be miserable on this journey because we don't understand the privileges that are included as heirs.

God is generous, "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all - how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32). He

Identity In Christ

loves to give, and He wants us to receive and experience all He has for us. What are some of the blessings and privileges of being in Christ? We will look at only three of these blessings:

1. We are Part of an Eternal Plan: CHOSEN

As believers in Jesus, we are special. We have been chosen by God Almighty to be His very own. We are not an afterthought or a burden. God chose us before the sun shone and before the earth began to turn.

Read Ephesians 1:4 and state what we are chosen for:

The word *holy* means to be set apart for God's exclusive use in order to become all that God has created us to be. To be holy suggests wholeness. Physically we are whole when our body functions as it was meant to; spiritually we are whole when we are in right fellowship with God.

God also chose us to be blameless. *Blameless* means to be *free from blemish*. God chose us to reflect His purity as we live a life that is morally and spiritually free from sinful blemishes.

2. We Are Declared Righteous: JUSTIFIED

Justification means that God declares us righteous, even though we still remain imperfect, unworthy, and sinful.

Identity In Christ

Read Romans 4:2-5. Based on this scripture, are we righteous because of what we do, or who we believe in?

Because of our position as children of God, we have Christ's righteousness - God sees us as perfect - we are justified, "*just-as-if-I'd never sinned.*" All of Christ's moral perfections are credited to our account. We are now accepted in Christ and can enter heaven based on His record not ours. We can have not only heaven in the future but blessings in the present (Romans 8:32). God wants to bless us.

3. We Live in the Presence of God: ACCESS

In secular Greek, the word *access* referred to the introduction of a speaker into the presence of the assembly or of bringing a person to a king.

Read Ephesians 2:18 and 3:12. What do they say about our access to God?

Access means we are already in God's presence. This access is possible because Christ removed the sin barrier between God and mankind when He died for our sins. At the moment that Christ died on the cross, a sovereign miracle happened to symbolize this truth: the veil of the temple in Jerusalem that separated the Holy of Holies (the place where God's

Identity In Christ

Spirit dwelt) from the Holy Place (the place where the priests were allowed to enter) was torn in two from top to bottom (Mark 15:37-38). Then Christ ascended into heaven where He now intercedes for us. Because of this we are in the majestic presence of the Most High at all times. God will never be any closer to us than He is now. His presence is not determined by our feelings, but by His actions (Hebrews 10:19-22).

In his book, You're Richer Than You Think, Erwin Lutzer writes, "Many people believe that the Christian life is a self-improvement program. We are challenged to be active, dedicated, and committed. Otherwise, we are made to feel guilty, worthless, and like second-class citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Some pastors exhort Christians to upgrade their spiritual lives by wrongly appealing to their will-power and their obligation to serve God.

This does not bring lasting results. Sometimes we can temporarily change by our own efforts. Indeed, we can choose to become involved, be more consistent in church attendance, and even break sinful habits by sheer determination. But something is missing. We can do all these things and remain completely unchanged on the inside.

Once we see ourselves as God sees us, we can stop living the Christian life by sheer will power. Let me put it this way: when we accept Christ as Saviour, God immediately gives us special recognition, status, authority, power, and a host of other privileges. If we are ignorant of these, we will dutifully plod through life quite certain that Christianity isn't all that it is supposed to be. We will be powerless to achieve spiritual victory when sin rears its ugly head, and there will be no love, joy, and peace through the hardships of life."

Identity In Christ

But if we know that we are adopted and heirs of God, accepted and loved by Him, we will be able to truly enjoy the riches we have in Christ both now and in the age to come (Ephesians 1:17-21).

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to be chosen in Christ?

2. What does it mean to be justified?

3. What does it mean to have access to God?

4. Define the word heir.

Identity In Christ

Read Romans 8:15-17. What does it mean to be an heir of God?

5. As a result of knowing your position "in Christ," how has or how should that affect your day-to-day walk with Christ?

6. Ephesians 1:3-14 describes some of the privileges and blessings of being in Christ. From this passage, list the privileges and blessings of being "in Christ" that mean the most to you:
