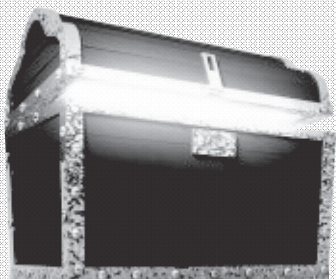


Discovering Who You Are



in Christ

by Jason Peebles

From the time you were born your SELF-IMAGE has been constantly developing. **Your self-image is the way that you think and feel about yourself in terms of your self-worth, abilities, and future potential. It's a powerful force that will either help you succeed or limit you.** The way you feel about yourself on the "inside" definitely influences how you function on the "outside."

Overcoming Your Past

If you were raised in a negative environment, then it's very likely that your self-image was programmed "low." A low self-image operates much like a thermostat. Just like a thermostat is programmed to limit the temperature to a certain level, so a low self-image will tend to hold you back and limit your potential in life. Even if a person has a positive self-image, it can be damaged and lowered if they experience tragedies or set-backs. Like a GPS, your self-image is constantly updating based on your experiences and what you believe about yourself. **But the best news about your self-image is that God has a NEW IDENTITY for you! Regardless of your past, God wants you to discover who you are IN HIM and what you can do THROUGH HIM.** Look at the apostle Paul's view regarding his potential. He said, "*I can do all*

things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil 4:13). **Wow! What a powerful statement! Paul had learned that his potential was based on GOD’S ability and not his own.**



In Christ Identity

The Bible teaches that God wants you to adopt a whole new way of thinking about your self-image and potential. What you decide to “believe” can radically change your self-image. The truth is, what you choose to believe can actually become more influential than your past. **You can choose to believe what your past “says” or you can make a firm decision to start believing what God says. Your future does not have to be dictated by your past.** IN CHRIST you have been given a whole new identity! The New Testament refers to your new identity as the NEW MAN. Ephesians 4:23,24 says, *“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the NEW MAN ...”* Your heavenly Father wants you to “put on” a new identity and self-image based on what Jesus Christ accomplished for you. **With God’s help, you can take the limits off your life! You can discover who you are IN CHRIST and start renewing your mind to it.**

Let’s pause a moment in our study and reflect back on your life with a few basic questions – *“In your view, who are you? How do you see yourself and your future potential? What are your strengths and weaknesses? What forces have shaped your self-image up to this point?”* In the beginning, your family was probably the primary force that shaped your identity. Their values, where

they lived, and their attitudes were all inescapable forces – and you had no choice in the matter! What they said became your standard of measurement. Through your family’s influence you began to think of yourself as capable, incapable, smart, dumb, accepted, rejected, worthy, unworthy, rich, poor, skinny, fat, and on and on. Even as an adult, you may still refer to yourself as the child of an alcoholic or a divorced family.

On the other hand, if you grew up in a nurturing and caring family then you were one of the blessed ones. If you grew up in a family that was nurturing AND truly knew Christ then you were doubly blessed. As we move through life, other people begin influencing our self-image. And now, as you read this Study Guide, here you are on your life’s journey -- and you have a decision to make. **You can either allow your past to define you -- or, you can start believing what God says about you. I can tell you with 100% certainty that God wants to do a miracle in your self-image regardless of whether your past experiences were good or bad.** You see, God wants to become the dominant force in your identity. If you’ve had a low self-image then you can exchange it for an IN CHRIST IDENTITY. Furthermore, even if you’ve had a positive self-image, your heavenly Father wants to “turbo-charge” your life with HIS IDENTITY and His unlimited potential. The Bible declares that God wants all believers to put on an IN CHRIST identity.

God wants you to take your eyes off “you” (and what others have said) and focus on what “He” says. IN CHRIST there are no limitations! IN CHRIST you can do all things through His power! **Thus, the starting point is for you to begin identifying with all the wonderful things that Christ did for you.** We’ll spend more time on this later, but one of the keys in this process is studying all the places in the New Testament that uses the phrase *“in Christ.”* **Wherever you see the phrase “in Christ” (or some form of it – in Him, by Him, in Whom, etc) then take note!** It’s telling you something about your new identity in Christ. For example, let’s look at a few of these *“in Christ”* verses and how they will radically change the way you think --

IN CHRIST . . .

* **You are BLESSED!** You don't have to hope for "luck" or "breaks." *Ephesians 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who HAS blessed us with all spiritual blessings."*

* **You are CHOSEN & ACCEPTED!** You don't have to let the rejection of others cripple you. *Ephesians 1:4 says, "He has chosen us in Christ" and verse 6 says, "He has made us accepted in Christ."*

* **You are FORGIVEN!** You don't have to suffer from guilt, condemnation, and anxiety. *Ephesians 1:7 says, "In whom (Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."*

* **You have WISDOM!** You don't have to "figure things out" on your own – God's wisdom is available. *Ephesians 1:8 says, "He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."*

* **You have the HOLY SPIRIT'S help!** You are never alone. God's very Spirit lives in your heart. *Ephesians 1:13 says, "In whom (Christ) also after you believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise."*

* **You have unlimited POTENTIAL!** God can accomplish more through you than you ever could on your own. *Ephesians 3:20 says, "Now unto Him (Christ) who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us."*

These are just a few of the wonderful realities that are yours in Christ! Just think how your life will change when you start renewing your mind to these wonderful truths. Your past will not matter. In Christ, you can break free. God is calling you to a lifelong journey of discovering who you are in Christ Jesus – walking with the living resurrected Savior to see what He can do in you and through you each day.



