

Response

Let me draw you together again, and we're getting to the end of Identity, and so what I thought I would do as we finish is try and summarise everything that we've been learning over the last few weeks, and also give some of you an opportunity to respond personally to what you've been hearing over the last few weeks.

You may remember that we started by asking two big questions: who is God, and who are we? And we said that as we would look at the identity and mission of Jesus, that as we knew more about who Jesus was and what Jesus did, then a lot of our confusion about who God is and who we are, well that would disappear. Now, I hope that's been what you have felt over the last few weeks, but let me try and summarise some of the things that we have learned.

Who is God? Well, as we understand more from Jesus, we discover that the God who made us is much more like a divine family. Three members: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Who are we? Well, we discovered that we're created by a loving God. We're created to need God, and God wants a relationship with us. And yet, we discovered that we're also rebels. We've not lived in God's world as we should have done, and yet we've discovered that although we deserve eternal punishment from God, we've discovered something wonderful about the greatest rescue mission ever told. That we have found out that just over two thousand years ago God the Father sent His one and only Son on the most dramatic rescue mission of all.

And what did Jesus come to save us from? Well, yes, he came to save us from settling for too little in this life, but he also came to save us from eternal destruction. Eternal punishment that we deserve. How did he do it? Well, we learned that he saved us by living in our place and suffering in our place. Remember, "It is finished,"? He has achieved it all.

And what are we saved for? Well, we are saved not simply for forgiveness and then we're told to go away from God. We're saved for relationship with the true and living God.

We learned too that none of this is automatic. Forgiveness is free, but we have to come personally to Jesus to receive it and to have a relationship with the God who made us.

So my question is: how will we respond to what we have been told, what we have learned together? You don't have to know everything about Jesus to respond. You need to know enough – if you believe the things I've said about the identity and mission of Jesus, then I would say to you, 'Yeah, you don't know everything. But you do know enough to come to Jesus as you are and to put him in charge of your life.'

The question might be in your mind: how would I do it? How could I begin a personal relationship with Jesus? Well, there are a number of ways, but one of the best ways is to pray to God. Now, you might think, 'What could I say? What kind of prayer could I say to God that would express some of what I'm feeling, some of what I'm thinking?'

Well, there is a prayer towards the end of your book. I'm going to read it out. It's an opportunity to say sorry, to say thank you, and to say please. Let me read it through once, and then what I'll do next is, I'm going to read it through again, and if this is a prayer that you think would be appropriate for you to say, why don't you say that silently in your mind to God in heaven, who is listening, and who will answer this prayer?

Let me read it through first. It says, 'Father, I recognise I need your forgiveness for the way I have lived my life. I am sorry for putting myself at the centre, and for living in your world as if I was in charge. Please forgive me. Thank you for sending your only Son into the world to live in my place and to die in my place. Thank you that Jesus has already experienced the judgement I deserve. From now on, I want to follow him as my Saviour/King. So please help me by your Spirit, day by day, to do whatever Jesus says.'

Now, that could be something, that right now you believe enough about Jesus to personally surrender to him. So what I'm going to do is, I'm going to read it through again, and if this is appropriate for you, let me encourage you to pray it silently in your mind to God in heaven, who is listening.

Father, I recognise I need your forgiveness for the way I have lived my life. I am sorry for putting myself at the centre, and for living in your world as if I was in charge. Please forgive me. Thank you for sending your only Son into the world to live in my place and to die in my place. Thank you that Jesus has already experienced the judgement I deserve. From now on, I want to follow him as my Saviour/King. So please help me by your Spirit, day by day, to do whatever Jesus says. Amen.

Well, if you have said that, it would be a great opportunity at the moment to tell someone. It'd be great to continue our discussions on the table. It might be that you think, 'Maybe I'm approaching saying that, but maybe not yet.' But why don't you spend just a few minutes on your tables and see what people are saying?

Identity – Who is God? Who are we?

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