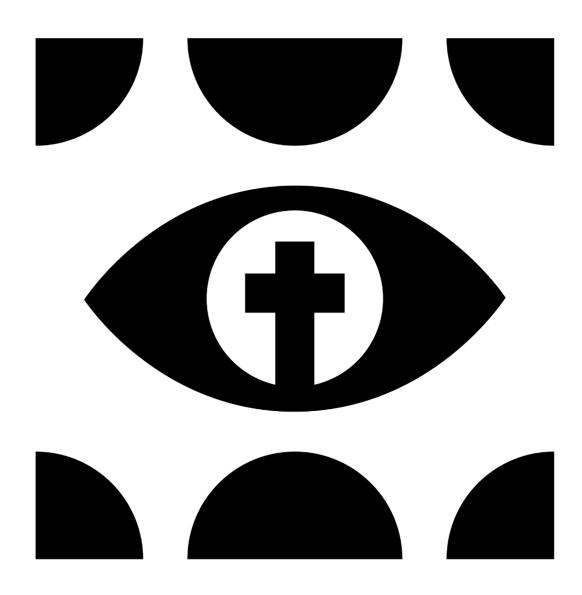
GOSPEL IDENTITIES

MOD-02 Name:



GOAL

To actively grow in the practice of living from our new identities in Christ rather than for any other identity, so that we can experience thriving new life in Jesus.

KEY PASSAGES

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. (2 Corinthians 5:17–18)

My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)













Practice Introduction

Who are you? How do you answer that question? Often we answer with our career, our accomplishments, or even our hobbies. But these are things we do, they don't answer the question of who we are. What makes you you?

Each of us deeply longs to know the answer to that question – to know our identity. We long to feel a sense of worth, belonging, and value because of who we are. People all over the world are desperately searching to *find* themselves or to *define* themselves. We look to our accomplishments, our reputation, or our uniqueness for a sense of identity. The problem is that all these things depend on our *performance*. We work endlessly, like we're on a non-stop treadmill, to achieve or maintain our sense of identity. This creates a tremendous amount of insecurity and fear because we know the truth about ourselves. We are not totally reliable. We are on an emotional roller coaster based on our performance, and we're plagued by a million questions of insecurity: What if I fail? What if I let everyone down? What if people reject me? Who am I then?

The good news of Jesus breaks this cycle of insecurity. God never intended us to live *for* an identity that we create, but rather *from* the identity that He has given to us. Everything we look to for a sense of identity outside of God, is utterly inadequate. It can't satisfy our God given desire to find our identity in belonging to Him. Paul says,

This means that anyone who <u>belongs</u> to Christ has become a new person.

The old life is gone; a <u>new life has begun!</u>

// 2 Corinthians 5:17

As followers of Jesus, we belong to Christ, and we are a new person. Our old life of endlessly working to perform for an identity is gone. A new kind of life has begun. Notice how definitive that statement is – a new life has begun! That's right now! It's not something we work or wait for. It's something Jesus has already accomplished on our behalf by dying on the cross for our sins. What is most real and most true about who we are is that Jesus Christ has made us new.

The whole Christian life, then, is becoming in practice who we *already* are in Christ. It is a movement from practices of our "old self" (the life that is gone) to practices of our "new self" (the new life that has begun). We move from:

- Orphans to Sons and Daughters
- Individuals to Family Members
- Idolaters to Worshipers
- Consumers to Servants
- Secular to Witnesses

These are five gospel identities we've identified from Scripture that communicate the movement of our practices to align with who we already are in Christ. We already are sons and daughters, so we move away from fending for ourselves as if we were orphans. We already are family members, so we stop living in an isolated, individualistic way. We already are true worshipers, so we surrender our idols of selfishness and pride at the feet of Jesus. We already are servants, so we stop giving into this consumerist culture. We already are witnesses of the good news about Jesus, so we stop hiding it.

Over the next 4 weeks, we will engage with *new practices* as a community that flow from the identities we already have in Christ. This will take effort on two fronts – our beliefs and our habits. For our beliefs, we will step into a practice of preaching the truth to ourselves about who we really are in Christ (gospel affirmations). For our habits, we will identify practical steps to live in-line with our gospel identities *and* combat the practices of our "old self".

