

Bible Study on Identity in Christ

4 lessons with questions

Who are you? This Bible study on identity in Christ answers from four passages about what is true of every believer: a new creation reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5), a son and heir who calls God Father (Galatians 4), part of a chosen people and royal priesthood (1 Peter 2), and someone raised with Christ who puts on the new self (Colossians 3).

It is especially helpful for students, new believers and anyone who measures themselves by looks, success, the past or other people's opinions. Each lesson prints the passage from the Berean Standard Bible, then the big idea, notes for the leader, questions to observe, understand and apply, a memory verse and a prayer.

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come!

— 2 Corinthians 5:17 (BSB)

LESSON 1 OF 4

A new creation

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

The big idea: Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation, reconciled to God, made righteous in Him, and sent out as His ambassador.

Read

¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that One died for all, therefore all died. ¹⁵ And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again. ¹⁶ So from now on

we regard no one according to the flesh. Although we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's trespasses against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.

– 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 (BSB)

Notes

Paul says Christ died “that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them.” That changes how we see everyone, including ourselves: “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come!”

This new identity is God's work from start to finish: “All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ.” Verse 21 explains how: God made Christ, who knew no sin, “to be sin on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” A new creation also has a new job: ambassadors carrying the message of reconciliation.

Questions

OBSERVE What does the passage say?

1. Why did Christ die, according to verse 15?
2. What is true of anyone who is in Christ (v. 17)?
3. What did God make Christ, and what do we become in Him (v. 21)?

UNDERSTAND What does it mean?

1. What does it mean that the old has passed away? What does not pass away immediately?
2. Why is it important that all this is from God (v. 18)?
3. What does an ambassador do, and how does that describe a Christian?

APPLY What will I do with it?

1. What 'old' label do you still carry that God says has passed away?
2. How would seeing yourself as righteous in Christ change how you face guilt?
3. Who could you be an ambassador to this week?

Memory verse

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away. Behold, the new has come!

— 2 Corinthians 5:17 (BSB)

Pray

God, thank You that in Christ I am a new creation. The old has passed away. Thank You that Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin for me so that I might become Your righteousness in Him. Help me live for Him, and make me His ambassador. Amen.

LESSON 2 OF 4

Sons and heirs

Read Galatians 4:1-7

The big idea: God sent His Son to redeem us and His Spirit to make us cry 'Abba, Father': we are no

longer slaves but sons and heirs.

Read

¹ What I am saying is that as long as the heir is a child, he is no different from a slave, although he is the owner of everything. ² He is subject to guardians and trustees until the date set by his father. ³ So also, when we were children, we were enslaved under the basic principles of the world. ⁴ But when the time had fully come, God sent His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those under the law, that we might receive our adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, you are also an heir through God.

– Galatians 4:1-7 (BSB)

Notes

Paul compares life before Christ to a child heir who is no better off than a slave until the time his father sets. Then “when the time had fully come, God sent His Son” to redeem us, “that we might receive our adoption as sons.” In Paul’s day sons received the inheritance, and in Christ every believer, man or woman, receives the full rights of an heir (see Galatians 3:26-28).

God did not only adopt us on paper. He “sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’” Abba is the Aramaic word for father, and Jesus Himself prayed it in Gethsemane (Mark 14:36). The conclusion is personal: “you are no longer a slave, but a son.”

Questions

OBSERVE What does the passage say?

1. How was the heir in verses 1–2 like a slave?
2. What two things did God send (vv. 4, 6)?
3. What does the Spirit cry out in our hearts (v. 6)?

UNDERSTAND What does it mean?

1. What is the difference between living as a slave and living as a son?
2. Why does Paul say ‘when the time had fully come’?
3. What does it mean to be an heir ‘through God’ (v. 7)?

APPLY What will I do with it?

1. Where do you relate to God like a slave, afraid or trying to earn your place?
2. Pray this week to God as ‘Father’, and notice what changes.
3. What would it look like to live this week as an heir, not an orphan?

Memory verse

So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, you are also an heir through God.

– Galatians 4:7 (BSB)

Pray

Abba, Father, thank You for sending Your Son to redeem me and Your Spirit to live in my heart. I am no longer a slave but Your child and heir. When I fall back into fear or trying to earn Your love, remind me whose I am. Amen.

LESSON 3 OF 4

A chosen people

Read 1 Peter 2:4-10

The big idea: Believers are living stones built on Christ, a royal priesthood and God’s own people, called out of darkness to proclaim His virtues.

