

the gospel[L]ived

Redemption is participatory, not imitative. It is grounded on grace appropriated through faith, not merely on obedience. **Spiritual life flows out of union with Christ, not merely imitation of Christ.** . . . The individual Christian and the church as a whole are alive in Christ, and when any essential dimensions of what it means to be in Christ are obscured in the church's understanding, there is no guarantee that the people of God will strive toward and experience fullness of life.
—**Richard F. Lovelace**, *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* (73-74)

Union with Christ is the central truth of the whole doctrine of salvation. All to which the people of God have been predestined in the eternal election of God, all that has been secured and procured for them in the once-for-all accomplishment of redemption, all of which they become the actual partakers in the application of redemption, and all that by God's grace they will become in the state of consummated bliss is embraced within the compass of union and communion with Christ (170).
—**John Murray**, *Redemption Accomplished and Applied*

The Gospel and Your Identity: Union with Christ

1. Answering the seemingly simple question "Who am I?" is one of the most profound questions we as human beings can address. Our personal life-experiences (as well as the life-experiences of those close to us) provide us with an almost limitless supply of facts and stories that shape our identity, our own personal self-definition. Take a few minutes to fill-in the following blanks:

Age:

Parents/Family:

Spouse:

Children:

Grandchildren:

Education:

Career:

Geography (Then/Now):

Health/Appearance:

Hobbies:

Talents/Skills:

Other Self-Defining Experiences:

2. Which of the facts/experiences from question one have shaped you the most? In other words, where do you most naturally find your identity?

3. What are some of the ways that people in our culture try to cultivate a “good” self-image? In other words, what are some of the common standards by which we measure ourselves?

4. What happens to us—physically, emotionally and socially—if we *don't* live up to our identity standards? How do our hearts respond?

5. What happens to us if we *do* live up to our identity standards? How do our hearts respond?

6. Read Philippians 3:4-6. Prior to his conversion, how did Paul define himself (where did he find his identity)?

What similarities/differences are there between the way we define ourselves now and the way Paul defined himself then?

How did Paul's self understanding shape the way he interacted with the world, with God and with the gospel (i.e., the Christian-community)?

7. Read Philippians 3:7-9. What happened to Paul's self-understanding when he encountered the gospel?

What does it mean to consider “whatever was to my profit” as “loss” and even “dung”? Why did Paul's self-understanding change so radically?

In v. 9, Paul contrasts two competing and mutually exclusive sources of “righteousness.” What are they and how do we attain them?

What areas of your self-identity do you need to “count as loss” in comparison to knowing Christ? Why is it so difficult to do this?

8. Read Ephesians 1:3-14. How does Paul describe the effects/benefits of being united to Christ?

v. 3: “in Christ”

v. 10: “in him”

v. 4: “in him”

v. 11: “in him”

v. 5: “through Jesus Christ”

v. 12: “in Christ”

v. 6: “in the Beloved”

v. 13a: “in him”

v. 7: “in him”

v. 13b: “in him”

v. 9: “in Christ”

9. How can you work the spiritual reality of being “in Christ” into your heart, mind and life on a daily basis?

