

SPIRITUAL  
identity



# SPIRITUAL identity

**BELIEVE GOD'S  
REVOLUTIONARY TRUTH**

by **Larry V. Silver**



## SPIRITUAL identity

Spiritual Identity: Believe God's Revolutionary Truth

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*This book is dedicated to all who are  
searching for their spiritual identity.  
(Galatians 2:20)*



# Acknowledgments

I sincerely want to thank the Lord Jesus Christ for allowing me to be His child and to walk with Him since my youth. This book is mainly about Him, but also about the people whom He loves. If He can transform me, He can transform anyone, given the opportunity. It is clear that we all need help, and in my life, the Lord provided Don Bartel as a mentor and friend. Don is living proof that it is not necessary to spend countless hours in order to have a positive impact on someone for eternity. Don was at the right place and the right time for me, beginning with his ministry to college students before I was even a believer.

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# Table of Contents

Foreword.....	11
Introduction.....	13
1 mirror, mirror on the wall .....	17
2 who you are not .....	32
3 children of God .....	40
4 heirs .....	45
5 kings .....	50
6 God's friends .....	56
7 masterpieces .....	63
8 new creatures .....	69
9 spiritual beings - part one .....	76
10 spiritual beings - part two .....	81
11 ministers.....	96
12 priests .....	104
13 members of one body.....	113
14 temples .....	124
15 holy and righteous.....	132
16 saints.....	138
17 overcomers! .....	150
18 sufferers.....	162
19 servants .....	169
20 followers of Jesus .....	175
21 Satan's adversaries .....	181

22 ambassadors .....188  
23 worshipers .....198  
24 blessed .....204  
25 dearly loved.....209  
26 CONCLUSION: behave as you believe.....215  
Index of biblical references by chapter .....223  
Endnotes .....230

## Foreword

Years ago someone graciously sent me this story. There was a British cat named Rupert. He lived in a London suburb with a family named Robinson.

Rupert, it seems, had a habit of disappearing for a day or two, sometimes three. Then he would come back as though he had never left. One day Rupert appeared with a brand new collar. A bit suspicious, the Robinsons attached a note to the collar which said, "My name is Rubert. I live at 22 Lansdowne Place with the Robinsons." Then they waited. Soon Rupert vanished again. This time when he finally returned, another note was attached to his collar.

"At 84 Bington Road, where I live with the Cromwells, my name is Blackie." Someone heard about the British cat named Rupert and said, "That's a smart cat. He had the best of two worlds." But a lady older and wiser said, "Not so smart. He didn't know who he was and where he really belonged."

For an animal, such a confused identity is nothing to be too concerned about, but for a blood-bought Christian to be mistakenly torn between two identities is nothing short of a full-fledged tragedy.

Yet this very tragedy is widespread among God's people. Was a dual identity in Jesus' mind when He prayed "they are not of this world even as I am not of this world"? Has God actually "qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light"? If He has, if you were suddenly separated from your physical body,

would you—as you now are—fit in a holy heaven the very next moment?

Commonly, when a person behaves out of character, we say, “He is not himself today.” Could the miracle of the new birth be great enough to justify our saying that whenever a Christian sins, that he is behaving “out of character”? Happily, this new birth miracle brings with it not only a radical change in identity but also all the resources necessary “for life and godliness.”

In an effort to clarify this new covenant message, Larry Silver has produced this book. Each of its pages will encourage you to let the Scriptures speak for themselves without those well-intentioned often taught rationalizations which minimize the greatness of this new birth miracle. It is the earnest hope of the author that this book will have a positive effect not only in the lives of new believers but also among mature believers, as they take a refreshing look at God’s revolutionary truth.

I share his hope that you will come away from your reading, both amazed and grateful for your glorious Lord Who by grace alone has made you His “by birth” child. So please read on!

David C. Needham, Professor Emeritus,  
Multnomah Bible College

# Introduction

*Of making many books there is no end –  
Ecclesiastes 12:12.*

I always thought this verse referred to how many books could be made, not to the book-writing process itself. Now, having had the challenging experience of putting together my own book, this verse has new meaning.

I felt compelled to put into writing what God and many brothers and sisters have taught me concerning the fascinating topic of spiritual identity.

What is spiritual identity? It is the biblical truth that God dwells in us through the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and through that indwelling, He is able to change us from the inside out. This God indwelling and Spirit filling work to fully carry out the purpose and meaning of life that God designed for us.

As believers, our fundamental nature is identified with God and His Spirit. Therefore, it should not surprise us that God identifies us with spiritual words and phrases that we would not normally apply to ourselves. Our spiritual identity, by grace, is now wrapped up in God's very person.

