

Hope Church November 16th 2025

Habit #4: Christlike identity – becoming who you already are.

Philippians 3:3-11

We're working through a series about what it really means to follow Jesus – ROOTED CONNECTIONS. We're asking, "What habits should show up in the lives of people who call themselves His followers every single day?"

Our first habits focused on **BELONGING**; now we move toward **GROWING** habits.

Just a reminder: A habit is a BEHAVIOR that **comes automatic**. Default setting. No matter what life throws at you.

People often say that I project a **lot of self-confidence**.

Confessions time: My sense of confidence DOESN'T COME from my own ability or my achievements. In fact, there are all kinds of **things I struggle with and can't do well**.

Fully aware of all my shortcomings and blind spots.

What *gives me real security* is knowing who I am in Christ. It's not about impressing anyone. It's about **doing life from the identity that Christ gave me**, not the one I try to build for myself. That is what today's habit is all about.

Habit #4: Christlike identity – becoming who you already are.

A CHRISTLIKE IDENTITY means *knowing* that I am deeply loved and accepted by God, not because of my achievements or popularity, but because **Jesus gave everything for me**. My *true value comes* from being a son or a daughter of God. **Chosen**.

Forgiven. This IDENTITY helps me to **live with confidence and show Jesus' love** to others no matter what the world says about me.

There are so many things that forms our identities: **Family**. Our experiences. Our SUCCESSES and FAILURES. *Culture*. **Relationships**. Our *roles in society*. Our **day jobs**. Social media. FAITH and personal reflection.

The world today tries to **influence your identity** from every angle. Yet for MOST OF HISTORY, ***family*** decided everything: CAREER and FAITH and BELONGING and even your NAME. The needs of the community always mattered more than any individual. It was not all about me.

We are reading from Paul's letter to the church in PHILIPPI.

- The church in PHILIPPI **lived in a Roman colony** – *deeply embedded* in Roman culture and Roman religious festivals and Roman emperor worship.

- The local authorities and powerful citizens in PHILIPPI didn't like Christians and the Christians were **excluded** and **slandered** and **even attacked**.
- Inside the church, people argued about *who truly belonged*. What really *made someone part of God's family*. FOLLOWING **Jewish rituals** or SIMPLY trusting in Jesus.

Verses 1-4a:

Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

Philippians 3:1-4a NIV

- “DOGS” is a strong word. People in middle eastern culture used it to **label outsiders**. People they thought were impure or unworthy.
- Paul makes it clear he's not talking about **outward marks or physical signs** like CIRCUMCISION or keeping to the Jewish laws.
- What really matters is a **transformation of the heart** – a *spiritual change*.

- Transformation of the heart comes through salvation in Jesus Christ. Transformation of the heart comes through **receiving of the Holy Spirit**.
- That's the real "CIRCUMCISION" that counts.
- Paul knows he shouldn't rely on OUTWARD THINGS or his OWN ACHIEVEMENTS to **prove his faith**.
- But because some Christians in the church still believed those things mattered, Paul tells them that if anyone could rely on their own accomplishments for salvation, it would be him.

Verses 4b-6:

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

Philippians 3:4b-6 NIV

- Paul lays out seven reasons why he could rely on his own accomplishments for his salvation.
- The 1st four he received at birth:
 ⇒ He was **circumcised on the eighth day**, exactly as the *Jewish Law required*.

⇒ He was **born an Israelite**. *One of God's chosen people.*

⇒ He belonged to the **tribe of Benjamin**. That's the same tribe as King Saul, Israel's first king. *Paul had royal roots.*

⇒ He was a **true Hebrew**. *Both his parents were Jewish, and he spoke the Hebrew language.* This was rare in his day, because most Jews spoke Aramaic.

- This gave Paul a tremendous status and respect among Jewish believers. According to their traditions, these things **made Paul righteous in God's eyes**.

- But that's not all. Paul also lists **three** reasons based on the **choices he made**:

⇒ He was a Pharisee. A religious leader with *deep knowledge of the Law and followed it with intense dedication.*

⇒ He persecuted the church. When the new Christian movement threatened the Jewish faith and God's honor, Paul saw it as his duty to stop them. *He believed killing Christians proved his loyalty to God.*

⇒ He was blameless when it came to keeping the Law. Paul tried hard to *follow every rule.*

- The list today would probably look like this:

⇒ I am an American. Born and raised in the land of the free and the brave.

⇒ I grew up in a Christian home...I lead a small group and served as a deacon...

⇒ I have a seminary degree...I understand the original Greek and Hebrew...

⇒ I don't drink or smoke...I never miss a quiet time...

⇒ I tithe faithfully...I sponsor several missionaries...

⇒ I've led many people to Christ...I never miss communion...I pray daily.

Verses 7-9:

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

Philippians 3:7-9 NIV

- Paul challenges the believers in Philippi: If you think your achievements or your background make you good enough for God, just look at my life. I had **every reason to be confident in myself**. I was a **SUPER JEW**.
- But that isn't how grace works.
- Everything we have – *our heritage and our efforts and our accomplishments* – is **worthless** compared to Jesus.

