

Identity

Identity is a major theme throughout *All Things New*. It is a major theme throughout all of our lives. How many times have you struggled to see yourself as God sees you? I know for me, it's been a continual battle. Satan knows how to keep us from being effective, and a low self-image is one of the most powerful weapons Satan can use against us. But that's just it—we shouldn't be concerned about our "self"-image or "self" esteem, but about our image (or identity) in Christ, and how much God "esteems" us.

Many of you may have heard this analogy in one form or another, but I think it is very effective. If I were to hand you a crisp, new twenty-dollar bill, would you want it? Would you find value in it? I would! Twenty dollars would come in handy right now! Would you still want it if I dropped it in a mud puddle, wadded it up, or sneezed on it—or would you view it as garbage? I don't know about you, but I'd still want it—it's still worth twenty dollars! Its value hasn't changed because it has "taken a beating" or is "dirty." In the same way, people who have been through a lot of hurt and "garbage" (or are "dirty") are still valuable to God. They are not garbage to Him. He loves the "sinner" as much as He loves the "saved." We just have to get that through our heads, just as Nardo did in this film. We all make mistakes and go through hard times, but thankfully for those of us who have followed Christ, God looks at us and sees us as pure and spotless. He loves us more than we can imagine, with an unending love!

Search the Scriptures:

Read Ephesians 1:3-14

For Discussion:

1. What does this say about how God views you?
2. How do you feel about being "chosen" by God?
3. How do you feel about being redeemed by Jesus' blood (forgiven of your sins)?
4. What do you think about your "eternal inheritance"?
5. Do you think you can ever view yourself or anyone else as "garbage" again, after reading this passage? I hope not!!

6. Most of the battle with identity is in the mind. Brainstorm some ways that you can keep the fact that your identity is in Christ in the forefront of your mind—even when you feel rejected or hurt by people here on earth, etc. Think of ways you can help others in this battle as well.

Here are some more ideas:

- Using a concordance, look up verses that speak to the problems you have with believing that you are dearly loved by God. (Example: search for the word forgiveness) Write verses that speak to you on note cards, or keep a notebook of verses you can refer to when you're feeling down.
- Talk to someone that you trust about how you are feeling, like a parent, youth leader, minister, or Christian counselor.
- Read a Christian book on the subject, like *The Search for Significance* (Student Edition) by Robert S. McGee. Ask your youth leader or minister for other godly studies you can do on this subject.

Conclusion:

Our identity is in Christ, not in what we look like, or in what we do. God chose each one of us to be His child, and He has a plan for our lives (Psalm 139:1-18). In the same way, God feels the same way about everyone else here on earth. If God looks at others as well as us in this way, shouldn't we view others and ourselves in the same way? No one is garbage; we are dearly loved and precious to God. Let's live like it!