



Life's Purpose Transformed

"...to them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles, the glorious riches of this mystery which is Christ in you, the hope of glory"
(Colossians 1:27).

God's love for me is real and evident...I am loved by God so that I might love the world in the same manner...that I might make His glory known!



This teaching outline was developed in support of the resource, *Transforming Love* for small groups. Check out this resource and many others today at: greatcommandment.net/resources

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I. INTRODUCTION

Identity is one of the key issues facing our world today—who we are, what we are here for...our life's purpose. The truth of who we are is under attack, and it is not just us. The identity of who Jesus actually is has been under attack ever since His time in the desert with Satan (Matthew 4:1–11). Today we see it being twisted by inaccurate books, movies, and misinformed bloggers. Sadly, the identity of the church has also been mired and muddled by political and moral controversy.

Who we truly are is, and always has been, found in Jesus.

Let's explore together what it means to have our identity in Jesus by discovering the truth in Paul's letter to the Colossians. The apostle Paul wrote this letter to deal with certain challenges in the church at Colossae, in modern day Turkey. Colossae sat on the river Maeander on the Anatolian Plateau. Paul sent his friend, Epaphras, to lead and mature the church in the city and share the gospel with the area (Colossians 1:7). Apparently, the church was forgetting the truth and power of Jesus Christ, and as a result, they were forgetting who they were in Him. This was because of the work of a group of people called "Gnostics" who claimed special knowledge of who Jesus really was.

From studying Colossians we can discover our worth, value, and identity in Christ.

It's no different today. Many are swayed by false presentations of Jesus in today's media-driven, internet-heavy world where everyone has their own opinion about truth—it's as if truth itself is under attack. When the fundamental construct of truth is distorted, the truth of Jesus becomes questioned; the result is that our own identity gets distorted as well.

To deal with the Gnostics, Paul wrote the letter to remind the Colossian Christians of who Christ is, and thereby, to remind them of their worth, their value, and their identity in Jesus. That same letter Paul wrote almost two thousand years ago is just as relevant today.

II. CHRIST'S IDENTITY SHAPES OUR IDENTITY

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven (Colossians 1:15–20).

In order to discover our identity, we must discover who Christ is. Paul discusses how central Christ is in Colossians 1:15–2:9. Let's take a moment together and reflect on some of the identity traits Paul described.

- Christ is the image of the invisible God, firstborn of creation (1:15).
- Christ is the Creator (1:16).
- Christ is the glue that holds creation together;
- Christ is the clue for understanding the world and creation (1:17).
- Christ is the head of the church;
- Christ is the premier figure of all of creation;
- Christ is the one who defeats death (1:18).
- Christ is the fullness of God;
- Christ is the one who reconciles creation to Himself by His death on the cross. In this act of love, Christ makes peace between God and creation and heals broken humanity (1:20).
- Christ is fully God and fully man (2:9).

All of the points indicated above, when seen together, represent what Paul calls the *"mystery which has been hidden from the past ages"* (Colossians 1:26).

"Christ is fully God and fully man"
(Colossians 2:9).

The “mystery” is that God has brought Christ into the world to reconcile not just Israel, but the entirety of creation to Himself—Israel, the Gentiles, and creation itself! God did this through Jesus Christ, “in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:14).

Christ came to provide life because of God’s great love for us.

ITS TRUE! His love has conquered death, sin, and hate. His love has brought peace between humanity and God. Christ is the clue to show us how God loves you and me! God’s love is extravagant enough to send Jesus, God’s own Son, to die for us.

“...the same love [God] has for his Beloved One, Jesus, he has for us”
(Ephesians 4:6 TPT).



L4. Rejoicing regularly in my identity as “His beloved”

God loved us so that we might make known God’s love to the world.

Encountering Jesus

“He has brought me to his banquet hall, And his banner over me is love”
(Song of Solomon 2:4).

“For it was always in his perfect plan to adopt us as his delightful children, through our union with Jesus, the Anointed One, so that his tremendous love that cascades over us would glorify his grace—for the same love he has for his Beloved One, Jesus, he has for us” (Ephesians 4:6 TPT).

We are deeply loved—by the Creator of the universe!

Take a minute to pray and rejoice in your identity as God’s beloved.

“Lord, thank You so much for loving me just the way I am. I appreciate how You sacrificed Your son to make a way for a loving and intimate relationship with me. You are amazing ,and I love You.”

As wonderful as it is to be loved, God’s love has a distinct aim in mind: to bring us to participate in His expression of love and life in the world. God loved us so that we might make known God’s love to the world.

This is what Paul means by saying, “God wanted to make known to those among the Gentiles the glorious wealth of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ” (Colossians 1:27–28).

How does this apply to us personally?

It means that our identity is found in Jesus Christ and His work. As He revealed the love and glory of God in the world, so we too find our identity in making His glory known to the world.

III. IN CHRIST, WE FIND LOVE'S ULTIMATE HOPE

God sent Christ in the world so that we might participate in God's redemptive activity in the world. As God is the source of life and love, He has offered humanity to make this glory known by sharing the truth of Jesus to others. As we believe in Christ, we experience the transformation from death to life, from darkness to light, from hate to love. As we live in relationship with Jesus, God invites us to share with the world the good news of Jesus' love to the world.