Though I do not consider myself to be a gifted writer, the biblical concept of spiritual identity and its implications have impacted me with such life-changing force that I have been compelled to share them with others. They have taken my mind and spirit higher than the heavens and seated me with the Lord of glory,

Jesus of Nazareth, and I do not believe that I have ever fully come back down to earth. Outward circumstances have not been able to penetrate Christ's take-over of my heart, though many things, people, and circumstances have tried.

I have invested many years reading, listening to, studying, testing, praying, memorizing, and meditating on God's Word and in fellowship with Him. Over this time, I have found that God has no problem speaking through His Holy Word. It says things about Christians that are so glorious and mind-boggling that, at some point, the spiritual seeker must wrestle with the question – do I believe all this or not?

For me, a young man from a Jewish upbringing, the answer to this question was neither expedient nor easy, but the truth was plastered all over the road to God. It turns out that a relationship with Him is the goal and the destination. Who would have guessed? And that relationship has every answer to every question we need to know this side of eternity. Not just ethereal, idealistic questions about man's existence, but practical questions of how to live a life of power and love.

Before receiving Jesus into my life, I was like Matt Damon in *The Bourne Identity*, face down in the ocean, left for dead, totally unaware of who I really was. Then Jesus revealed Himself, and through Him, my true spiritual identity began to take shape.

Spiritual Identity contains 24 characteristics of who Christ is in us through the power of a Spirit-regenerated life. Each characteristic is a wonder, a

promise, a God-view, an infinite truth, an irrefutable foundation for the believer.

By taking each characteristic in its given order, we can build layer upon layer of truth. I encourage you to study each chapter carefully, prayerfully, and with a studied fellowship of like-hearted souls.

### ***Who Are You?***

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For me, this revelation – who God says we are in Christ and who Christ is in us – started in the late 1980s, when I was at a conference with my mentor, Don Bartel, a leader for the Navigators, a worldwide Christian ministry dedicated to reaching God seekers and discipling them into spiritual maturity.

I openly shared with Don that I did not think I was doing well in my faith and that I felt like a “pride ball.” He bantered back that he saw Christ in me and that I was viewing myself according to the flesh, not the Spirit. Then Don encouraged me to read David Needham’s book, *Birtright*, a theological approach to spiritual identity that changed my life. He helped me see that the New Testament’s view of believers is based on the truth of God’s Word, not our self-perception.

Books can influence our thinking in very positive ways. My hope and prayer are that this book, like *Birtright* in my own life, will do that for you. I hope that it will clarify what the New Testament clearly teaches – that as believers in Jesus, we have a spiritual identity that is secure and wrapped in God’s promises.

Because God is a spirit being, we who are created in His image, are also spirit beings. This doesn’t mean

that we don't have bodies (clearly, we do, and one day, the Bible teaches, we will receive new, perfect bodies suited for eternity with Him—1 Corinthians. 15:50-54), but for now, our earthly bodies are mere "tents" to house the "real us," which are eternal spirits, inseparably linked with Christ.

The truth about our spiritual identity in Christ is not contained in one verse or another, but due to its beauty and complexity is interwoven throughout the New Testament.

This book is meant to pull all of the pieces together so you can see the brilliance of the diamond formed from the heat and pressure of God's Word.

Each chapter of *Spiritual Identity* is purposed to view this diamond from a different facet. My hope is that the sparkle will be so glorious that it will permanently encourage your inner man and catapult you to where you belong – seated with your Savior in the heavenlies. If I help you to achieve a more solid spiritual identity and encourage you to be stronger and bolder in your faith, my investment will have been worth it.

Ultimately, my goal is to increase awareness among believers of New Testament concepts and principles that have made the church great. If believers can be who God created them to be, they will do the things He is calling them to do. Then the world will know that the Father sent the Son.

What a privilege!

Larry

[www.larryvsilver.com](http://www.larryvsilver.com)

## *mirror, mirror on the wall*

**D**o you know who you are? This is the question that man has struggled with throughout the ages. Most people would answer by giving their names, their ages, what they do, where they live and work, and their favorite roles: husband, wife, son, significant other, grandparent.

Some Christians will even expound on what they believe, where they are going in life, and their desire for others to follow suit. But is this how God sees us?

The answer to this question is important because, as Christians, we are tasked with bringing the light of Christ into a dark world. But what happens when the lives of believers look just like those of unbelievers?

Have you really thought about this question? Just look around you. Christians and unbelievers have similar divorce and crime rates, business ethics, and lifestyles. What kind of impact is our Christian testimony having? Very little—if any. The unbelieving world sees that our belief and faith in Christ doesn't change our thoughts and behavior in a practical sense. Yes, it may lift our spirits on Sunday and give us hope for eternal life, but then, so do other religions. Overall, the world is not impressed. Can you blame them? For a long time, I was among them.

