

# YOU ARE

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*Presented at Trinity Community Church, San Rafael, California, on Sunday, March 5, 2006*

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Do you know who you are? Who would you say you are?

Most identify themselves by what they do...I am a dentist. I am a businessman. I am a teacher. I am a minister. I am homeless.

Others identify themselves by their heritage or nationality...I am Scottish and Irish. I am from Mexico. I am a fourth generation Californian. I am a mutt.

Some, by their education...I studied at Yale. I am a PhD from Harvard. I have a degree by correspondence. I am a high school dropout.

The Apostle Paul was once like these:

*"...circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:5-6).*

Of course, some will always identify themselves by what they have accomplished, or what they have endured...I hold the world record for consecutive Sunday School attendance. I am a three-time local spelling bee champion. I am on my fourth marriage. I did ten years in the Big Q. I have had cancer twice, open-heart surgery three times, both my knees are man-made, and I have been shot in the leg and the hand and the ear. I broke every bone in both arms and legs snowboarding!

That's either *chutzpah* or lunacy. The Apostle Paul had *chutzpah* (that's Yiddish for boldness). He once boasted:

*"Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ?—I speak as a fool—I am more: in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (2 Corinthians 11:22-27).*

I have said "once" concerning Paul, because all of that changed for him. Late in life he gained a new identity, that is, a new way of speaking of himself and most importantly, a new way of thinking about himself:

*"But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith" (Philippians 3:7-9).*

"Found in Him." Not known for my background, my heritage, my education, my achievements, my wealth...but for my relationship with Jesus Christ. Known, not even as my own, but as His. Everything right about me is because of Him. I owe Him my life.

I don't have to pretend. I don't have to hide. I am what I am, in the grace of God.

How simple is that moniker. How uninflated. How liberated.

Now that I think of it, God does the same. No endless list of attributes or accomplishments, and no excuses, but simply this: *"I AM WHAT I AM."* In the original language, it was even more timeless, since it also meant "I have been what I have been," or "I will be what I will be." God is. He is Himself. And He is good.

You know, that is my goal: to simply be myself, and be good. To be good without striving. To please God, without sweating it. To be so in tune with Him that my desires really become His desires.

## A New Beginning

Do you know how it starts? It starts just like Paul described it: *"not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith"* (Philippians 3:9). Give up all that inferior stuff and get to know Christ personally. Any other kind of righteousness or approval is cheap and hollow and fleeting by comparison.

Then you let God define and describe you. You take your identity and purpose from what *He* says about you, instead of anyone else. For instance, here's a starter list:

### You Are Valuable

*"And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; **you are of more value than many sparrows**"* (Matthew 10:28-31).

Sparrows are cheap by men's standards; you can buy two for a penny. But in God's economy, not one of them is unimportant or unnecessary. And yet, you are more valuable to Him than many of them.

### You Are Family

*"Now, therefore, **you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God**, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord"* (Ephesians 2:19-21).

You once were distant and unfamiliar to God and His ways, but all that is changing. Now you belong, just like the saints of old; yes, even you. You are members of God's household, adopted as His own.

### You Are Sons

*"For **you are all sons of God** through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). *"Therefore **you are no longer a slave but a son**, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ"* (Galatians 4:7).*

Sonship is a privileged position. You belong to God, not as His property, but as His child; not by your works—even your works of obedience—but by His love.

## You Are The Body

*“Now **you are the body of Christ**, and members individually” (1 Corinthians 12:27).*

You are members of the body of Christ upon the Earth. You represent Him, by your speech and by your actions.

## You Are An Heir

*“And if you are Christ’s, then **you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs** according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29).*

Jesus Christ is the seed of Abraham to whom God’s promise has been passed down. Since you are His, you share in that promise. What is the promise? Essentially, it is an everlasting relationship with God through a spiritual connection that produces a prosperous life.

## You Are The Temple

*“Do you not know that **you are the temple of God** and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).*

*“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and **you are not your own**? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).*

*“And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For **you are the temple of the living God**. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people’” (2 Corinthians 6:16).*

Mysteriously, marvelously, God has taken up residence in you, if you have put your trust in Jesus Christ. Your body has become His dwelling and His temple of worship. The Spirit of God is in you. He is with you at all times. Live like it.

## You Are Friends

He said, *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends. **You are My friends** if you do whatever I command you” (John 15:14).*

What could be better than being friends with the Mighty God?

## You Are Chosen

*“But **you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people**, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are **now the people of God**, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy” (1 Peter 2:9-10).*

You are His — chosen, royalty, separated from sin, united to God and each other — the people of God. You once were not, but now you are.

## You Are Siblings

*“The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men... They love the best places at feasts, the best seats in the synagogues, greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called by men, ‘Rabbi, Rabbi.’ But you, do not be called ‘Rabbi’; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and **you are all brethren**. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called teachers; for One is your Teacher, the Christ. But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Matthew 23:2-12).*

As God’s people, you are siblings — equally loved, equally privileged, equally dependent. Live as brothers and sisters.

## You Are Light

*“For you were once darkness, but now **you are light in the Lord**. Walk as children of light (...in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:8-10).*

You already live in the light with Him. Now, walk in the light with Him, too.

## You Are Disciples

*“Then Jesus said to those...who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, **you are My disciples indeed**. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31-32). “By this all will know that **you are My disciples**, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).*

You are Christ’s followers. He teaches you what is good. Follow His lead. Live His love.

## You Are Salt

*“**You are the salt of the earth**; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men” (Matthew 5:13).*

Resist evil and corruption. If you do not, who will? The only thing required for evil to triumph is for good people to do nothing.

## You Are A Lamp

*“**You are the light of the world**. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:14-16).*

The light of a single match is as a hundred lamps in a room full of darkness. Wherever you go, let your light shine for Christ’s sake. Make His name glorious!

## **You Are New**

It is not where you came from nor who your parents were that determines your future.

It is not what you have done or failed to do that decides what you will do.

*“If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes”* (Mark 9:23).

Not because of who you’ve been, but because of what Jesus has done, you have a brand new start.

Not because of what you’ve done, but because of who He is, you have a new identity.

He is everything you need Him to be, both now and forever. Will you become what He wants you to be?