Our participation in Christ's redemptive love for us and the world is love's ultimate hope.

We make God's glory known in a number of very practical ways, according to Paul's letter to the Colossians. Among other things, we reveal God's glory:

- In what we say (Colossians 1:28).
- In how we live (Colossians 3:1–11).
- In how we treat one another (Colossians 3:12–17).
- In our lives at home (Colossians 3:18–4:1).

All of these facets of life are to be devoted to Christ. Paul uses a wonderful image to communicate this. He says to put off the "old person" and put on the "new person" (Colossians 3:1–11). The new person looks like our Creator, Jesus Himself (Colossians 3:10).

All of the aspects of our lifestyle are both training grounds to fashion us into the image of our Saviour as well as living opportunities to share His "message, to speak the mystery of the Messiah" (Colossians 4:3) to the world around us.

Engage Community

Pause and consider for a moment that God sees you as a bearer of His glory.

How does this impact your heart?

Reflect upon your lifestyle for a moment: your relationships, personal life, family, work, and spiritual life. Is there a part of you that may be hindering your role to make God's glory known? Consider why this may be the case.

Have a time of quiet confession with the Lord. Consider praying something like this:

"Lord, forgive me please. My lifestyle has hindered my role as one who proclaims Your glory at _____ (home/office/relationships/lifestyle/spiritual life, etc.) because I _____."

Allow the Holy Spirit to minister forgiveness to you. Then, break into small groups of two or three and confess to each other how you feel God is challenging you to change so that you may be free to engage in Christ's mission of revealing the glory of God.

"I believe the Spirit is asking me to change my lifestyle by _____ so that I am free to 'speak the mystery of the Messiah' (Colossians 4:3) to the world around us."



L10. Practicing the presence of the Lord, yielding to the Spirit's work of Christ-likeness

M7. Faithfully sharing of time, talent, gifts, and resources in furthering His mission

IV. CONSIDER GOD'S GREAT BELIEF IN US

When you consider what God has done through Jesus, consider His great love for us. Consider love's aim—to bring us into His family and participate in spreading Christ's love and life to the world!

What does this mean to us personally?

It means, amazingly, that God believes in us!

Think about this for a moment: GOD BELIEVES IN YOU AND ME!

This is a wonderfully exciting truth. He takes us wherever we are, wherever we are from, whatever skin color, whatever nationality, and from whatever family to make us heralds of God's glory! He believes that we can do it.

GOD BELIEVES IN YOU AND ME!



W1. Frequently being led by the Spirit into deeper love for the One who wrote the Word

Colossians 3:16 Moment:

"Let the Word of Christ dwell deeply in you."

Pastor/Teacher:

Pause during this time and vulnerably share about your own reaction to God's relational love for you.

"When I think about how much God loves me, I feel _____, and I am moved to share _____ with _____."

Experience Scripture

God expresses real relational love towards us. In fact, the Scriptures record that the Lord:

- Accepts us when we fail (Romans 15:7).
- Encourages us when we are down (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
- Supports us when we struggle (Galatians 6:2).
- Comforts us in pain (2 Corinthians 3:7).
- Delivers us in times of trouble (Zephaniah 3:17).
- Rejoices over us with singing (Zephaniah 3:17).

When you consider God's belief in you and His relational love towards us as we proclaim His glory, how does your heart react?

Re-read the ways that God shows us relational love in the scriptures above and take a moment to express how you feel back to the Lord.

Now consider how you might express this kind of relational love to others in your own life. This expression of love to others actively brings you to participate as a herald of God's glory!

"When I think about how much God loves me, I feel _____, and I am moved to share _____ with _____."

*“Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget none of His
benefits; who pardons all your
iniquities, who heals all your
diseases; who redeems your
life from the pit, who crowns
you with lovingkindness and
compassion; who satisfies your
years with good things, so
that your youth is renewed like
the eagle. The Lord performs
righteous deeds and judgments
for all who are oppressed”*
(Psalm 103:2–6).

V. CONCLUSIONS

Scripture reminds us to “*praise the Lord*” and to “*forget not all His benefits*” (Psalm 103:2). As we conclude, let’s consider the goodness and the benefits of the Lord.

We discovered that God’s love for us is incredibly deep and relational. We learned that part of our purpose was to just be loved!

We also learned God desires to shape us, to form us into the image of Jesus. This process was not just for our betterment, but as Colossians admonishes us, it is to reflect God’s glory to those around us.

Our identity is found in:

- God’s love for us.
- God’s desire for us to become more Christ-like.
- God’s mission to share His glory—His transforming *love* with the world, through us.

Let’s close in prayer.

Heavenly Father,

We pause to consider the wonder that Your glory has taken residence in us, and that You have offered us the opportunity to reflect Christ and bear Your glory. I know that this is a result of Your great love and Your grace in our lives. I praise You for:

- *Loving me.*
- *Healing me.*
- *Your grace and compassion.*
- *Your goodness.*

We ask for empowerment by the Holy Spirit to put on the ‘new person’ and be conformed to the image of Christ. We want the world around us to see You in us... we pray that our lifestyle would reflect You, Lord Jesus. We ask that You would continue to reveal more and more the mystery of ‘Christ in us, our hope of glory’ (Colossians 1:27). It is in Christ’s name that we ask this, Amen.