## *My Story*

---

I suffered from an identity crisis right from birth. Born an identical twin in a Jewish family in Overbrook Park, Philadelphia, I struggled to know who I was, the purpose of life, and my part in it.

The conservative synagogue my family attended was just a few doors from my home on the same side of the street. Although I was intrigued by the Old Testament stories and knew that the Jews were God's chosen people, I did not know what we were chosen for. I had heard about a coming Messiah from time to time. There were so many things that we (the Jews) needed to be delivered from. But my understanding did not go very deep.

It's not as if I didn't try to understand. At the ripe old age of six, there was a gorge down the street where I used to go to seek God. The neighborhood lore was that a bridge used to run over the gorge, but it collapsed while cars were traveling over it. The fact that there were tires and car parts down the steep sides of the gorge seemed to confirm this horrifying tale. Although I was afraid to be there, I thought God would be in this sacred place, so I would go there and ask Him questions that my parents and others could not seem to answer.

When I turned eight, my family moved from Pennsylvania to New Jersey. We blended nicely with the natives (the Gentiles) in our new neighborhood. After a year or two, my parents no longer required that

we attend synagogue. When I turned 13, my grandmother died and even the thought of a Bar Mitzvah faded. Religion and tradition stopped being a priority in our household.

During my high school years, my parent's relationship went downhill. By my senior year, they were separated, never to join together again. Senior year was a time of regression. I experimented with drugs and alcohol. I joined a rock band, playing the drums. Dave, my twin, played the guitar. It was a time of independence and rebellion, but our upbringing prevented us from getting into any major trouble.

Although my three brothers and I did well academically, I entered my freshman year at LaSalle College (now a university) disillusioned with life. Satan loves disillusion, as it offers a chance for him to lure people away from the truth. Though the glamour of drugs and alcohol had worn off, I now sought meaningful communication with anyone who was willing to talk about life. The first person I found was John, a fellow freshman who lived on the same floor I did.

Like me, he preferred talking late into the night over drinking or drugs. After his gay tendencies revealed themselves, however, I sought a counselor instead.

In my counseling sessions, I discoursed frequently about death. This alarmed my counselor and she brought in a psychologist. He didn't see me as suicidal but acknowledged that I was grappling with some

legitimate questions about life. Neither he nor the counselor, however, could provide satisfying answers.

For some extra money, I took a job on weekends as a mobile disc jockey. I enjoyed the music, dancing, and emcee role, showing people a fun time. In between classes and homework, I would relax in the music room. Bernard, the janitor, showed an unusual interest in me. We quickly became friends. Shortly thereafter, I took up video arcade games, and Bernard would supply me with quarters. He seemed to have an endless supply, which, at the time, I never questioned.

One day, he asked me what my license plate number was and proceeded to announce that my number would win the lottery. The next day, he nonchalantly tossed me the paper. Can you guess what the winning number was?

Bernard, it seemed, had psychic powers. He even claimed that he could cause me to think about him, even call him. Often when I called, he would exclaim that I had just done his bidding. Whenever I tried to find where he lived, I was unable.

Years later, when I attempted to find Bernard, there was no record that he ever worked for the college. It turns out, I didn't need to find him. Even though I had moved so many times that my parents had trouble keeping track of me, whenever I least expected it, Bernard would appear.

Who was this mysterious person and why did he show up in my life at that time? I realized later that, by distracting me from my spiritual quest through

appealing alternatives, Bernard was one of Satan's decoys to keep me from the truth.

By the end of my freshman year, a girl from my hometown in New Jersey was showing interest in a serious relationship. I went along for the ride. We got an apartment together 30 minutes from my college. I attempted to commute my second year but saddled with a dysfunctional relationship, I soon dropped out of LaSalle, even though I was just shy of a 3.6 GPA.

Now I was responsible for taking care of the two of us. I landed a job selling family portraits for straight commission and began to travel from store to store and invest 10 days per stint in each new place. Being on the road quickly revealed that my girlfriend was interested in whoever happened to be around at the moment. Soon, that person wasn't me.

Again on my own, my work had become traveling photo salesman by default. I would meet hundreds of people every day in the food and department stores I was assigned to. I enjoyed the challenge of selling, but there were many lonely days when there was no friend with whom to talk.

In early 1982, during a photo promotion in Reading, Pennsylvania, a couple came into the store and promptly bought some family portraits. After I secured their five dollar deposit, they began to question me. The first thing I found surprising was that they asked my name. No customer had ever asked before. Then they asked me about my background. When they

heard that I was Jewish, they seemed excited. I told them that I was pretty streetwise.

