



## Who Are You? Finding Your Identity in Christ

Grace BFC – “This We Believe” class – May 1, 2011  
Mark Bickel

### Intro: 3-Week Series

#### Who Are You? Where Do You Fit?

Who Are You? Finding Your Identity in Christ • May 1

What Are Your Passions and Gifts? Discovering Your Unique SHAPE • May 8

Where Do You Fit? Identifying Your Calling and Place in the Body • May 15

~ all teaching notes and handouts online: [aracebfc.org/archives/bickel.asp](http://aracebfc.org/archives/bickel.asp) ~

### Devotional: Who is God? the Creator (15 minute) (each week devotion first, that fits with main topic)

- **Video:** “He (is)” (by Erwin Brothers Motion Pictures downloaded from SermonSpice.com)

#### - **God Is: Creator**

- **Genesis 1:** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
- photos of Universe
- photos of creation
- photos of micro-organisms

#### - **God is:**

- All Powerful
- All Knowing
- Everywhere
- Holy

...

#### - **Psalm 148**

1 Praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD from the heavens, praise him in the heights above.

2 Praise him, all his angels, praise him, all his heavenly hosts.

3 Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars.

4 Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies.

5 Let them praise the name of the LORD, for he commanded and they were created.

6 He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away.

7 Praise the LORD from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths,

8 lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding,

9 you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars,

10 wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds,

11 kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth,

12 young men and maidens, old men and children.

13 Let them praise the name of the LORD, for his name alone is exalted;  
his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.

14 He has raised up for his people a horn, the praise of all his saints,  
of Israel, the people close to his heart. Praise the LORD.

## Who Am I? a unique creation of God (45 minute main talk)

### Intro: Who Are You?

- **Who Are You?** ~see handout, 3 boxes at the bottom of side one (the side with the Logo)~
  - Who would people say you are? Who do you tell them you are?  
Me: Christian, Pastor, Crossroads ... Photography, SciFi, Strategy Games ... Single ... short, overweight ... uncle ☺  
You: Who are you publicly (*fill in box 1*)
  - Who are you on the inside? What is your personality, emotional state, etc?  
Me: ISTJ, Hi D lo I, ... dislike/midline tests ... optimist, people pleaser, lonely ...  
You: Who are you privately (*fill in box 2*)
  - Why are you who you are? What / who has influenced the development of who you are?  
Me: Son of Barry Bickel, suburbs, Parkland high, Drexel, IV, LWC, Brotherhood, DM  
You: Why are you who you are {both positive & negative – parents, friends, illness, abuse, divorce, death ...} (*fill in box 1*)
- **Video: “Who Are You”** (by Jonathan Drake, downloaded from SermonSpice.com)
- While everything we just wrote down is important, and we will come back to many of them over the next few weeks – there is a much more important perspective on who we are than where we came from, what others think about us, or even what we think about ourselves – We need to ask who God says we are!

### 1a) You Are: Created By God

- Recently some of us went **camping** – it was a gorgeous weekend – bright full moon, great temperatures – we walked for several hours soaking in the beauty of God’s creation – his trees and skies and streams ... and we sat around eating food and watching the fire
- a few minutes ago we looked at photos of just a tiny piece of the vast universe God created
- But if you want to see God’s most wonderful, amazing creation – the one thing he called “very good” – look at **the person sitting next to you!**
- The pinnacle of creation is not the stars or universe or forests or plants or animals ... it was on day 6 when he created mankind ... **male and female he created them, and gave them rule over all he had made! (Genesis 1:26-27)**
- And he did not just create mankind in general, but **psalm 139** says:  
**13 For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.**  
**14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful, I know that full well. (psalm 139: 13-14)**
- **Who are you?** You are a unique creation of God, custom created by Him in your mother’s womb!