Old Self Practices vs. Gospel Identity Practices

| OLD SELF PRACTICES | GOSPEL IDENTITY PRACTICES | |
|--|---|--|
| Orphans Restlessly working to create your own security Worrying about the provision you need and fending for yourself Ignoring God or being angry at Him for the hard life you've experienced Feeling a sense of entitlement to live however you want to live Hardening your heart and thickening your skin each time you experiencing trouble | Sons & Daughters Meditating on your identity as a child of God, and experiencing peace, security, and rest in your soul Expressing child-like faith to God — trusting in His provision and expecting good things from Him. Pursuing and enjoying a meaningful relationship with God through consistent prayer, Scripture reading, and worship Delighting in obeying God's commands in Scripture and following His will above your own. Running straight to God, like a child, when you face troubles of all kinds | |
| Individuals Securing everything you need in life on your own Attending worship gatherings only as often you feel it will help your own personal walk with God Keeping relationships at a surface level Quickly giving up on relationships and moving on Seeing no problem with holding unforgiveness, bitterness, or resentment towards others Avoiding accountability in your life Holding back your time, gifts, and resources for your own benefit | Family Members Having a deep sense of your need for the family of God Actively and consistently participating in weekly worship gatherings with the people of your local church Intentionally pursuing meaningful relationships with other believers in your local church Fighting for unity within the church by resolving conflict biblically Refusing to walk in unforgiveness, bitterness, or resentment towards others Having several Christians who have permission to speak into your life about anything, and with whom you are honest with, confess sin, and ask for help Actively using your time, gifts, and resources to serve the people in your church | |

Idolaters

- Feeling no joy in knowing God Himself, but looking to weath, career, experiences, reputation, etc... for fulfillment in life
- Not seeing the value and priority in your life of praising and singing to God
- Giving your life and priorities over to career, hobbies, family, money, etc... but not to God
- Not desiring to put effort into growing closer to God
- Keeping close guard on your time, gifts, energy, and resources
- Tipping God every once in a while

Worshipers

- Finding joy and fulfillment in a vibrant relationship with God
- Expressing praise to God often with all of your being (body, mind, heart, soul)
- Delighting in surrendering your life and your priorities to God by living in light of His character
- Growing in your knowledge of God and His ways by regularly studying scripture
- Giving God access to all of your time, gifts, energy, and resources
- Regularly and sacrificially worshiping God with your finances

Consumers

- Living unaware of needs beyond your own
- Thinking of yourself and your desires as most important
- Valuing relationships only if they benefit you
- Being reluctant to put in effort to help others
- Having no intentionality about living for the benefit of others
- Expecting others to give their time, gifts, energy and resources to serve you

Servants

- Having a keen sense for the practical needs around you and a willingness to work to meet those needs
- Determining to walk in humility and to consider others better than yourself
- Understanding that you live to serve those who God has placed in your life
- Always being ready to respond when someone needs help
- Prioritizing your life around living for the benefit of others
- Consistently giving your time, gifts, energy and resources to help and serve others

Worldly

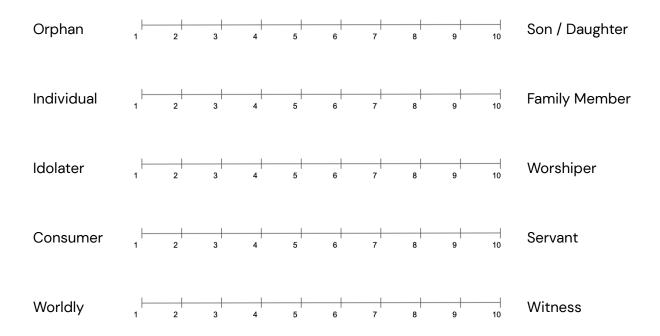
- Only surrounding yourself with people who think and act like you
- Having no intentionality in your daily life to be used by God
- Keeping your faith to yourself
- Seeing the church as a social club

Witnesses

- Making a practice of engaging with non-Christians and looking for ways you can bless them or be a blessing to them.
- Seeing your daily encounters with others (friends, family members, co-workers, neighbors) as the people to whom God has called you to be a witness
- Actively sharing your faith on a regular basis and knowing how to lead someone to Christ
- Seeing the church of which you are a part as a community of believers on mission to reach your local geography

Self Assessment

Reflect on the comparison of "old self" practices and gospel identity practices above. For each gospel identity, give yourself an overall score for how well you feel you are living from that identity (1 meaning "not at all", 10 meaning "fully living from this identity").



What do you imagine would change in your life if you were to live fully from these identities (particularly the ones you may have given yourself a lower score on)?

What barriers do you see to changing your internal narrative (and perhaps negative self-talk) to one that declares the truth of who you are in Christ?

