

CHANGE YOUR LIFE. CHANGE YOUR WORLD.

ACTIVATED

Vol 25 • Issue 8

OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

Discovering God's plan

Golden Repairs

A more beautiful
vessel

The Heart Spa

Clay in the Potter's
hands





PERSONALLY SPEAKING OUR PLACE WITHIN GOD'S FAMILY

Have you ever met someone who asks “How are you?” not as a cordial salutation but with genuine concern? And then that person takes the time to quietly listen to you without interruption, without feeling the need to advise you or tell you of their own similar experiences. As a result, you have this

wonderful feeling that you are genuinely loved.

In contrast, there is an old joke about a conversation overheard at a party. One fellow says to the other, “That’s enough talk about me, now tell me about you. What do *you* think of *me*?” This constant need for approval through self-promotion usually reveals a hidden insecurity. But does it really work to hide behind a façade?

The first example above reminds us of people who can be concerned about the world around them without using themselves as a reference point. They are likely at peace with who they are. How do we find such peace? Once we begin to realize how loved we are by Christ—how He accepts us despite all our frailties and shortcomings—then the need for approval by others begins to fade.

And that’s just the beginning. As we learn more about our place within God’s family as *heirs* of His many promises, we also begin to see the mission that He has set before us as *ambassadors* of His love. Maria Fontaine’s article on pages 4–6 explores all that is in store for us as we grow to understand our identity in Christ.

Our hope is that this month’s issue will be a blessing as you learn of “the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27), and grow deeper in the knowledge of His love for you and of who you are in Him.

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THE MOST TRUE THING

BY MARIE ALVERO



ONE OF THE BIG CHALLENGES WE FACE TODAY IS MANAGING OUR EXPECTATIONS. What do we use as a gauge for a life well lived? Everything from the styling of our pantry to the trajectory of our portfolios feels like something we should care about and improve. It can feel like lack or failure defines us, and it can be hard to know what is true about ourselves.

Recently I pursued something big in my career, something I really wanted; and despite coming oh-so-close and making the first few cuts, ultimately I was turned down. In that moment of disappointment, I felt like the sum of all my past and future failures, and for a minute there I was very, very sad. But when I started calling myself names like “failure” and “loser,” it only took a moment for me to recognize that none of those things are what *God* calls me.

Though I was still disappointed with the rejection, recalling who I was in God’s eyes was enough to steady me. Then I remembered one of my favorite songs:

You say I am loved when I can't feel a thing
You say I am strong when I think I am weak
And You say I am held when I am falling short
And when I don't belong, oh You say I am Yours
And I believe
Oh, I believe
What You say of me
I believe¹

And there you have it. Who does God say that I am?
How does God measure me?

1. “You Say” by Lauren Daigle

“The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children” (Romans 8:16).

God is telling me that I am His child, and *that* is what defines me. I’m already a winner. With Him I am enough. That I belong to God is the most true thing about me.

I have had to trace my identity back to Jesus so many times that I’m pretty good at it. The truth of God’s words has worn a groove in my soul, and I know how to pray this truth over my heart. And when I question it, I just dig a little deeper in the Bible. Every time God’s Word proves I am worthy because of His grace.

You, too, can find your identity in Jesus. You are defined by His love and grace. This doesn’t get you out of the highs and lows of life, but in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Romans 8:37).

MARIE ALVERO IS A FORMER MISSIONARY TO AFRICA AND MEXICO. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES A HAPPY, BUSY LIFE WITH HER HUSBAND AND CHILDREN IN CENTRAL TEXAS, USA. ■

OUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

BY MARIA FONTAINE

WHAT MAKES UP OUR IDENTITY? We are born into this world with many traits, such as gender, ethnicity, nationality, and various strengths and weaknesses. Our culture and environment also influence our attitudes and beliefs, and how we respond to all these factors shapes our human identity.

When we experience a spiritual rebirth by receiving Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we receive a new identity as one of God's children (John 1:12). We discover a whole new range of opportunities to grow and learn and to establish our identity as followers of Jesus. As we continue to grow in our faith and incorporate the teachings of the Bible into our lives, our identity in Christ continues to develop.

