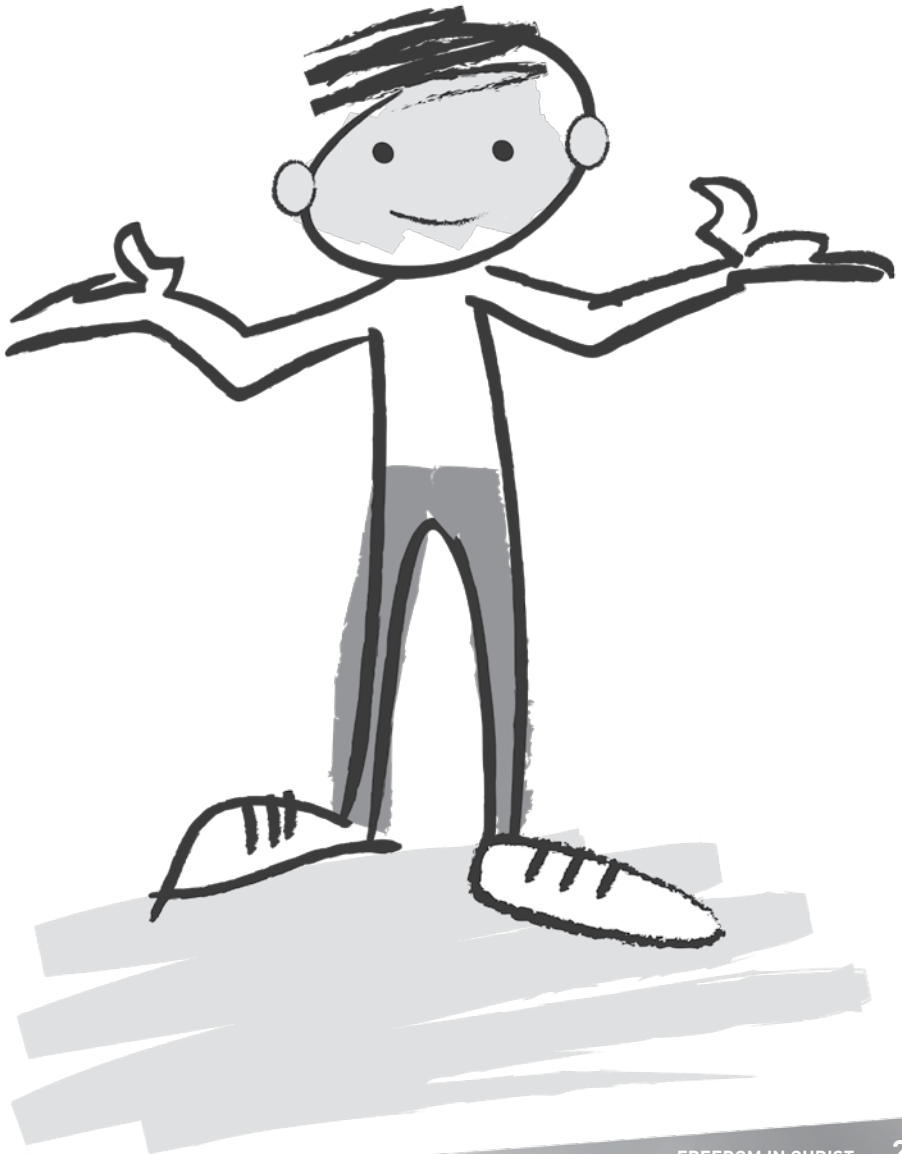


Who Am I?





WHAT'S IT ABOUT?

OBJECTIVE: To realize that deep down inside we are now completely new creations in Christ, “holy ones” who are accepted, secure, and significant.

FOCUS VERSE: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. [2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV]

FOCUS TRUTH: Your decision to follow Christ was the defining moment of your life and led to a complete change in who you now are.

It's time to start the Freedom In Christ app (see page 7)! Enter the date of today's session and for seven days it will give you some short nuggets of truth to consider.

Steve Goss has written four short books that correspond to the four parts of the course (see page 6). The first in the series, *Free To Be Yourself*, corresponds to Part A of the course (the first two sessions). Read up to page 59 in the book for the material that relates to this session.



