

Who Am I?

March 26, 2006
Captain Chuck Fowler
Discipleship Series

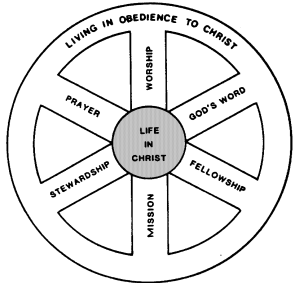
INTRODUCTION

In April 2006 the Department of Justice reported that in 2004 3.6 million people were victims of some type of identity theft. That number represents about 3% of the US population. Half of those victims were victimized with stolen credit accounts, 25% had other accounts compromised (i.e. bank accounts), 15% had their personal information misused and 12% had multiple types of theft at the same time.

What I want to talk about today goes deeper than the types of identity theft spoken about in that report. In those kinds of thefts, we are talking about someone who pretends to be you so they can get some kind of financial reward. The truth is that they can never be you, they really are pretenders or counterfeits of the real you.

It is often said that adolescence is the most difficult time of life. This is said because it is the time of life when you struggle the most to discover who you are and what your place will be in the world. Ask yourself the question, "Who am I?" I would guess that the older you are, the easier that question is to answer. With age comes confidence. There is less to prove. There is more wisdom.

Today we are continuing our series on discipleship. We are looking at the Christian life with the perspective of an old time wagon wheel. Each spoke represents a specific discipline of the Christian's life that needs to be in balance for the wheel to keep turning properly. Last week we started with the hub of the wheel. Every wheel starts at the hub. The hub connects the wheel to the object it is supposed to move. The hub of our wheel represents our life in Christ. In looking at this topic, last week we talked about assurance of salvation. In other words, how can we know that we are saved. Do you remember? We talked about the fact that we cannot rely on our feelings and that in the dry times of life we need to continually turn to God's word that does not change and that can be relied upon.



Today we are going to continue in the hub and look at our identity as Christians. In other words, "Who am I as a Christian?" or even more simply, "What is a Christian?"

IT IS MORE THAN ONE WHO'S SINS HAVE BEEN FORGIVEN. To have your sins forgiven is the requirement to become a Christian. This step requires you to acknowledge your separation from God because of the life of sin you have been living. It requires you to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, who paid the penalty for your sinful life when He died on the cross. We're told that forgiveness of sin only comes through sacrifice. However, until Jesus there was never a perfect sacrifice. All sacrifices were blemished so they had to be repeated. Jesus was without blemish. He was perfect. Contrary to Dan Brown's book, Jesus never committed sin of any kind. He therefore became the perfect sacrifice.

At the beginning of his ministry, Paul said to a group of believers,
"Therefore, my brothers, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38-39)

So, while important and vital to our becoming Christians, to say a Christian who is one whose sins are forgiven is only a partial answer. There's more to it than that.

THE QUESTION MAY BE BETTER ANSWERED NOT BY WHO WE ARE, BUT BY WHOSE WE ARE? I remember that the first time I heard this I was confused by it. "Who am I?" or "Whose am I?" The changes in letters are very minor, but the changes in meaning are dramatic. The bottom line is that who we are as Christians has everything to do with who we belong to.

The Gospel of John puts it this way,
"He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—
13children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God." (John 1:11-13)

Having received forgiveness for the sinful life we had been living, we become God's children. Not just any child; His adopted child. Adopted children are special for a very important reason: they are chosen. All of creation chose to turn its back on God. It started with Adam and Eve and continues to this day. The amazing and wonderful truth is that God continues to choose us. Even before we return to Him, He chooses us and calls us into His family again.

WITH THIS RELATIONSHIP COME SPECIAL PRIVILEGES. In my family there are privileges you get only if you are my child. Allowance is one thing. You have to be one of my kids to get an allowance from me. Expensive gifts are another. My money is tight, so if I'm going to give an expensive gift it's going to be for someone in my family. When I die my kids will inherit my stuff.

What are the privileges we have as God's children?

It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 1 Cor. 1:30

As God's children we are righteous, holy and redeemed. Righteous is simply a church language word for rightness or being right with God. It means our relationship is restored. Holiness is simply to be pure. It means there is no more blame to be put on us and there is no more guilt. Its not that we never sin, but we're in the family now so our sin doesn't separate us from God. It also doesn't mean we can just go on sinning. That would eventually harm the relationship. What are we redeemed from? That's an easy answer. We're redeemed from paying the penalty for our sins.

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ. (Philippians 3:7-8)

For Paul, just the opportunity of knowing Christ as privilege enough. Paul had every advantage the world had to offer. He had education, wealth and power, yet he gave it all up for the opportunity to know Christ.

For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, 10and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. (Colossians 2:9-10)

The word fullness is the key word here. Doctrinally Paul's words in v. 9 support our theology that Jesus was both God and man. Jesus was filled with the attributes of God in their entirety. Our privilege as God's children is in v. 10. Not only does all the fullness of deity live in Christ, but believers are given fullness through their union with Christ. This is the epitomy of the now famous line from Jerry Maquire, "You complete me." Without Christ we are not all we were created to be, but with Him we are complete. This means that there is nothing lacking in our relationship with God. We don't need to turn anywhere else.

CONCLUSION

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." (author of [You're Richer Than You Think](#))

When we see Christianity in that light, we are prone to live by a list of rules. The problem with living that way is that we will regularly fail. To try to live by the rules is an impossible task. It is a burden that none of us wants to bear. It's the

reason Jesus came. He enabled us to be adopted into God's family instead of having to earn our way in.

That is the beauty of God's love for us. He looks down with eyes of love and compassion. The moment we accept His gift of grace we are entitled to all the privileges of a son or daughter. There is peace, joy and love. There is immediate acceptance.

How about you this morning? Who are you? Have you taken hold of the privileges that are yours as God's child?