I noticed right away that there was something different about them. The comment just flowed out unexpectedly. "I see something in the two of you that I have never seen before. What is it?" They chuckled, joyfully acknowledging that what I had just said was true indeed. Instead of answering directly, they continued their line of questioning.

"What is the hope of a Jewish person?" they asked. I replied, "I don't know. I believe in God and I try to be the best person that I can be." "From our understanding of the Jewish scriptures, it seems as though Israel was waiting for the Messiah." "Well, I don't read those anymore. Though, I still remember some stories from Hebrew School." I looked at them intently. "You are going to tell me that you think Jesus Christ is the Messiah." They laughed, incredulous at how fast I read them. "I told you that I've been on the streets for a while. I don't believe that stuff about Jesus. If you want to, that's up to you."

They excused themselves and promised to come back later that day. They had something they wanted to show me. Upon their return, they presented a chart showing all the major world religions. The heading stated something like, "The Truth of Being Born Again and the Error of All Other Religions." I remember thinking how audacious that title seemed to me. I also remember the man pointing his finger at me in a strong

way (I did not like when anyone did that) and challenging me.

“Larry,” he said. “I challenge you. Just pray to your God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and just ask Him if Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. If he’s not, you have nothing to lose. But if he is...”

Never again was I to see this couple or even remember their names. If only they knew the events that were soon to occur in my life.

That night, I returned to my rundown motel. A bar was attached to the side and I was having a beer, wondering which gal I might pick up. One was showing interest from a distance, but somehow, I was too bothered about the events of the day to pursue it. That couple had gotten through a chink in my armor. In disgust, I left the beer and the gal where they were.

Back in the room, I tossed and turned. Restless, I turned on the TV. The first words I heard were from Pat Robertson of the 700 Club. “I know some of you Jews are watching tonight.” I turned around to see who was in the room with me. “The Bible says that you are a stubborn and stiff-necked people. You always demand miraculous signs.” He flashed scriptures on to the screen from the Old Testament to prove his point.

Then he did something that I will never forget. He pointed his big, bony finger at the viewing audience and said the very same words I’d heard earlier in the day. “I challenge you Jews who are watching. Just pray to your God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,

and ask Him whether Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. What do you have to lose?"

Well! Two Gentiles had challenged me on the same day about some Jesus who they claimed was raised from the dead. Until now, the only times I had heard Jesus' name were when someone from the old neighborhood hit their finger with a hammer! Now there were two boney fingers both pointing at me to pray.

Years earlier, I had asked God for answers about life, but I had never heard anything back. Still, I did believe in God. I had always believed in God since I could remember.

I prayed out loud for the first time in my life. "God, I'm a Jew, I don't believe in Jesus, but if He is really alive like these Gentiles are saying to me, then I will put my faith in Him. If He's alive, then it should not be too difficult for him to reveal Himself to me. You know, since we Jews always demand miraculous signs." (I was still upset about Pat's comment.) "Come to me and show Yourself to me and I will believe in You and commit myself to You."

After putting the onus back on God, I easily fell back asleep. After all, it wasn't my problem anymore. The next day as I was in the shower, hair lathered, I heard a voice. Not audibly, but in my mind. I had never had this experience before.

"I have come in answer to your prayers," it said. The voice was so clear that I did not even finish rinsing the shampoo out of my hair. I put a towel around me and

went, shivering, out into the room. In the bathroom, there was a shower and toilet. Outside was a foyer with a double sink. My hairdryer had been plugged into the big mirror's outlet for all five days I had been there.

The room was pitch dark. I sat on one of the double beds closest to the bathroom. Then asked out loud, "How did you come in answer to my prayers?"

The voice spoke again. "What you are looking for is on the mirror." "The mirror...?"

I stood up and flicked on the light. I was stunned to see symbols scratched into the glass of the mirror. They did not spell anything or mean anything in English. They looked Greek to me.

The next thing I knew, the clerk and the motel manager were trying to calm me down as I attempted to ascertain where the letters had come from. They assured me that the writing had not been there when I moved in. Terrified, I asked for another room, but there were none available. For the next five days, I continued to stare at the symbols, wondering how they got there.

I called my mother and twin brother to tell them of the bizarre incident. Dwayne, my brother's college roommate, seemed to affirm that God was revealing something to me, but it all seemed too weird and farfetched to me.

This event did not convert me, but it did get me to investigate the New Testament for myself. "I don't trust any Christians as far as I can throw them," I

would mutter as I read the enthralling stories in a book I never had reason to look at before.

Very quickly, I became enamored with Christ. He was like a superhero. In fact, reading the New Testament was more like reading a comic book than a religious book. How could Jesus live like that? Always doing good and overcoming the odds? I even called each of my parents and asked them why I had not learned of this Jewish rabbi before.