WELCOME

Spend a couple of minutes in pairs finding out as much as you can about each other. Then, in no more than 30 seconds, answer this question about your partner. “Who is he/she?”



WORSHIP

God's plans and promises. Psalm 33:10–11, Job 42:2, Proverbs 19:21.



WORD

Who Are You Really?

Perhaps the most fundamental truth we need to know is who we are. What makes up the real “me” or “you”?



The Original Design

We were made “in God’s image” (Genesis 1:26), and God is spirit. So at the most fundamental level of our being we too have a **spiritual** nature. It is not our body, our outer person, that is created in the image of God; it’s our inner person.

Scientists confirm that our mitochondrial DNA proves that we are all descended from the same woman and our Y-chromosomes prove that we are all descended from the same man. The Bible tells us that our ultimate ancestors were called Adam and Eve. Christians disagree about exactly how God created them but we all agree that God inspired their story to be written down to communicate some very significant truth.

Adam’s spirit — his inner person, the core of his being — was connected to his body. In other words he was **physically** alive. Just as we are. But Adam’s spirit was also connected to God. Which meant that he was also **spiritually** alive. That is how we were designed to be too: on the one hand our spirit connected to our physical body, and on the other hand our spirit connected to God.

This spiritual connection to God gave Adam three very significant things:

1. Acceptance

He had an intimate relationship with God. He could talk with Him at any time and have His full attention.

2. Significance

He was given a purpose: to rule over the birds of the sky, the beasts of the field and the fish of the sea (Genesis 1:26).

3. Security

He was totally safe and secure in God's presence. Everything he needed was provided for — food, shelter, companionship — everything!

You were created for that kind of life: complete acceptance by God and other people; significance — a real purpose; and absolute security: no need to worry about a single thing.



The Consequence Of The Fall

Adam and Eve were told, “You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die” (Genesis 2:17).

They died spiritually. The connection that their spirit had to God was broken and they were separated from God. Consequently, all their descendants were born physically alive but spiritually dead.

The **acceptance** they enjoyed, that amazing intimate moment-by-moment relationship with God, changed into a crushing sense of rejection and we all know that feeling.

That sense of **significance** was replaced by a sense of guilt and shame and we’re all born with it.

And that sense of **security** turned to fear. The first emotion expressed by Adam was, “I was afraid” (Genesis 3:10). “Don’t be afraid” is the most repeated commandment in the Bible.

So all of us are born into an environment that’s not at all like the one we were designed for. Instinctively we want to find our way back to the acceptance, significance, and security we were meant to have.



PAUSE FOR THOUGHT 1

What prompted you to come on the *Freedom In Christ Course* and what are your hopes for it?

What were the consequences of Adam and Eve’s sin? What are the ways it caused their relationship with God to change?

What sort of things in our daily lives promise to make us feel accepted, significant, and secure?



What Jesus Came To Do

The only solution to the predicament that we've looked at is to restore our relationship with God, to become spiritually alive again.

That's why God sent Jesus. Like Adam at the very beginning He was both physically and spiritually alive. But unlike Adam, Jesus never sinned.

Why did Jesus come? To forgive my sins? Well, yes, but that was just a means to an end. Jesus Himself said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

What did Adam lose? **Life**. What did Jesus come to give us? **Life**.

When we become Christians our spirit is reconnected to God's Spirit. At that moment we get back the life we were always meant to have with its acceptance, significance, and security. Eternal life is not just something you get when you die. It's a whole different quality of life **right now**.

A Saint — Not A Sinner

So, who are you? The moment you became a Christian was the defining moment of your life. Everything changed for you. The language the Bible uses is dramatic:

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Can you be partly old creation and partly new? No!

For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. (Ephesians 5:8)

Can you be both light and darkness? Not according to that verse.

Many of us have come to think of ourselves as “a sinner saved by grace”. You certainly **were** a sinner, and you were saved by grace alone. But, here’s an interesting verse:

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

It seems to imply that we’re no longer sinners. In the New Testament, the word “sinner” appears over 300 times and is clearly a shorthand way of referring to people who are not yet Christians. You never see it applied to a Christian, at least not in terms of who they are **now**, only in terms of who they used to be.