So how do we grow in our identity in Christ? One very important way is to study His Word, believe what He says, and apply it to our lives. The more we appropriate what Jesus has told us about who we are and what we are called to do as His followers, the more we can grow in our walk with Him and be transformed into His likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18).



What are the benefits to discovering and developing our identity in Jesus? There are the personal benefits of greater faith and confidence through knowing who we are in Him and that we are unconditionally loved by Him. There is, however, an even *more* compelling reason: the more we grow into our identity in Him, the more evident His Spirit in us becomes to others, as we “let our light shine before others, so that they may see our good works and give glory to God” (Matthew 5:16). This may be the starting point for those who have not yet received Jesus to desire to know



Him and draw
closer to Him.

So many people
in today's world wonder

what their purpose is, what they're meant to achieve, and whether their efforts will make a difference. As Christians, we have a vital mission, given to us by Jesus, which should orient our lives and pursuits. We are called to be "ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us" as we implore people "on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20). Jesus said that as the Father sent Him into the world, even so He has sent us to be witnesses of His truth and love to others (John 17:18–21).

While many people struggle with uncertainty about the future, we can discover what God's personalized will for our lives is. The Bible tells us, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Romans 12:2 NIV). We also can know that God Himself will complete the good work He began in us from the time of our spiritual rebirth. "And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6).

We have the privilege of knowing that we are each chosen and dearly loved by God. "For we know, brothers

and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you" (1 Thessalonians 1:4 NIV). We have been adopted as God's children, and God is our "Abba, Father" (Romans 8:14–15). And Jesus is our friend. "I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15).

In spite of our many flaws and human weaknesses, we are "holy and blameless" in Jesus' eyes and chosen in Him "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4). And in fact, the Bible tells us that God loves us with an everlasting and unfailing love (Jeremiah 31:3 NLT), and rejoices over us "as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride" (Isaiah 62:5). Nothing can ever separate us from the love of God in Jesus—neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor anything else in all creation (Romans 8:38–39).

As Christians, we are citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20), and we have an inheritance of eternal riches. We have been "born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" and "by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Peter 1:3–5). One day, we will sit with Christ in heavenly places to show the "incomparable riches of God's grace, expressed

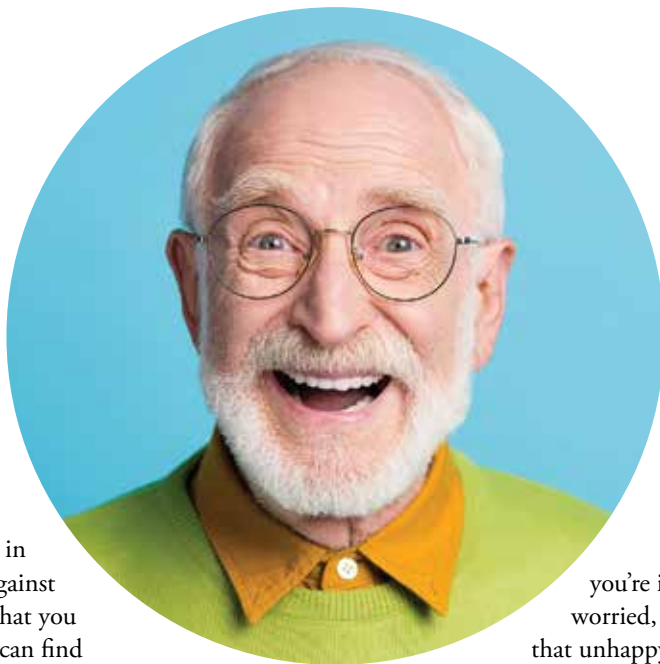


in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6–7 NIV).

It’s important to recognize your identity in Jesus and to have the vision for how you are meant to grow in the future, and who you are called to be in Him. As you study and memorize God’s promises in the Bible and appropriate them personally for your life, you can develop the qualities that are part of your identity in Christ. For example, if you struggle against feeling bound by guilt and the sense that you can never be free of past wrongs, you can find freedom in knowing that Jesus says there is now no more condemnation when you are His (Romans 8:1).