- Paul uses the word **σκύβαλα** (skubala) to show how useless these things are. SKUBALA is translated as garbage but it has a **stronger meaning**: animal dung.
- SALVATION comes from Christ alone. Our TRUE IDENTITY comes from Christ alone.

Verses 10-11:

I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.

Philippians 3:10-11 NIV

- Paul's LONGING is not for more performance. He longs for a **deeper connection with Jesus**. He wants to **share** in Jesus' suffering and death and resurrection.
- Almost seems as if Paul is *doubting his salvation* – 'somehow attaining resurrection'.
- Paul shows HUMILITY. He knows that he **can't tell God what to do**. He trusts God completely. His salvation and identity and security isn't self-made. *It's a gift from God*.

Paul invites us to make a choice about how we live.

- We can try to find and maintain salvation in who we are and what we do OR we can find it in Christ.

- We can try to find our identity in a **PERFORMANCE-BASED-LIFESTYLE** or we can find our identity in a **GRACE-BASED-LIFESTYLE**.

Cycle of Performance:

- ⇒ Always chasing **approval**.
- ⇒ Always trying to live up to expectations.
- ⇒ Always trying to **prove how valuable we are** by what we achieve, or by matching up to someone else's standards.
- ⇒ When we achieve enough, we **feel accepted**.
- ⇒ This path is *exhausting*. This path LEADS to **anxiety and emptiness**.
- ⇒ On this path your sense of worth goes UP AND DOWN with **every success or failure**.

But there is a better way than the way of the world we live in.

It's called the **Cycle of Grace**:

- ⇒ It starts with acceptance: **GOD loves you and values you** simply because you are his child. *Not because of anything you've done.*

- ⇒ Next you experience sustenance: GRACE becomes **your daily strength**. GRACE becomes **a steady reminder** that *God deeply cares for you*. Despite my challenges and circumstances and failures.
- ⇒ Then comes significance: Your significance. Your meaning. Your value **comes from his love and his purpose for your life**. Not from popularity. Not from how well you perform.
- ⇒ Finally, you reach achievement: WHEN YOU KNOW **you're secure in God's love**, you begin to *grow and achieve*. Begin to raise your game. To do life better – to love more and to love deeper. To forgive unconditionally. To laugh and to cry freely. To have more empathy. Not to try to earn God's acceptance. But because **I already have it** and I want to **do better at life out of gratitude**.

In that sense our real selves are all waiting for us in Him. It is no good **trying to 'be myself' without Him**. The more *I resist Him and try to live on my own*, the more I become dominated by my own HEREDITY and UPBRINGING and SURROUNDINGS and NATURAL DESIRES. In fact what I so proudly call 'Myself' becomes merely the meeting place for trains of events which I never started and which I cannot stop.

C.S. Lewis (Mere Christianity)

- **Living with a Christlike identity** means that only God – our Creator – gets to define who we truly are.
- **Living with a Christlike identity** means you ARE righteous. You ARE forgiven. You ARE loved. Not because you've earned it, but because Jesus gave it to you through his death and resurrection.
- **Living with a Christlike identity** means that the Holy Spirit lives in you. He wants to empower you to discover and to walk in this new identity. As a child of God that is free from sin and shame.
- **Living with a Christlike identity** means your unique personality and gifts reflect His creativity.
- **Living with a Christlike identity** challenges us: don't chase approval. *Don't measure yourself against impossible standards.*
 - ⇒ There's *nothing* you can do to make God love you less.
 - ⇒ There's *nothing* you can do to make God love you more.
- This reality **FREES US** from the exhausting cycle of performance. It leads us into the gentle cycle of grace.
- **Living with a Christlike identity** brings real freedom and lasting joy and genuine strength and deeper relationships.

- Being “true to yourself” isn’t the goal. Being “transformed by Jesus” is.

Be with Jesus. Become like him. Do as he did. There simply is no better way, truth, or life to be found than that of Jesus.

John Mark Comer

- Our CHRISTLIKE IDENTITY grows in community. Over time and through grace and as we walk with Jesus and each other. We discover how to do life differently.

- *Important principle* I discovered: **GETMO** – good enough to move on.

⇒ We live in a world that teaches us to aim for perfection. We can spend too much time on small details and trying to be flawless and make everything flawless.

⇒ **A helpful principle is “GETMO” – Good Enough To Move On.**

⇒ This means do your best. Give life your everything.

⇒ But don’t get stuck in the mentality of perfection.

⇒ When your work is good enough continue. Move forward.

God says:

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.

- Having a Christlike identity means you are **truly known by God**. You are loved. He sees you and understands who you are. Inside and out.
- Having a Christlike identity means **God has set you apart**. He has forgiven you. He has restored and renewed you.
- Having a Christlike identity means **God has appointed you** to be salt and light in this world. To make a difference by sharing his love and truth wherever you go.

We can live in a Christlike identity not because of what we've done,
but **because of what Jesus has done and finished for us.**