

Who Am I?: What it means to be a child of God

Part 2: Can Christianity heal division?

Galatians 3:26-29

**INTRO:** We spend so much time and energy deciding who is “in” and who is “out”

And of course we always tend to be part of the group... that in our minds... are IN.

We almost instinctively emphasize our distinctions/differences to set “us” apart from “them”... As old as humanity... even many animal species do it.

But Jesus brought something better... something more... something that outshines every distinction we use to divide ourselves... he brought a better way to be human.

So let's talk about it... together.

**WE:** What defines you? What makes you different from “them”?

How do you decide who is “your people”, your “WE”?

**We usually define our ME within the framework of our perceived WE.**

*Me Middle school- rock or rap... country kids not even invited to conversation.*

- *Influenced who we hung out w/*
- *How we dressed*

*“How could anyone like that?” Missed out on a lot. And so did they*

So many categories we create to make sure we feel like we are the IN ones...

Values/ Money (have/use/view) / Politics/ Entertainment (sports team/sports)/ Education/ Parenting style/ Race/ Religion (so many categories)... I've even caught myself doing it w/ other pastors.

The problem is...

When our worth is wrapped up in the identities we give ourselves we fight for those identities to be the “right one” in order to make ourselves feel better/more righteous/more than others...

And when that happens we can't help but demean/vilify the “others”

Can't even describe what we are FOR without demonizing what we are against.

**We try to legitimize our WE by vilifying someone else's WE**

Even more... We become prisoners of our own images... trapped in the identities we've portrayed to others.

We have to stay loyal... can't step out of line ("maybe they have a good point")... b/c might start being seen as "one of them/those" Might lose the identity you've built for yourself.

Create our own Silo's- become Angry, empty, always worried we/our people might be losing...

Miss out on finding our own unique purpose- how we can add our own unique role in the story of God/humanity

Jesus offers something so much better, deeper, satisfying, lasting.

**Jesus offers a new and better ME through a new and all-inclusive WE.**

Something even the first JF's had difficulty grasping.

**GOD:**

Galatians Background:

- Ancient world divisions- religion/race/nation- slave/free/rich/poor- male/female- power.
- Some Jewish Xians had come into JF communities around region of Galatia
- Saying JF'S need to identify as their WE- Jews. Obey laws of torah-circumcision
- About 48 AD- Paul writes them and says requiring JF's to identify with the jewish laws/religion in order to be "IN"... completely takes away from what the good news of Jesus is all about.

In the middle of his letter he just lays it out... famous and defining paragraph

For JF- What you are      Not JF- what you are invited to be...

Paul- Talking to the Galatian JF's , "JF's aren't part of the old Jewish view of WE...

**Gal 3:26-29**... let's break it down.

**V. 26 All-** Hard to grasp what a big deal this was/is... Paul- not just talking about some mystic/ethereal idea.

Talking about a privileged position that was thought once to only be reserved for the physical descendants of Abraham now being offered and given to anyone who wants it.

Not dependent on being born into the Jewish nation, or observance of a set of religious laws... Its only requirement is trust in and allegiance to Jesus.

Old System- Jews= children of God. Gentiles= not so much (sinners)

Now- Anyone can be IN.

That's the good news of Jesus. That God's love and grace is offered to everyone.

Shocking - offensive - Too inclusive - too easy

- When we really think about it we still argue that it's too easy.

- Think we need to do something to earn it or deserve it
- Gotta do our part right?

But that's the point... when a child is born or adopted into a family it isn't b/c they earned it... it's b/c the parents have chosen to love that child exactly as they are and for who they are.

They have chosen to create a new WE simply bc they have chosen to love that child.

**God's acceptance and inclusion seems unfair because it is.**

That's the point! [Check out parable of workers in field- [Matt 20:1-16](#).]

So what is this privileged position... what does it mean to be children of God? To join this new... WE

**V. 27** A complete transformation of identity. Identifying w/ Jesus and his family/community.

"United w/ Christ in baptism"- Other translations- "Baptized into Christ"

The baptism act doesn't unify... it symbolizes what has happened/a picture of what is.

Like wedding ceremony

- Already committed to each other. Ceremony doesn't make you committed. Choice is already made.
- Symbol to world/self that this is the commitment you have made
- A moment in time that shows you have made this life long/life changing/life consuming commitment

But this new life requires that your old life dies.

Just as getting married is the death of your single self and whoever you would become with anyone else.

Your old/single hopes/dreams/motivations die and are now reborn into someone/something new/something better

Becoming a child of God is similar... **When we are reborn as a child of God every other identity dies.**

It's a death

- Of who you used to think you were
- Of not just the old you, but what you used to define the old you...

Baptism symbolizes the death of our old self and the rebirth of our new selves as children of God

**\*you should get baptized**

Paul describes it as putting on new clothes... "putting on Christ"

Those who have been united to Jesus have taken off the old clothes they used to identify themselves

- family/socio-economic status/ race/politics/etc/ Whatever the old ME was... that, we take OFF

And have put on the new identity of Jesus. Completely and wholly identify w/ Jesus

- Thoughts/motivations/passions/what you celebrate/mourn are influenced permeated by Jesus

And having done that they are united to everyone else who has put on the same identity... a new WE

How?