If you feel you are a prisoner to your fears, you can declare in faith that things will change when you trust in Him. “What time I am afraid, I will trust in You” (Psalm 56:3). If your circumstances make you feel small, insignificant, or worthless, you can declare with perfect assurance, “God says that I am His handiwork, His masterpiece; therefore, I know that I’m important to Him” (Ephesians 2:10). If you feel alone and forsaken, you can remind yourself that God has chosen you and He loves you unconditionally (1 Peter 5:7).

When you feel like you have nothing to offer, remember that you are God’s child, and He says He’s given you the greatest job in the world, as His ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:20). If you feel anxiety and stress, or



you’re in turmoil or worried, don’t just stay in that unhappy state. Take Him at His Word that says, “My peace I give unto you” (John 14:27).

Remember, it is God’s opinion about you that counts. You can choose to accept what He has said in His Word about who you are and your identity in Christ and live victoriously! Embrace what God has said about your eternal identity, agree with Him that it’s true of you, and allow Him to transform you into the person He has called you to be.

You can choose to affirm your identity in Christ by embracing the things Jesus has given you as His follower. Commit to making them a part of your life so that your identity becomes more deeply rooted in Him each day. Determine to adjust your thinking to coincide with what God’s Word says about you as His child and heavenly citizen. By doing these things, we open ourselves up to the Spirit of God working in our lives so that we can become all that Jesus promised we can be in this life and the life to come.



MARIA FONTAINE AND HER HUSBAND, PETER AMSTERDAM, ARE DIRECTORS OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL, A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY OF FAITH. ADAPTED FROM THE ORIGINAL ARTICLE. ■

GET INTO THE WATER

—A LESSON FROM ROSES

BY CHRIS MIZRANY

IT ALL STARTED WHEN SOMEONE GAVE MY WIFE A BEAUTIFUL BOUQUET OF WHITE AND PINK ROSES. Somehow, they ended up on the kitchen counter while she looked for a vase. By the time I got home that evening, they were still there and were beginning to droop. My wife asked me to go out and find a vase, but I was in a rush and forgot.

Only the next morning was I reminded when I walked into the kitchen again. A pang of guilt hit me as I went out to purchase a vase, hastily trimmed the stalk ends, and plunged the roses into the water. Then I had to head out again, almost sure I had acted too late.

But when I returned later, I was met with a cheerful greeting and “Thank you for putting the roses in the vase. They’re so pretty!”

Surprised, I stepped in, and there they were—perky, bright, and strong! What a difference water makes!