## 1b) You Are: Created By God ... In His Image

- **Genesis 1** says more about us – it says:

**26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."**

**27 So God created man in his own image,  
in the image of God he created him;  
male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)**

- What does this mean? We find out in chapter 2 that God breathes his very **breath in us**, that our very life itself comes from God – and that it is unique because we reflect the image of God himself in a way no other part of creation can
- Go back through the list of **attributes of God**, but now apply them to us – not as if we are God, but as one that images Him –
  - He is creator – we are creative
  - He is all powerful – we too are powerful, given rule over creation
  - He is all knowing – we too can know, and learn, and grow in wisdom
  - ....
  - I encourage you to continue meditating on this
- **Who are you?** The Image of God Himself!

## 1c) You Are: Created By God ... In His Image ... for a Purpose

- **Genesis 1** goes on to give us a purpose:

**28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Genesis 1:28)**

- We are not just here as God's toys, but we are here to enjoy and fill the earth and to rule over the entire earth ... and we are given everything in the earth to enjoy, as the blessing of God
- And again, this is not just create mankind in general, but **psalm 139** also goes on:
  - 13** For you created my inmost being;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
  - 14** I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;  
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.
  - 15** My frame was not hidden from you  
when I was made in the secret place.  
When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,
  - 16** your eyes saw my unformed body.  
All the days ordained for me  
were written in your book  
before one of them came to be. (**psalm 139: 13-16**)
- Notice he knit YOU together in YOUR mother's womb –
  - you being born when and where you were, into the condition you were is not an accident! Go put you there. Take courage, if He put you there He has a purpose, and He will fulfill that purpose!

- Why are you here tonight? Why am I here? Part of the days God has ordained for me
  - not just fatalism – rather draw strength and purpose when Satan tried to discourage – God really does have a plan for ME, and He knows what it is and is seeing it through
- **Who are you?** Someone who God has Created ... in His Image ... With a unique purpose for life!

## 2) You Are: Sinful

- But early in Scripture tragedy strikes .. man decides to turn against the God that created Him and in **Gen 3** Adam and Eve disobey God and plunge the entire human race into sin and shame
- Here again Scripture does not just state this generically, but makes it very personal

### - Romans 3:9-18

**9**What shall we conclude then? Are we any better Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. **10**As it is written:

"There is no one righteous, not even one;

**11**there is no one who understands,  
no one who seeks God.

**12**All have turned away,  
they have together become worthless;  
there is no one who does good,  
not even one."

**13**"Their throats are open graves;  
their tongues practice deceit."

"The poison of vipers is on their lips."

**14**"Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."

**15**"Their feet are swift to shed blood;

**16**ruin and misery mark their ways,

**17**and the way of peace they do not know."

**18**"There is no fear of God before their eyes."

- You and I have rebelled against our creator ... and continuously do so ... and have no desire to stop doing so!

- Admit it – in your natural self, you do not really want to seek God and have to obey Him!

- Who are you? You're not an engineer or artist or great leader ... you are a rebel, you are one who wants to live your life your way for your pleasure and your glory! That's who you are!

- For some of us we have a tough time thinking of ourselves this way – we are full of ourselves and the universe revolves around us – we are good at what we do, and we want others to see that – God says we are not a success, we are not the center of all things, we are in fact a fraud - there is already a God on the throne of the universe and it is not you or me – wake up and smell the coffee!

- For others of us we are acutely aware of our sin. Guilt and shame plague us. We know we have not served God well, we know all the sinful things we have done, and that God could not possibly love us. We are easily discouraged and depressed. – to you the scriptures would first say 'yes, you see yourself correctly.

- Jack Miller – “cheer up, you are worse than you think” – God not there to give us a pep talk, get us out of our funk ... and he is not surprised, shocked or somehow wondering what to do next ... no he does not offer us ‘greater self esteem’ , rather he offers us a refreshingly true and sober evaluation of our sin and rebellion, and of it’s consequences

**- Romans 3:23**

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

**- Romans 6:23a**

For the wages of sin is death,

- **Who are you?** You are created by God ... But have rebelled against him!