This is the truly counter-cultural, earth shattering part that is still challenging all of the distinctions with which we try to define ourselves... This was extreme then and it's still extreme.

**V. 28** Not saying those things don't exist... obviously there are still racial/social/gender distinctions...

They exist, and some are beautiful differences- but they are not our true/primary/driving identity

- For a Jesus follower, our Identity is now child of God

For the ancient mind these distinctions were everything... they WERE your identity... how they made sense of their place in the world.

Jew, good. Gentile, unclean.

Slave, unworthy. Free, power/blessed by God/better than.

Male- God's chosen/preferred

Female- inferior/weaker/dependent- Aristotle: Women are unfinished men.

**But in the family of God all are equal.** No one has more privilege, access, importance / standing over the other.

The good news of Jesus creates a new people whose identity is no longer gender/ wealth/ race/ religion/ politics/ borders/ language/ culture...

but Jesus, and his family.

**All divisions, prejudices, and hierarchies that we use to define our WE are meaningless in Jesus.**

These distinctions have no bearing on our standing w/ God... therefore they should have no bearing on our standing with each other.

- No **hierarchy**. [the greatest will be the servant of all- [Luke 22:25-27](#)]

For the Jesus community- This removal of inequalities is not optional- essence of the Good News.

Paul is saying being a child of God means... THIS IS YOUR/**OUR** IDENTITY NOW! A new multi-ethnic family of God.

A WE based only on Jesus. A family of ME's defined by the same HE.

Becoming a Child of God is an identity-changing rebirth

A child of God no longer identifies with the WE's of categories like Rep/Dem, Liberal/Conservative, White/black/brown, gay/straight, boss/employee, rich/poor, baptist/lutheran/catholic— basically nything we use to make ourselves IN and others OUT

Even our identity as Xian doesn't define us- Jesus does.

I think you can “be a xian” and not be a child of God in this sense.

Can be so caught up in the WE of Xianity that we miss what it really means to be a child of God.

The WE of “Xian” can mean many things - born again with varying levels of commitment, or religious affiliation with little understanding or commitment, or a cultural identifier with little to no allegiance and transformation.

Why you might have quit/rejected Xianity... not b/c of Jesus but b/c those who claimed to be WE were nothing like the HE they claimed.

But when we embrace it/live it... what is the result/benefit of this new identity?

#### **V. 29**

Jews were proud of being descended from Abraham b/c it meant they were the recipients of God's promise to Abe... now Paul is saying ALL children of God have this promise... what is it?

**Gen 12:3b**... “All families on earth will be blessed through you”

Not only does becoming a child of God change our identity.. But with that identity comes a new purpose/privilege.

To be blessing to the rest of humanity.

**The family of God is a new, multi-ethnic WE created to bless every other WE on earth.**

Blessing= Literally Godsend/good thing... bring good to.

Children of God are, as author/theologian/pastor Tim Mackie says... “New humans who fulfill the law by loving God and others... Bc of what Jesus did for us that we could never do for ourselves.”

**YOU:** So it's good to think through these... at a personal level. Not just listen and then move on...

Important to stop and **Ask some questions:**

First: Have you accepted Jesus' offer to be a child of God. If not, Why not?

- Fair question. Not trying to pressure or trap you. Just good to be aware of why you choose what you choose. And why we reject what we reject.

If you have... What identities, distinctions, or WE's have you placed above being a child of God?

Finally... Have you written off/judged a child of God b/c of some other distinction...

- What are you going to do about it?

## **WE:**

The good news of Jesus is that no matter who you are, where you are from, what you have done you are invited to accept a new identity as a true child of God. Fully loved, fully accepted.

And no, it won't always be easy to let the old identities, the old WE's die. But the life we find on the other end is worth it.

**Our false identities and divisions fade away as we continually embrace our identity as a child of God.**

Summary:

We spend so much time and energy deciding who is "in" and who is "out." And remarkably, our group always seems to be the group that is "in." But Jesus brought something better... something more... something that outshines every distinction we use to divide ourselves... he brought a better way to be human.

QUESTIONS:

1. We usually define our ME within the framework of our perceived WE. What "WE's" do you tend to identify with?
2. Read Matthew 20:1-16. What stands out to you? How would you relate this to Paul's thoughts in Galatians 3:26-29?
3. Jon said that we can be so caught up in the "WE" of Christianity that we miss what it really means to be a child of God. What do you think?
4. How can your group pray for you this week?

Main Points:

- We usually define our ME within the framework of our perceived WE.
- We try to legitimize our WE by vilifying someone else's WE.
- Jesus offers a new and better ME through a new and all-inclusive WE.
- God's acceptance and inclusion seems unfair because it is.
- When we are reborn as a child of God every other identity dies.
- All divisions, prejudices, and hierarchies that we use to define our WE are meaningless in Jesus.
- The family of God is a new, multi-ethnic WE created to bless every other WE on earth.
- Our false identities and divisions fade away as we continually embrace our identity as a child of God.

Weekly Challenge:

Think through some key questions...


1. Have you accepted Jesus' offer to be a child of God? If not, Why not?
2. What identities, distinctions, or WE's have you placed above being a child of God?
3. Have you written off or judged a child of God because of some other distinction?


What are you going to do about it?

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