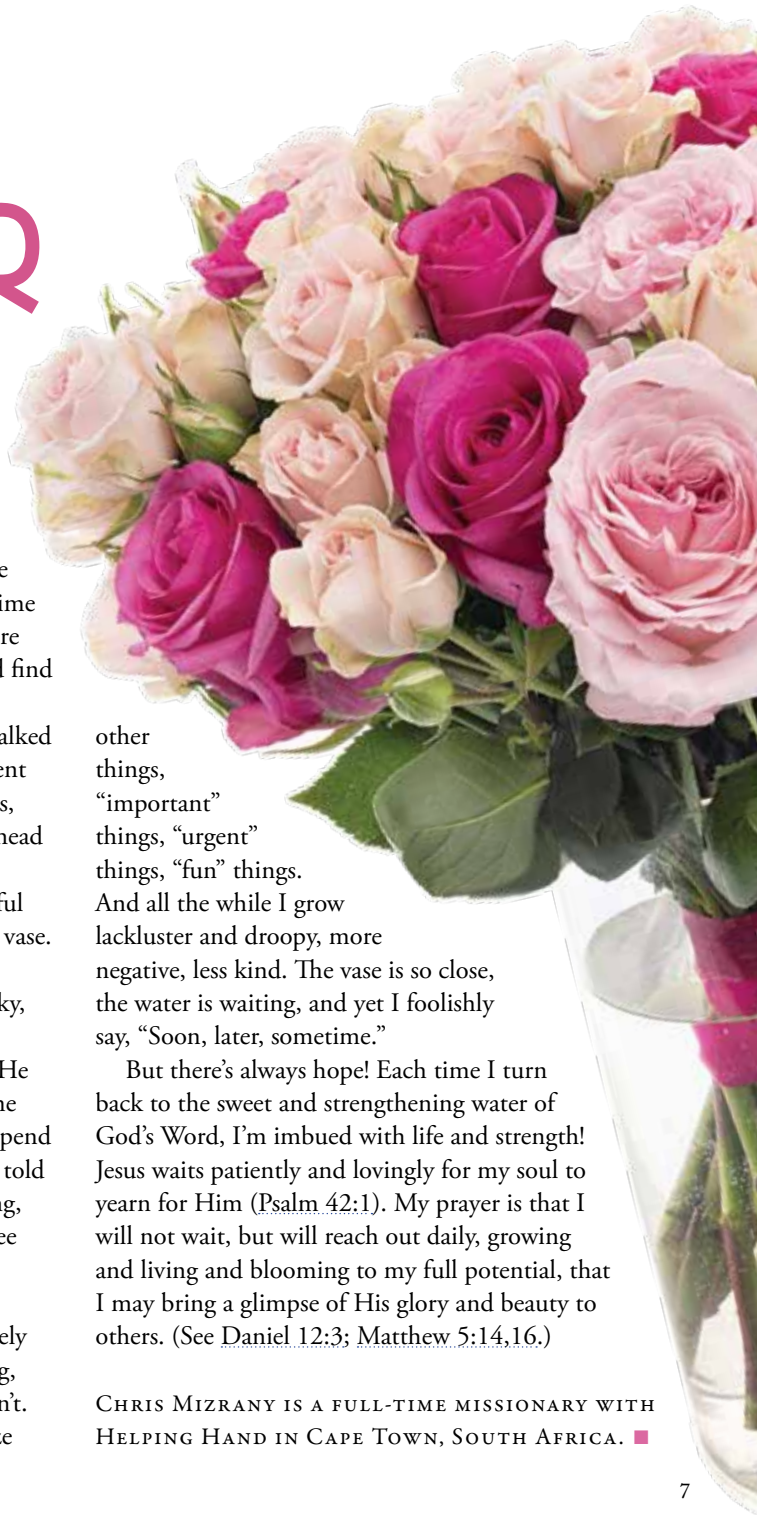
My walk with God started some years ago, when He offered me salvation and I accepted. Then He gave me some guidelines, the most important of which is to spend time with Him absorbing His truth in the Bible. He told me that is the only way to grow, stay spiritually strong, and shine with the beauty He intends for my life. (See [Romans 10:17](#); [Colossians 2:6–7](#).)

But so often, I forget and leave my spirit dry and alone, without the refreshing water of life it desperately craves. I mean to take time reading the Bible, praying, and communing with Jesus, but then, well, I just don’t. Sometimes I actually forget, and often I just prioritize

other things, “important” things, “urgent” things, “fun” things. And all the while I grow lackluster and droopy, more negative, less kind. The vase is so close, the water is waiting, and yet I foolishly say, “Soon, later, sometime.”

But there’s always hope! Each time I turn back to the sweet and strengthening water of God’s Word, I’m imbued with life and strength! Jesus waits patiently and lovingly for my soul to yearn for Him ([Psalm 42:1](#)). My prayer is that I will not wait, but will reach out daily, growing and living and blooming to my full potential, that I may bring a glimpse of His glory and beauty to others. (See [Daniel 12:3](#); [Matthew 5:14,16](#).)

CHRIS MIZRANY IS A FULL-TIME MISSIONARY WITH HELPING HAND IN CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA. ■





If you do not yet know Jesus as your Savior, you can pray this simple prayer:

Jesus, please forgive me for my sins. I believe that You died for me. I invite You into my life. Please fill me with the Holy Spirit. Help me to love You and others and live by the truth in the Bible. Amen.

THE BRIDE PRICE

BY UDAY PAUL



I RECENTLY MARRIED A WONDERFUL UGANDAN WOMAN WHO I MET ON MY FIRST MISSION TRIP TO AFRICA SOME YEARS AGO. Our relationship eventually deepened, and we felt God leading us to marriage.

In Africa there is a custom called the “bride price” where the prospective groom gives a dowry to the bride’s family. (This is the opposite of the custom in India, where I come from, where it is usually the bride’s family who pays a dowry to the groom’s family.) This custom in Uganda is intended to be an expression of the love the husband has for his wife and his way of honoring her. A biblical instance of a bride price is when Jacob acquired Rachel as his wife by serving her father Laban for fourteen years before marrying her. He did this because of his deep love for her. (See [Genesis 29:15–30](#).)