**4a ) You Are: Redeemed ...**

- everything up to now if true of every human being on the earth ... but from here on out the Bible gives some very encouraging words on the identity change we go through in Christ!

- One of the greatest words in the New Testament is the simple word “But” – God in His great mercy chooses to give us something different than we deserve.

**- Romans 6:23**

For the wages of sin is death,

... but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**- Romans 2:21-24**

**21**But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. **22**This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, **23**for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, **24**and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

**- Ephesians 3:1-7**

**1**As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, **2**in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. **3**All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature<sup>[a]</sup> and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.

**4**But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **5**made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. **6**And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, **7**in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

- **Who are you?** One God loves so much that He did not give you what your rebellion deserved
- **Who are you?** One Christ was willing to come and die for ... die to save you while you were still in your sin and transgression, while you still hated Him!
- **Who are you?** One who the Spirit is working in to open your eyes and lead you to repentance

#### 4b ) You Are: Redeemed ... and Re-Created

But God goes on ... you are not just redeemed and forgiven of your sin and rebellion...

#### 2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

- Common NT description of us – new – **new life, new creation, in new covenant – re-creation**
- **What is new about us?**
  - **New standing with God** – no longer guilt, shame, pessimistic attitude
    - when tempted to be discouraged, see God creator and controller, and see yourself as redeemed and empowered to live a new life, and with eternity ahead!
  - **New relationship with God** – know can know and love God, be loved by God
    - you are loved, you can talk to God, God does hear you
  - **New Power** – to resist sin, to love others, to speak God’s word authoritatively
    - Spirit of God himself lives in you!
  - **New Purpose** – Love God and Others, Grow in Christ’s image, Share Christ ...
    - ~ more on this next week ~
  - **New Image** – we were created in the image of God .. now we are being transformed into the image of Christ ... being molded and shaped to look more and more like Christ himself!
    - This should shape all I am and do – where I do not look like Christ I need to change, where I do I should rejoice..
    - in the words of the Steve Green song “you’re the only Jesus some will ever see”
  - **New Hope** – Promise of eternity!
    - no matter what happens in this life, there is a much better longer life to come!

- Paul puts it this way in Romans 8 ... Take this with you to work and life tomorrow!

#### - Romans 8: 31-39

**31**What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? **32**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? **33**Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. **34**Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus,

who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.

**35**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? **36**As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." **37**No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

**38**For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, **39**neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- **Who are you?** If you are in Christ you a new creation – with a new identity!

## 5) You Are: ...

**Bible uses lots of other terms for who we are, including:**

- **I Peter 2: 9-10**

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 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.

- Loved
- Forgiven
- Redeemed
- Adopted
- Indwelt by Holy Spirit
- Temple of the Living God
- Sitting at the right hand of God
- Heir of Eternal Blessing

- **Video:** "I (Am)" (by Erwin Brothers Motion Pictures downloaded from SermonSpice.com)

- **Who are you?** Are those the terms you would use about yourself?

- Who defines you? The people around you? Your own internal perspective? Or the God who created and redeemed you?

- If we truly, deeply believed these things it would transform who we are!

## Conclusion)

## **God Says... You Are:**

A unique creation of the living God ....

Who rebelled ...

But was loved and made New ...

And Who is Being Changed ...

By the indwelling Spirit's Power...

Into Christ's Image ...

for God's Eternal Glory

**\*\* Pray \*\***

## **For Further Study:**

### **1) Know God:**

- a. Book: **"Knowing God"** by J.I. Packer
- b. Video: **"The Heart of Passion"** by Louie Giglio

### **2) Know Yourself:**

- a. Handout: **Who Are You?** - take an hour or so this week – further look at your identity in Christ ... as well as beginning to understand the unique personality, passion, gifts and call God has given you
- b. Workbook: **"Identity: Becoming What God Wants Us To Be"** NavPress Connection