What didn't they tell me about him? I needed to have Christians challenge me to look into it. I even told my mom about the mirror incident. I wondered what she thought of her nice unstable Jewish boy.

One day, I read in the gospels the story of Jesus visiting his hometown and how they were taken aback and offended. After all, He grew up with them. They were so angry that they intended to throw him over the cliff on which the town was built. The sentence ended at the bottom of the right-hand page.

I turned the page in suspense and read, "He walked right through the crowd and went on His way." I kept flipping back and forth to see if I was perhaps missing a page. I was not. How could Jesus walk through a mob of one thousand angry Jews? I have personally seen a single Orthodox Jew clear out a whole New York City subway train because one of the passengers provoked him. Now here was Jesus walking right through their midst. He must be God, I thought. I felt afraid of what that might mean.

During the time of my reading the New Testament, I visited my brother at his university. His roommate, Dwayne, turned out to be a Christian. He shared a very clear explanation of God's plan for mankind and how Jesus, being the Messiah had completed the work on the cross, dying for my sins. He drew out a bridge with God on one side and man on the other.

"Which side are you on?" he asked.

"Man's side. Which side are you on?"

"God's."

"Well, how do I get over there?"

Dwayne shared John 1:12: "Yet to all those who had received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God."

I told Dwayne that I had already done that on my own. He then shared 1 John 5:11-13. This passage talked about knowing for sure that I had eternal life. As he was still sharing with me, I bowed my head in response to the challenge to know for sure that I was going to heaven and that I was saved right now. The date: November 15, 1982. I was 19 years old. Over time, I learned that the symbols scratched on my mirror in Reading, Pennsylvania, were the Greek symbols of the Alpha and Omega.

*I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last: and what thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia. (Revelation 1:10,11, kjv)*

It became clear to me that Jesus had come in answer to the prayer of this stubborn and stiff-necked Jew. It is interesting to note that the voice that accompanied the symbols was, in fact, Jesus Himself and that He was alive. Was it possible that I could now find my true identity in Jesus Christ?

Some have asked me how I know that it was Jesus, not Satan, who engraved the symbols on the mirror that day. My response begins with a bit of sarcasm. "Thank you, Satan, for doing such a thing—for getting me to read the Bible and helping me get to know the Jewish Messiah."

My point is clear. Satan does not lead people to Jesus. I know Satan as a deceiver who loves to promote fear, pride, and confusion. He loves to mimic God and to try to steal His praise, honor, and glory. If he did write the message in an attempt to lead me away from Jesus, he made a whopper of a miscalculation!

Within a day or two of praying with Dwayne, I approached David, my twin brother.

"Dave, you know how God has always been obvious to us..."

"Yes," he said with hesitation.

"Well, now Jesus is obvious to us."

Within one week, David came to the Jewish Messiah. Now we are eternal twins instead of just earthly twins. Now we are laboring together to help one another find our identity in Him.

Though I was unworthy, undeserving, and not outwardly seeking at the time, God chose to reveal something about Himself to me. It also changed my relationship with mirrors forever.

I had always been uncomfortable looking at myself in the mirror. I did not know who I was as a person, nor my meaning and purpose in life. It's challenging enough to be a twin, but even if you are not, how do you look confidently in the mirror every morning, ready to tackle God's plan for your life? Now, for the first time, I could. I knew what my life was about. It was living for God, to accept who He had made me to be, and to appreciate the special uniqueness that He created in me for such a time as this – to serve Him.

Since then, God has shown me many things about who we as believers are in Christ. Listen to these passages and relate them to my story and to yours.

*For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass [mirror]: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. (James 1:23,24 kjv)*

*Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass [mirror] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Corinthians 3:17,18 kjv)*

Through the mirror of scripture, I have found that which I had been seeking my whole life – my identity.

## *Pilgrim's Mirror*

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A story in *Pilgrim's Progress* summarizes the impact the "mirror of identity" can make in the life of a person who is open to seeing life from God's vantage point.

"Now when the Shepherds had shown them all these things, they took them back to the palace and entertained them with what the house had to offer. Mercy, being young and expecting a child, longed for something she saw there, but she was ashamed to ask. Her mother-in-law then asked her what ailed her, for she looked like an individual not well."

Then Mercy said, "I can't take my mind off a mirror that hangs in the dining room. If I can't have it, I think I'll miscarry." Then her mother-in-law said, "I'll mention your desire to the Shepherds, and they won't deny you of it."

"But I am ashamed that these men should know how I longed," said Mercy.

"No, my daughter," said Christiana. "It's no shame but a virtue to long for such a thing as that."

So Mercy said, "Then, Mother, if you please, ask the Shepherds if they're willing to sell it."