Thinking about this custom gave me a deeper understanding of the redemption that Jesus accomplished for us. The Bible calls all those who believe in Jesus “God’s possession” who glorify Him ([Ephesians 1:14](#) NIV). We are called the bride of Christ both individually and collectively as a church ([Revelation 19:7–8](#)). When we

invite Jesus into our lives, we enjoy an intimate spiritual relationship with Him.

Jesus paid a bride price for us, which was more than any monetary or material gift. The price He paid was costly and beyond anything we have the capacity to give to another. The price, or ransom as it is called, was His own blood, which alone could atone for us and was an expression of God’s love for humanity. “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” ([1 John 4:10](#) NIV).

We belong to a God who loved and redeemed us even when we were lost in sin and did not deserve His love. He bought us with a price ([1 Corinthians 6:20](#)) by giving His only Son for us. “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” ([John 3:16](#)). It is a wonderful privilege to belong to the family of the living God. Therefore, God calls us to live our lives in a manner that is worthy of Him and glorifies Him ([1 Thessalonians 2:12](#)).

UDAY PAUL IS A FREELANCE WRITER, VOLUNTEER, AND TEACHER BASED IN INDIA. ■



GOLDEN REPAIRS

BY AMY JOY MIZRANY

A BOOK I WAS READING MENTIONED A FORM OF JAPANESE POTTERY REPAIR CALLED *KINTSUGI*.

This means “golden joinery” or “golden repairs” and it is the art of fixing broken pottery by mending the broken parts back together with a lacquer mixed with gold or silver powder. In this practice, you recognize that, when a beautiful thing is broken, that is part of its history and not something that needs to be hidden or disguised.

Fascinated by this idea, I looked up images of pottery that had been repaired using this method. Hundreds of beautiful delicate bowls, cups, and plates appeared on my screen, each one with a uniquely unplanned pattern of gold visible across its surface. The broken items had become not only more interesting and more captivating to look at, but also more valuable with their gold additions.

When looking at a broken plate with kintsugi in mind, you don’t think, “Ah, now the plate is unsightly and useless!” No, you think, “This plate has gone through an experience that will mark it, but beautifully. And it will become even more valuable, more remarkable, and more precious because of it.”

Researching and understanding more about kintsugi inspired me greatly because I am acutely aware of how imperfect I am. I need no convincing to believe the Bible’s description of my heart as “deceitful above all things” (Jeremiah 17:9). But now, I like to think of God performing some kintsugi on me, taking all my cracks and flaws and mending them to form a pattern that

exceeds anything that could have existed without those broken lines.

If we let Him, God can use our imperfections to make something truly stunning out of what would have been discarded.

Don’t fear the blemishes. They can be opportunities for the Lord to come in and make golden repairs in your life.

AMY JOY MIZRANY WAS BORN AND LIVES IN SOUTH AFRICA, WHERE SHE IS A FULL-TIME MISSIONARY WITH HELPING HAND AND A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL. IN HER SPARE TIME, SHE PLAYS THE VIOLIN. ■

Behold, I am making all things new.

—[Revelation 21:5](#)

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

—[Lamentations 3:22–23](#)

We are all trophies of God’s grace, some more dramatically than others; Jesus came for the sick and not the well, for the sinner and not the righteous. He came to redeem and transform, to make all things new.

—[Philip Yancey](#)

THE BENEFITS OF A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

BY SIMON BISHOP

HENRY FORD ONCE SAID, “If you think you can or if you think you can’t—you’re right.” This mirrors a truth found in the Proverbs: “For as he thinks in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7 NKJV). In other words, a deeply held thought becomes a part of who you are.

I have pondered recently about how much power our thoughts have. And have been identifying and trying to eradicate some of the thought processes which are unhelpful and contrary to what I know to be true from God’s Word. I’ve realized that my happiness in life and my ability to serve God and others are directly related to what I allow to settle in my heart and mind.