Gospel Affirmations Exercise

Read all of the gospel identity scriptures (see "supplemental materials" pg 21) out loud to yourself, but insert yourself into the passage. Here is an example:

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

Becomes

For I did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but I have received the Spirit of adoption as a son/daughter, by whom I cry, "Abba! Father!"

Romans 8:15

Allow this to be an experience of preaching God's word to yourself and affirming who you are in the gospel.

Practices

| For the gospel identities that you scored yourself lowest on the self-assessment, |
|---|
| pick 3 of the practices listed in the "Old Self Practices vs. Gospel Identities |
| Practices" table to engage with this week, and identify the practical step you will |
| take: |

| Practical step |
|--|
| Listen to worship music and physically bow on my knees before God this week |
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| |



Combating the Practices of Our "Old Self"

Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Living from our new identity in Christ is a *battle*. The encouragement to us in Hebrews is to lay aside *every weight and sin that clings so closely*. In other words, there are practices of our "old self" that cling to us. While we are trying to run this race (live fully devoted to Jesus), we experience being hindered and weighed down by our old way of living. We have to lay these things aside! We have to combat the practices of our "old self" if we want to run freely to Jesus and experience the fullness of our new identity in Him.

// Removing the weights

Some of the things that hinder us are just weights – things, habits, practices that are not at all helping us run this race. Binge watching netflix. Constant online shopping and dreaming of the next upgrade for our lives. Endlessly scrolling on our phones. These things are weights. We wonder why we're not experiencing the thriving life Jesus promised (John 10:10), yet we give so much time to things designed to pull our affections away from Him.

If our aim was to get in shape, we would need a diet to control what foods we eat and how much. Similarly, if our aim is to run after Jesus, we need a "diet" for our entertainment – what kinds of content we're consuming and how much. A simple step we can take is to spend time with God before we look at our phones in the morning. So many of us start our day without God, already trying to figure everything out for ourselves. Let's not act like orphans who have to fend for themselves! Lets run to our good Father first – looking to Him for help with our anxieties, guidance on what we should be doing, and a sense of security in this world.

// Un-sticking sin

Sin clings so closely. The practices of our "old self" are not just bad habits, but sin. They come from a heart that has pushed God out of every area of life (orphan, individual, idolater, consumer, secular). The thing about sin is that it enslaves (John 8:34). It easily entraps us (Galatians 6:1). It is a war raging within us (Romans 7:15–25). We often *underestimate* sin – we think we have it under control, or it's not that bad. But the truth is that we are desperately hopeless in our fight against sin apart from God's power at work in us.

So how do we lay aside sin when it clings so closely? The secret is to remove what makes sin stick. Sin clings to our soul because deep in our heart we believe we need it to be happy or secure. But now we have a new identity in Christ – He alone makes us happy and secure. So un–sticking sin from our lives means *looking to Jesus*. Instead of trying not to desire sin, set your desire on Jesus. "I want life in Jesus more than I want to look at pornography". "I want the joy of following Jesus more than I want a single penny from dishonesty". We invite the power of Jesus – the author and perfecter of our faith – to unstick the sinful practices of our old self. And when we do this, we begin to see that the "old self" truly is *dead*. It does not have power over us any longer.

We know that our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin.

Romans 6:6-7

Gospel Affirmations Exercise

When you wake up each morning this week, before you do anything else, take a moment to declare gospel affirmations over your life (see "Gospel Affirmations" in the supplemental materials section.)

| | | | • | | |
|---|----|--------|----|----|---|
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| | | \sim | | | • |

| Vrite out some practical steps you will take this week to combat your "o | ld self" |
|--|----------|
| oractices (weights and sins). | |

1.

2.

3.

4.



Gospel Identity Culture

For you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.

1 Peter 2:9

What happens when a whole community begins to live from their gospel identities together? So often we can think of our Christian life individualistically – like it's just us and God. But the Bible doesn't talk about it that way. God is saving a *people* for Himself. As Peter says, we are a *chosen people*; a holy nation. The power of living from our gospel identities is not limited to our personal walk with God, but is meant to be experienced in the context of God's people.

// Sons and daughters with child-like faith

When a community comes alive to the fact that they've been adopted as sons and daughters of God, an infectious child-like faith spreads. Suddenly the level of expectation for what God can do rises to new heights. In that environment, signs, wonders, and miracles abound as the community is awestruck by the goodness of their Father. People are joyfully seeking the Father with all their hearts and hearing from Him. Peace becomes pervasive – even in the midst of suffering – because the community has taken hold of the promise that the Father works all things for the good of those who love Him.