Now the Mirror was one in a thousand. It would present a person one way with one's own features exactly, but turn it another way and it should show the actual face and similitude of the Prince of Pilgrims himself. Yes, I have talked with them who know, and they have said that by looking through the Mirror they

have seen the actual Thorn of Crowns upon His head. They have also seen in it the holes in His hands, in His feet, and in His side. Certainly, there is such an excellency in that Mirror that it will show Him to an individual wherever the person would like to see Him, whether living or dead, whether in earth or heaven, whether in a state of humiliation or in His exaltation, and whether coming to suffer or coming to reign.<sup>1</sup>

As we seek our spiritual identities, we will learn more about reigning as kings and priests in Christ's name, suffering with others, and exalting in the position we have in the heavenly realm. The position described in the New Testament is so glorious that the revealed truths can be misconstrued and misunderstood in ways not intended by scripture.

For this reason, before I launch into the discussion about OUR spiritual identity, which is the purpose of this book, I want to clear the decks about who God is and also recognizing who we are not!

## who you are not

**B**efore we discuss all the wonderful and glorious things that the Bible says about us as believers in Jesus, it is important that we clearly establish who we are not, both individually and corporately.

First and most importantly, we are not God! Listening to followers of the New Age movement, it might sound as if we are. But the scriptures (not to mention earthly reality) reveal that we are not.

One of the best illustrations of this can be found in the Book of Job, which tells the story of how God allowed Job to be tested by Satan. With God's permission, Satan took away Job's family, his livelihood, his health—even his respect. Left with only his wife and a broken spirit, Job lifted up his lament to God.

To his complaint, God replied:

*Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?*

*Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone – while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?*

*Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, when I fixed limits*

*for it and set its doors and bars in place, when I said,  
“This far you may come and no farther; here is where  
your proud waves halt?”*

*Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown  
the dawn its place, that it might take the earth by the  
edges and shake the wicked out of it?...*

*Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or  
walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of  
death been shown to you? Have you seen the gates of  
the shadow of death? Have you comprehended the  
vast expanses of the earth? Tell me, if you know all  
this.*

*What is the way to the abode of light? And where  
does darkness reside? Can you take them to their  
places? Do you know the paths to their dwellings?*

*Surely you know, for you were already born! You  
have lived so many years! (Job 38:4–13, 16–21)*

God has much more to say to Job, and at the end, Job’s response is abject humility. He says, “I spoke once, but I have no answer—twice, but I will say no more” (Job 40:5).

God is the Creator. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He was and is and is to come. He is the Almighty. All the “omnis” describe Him: omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all-knowing), and omnipresent (all present). God is worthy of all praise, honor, and glory. God is love. His person radiates goodness to all His creation. God is holy.

His perfect nature and character are never changing. But God is also just. Because of His sinless nature, God

fights against sin, evil, and anything that sets itself up in place of or against Him. Hopefully, we will never think that we are (or could be) God. In his pride, this is what Satan does, and we don't want to be like Satan. Still, we do sometimes rebel against God's sovereignty or think we have a better way of doing things. When this happens to you, try reading the full text of Job 38–41.

It is necessary to establish our limitations right at the beginning of our discussion. Why is this so important? Because the truth about our spiritual identity is so uplifting that, if not seen in its proper context, it could be misconstrued. God says wonderful things about us, but we have to remember that we are still His creation.

### *Grasping by the Spirit*

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The Word of God is clear about our identity, but these spiritually-charged truths are difficult for the natural mind to grasp.

*The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Corinthians 2:14)*

Fortunately, as believers in Christ, we have the Spirit of God in us, willing and working to accomplish God's will. The Spirit is capable of helping us understand these truths, and when we believe them, He gains ground to move forward and "do His thing."

But beware! When God shows up in the person of the Holy Spirit, He does not come to take sides. He comes to take over!

This is clearly seen in Joshua 5:13-15 when Joshua asks, “Are you for us or for our enemies?” “Neither,” he replied, “but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.” When Joshua senses whose presence he is in, he hits the ground. This should be our natural response to God, as well—to keep our hearts humble, submissive, and open to His marching orders.

We are altogether different from our Maker. We are made of temporal stuff in these bodies of flesh. He is the eternal “I AM.” God is what He is, regardless of time, space, and circumstances. He is a sovereign being, in control of everything. Fortunately for us, He loves His creation and desires to co-labor with us for His purposes and will.

This co-laboring can only occur if we belong to God, and we belong to God only if we receive the person of Christ into our hearts and live by faith. It is God who gives us the gift of faith so that no person can boast before Him, but we still need to respond and offer repentance for a life that is “off the mark” of God’s glory.