A funny story I once heard illustrates how our attitude is so impactful on our happiness. A couple had twin boys who were very different from each other. One was extremely optimistic about everything and full of

excitement and joy; the other, no matter how good his circumstances, was always unhappy and negative. Their parents took them to a counselor, whose advice was to make the negative boy’s life as easy and pleasant as possible to offset his pessimism, and to create difficulty and hardship for the positive boy to temper his optimism.

A few days later was the boys’ birthday. The parents filled a room with wonderful gifts for their pessimistic son. When they brought him to see all the gifts, he looked at each one, saying how it wasn’t his favorite color, was too simple or too complicated, might break easily, etc.


The parents were disappointed, but decided to continue the plan, so they brought their other son to another room which was empty except for a pile of horse manure. When this boy saw the dung, he started jumping up and down, clapping his hands. His parents were startled and asked, “Why are you happy about a room full of manure?” He replied “Well, with all this dung, I am pretty sure that there is a pony waiting for me around the corner!”

I doubt that this is a true story, but it illustrates how our attitudes are more affected by our thought patterns than by our circumstances.

I am learning that, although I may not always be able to change my circumstances, I can make sure my thoughts are focused on positive, faith-building things and aligned with God’s Word (Philippians 4:8). I can then be a positive influence, and not allow negativity, bitterness, or discouragement to cloud my mind.

SIMON BISHOP DOES FULL-TIME MISSION AND HUMANITARIAN WORK IN THE PHILIPPINES. ■





REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE AND WHO GOD IS

BY ROSANE CORDOBA

THE FIRST THING I LEARNED IN MY CHRISTIAN JOURNEY WAS TO TAKE TIME DAILY WITH GOD, reading the Bible and praying, habits I still practice daily. Every morning I read the Bible or other Christian material and focus my thoughts on the goodness of the Most High. I feel my faith being strengthened and negative thoughts vanishing. Then I pray for anything weighing on my heart. I put my loved ones in God's loving hands. Then I wait and listen to His still small voice speaking to me.

Still, I have made plenty of mistakes, for I am human. After one such mistake a few years ago, I had to begin again in an area of my life. But even after I had done the right thing and returned to the will of God, I felt very discouraged, until I heard the voice of the Holy Spirit whisper to me, "Remember who you are!"

"What?!" I questioned. The Holy Spirit went on to whisper: "You are a child of the living God. You are made in His image. Remember all the courageous things that you have done up to now. You are a fighter, and no one can take that away from you."

I recalled an instance when my father, who used to go mountain climbing with us kids and our friends, got lost

on a mountain called Pico da Tijuca, one of the tallest mountains in Rio. It had rained that week and the trail washed away. Instead of giving up, he said, "We can see the peak, and if we keep going up, we will get there." He went ahead of us with his big stick, cutting through the brush, and soon we made it to the top and had the privilege of seeing a view of Rio, which is nicknamed *Marvelous City*.

So, the second most important thing that I have learned is not to give up on myself when I make mistakes, but rather to get up and try again. Our mistakes are part of our learning. There are times when we lose our way, as my father did on the mountain, but God can make a way where there is no way if we keep looking up to His promises. We need to remember who we are, and most of all, who God is. "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. . . . The Lord Almighty is with us" (Psalm 46:1, 7 NIV).

ROSANE CORDOBA LIVES IN BRAZIL. SHE IS A FREELANCE WRITER, TRANSLATOR, AND PRODUCER OF FAITH-BASED AND CHARACTER-BUILDING CHILDREN'S MATERIAL. ■



WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP

BY STEVE HEARTS

FOR ME, one of the most important and freeing aspects of spiritual growth is learning to live in my identity in Christ. There are several places in the Scriptures which clearly describe who we, as the body of Christ, are in Him. [Romans 8:37](#) says “We are more than conquerors.” [First John 3:1](#) says that we are “the sons [and daughters] of God” (KJV). [Ephesians 2:6](#) says that God “raised us up with [Christ] and seated us with him in the heavenly places.” I think it’s safe to say that the more we choose to believe these verses, claiming them as personal promises directly from God to us, the more grounded we will be in our faith, with greater conviction to pursue our callings.