// The family God has in mind

When a community embraces the truth that God has made them family – brothers and sisters – the whole relational dynamic changes. They are no longer "church-goers" loosely connected on a Sunday morning – they are committed one to another. There's a deep sense of belonging felt by each person – they are truly known in the family. There's no pretense or show – people feel safe to be themselves. There's lots of fun, laughter, eating, and games. People actually work through relational difficulties rather than just moving on to another church! All of this happens because of a deep awareness that God has made them family by the blood of Jesus.

// A culture of worship

When a community begins to worship God with all of their being, suddenly an awareness of the presence of God spreads like wildfire. Where once people were blind and deaf to God because of their idolatry (hearts that love created things rather than the creator), a spiritual awakening occurs. The presence of God is felt, and is thick in the room. People are set free from sin and bondage. The people of God are unified in the triumphant song of their King. In their daily lives, people are filled with a lasting gratitude and joy in God.

// Servants like the King

When a community embraces their identity as servants of Jesus, a powerful humility is put on display. People stop looking to *perform*, and start looking to bless and serve each other. They want to be like their king – the greatest of all – who came not to be served, but to serve. The culture becomes one of outdoing one another in showing honor. It changes from self-focused to others-focused. Church is no longer seen as a place to attend, but a place to serve and build the kingdom of God.

// Witnesses who turn the world upside down

When a community embraces the mission of Jesus – to be His witnesses to the world and to make disciples – the city is turned upside down. The testimony of Jesus' current work spreads beyond the 4 walls of the church. Rumor spreads in the city that people are experiencing life, freedom, and healing in the church. Everywhere the people of God go, the gospel begins to penetrate – workplaces, schools, neighborhoods, grocery stores. An awareness of Jesus Christ spreads, and a revival begins. God has done this again and again throughout the world, and we pray for it to happen in our own city!

Our desire as a church is to grow together in an expression of all five gospel identities. We desire to build a gospel-centered culture that powerfully transforms lives. That starts with us – our life groups – living in the reality of our gospel identities together.

Gospel Affirmations Exercise

Spend time each day this week praying for specific people in your group. Pray that they would live more fully from their gospel identities. Read through the gospel identity verses inserting *their* name and declaring truth over their life. If God gives you a specific word of encouragement, write it down and share it with them at next week's meeting.

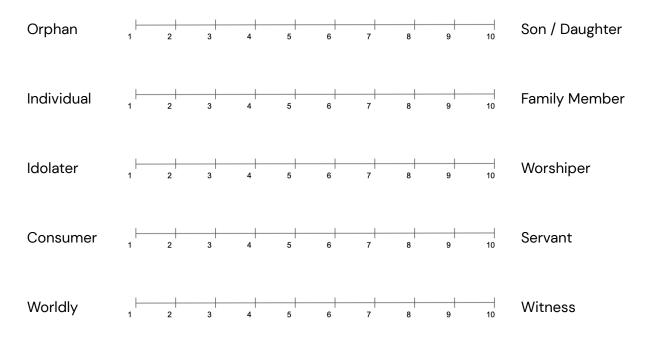
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| Continue taking the steps you identified to combat the practices of your "old self |
|--|
| Text a gospel encouragement to that person in your life group. |



Self Re-Assessment

Reflect on the comparison of "old self" practices and gospel identity practices above. For each gospel identity, give yourself an overall score for how well you feel you are living from that identity (1 meaning "not at all", 10 meaning "fully living from this identity").



What do you imagine would change in your life if you were to live fully from these identities (particularly the ones you may have given yourself a lower score on)?

What barriers do you see to changing your internal narrative (and perhaps negative self-talk) to one that declares the truth of who you are in Christ?

Gospel Affirmations Exercise

Read Ephesians this week, and write down as many gospel affirmations as you can find. Spend time each day declaring those truths over yourself.

| Practices |
|---|
| ☐ Reflect on the gospel identity practices from the table in week 1 |
| Share with someone in your life group where you experienced growth and where you still desire to see more breakthrough. |

☐ Invite that person to ask you about progress in this area in a month.

Supplemental Materials



Scripture References for Gospel Identities

Orphans → Sons & Daughters

"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

// John 1:12-13

For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

// Romans 8:15-17

For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

// Galatians 3:26

God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.

// Ephesians 1:5

But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. And because we are his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, prompting us to call out, "Abba, Father." Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, God has made you his heir.

// Galatians 4:4-7

See how very much our Father loves us, for he calls us his children, and that is what we are! But the people who belong to this world don't recognize that we are God's children because they don't know him. Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is. And all who have this eager expectation will keep themselves pure, just as he is pure.