### *Missing the Mark*

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What do I mean by “off the mark”? It’s another way of talking about sin. When translated, the word “sin” means “missing the mark.” In ancient days, an archer would practice his trade by aiming at a target some distance away. Usually, an aid would be close by to help. When the arrows completely missed the target, the apprentice would shout, “sin!” This meant that the

arrows had not even nicked the target, let alone hit the bulls-eye.

Our sin causes us to miss God's purpose for our lives. However, as believers, His Spirit is given to us as a helper of our hearts, and the Spirit diligently reaches out to guide us in all things.

It is all too easy to fall back into the patterns in which we once lived when we were apart from Christ. When this happens, we are not allowing the regenerating work of the Spirit to have His way. It is a matter of who is in control. Is it us? or God? Jesus desires to be Lord of our lives, and as we grow up in our faith, we clearly see that His Lordship makes a tremendous difference. It is a matter of our inner man being impacted by the Lord's Spirit, thus constituting us from the inside out to be and do according to His pleasure.

If we are not constituted rightly before Him, our actions shoot way off course, just like the archer's arrows. In God's economy, hitting the bulls-eye is impossible through our own fleshly efforts. It is only after He fundamentally changes who we are that we can begin to hit the mark, and yes, even the bulls-eye of our lives.

Prayerfully approach the following passage from the book of Ephesians. As you read, resist any inclination to understand the verse based on your past. Renounce anything that you have learned from man and let the Spirit illuminate your mind. As it is written, "they will all be taught by God" (John 6:45).

*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the*

*prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. (Ephesians 2:1-3, kjv)*

What a bleak existence we had before our regeneration by the Holy Spirit! Go back and consider this passage again. Notice that before the point of God's regeneration in our hearts, we were by nature objects of His anger. God is holy, and we were off the mark. Not just our actions, but our whole being was out of tune with Him. We were on Satan's frequency. Without God, Satan had a direct dial-up connection to our souls.

Computer geeks might very well call this GIGO—Garbage In, Garbage Out. We put garbage in and garbage comes out. Apart from God, even our best and kindest deeds are as "filthy rags" in God's sight (Isaiah 64:6). This was God's way of telling His chosen ones, the Jews, that their best human efforts at righteousness were like a woman's monthly menstrual pad. What a mental picture! God is not impressed by our human efforts apart from His transforming power.

### ***Receive Something Different***

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To be transformed, we must first receive something different than we had as unbelievers. As unbelievers, we were sinful. It was our very nature and heart to do wrong and to choose evil apart from faith birthed in God.

*The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time. The LORD was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain. So the LORD said, "I will wipe mankind, whom I have created, from the face of the earth – men and animals, and creatures that move along the ground, and birds of the air – for I am grieved that I have made them."*  
(Genesis 6:5-7)

But our nature changes when we receive Jesus. When Jesus died on the cross, He took the punishment and wrath of God for us. When we receive Him into our hearts by faith, we no longer have to fear God's fiery punishment. Rather, God accepts the punishment that Jesus took in our stead.

We are forgiven and can stand blameless before Him. Not only this but at the moment of salvation, God fundamentally changes our spiritual identity. Instead of our old nature (the old man), whose natural instinct is to sin, He replaces it with a new nature (the new man) who, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, naturally desires to live for Him. God regenerates us through the Spirit and resets our spiritual programming to obey Him.

We must believe what God says in His Word or we will be duped by Satan's lie. What is this lie? That we are unable to please God, unable to walk by faith, and unable to do anything for Him. Satan tells us this in order to steal our confidence in who God's Word says

we are and to severely inhibit, impede, and even abort our divine call and destiny.

But this is where the mystery and wonder of God can accomplish something that we could never accomplish on our own. Through God's transforming power, we can now shoot our arrows straight and sure. We can hit the mark. It takes faith in God's Word and revelation through it to accept this truth.

### *The Greatest News*

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Though I have spent the chapter telling you who we are not, this is not bad news. On the contrary, it is really the best news we can ask for. God loves us even more than we can imagine, and as part of His perfect plan for us, He decided to take up residence in the lives and hearts of those who believe the gospel – the good news of who Jesus is and why He came to the earth. The Holy Spirit came into our physical bodies – not to take sides, but to take over!

It is beyond comprehension that, in sending His Son to die on the cross, God decided to do a new thing and indwell anyone who believes the gospel. Now, it is His desire to walk with us in the most intimate setting, the human heart.

God's residence and home address is no longer just heaven, but wherever you live as a believer in Him. You could even say that your Father is living within you and you have become his child.