I think one thing that hinders many of us from truly knowing and living in our identity in Christ is the tendency to compare ourselves with others and to sometimes

try hard to be like them rather than simply being who we are. We figure that if we could just look, act, or walk in their spiritual anointing, we’d somehow be happier.

Of course, there is a time and place for following others’ example, especially when they motivate us to be more loving, Christlike, health-conscious, etc. A problematic tendency we can experience is that of wishing or seeking to be like others out of discontentment over the way we are. It’s almost like spiritual identity theft. We get so caught up in taking on the characteristics and gifts of others instead of being content to walk in our own. This in turn robs us of the joy and freedom we are meant to live in.

This unhealthy tendency can be traced all the way back to the beginning of mankind. Adam and Eve fell prey to



Comparison is the thief of joy.
—*Attributed to Theodore Roosevelt*

The number one way to block your creativity. Dabble your paintbrush in another's palette. Stop comparing your gift to another person's gift.
—*Katherine Walden*

When the Lord makes it clear you're to follow Him in [a] new direction, focus fully on Him and refuse to be distracted by comparisons with others.
—*Charles Swindoll*

the serpent's temptation in the Garden when he promised them that if they ate the forbidden fruit, they would be like God ([Genesis 3:5](#)). When they heard this, they were no longer content to live just as they were—happily and blissfully, in a simple, beautiful, perfect world. They wanted to know all that God knows instead of being content with walking in intimacy with Him. So they chose to embrace the serpent's reasoning, and creation was forever altered.

The children of Israel fell into this same trap when they requested that a king reign over them, so that they could be like other nations ([1 Samuel 8:5](#)). They tried to make this petition sound reasonable and logical since Samuel was advancing in age, and his sons were not following in his footsteps. But the Lord knew their hearts and told Samuel, "It is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king" ([1 Samuel 8:7](#) NIV). Despite their God-given identity as His set-apart, chosen people, the Israelites were still not satisfied and wanted to be like other nations. Consequently, they began worshiping the heathen gods of those nations to whom they compared themselves and started emulating their sinful practices, and they were taken into physical captivity. We, too, can live captive to unhappiness, discontentment, and self-imposed limitations, if we are not satisfied with who we are in Christ.

It took me quite some time to realize how much I was trying to be like others—specifically in my singing and songwriting. For a while, whenever I'd hear a certain artist

or singer for the first time and liked what I heard, I would try to pattern my own songs after their style. People noticed this and would tell me, "Just be yourself. Sing and play in your own unique way, without always imitating other people." When I took this advice, I was set free to discover and work out the unique voice and style Jesus gave me.

I went through the same thing in my efforts to lead people to Christ; I emulated those who mentored me in evangelization. Yes, I respect my mentors and am grateful for the impact they had on my life, but after a personal encounter with the Holy Spirit, I began to walk in a more personalized anointing for telling others about Jesus, so that it was no longer necessary for me to try to copy others.

God has not called us to a life of comparing. As we walk after the Spirit instead of the flesh ([Romans 8:1–9](#)), we can feel free to be who God created us to be since we are created in His image ([Genesis 1:26](#)). Each of us is "fearfully and wonderfully made" ([Psalm 139:14](#)). Regardless of our varying characteristics, gifts, and callings, [Ephesians 2:10](#) clearly tells us who we are in Christ: "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

STEVE HEARTS HAS BEEN BLIND SINCE BIRTH. HE IS A WRITER, MUSICIAN, AND MEMBER OF THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN NORTH AMERICA. ■




WHO AM I?

BY KEITH PHILLIPS

SOME THINGS NEVER CHANGE—the question “Who am I?” for example. That search for self is a universal, God-created experience. One thing that *has* changed in the last generation or two, though, is where people are looking for the answer. For many it’s not so much a search to find values and a purpose to base their lives on as a search for an identity, an image, with a heavy emphasis on individuality.