Read

⁴ As you come to Him, the living stone, rejected by men but chosen and precious in God's sight, ⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

⁶ For it stands in Scripture: "See, I lay in Zion a stone, a chosen and precious cornerstone; and the one who believes in Him will never be put to shame." ⁷ To you who believe, then, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone," ⁸ and, "A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." They stumble because they disobey the word—and to this they were appointed. ⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. ¹⁰ 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.

– 1 Peter 2:4-10 (BSB)

Notes

Peter wrote to believers who were treated as outsiders. He tells them they belong to something solid: Christ is "the living stone, rejected by men but chosen and precious in God's sight," and they are living stones being built into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood.

Then he gives them a new list of names: "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." The names come with a purpose: "to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." Identity in Christ is never only private; we belong to His people and to His mission.

Questions

OBSERVE What does the passage say?

1. How is Jesus described in verse 4?
2. What are believers being built into (v. 5)?
3. List the four names Peter gives believers in verse 9, and the reason he gives.

UNDERSTAND What does it mean?

1. Why might it encourage outsiders to hear that Jesus was ‘rejected by men but chosen’?
2. What does a ‘royal priesthood’ do?
3. What changed for these believers, according to verse 10?

APPLY What will I do with it?

1. Where do you feel like an outsider? How do these names speak to that?
2. How are you part of a ‘spiritual house’, a local church, this month?
3. Which of God’s ‘virtues’ could you tell someone about this week?

Memory verse

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

– 1 Peter 2:9 (BSB)

Pray

Lord Jesus, You are the living stone, rejected by men but chosen and precious. Thank You that I belong to Your people, a chosen people and a royal priesthood. You called me out of darkness into Your marvelous light; help me proclaim what You have done. Amen.

LESSON 4 OF 4

The new self

Read Colossians 3:1-11

The big idea: Raised with Christ and hidden in Him, believers set their minds above, put off the old

self and put on the new.

Read

¹ Therefore, since you have been raised with Christ, strive for the things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. ³ For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. ⁵ Put to death, therefore, the components of your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience. ⁷ When you lived among them, you also used to walk in these ways. ⁸ But now you must put aside all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, since you have taken off the old self with its practices, ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. ¹¹ Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, or free, but Christ is all and is in all.

– Colossians 3:1-11 (BSB)

Notes

Paul starts with what is already true: “you have been raised with Christ” and “your life is now hidden with Christ in God.” That is the foundation for everything he asks next. Because of who we are, he can say, “Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.”

Then comes the hard work: put to death sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed; put aside anger, rage, malice, slander, filthy language and lies. We do this not to become new people but because we already have “put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.” And in this new humanity, Christ is all and is in all.

Questions

OBSERVE What does the passage say?

1. What has already happened to believers, according to verses 1 and 3?
2. What are we told to put to death, and what to put aside (vv. 5, 8–9)?
3. What is the new self being renewed into (v. 10)?

UNDERSTAND What does it mean?

1. Why does Paul describe who we are before he tells us what to do?
2. What does it mean that your life is ‘hidden with Christ in God’?
3. Why does verse 11 say there is no Greek or Jew, slave or free, in the new self?

APPLY What will I do with it?

1. Which item in verses 5 or 8 is hardest for you to put off? Ask God for help, and tell a friend.
2. What would setting your mind on things above look like tomorrow morning?
3. Is there someone you look down on whom Christ is ‘in all’ for? Pray for them.

Memory verse

For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

– Colossians 3:3 (BSB)

Pray

Lord Jesus, thank You that I have been raised with You and my life is hidden with You in God. Help me set my mind on things above, put to death what belongs to the old self, and grow in the new self, renewed in Your image. Amen.

Tips for leading this study

Start with the labels. Ask the group what labels the world puts on people: success, looks, failure, the past. Then let the passages speak.

Notice the order. In every passage, who we are in Christ comes before what we do. Point it out each week.

Encourage the young. Teens and students often need this study most. Consider giving each person a card with the four memory verses.

Pray identity over each other. End lesson 4 by reading 1 Peter 2:9 over the group.

More Bible studies

Bible Study on Grace · 4 lessons

Bible Study on the Holy Spirit · 4 lessons

Bible Study on Love · 4 lessons

Bible Study on Forgiveness · 4 lessons

Bible memory verses for teens

Bible reading plan for teens

Bible reading plan for new believers

Psalm 139:14, a prayer

All Bible studies

Questions