// 1 John 3:1-3

$\textbf{Individuals} \rightarrow \textbf{Family Members}$

So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. Therefore, whenever we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone—especially to those in the family of faith.

// Ephesians 2:19

// Galatians 6:10

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has become a child of God. And everyone who loves the Father loves his children, too.

Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near.

// 1 John 5:1

// Hebrews 10:24-25

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.

A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.

// John 13:34-35

// 1 Corinthians 12:7

Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it.

// 1 Corinthians 12:14-18

Idolaters → **Worshipers**

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.'

// Mark 12:30

// Romans 12:1

So whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

// 1 Corinthians 10:31

And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father.

// Colossians 3:17

Do you have the gift of speaking? Then speak as though God himself were speaking through you. Do you have the gift of helping others? Do it with all the strength and energy that God supplies. Then everything you do will bring glory to God through Jesus Christ. All glory and power to him forever and ever! Amen.

No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.

// Matthew 6:24

// 1 Peter 4:11

Consumers → **Servants**

You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.

God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.

// 1 Peter 4:10

// John 13:13-17

For you are free, yet you are God's slaves, so don't use your freedom as an excuse to do evil.

// 1 Peter 2:16

Work willingly at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and that the Master you are serving is Christ.

// Colossians 3:23-24

Worldly → Witnesses

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" // 2 Corinthians 5:20

//Acts 1:8

The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus.

We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard."

//Acts 4:20

// Acts 4:13

Again he said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you."

// John 20:21

Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.

// Matthew 28:18-20

Gospel Affirmations



| I have been justified — completely forgiven and made righteous. (Rom. 5:1) | I died with Christ and died to the power of sin in my life. (Rom. 6:1–6) | I am free forever from condemnation. (Rom. 8:1) |
|--|--|---|
| I have been placed into Christ by God's doing. (1 Cor. 1:30) | I have received the Spirit of God into my life that I might know the things freely given to me by God. (1 Cor. 2:12) | I have been given the mind of Christ. (1 Cor. 2:16) |
| I have been bought with a price; I am not my own; I belong to God. (1 Cor. 6:19, 20) | I have been established, anointed and sealed by God in Christ. (1 Cor. 1:21) | I have been given the Holy Spirit as a guarantee of my inheritance to come. (Eph. 1:13, 14) |
| Since I have died, I no longer live for myself, but for Christ. (2 Cor. 5:14, 15) | I have been made righteous. (2 Cor. 5:21) | I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. The life I am now living is Christ's life. (Gal. 2:20) |
| I have been blessed with every spiritual blessing. (Eph. 1:3) | I was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him. (Eph. 1:4) | I was chosen by God to be adopted as His child. (Eph. 1:5) |
| I have been redeemed and forgiven, and I am a recipient of His lavish grace. (Eph 1:7-8) | I have been made alive together with Christ. (Eph. 2:5) | I have been raised up and seated with Christ in heaven. (Eph. 2:6) |
| I have direct access to God through the Spirit. (Eph. 2:18) | I may approach God with boldness, freedom and confidence. (Eph. 3:12) | I have been rescued from the domain of Satan's rule and transferred to the kingdom of Christ. (Col. 1:13) |

| I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins. The debt against me has been canceled. (Col. 1:14) | Christ Himself is in me. (Col. 1:27) | I am firmly rooted in Christ and am now being built in Him. (Col. 2:7) |
|--|---|--|
| I have been spiritually set apart (Col. 2:11) | I have been made complete in Christ. (Col. 2:10) | I have been buried, raised and made alive with Christ. (Col. 2:12, 13) |
| I died with Christ and I have been raised up with Christ. My life is now hidden with Christ in God. Christ is now my life. (Col. 3:1–4) | I have been given a spirit of power, love and self-discipline. (2 Tim. 1:7) | I have been saved and set apart according to God's doing. (2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5) |
| I am united with Christ and He is not ashamed to call me brother. (Heb. 2:11) | I have the right to come boldly before the throne of God to find mercy and grace in time of need. (Heb. 4:16) | I have been given exceedingly great and precious promises by God by which I am a partaker of God's divine nature. (2 Pet. 1:4) |
| I am led by the Spirit of God and I am a son/daughter of God. (Rom 8:14) | I have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear, but the Spirit of adoption by whom I cry out "Abba! Father!" (Rom 8:15) | I am an heir of God and a fellow heir with Christ. (Rom 8:17) |
| The sufferings of this present age are not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed to me. (Rom 8:18) | Nothing can separate me from God's love. (Rom 8:38-39) | I am more than a conqueror through Him who loved me. (Rom 8:37) |