Never has there been so much importance put on expressing individuality as in today’s commerce- and media-driven world. I did a quick search on the Internet and found hundreds of thousands of sites telling me how I could express my individuality—and most of them were selling something. There were the obvious ways (choice of clothes, hairstyle, music, diet, or car) and the less conventional (tattoos and body-piercings). These days, anything marketable is fair game. Advertisements pitch items as diverse as custom cellphone tones, artisan cremation urns, and multicolored hair extensions—all as means of expressing individuality. What consumers don’t



Remember who you are. Don’t compromise for anyone, for any reason. You are a child of the Almighty God. Live that truth.
—*Lysa TerKeurst*

There is no one who is insignificant in the purpose of God.
—*Alistair Begg*

All the darkness in the world cannot extinguish the light of a single candle.
—*Francis of Assisi*

seem to realize is that, in their quest for individuality, they end up as models of conformity—walking advertisements that promote other people’s ideas, tastes, creativity, and enterprise.

What was once a teenage rite of passage now follows us from cradle to grave—literally! A gift card company says, “You want your birth announcement to express your individuality in a special way.” A funeral home says, “Prearrangement means you can express your individuality in a funeral service.”

But stop and think. Are those surface things what make up the real you? Or is it the inner you, your spirit and the values motivating you and guiding your actions that determine the real you? What do you want to be known and remembered for—the image you project, or the positive influence you have on others? Who are you?

KEITH PHILLIPS WAS *ACTIVATED*’S EDITOR-IN-CHIEF FROM 1999 TO 2013. HE AND HIS WIFE CARYN NOW WORK WITH THE HOMELESS IN THE USA. ■

The Heart Spa

BY MARCELA CEDEÑO MADRIGAL



THE ADVERTISEMENT SAID: *This summer you can show off the perfect body for only \$600!* It was an offer that she couldn't resist, and she decided to make an appointment.

She went from her work to the spa with a clear picture in her mind of the new image that she wanted. It was a beautiful vintage-style salon with photographs on the wall and magazines strategically placed promoting the perfect body. She redeemed the promotional coupon and received good attention for the money she paid. She also started biweekly treatments that would work on shaping her body. But she did not find a treatment for her heart.

Beauty spas are often the preferred hiding place for feelings of abandonment, resentment, and low self-esteem. Men and women alike seek refuge in an aesthetic center as an escape from their difficult realities. Yet the Bible says to “watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life” (Proverbs 4:23 AMP). True beauty comes from a heart filled with God.

My profession is dermatology; my vocation is treatment for the hurting heart. We need to maintain a balance between outer and inner beauty. It's important to maintain healthy diet habits and exercise for physical

and mental health, but we cannot neglect the care of our hearts and spirits.

Today you can have a Heart Spa session, unlike any treatment you have had before. You can undergo a cleansing of your soul, receive forgiveness, learn to forgive others, smooth the rough spots, tone up your values, strengthen your emotions, and much more.

The spa treatment that Jesus offers us personally is given with His loving hands and the purifying water of life! You don't need a special coupon offer, a VIP salon, or even a credit card. You only need an open heart.

All that has happened to you that has affected your self-esteem—disparaging words or situations that have made you insecure and have driven you to strive for a perfect body and eternal youth—God wants to heal and restore. He formed you with His own loving hands and made you perfect (Psalm 139:14-18).

This is not the *spa mud bath therapy* that you see advertised. It is *you as clay in the hands of the Divine Potter*, Jesus, who will mold your life and make you into a beautiful new vessel for His glory (Isaiah 64:8).

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FROM JESUS WITH LOVE

YOUR ETERNAL IDENTITY

My love for you is so great that it propelled Me to undertake My mission on Earth to reclaim you and raise you up to new life. I died so that you might find the way, the truth, and the life, and that you would discover to whom you belong and your eternal identity in Me (John 14:6).

My love for you is from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 103:17)! I have implanted My love and Spirit deep in your heart to sustain you on your journey through life until the day when you come home to the place I have prepared for you (John 14:3).

Whenever you feel alone or you have fallen on hard times, come to Me and find peace in My presence. When you are discouraged and feel like you have made a mess of things, look up into My face and see Me smile upon you with My unconditional love. When you feel worried or anxious, bring all your cares to Me, and you will find rest for your soul (Matthew 11:28–29).

When you are in need of guidance, I will lead the way and light your path. When you feel lost, I will be with you to remind you that you have already been found for all eternity.

I have tenderly watched over you from the moment that you were conceived. You're not lost in a faceless crowd called humanity. I died on the cross for you personally, so that you could experience My love and forgiveness today and always.