The Self-Image Thermostat

Let's examine the illustration of a thermostat a bit further. A thermostat is a control unit in a home that can be programmed to keep the temperature at a certain level. If you like your home cold, then you can program the thermostat to turn on the air conditioner. If you like your home warm, then you can program it to turn on the heater. **The point of this illustration is that a thermostat will "govern" the temperature according to the program. In a very real sense, your self-image operates much like a thermostat.** Thus, if you view yourself as a person lacking confidence, then you will probably go through life shy and awkward. If your self-image and identity are programmed to believe that you could never own a home – or worse, that you are "unworthy" to have anything nice – then you probably won't even try to own a home. Your "low" self-image will hold you back. And the list goes on and on. The way you "feel" about yourself on the inside definitely governs how you function on the outside.

Let me share a true story with you. I once knew a young boy that grew up in a difficult environment. His father battled alcohol most of his life which led to a divorce in the family. Like most children of alcoholic parents, the young boy developed a sense of unworthiness and a general lack of confidence. **No matter what he attempted to do, he always seemed to have an undefined feeling that he "just wasn't good enough."** Any counselor will tell you that these things are the typical results of living in a dysfunctional

environment. When you live around too many senseless arguments, punishments, and alcoholic binges, it all begins to take a mental and emotional toll. Thus, no matter how hard the young man tried, he could never seem to rise above the cloud of discouragement and depression that seemed to plague him. His inner self-image had been programmed “low” and it was holding him back.

Then, one day, that same young man made the wonderful discovery of what we are talking about here. **HE DISCOVERED HIS IDENTITY IN CHRIST and the potential that God had for him! At that point, His life began to quickly change.** That young man went on to become a college graduate and later a popular public speaker. He traveled the world and stood before large crowds – in auditoriums, outdoor events, business gatherings, and on and on. He also became an accomplished airplane pilot and flew thousands of hours for the work of Christ. Nothing seemed to intimidate him. **What had happened? What accounted for the radical change that took place? The answer is that God did a miracle and reprogrammed that young man’s inner thermostat with HIS NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST!**

And who was that young man, you may ask? That young man that I once knew was me, Jason Peebles. I say that I “*once knew him*” because I no longer think of myself that way. 2 Corinthians 5:16,17 says, “*Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yes, though we have known Christ after the flesh, ye now henceforth know we Him no more. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things have passed away and behold all things are become new.*” I thank God for the work of the Holy Spirit in my mind and emotions that changed my identity. God gave me a new identity based on what Christ did for me and what His ability can do. And, He will do the same for anyone who will start believing what God says.

Discover Your New Identity

Here are three fundamental keys to help you “put on” the new identity and self-image that God has for you --

1. KEY #1 - Make it a habit to take special note every time you see the phrase IN CHRIST or some version of it -- in Him, in Whom, etc. A great place to get started is to study the book of *Ephesians*, beginning with chapter 1. You will be amazed! You will see the phrase IN CHRIST

repeated over and over. And every time you see it - mark it, study it, and apply it to your life. It will be revealing something about your new identity and potential. The book of *Ephesians* will get you started on your quest, but you will see the phrase and concept of IN CHRIST throughout the New Testament.

2. KEY #2 - Start seeing yourself as God’s Word says you are. In other words, renew your mind to it. If you are in the habit of thinking of yourself as lacking confidence, then begin adjusting your mindset. Do you remember what the apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:13? He said, “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*” Notice that it says “*through Christ who strengthens me.*” This is not “mind over matter” or simply mental gymnastics. No, the living resurrected Savior is the one who will strengthen you and help you walk in a new level of confidence. He lives IN you by the presence of the Holy Spirit. Thus, as you discover the wonderful truths of who you are IN CHRIST, the next step is to renew your mind to it. Start thanking God for HIS confidence. Thank God for HIS provision. You are not trying to “be like Jesus” – no, you are allowing Christ to live HIS LIFE through you. “See” yourself the way that God says you are.

3. KEY #3 - Start speaking in line with what God’s Word says about your new identity and potential. The apostle Paul often spoke of the extreme hardships that he went through to fulfill his ministry. And what was his answer for dealing with all his trials? 2 Corinthians 4:13 says, “*And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, ‘I believed and therefore I spoke.’ We also believe and therefore speak.*” Paul was in the habit of “speaking” with his mouth the good things that God promised. He went on to say, “*Knowing that he who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up and will present us with you (vs 14).*” In other words, Paul was “saying” that he would prevail and be delivered from the trials he was experiencing. **Do you see the principles? Discover → Renew your mind → Speak it with your mouth.** Get in the habit of “saying” and thanking God for His provision. IN CHRIST you have confidence; IN HIM you can do all things; THROUGH HIM you will prevail! Learn to release the faith that is in your heart with the words of your mouth.

Dear friend, I pray that you will discover your true identity and self-image IN CHRIST – and learn to walk in all that He has for you. ■ -- *Jason Peebles*

Key Memory Verse:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

2 Corinthians 5:17

Prayer for Your Identity

“Father, thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for my sins. I accept His sacrifice and commit my life to Him. I choose to focus on my identity IN CHRIST instead of my past and what others have said. Help me to discover and walk in all the wonderful provisions that Christ has for me. Thank you for your great love. In Jesus Name – Amen.”

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