There's another word that is shorthand for believers and you'll find it over 200 times. Traditionally in English this word has been translated "saint". It means "holy one".

Yes, you are holy. Set apart for God. Special. At the moment you became a Christian — even if you can't pinpoint the exact moment — you became completely new in your inner person. Who you are deep down inside changed from being someone who couldn't help but displease God to someone who is accepted, significant, and secure in Christ.

Galatians 3:27 says that we have "clothed ourselves with" Christ. Perhaps you have understood that to mean that you're still the same dirty, rotten no-good person deep down inside, but it's all covered up by Christ, so that when God looks at you, He doesn't really see you, He sees Jesus. But that's not at all what the Bible says. It's more like the story Jesus told about a son who messed up badly and came crawling back home dirty, smelly and broken, expecting to be punished. His father unexpectedly welcomed him with open arms and within a few minutes of his arrival gave him a fine, expensive robe to wear (Luke 15:22).

Did the robe make him acceptable because it covered up all the dirt? No. The dirt was on the outside. It wasn't the robe that made him a son. He was given the robe because he was a son. It was the appropriate dress for a son.



Regardless of the mess you may have made or how bad you feel about yourself, the truth is that, if you have accepted Jesus as your Lord, you are now a son or daughter of God Himself. You're righteous, clean, and holy on the inside. You can clothe yourself with Christ because at the deepest level of your being He has already made you holy. When God the Father looks at you now, He doesn't see Christ covering your mess. He sees you just as you are: a new creation, holy, wonderful. And He delights in you.

Who you are now is a **fact** and Satan can't change it. But if he can get you to believe a lie about who you are, he can cripple your walk with God.

No child of God is inferior or useless, but if Satan can get you to believe that you are, that's how you'll act.

No child of God is dirty or abandoned any more. But if Satan can get you to believe that you are, that's how you'll act.

"You don't know what's been done to me." It doesn't change who you are in Christ. "You don't know what failures I've had as a Christian." It doesn't change who you are in Christ.

Jesus loved you when you were still a sinner. He's not going to stop now that you're a saint.

"But what about my future sins?" When Jesus died once for all, how many of your sins were future? All of them!

You're not saved by how you **behave** but by what you **believe**. And life as a Christian is more of the same. It's not about trying to behave differently. It's about knowing the truth, which then works out into your behaviour. This course is not about learning to behave differently but to believe differently.



PAUSE FOR THOUGHT 2

John 10:10 says that Jesus came to bring us life in all its fullness. What do you think that might look like in practice?

How might knowing that we are “saints” or “holy ones” instead of “sinners” change how we see ourselves?

What are some of the things that could prevent us from fully knowing that we are now new creations in Christ who are completely forgiven?

What Happens When I Go Wrong?

One of the main problems we have with seeing ourselves as saints rather than sinners is that we are painfully aware that we still sin. You may have a problem with snoring or burping, but that doesn't mean you have to introduce yourself to people by saying, “Hi, my name is X and I'm a snorer / burper!” You may snore or burp but that's not who you **are**. It's what you **do**. There is a big difference between the two.



It's what we are deep down in our inner person that defines our identity, not what we do. If you are a Christian, at the very core of your being you now share in God's divine nature. We are now new creations; the old has gone, the new has come.

However, that doesn't mean that we are living in a state of sinless perfection: The Bible is clear: "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." (1 John 1:8). We will go wrong from time to time.

Perhaps an accurate way to describe us would be "saints who sometimes sin."

Sin is a serious matter. It gives the devil a foothold in our lives, stops us being fruitful, and disrupts the harmony of our fellowship with God. But it doesn't fundamentally change our relationship with Him.

When you were born again, you became God's child. Spiritually speaking you received His DNA — God's own Spirit lives in you (Romans 8:9) and you now share His very nature (2 Peter 1:4). Nothing can separate you from God's love (Romans 8:39). No one can snatch you out of His hand (John 10:28).

