

The Life-Choking Depression You Feel Boils Down to One Simple Root

Do you feel like you've lost your joy?

Do you feel like you're flailing in the wind as life pulls you along at warp speed, like you've lost all control?

Do you feel a frustration and emptiness inside that you can't seem to define?

So much of the disappointment and depression, loss of joy and control we experience as believers boil down to one simple truth.

We don't recognize our identity in Christ.

I know a lot is said today about who we are in Christ and recognizing our identity in Him, but I believe that many don't know how to identify with Christ. They don't know how to discover who they are in Him.

That is why over the next few weeks I'll be talking about that very thing. But let's first look at what the Bible says about our identity in Christ.

It is so easy for Christians today to suffer an identity crisis!

We're told how we should look, how much we should weigh, what we should wear, what kind of hair and makeup we should have.

The media has established an ideal look for men and women and if you don't fit that ideal you're marginalized.

Women should be 5 feet, 7 inches; wear a size 2; have a thigh gap; wear skinny jeans; and have long, straight hair.

If you fit that ideal, you're accepted.

But if you're 5 feet, 2 inches; are a size 14 or more; find that yoga pants tell too much truth about your cellulite, and even your mom-do isn't attractive anymore, you're invisible and unacceptable.

But how does our identity in Christ square up with this ideal?

As a matter of fact, media in general plays a central role in how we feel about ourselves—including social media!

Studies have shown time and again that while social media has done good things, such as connecting long-lost friends and loved ones, too much of it leaves us feeling depressed and empty.

This is partly because it is so one-dimensional.

We see what our friends let us see.

We see a filtered view of their lives, but we see our own life in 3-D, in all of it's messy glory, and then compare our messy 3-D image with their filtered, edited, one-dimensional image.

This scenario is just like the ideal that Hollywood has created—starved, operated on, drugged, filtered, edited and Photoshopped!

If we're not careful, we start to allow things other than God's Word to define us:

- Blogs
- Magazines
- Social media
- Movies and TV

And we begin to define ourselves by our career, ethnicity, economic class or appearance.

Even worse, our past mistakes, disappointments, hurts,

rejection and abandonment begin to define us—the fact that we were raped, had an abortion, grew up in a single-parent home or grew up in foster care or an orphanage; we were an abuse victim, used drugs, were an alcoholic or were homeless for a season.

these things and more begin to form an identity for us until all of life is lived from that prism.

But what does the Bible say about our identity?

1. God has no ideal. *“You brought my inner parts into being; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will praise you, for You made me with fear and wonder; marvelous are Your works, and You know me completely. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in secret, and intricately put together in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw me unformed, yet in Your book all my days were written, before any of them came into being” (Ps. 139:13-16).*

The whole idea that there is an ideal physical image is not only a lie, it is a strategy of Satan to keep us in a cycle of striving for what God never intended and depressed because we cannot attain it. God created you the way you are for a purpose and a part of recognizing your identity in Him is learning to love and accept yourself as He created you.

2. Your past is an event, not your identity. *“So from now on we do not regard anyone according to the flesh. Yes, though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet we do not regard Him as such from now on. Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away. Look, all things have become new. All this is from God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their sins against them, and has entrusted to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, as though*

God were pleading through us. We implore you in Christ's stead: Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:16-20).

When Christ forgives our sins, a miraculous thing takes place.

There is a theological term for it: Justification. Justification is a five-syllable word that literally means "just as if you've never sinned."

That is what Jesus' work on the cross did for us. It completely did away with our past so that it is as though it never happened. And this work of grace needs to be extended to those who hurt us as well!

Just as Christ forgave us to such a degree, so His grace can enable us to forgive others in this same way.

3. Your ethnicity, economic status and career describe your birth and situation; they don't define you. *"You are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, and there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26-28).*

Now that we are in Christ, our heritage can no longer be an excuse for certain behaviors. Sure, you may be of Irish descent, but that doesn't mean that you have no control over your temper. You are now a daughter of God! That is now your heritage, and the fruit of the Spirit should be growing in your life!

Maybe you live on food stamps right now, that doesn't have to define you because you are a daughter of the King of all kings who owns the cattle on a thousand hills! You are the richest woman in the world! Rich in all things that money cannot buy.

Your career is something you do; it's not who you are. Who you are is an ambassador of Christ, regardless of whether you

clean toilets or have a corner office. He sent you here to do one thing alone, extend the kingdom of God on Earth.

Plunder hell to populate heaven!

Now do you see why recognizing our identity in Christ is so vital?

Our identity, whether properly recognized as being in Christ or not, clearly becomes the prism through which we live out our everyday lives.

And if we are to live lives that glorify Christ and fulfill the purpose for which He created us, we must recognize and embrace our identity in Jesus Christ. {eoa}

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