### 3

## *children of God*

*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. (1 John 3:1-2)*

*Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)*

*The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. (Romans 8:16)*

**T**his is an awesome fact for the believer in Jesus. We are now God's children. Some feel that all people are God's children since we all descended from the same man, Adam. It is true that there is only one race, the human race, and we are all a part of it. But the Bible is clear that it is by faith in Jesus, and His atoning and sacrificial death on the Cross, that we have the right to now become His children. The verse just before Romans 8:16 says "...the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by Him, we cry, "Abba Father." God is no longer far off and distant; He is up close, personal, and caring.

## *Sons and Daughters*

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As a child of God, we are His sons and daughters. How do you feel about your children? Do you have unconditional love for them? Is there anything they can do to take away your love? Most parents would say no to that question.

Of course, we want them to do well with their lives. We want them to make wise decisions and to be happy, right? Should God be any different than human parents? It is instinctive for human parents, being made in God's image, to care for their children. This is part of our spiritual identity. This is part of our DNA, the fabric of who we are. We are children first, but then parents. As a parent, often there is a paradigm shift. All of a sudden, a parent experiences unconditional love for the child. It just comes as part of the parental DNA that God imbued.

He is our Heavenly Father, who does not change like a shifting shadow (James 1:17) but is a constant. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). People may change, but God does not. This should be a comfort to you as life unfolds. He will forever be your Father. You will forever be His child. He accepts you in the beloved (Ephesians 1:6, kjv). Another way of saying this is that you are a child who is loved. God promises that He will never leave you and never forsake you (Hebrews 13:5).

He is a Father who is good and always wants what is best for you as His child. This is where trust comes in. Since God is good and has your best interests at heart,

would it not be wise to trust Him at all times (Psalm 62:8) and in every situation?

If you reason out the above statement, it becomes clear that trusting God at all times is a logical choice and lifestyle. If only it were that easy, all of His children would be trusting Him and walking by faith. Unfortunately, reality shows otherwise. In our culture, there does not appear to be a big difference in the behavior of the believing child of God and the unbeliever. Both seem to be making their independent choices and using worldly criteria as priority ahead of God's Word.

If we really believed in the depths of our hearts that we are His children, then we could really trust in His goodness throughout life and in our decisions- big and small. God's Word declares us to be His children all over the New Testament. We are part of his family as soon as we enter this faith by believing in the gospel message.

John 1:12 makes it clear also that we are not just believing a message but receiving a person - Jesus Christ - into our hearts. We are allowing Him to come in by faith and to rule in our hearts through the promised Holy Spirit. It is not necessary to understand how all this works right away.

What is important is to believe that God is true, His Word is true, and He encourages every person to repent of their sin, believe the good news (of eternal life and salvation - John 5:24), and to begin their faith adventure placing God ahead of all priorities and things in one's life. Matthew 6:33 promises that if you

do this, He will give you everything else in addition – your needs, wants, desires (Psalm 37:4 nasb), and imaginations (Ephesians 3:20).

### *Princes and Princesses*

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We are the apple of God's eye. We are His children. It is hard to fathom what we really mean to God, except that we can see the proof of His love by the death of His Son. Jesus died to bring us into His family forever. In another chapter, I discuss the verses that say we are made kings because of His blood. I think that some will have trouble believing this fact about themselves. But, it may be easier to believe that you are a child of God. In Revelation, it states that He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords (Revelation 17:14, 19:16).

If it is true that He is the King of Kings, and the Bible states it plainly, then as His child, you are now a prince or princess. You are royalty. You are part of the King's family. You are welcome at His table to dine and feast as your heart desires. Your thoughts matter to the King- your well being, and your happiness. It all matters to Him. What kind of father would not give his child everything he could for their well being? How much more the God of all spirits? He is the best Father imaginable.

### *Abba Father*

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The New Testament reveals that our spiritual status is children of God. God has become a daddy to us. When we pray, we are speaking as His son, His daughter, His child, to engage with His thoughts in our situation.

Realize that our Abba Father responds with love and compassion like our earthly dads respond when they hear us hurting.

Our Heavenly Father responds to our hurts and our tears with more concern and understanding than we can possibly fathom.

### ***Our Future***

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In 1 John 3:2, it says that what we will be is not yet known. It is in conjunction with being God's child that this is stated. What potential does a prince or princess have in the kingdom of the King? The potential is unlimited. The implied power is there. The credentials are known. The family is preeminent. When you realize that your future is skewed by your Father toward the good, the prosperous, the successful, and the hopeful, it is very humbling. Our futures are very bright and full of possibilities.

*"For I know the plans I have for you," says the Lord.*

*"Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11)*

Our spiritual identity begins with this concept of sonship, this truth that we are God's children. Please internalize it, receive its truth, and bask in your great standing in this short time you have to be part of the family whose Father is the greatest Father in the Universe.

By being part of this family of God, you have now gained an inheritance and become an heir.