When we do wrong, we need simply to go to our loving Father, agree with Him that we were wrong, change our thinking about the sin, turn away from it, and know our sin is already forgiven because of Christ's death.

Nothing you do can make God love you any more — or any less. If you were the only person in the whole world who needed Christ to die, He would have died just for you. That's how special you are!

Are You "In Christ"?

Does all we have been looking at apply to you? If you are a Christian the answer is a definite yes — but if you are not a Christian it does not yet apply.

What is a Christian? Someone who chooses to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and has made a definite decision to put Him in charge of their life. If you are not certain that you are a Christian or you know you are not, and you want to take that step, you can do it right now. It's not complicated. But it will transform you from the inside out. No one is too bad or has gone so far away from God that they are disqualified. It's open to absolutely everyone. No exceptions.

Simply speak to Jesus out loud or in your mind in normal everyday language. Tell Him that you receive the free gift of spiritual life that He came to give you, ask Him to forgive everything you have ever done wrong, and tell Him that you are making a choice to put Him in charge of your life.

You could, for example, use these words:

“Thank you, Jesus, Son of God, for dying in my place to take away all of my sin. Right now I accept Your gifts of life and forgiveness. I choose to make You Lord of my life so that I can become someone completely new. Thank You that I am now Your holy child and that I belong to You.”

If you have sincerely taken that step (whether you did it today or 80 years ago), all of the statements we read in the “Who I Am In Christ” list now definitely apply to you!



REFLECTION

Get together with one other person and have the first person read the “Who I Am In Christ” statements to the other changing “I am” to “You are”. Then swap around.

Spend a few minutes discussing the statements and the verses they are based on. Share which ones impacted you and why. Spend some time praying for each other, that you will have a deeper understanding that your significance, security, and acceptance are found in Him.



WITNESS

If you were asked by a neighbour to explain the difference between a Christian and someone who is not yet a Christian, what would you say? Do you think that a Christian is in any way better than a non-Christian? What would you say to someone who asks you, “Why should I become a Christian?”



IN THE COMING WEEK

Read the “Who I Am In Christ” list out loud every day. Then pick one of the truths that is particularly meaningful to you and spend some time reading it in its context and asking God to help you understand it more fully.

Who I Am In Christ

I Am Accepted

I renounce the lie that I am rejected, unloved, or shameful. In Christ I am accepted.
God says:

I am God's child (John 1:12)

I am Christ's friend (John 15:5)

I have been justified (Romans 5:1)

I am united with the Lord and I am one spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17)

I have been bought with a price: I belong to God (1 Corinthians 6:19–20)

I am a member of Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:27)

I am a saint, a holy one (Ephesians 1:1)

I have been adopted as God's child (Ephesians 1:5)

I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:18)

I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins (Colossians 1:14)

I am complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10)

I Am Secure

I renounce the lie that I am guilty, unprotected, alone, or abandoned. In Christ I am secure.

God says:

I am free from condemnation (Romans 8:1–2)

I am assured that all things work together for good (Romans 8:28)

I am free from any condemning charges against me (Romans 8:31–34)

I cannot be separated from the love of God (Romans 8:35–39)

I have been established, anointed, and sealed by God (2 Corinthians 1:21–22)

I am confident that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected (Philippians 1:6)

I am a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20)

I am hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3)

I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7)

I can find grace and mercy to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16)

I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me (1 John 5:18)

I Am Significant

I renounce the lie that I am worthless, inadequate, helpless, or hopeless. In Christ I am significant.

God says:

I am the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13–14)

I am a branch of the true vine, Jesus, a channel of His life (John 15:1,5)

I have been chosen and appointed by God to bear fruit (John 15:16)

I am a personal, Spirit-empowered witness of Christ's (Acts 1:8)

I am a temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16)

I am a minister of reconciliation for God (2 Corinthians 5:17–21)

I am a fellow worker with God (2 Corinthians 6:1)

I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:6)

I am God's workmanship, created for good works (Ephesians 2:10)

I may approach God with freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12)

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me! (Philippians 4:13)

I am not the great "I Am," but by the grace of God I am what I am. (See Exodus 3:14; John 8:24, 28, 58; 1 Corinthians 15:10.)