

## Journey Into God's Word



**2 Samuel 13-24**

**Jeremiah 1-10**

**Ephesians 1-6**

**Dear Friend,**

Do you know who you really are? I don't mean your name or job, but who are you as a person? Before we start our journey this week into God's Word, I would like for you to take a few minutes and write down your identity as you see yourself. As we study together, we are going to see from our Bible reading how some, like Absalom, had a mixed-up identity and as a result really made a mess of things. Others like Jeremiah were able to keep on going even when everything seemed to be going wrong.

In order to know who we really are, we must go to the One who created us, redeemed us and keeps us going. Please go to **Colossians 1:13-23** and review what Paul tells us about who Jesus is and what He has done for us. Now in the book of Ephesians we see what this means to us personally. In this dynamic book we learn who we really are as children of God, set free from sin, death, and the devil through the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ. So fasten your seat belts because we are about to take off in an exploration that could change your life!

On this special trip into who we really are, because of the love of God, our first stop is **Ephesians 1:3-8**. There we discover the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will—to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. "Did you see in these five verses the following 4 insights into who you are as a child of God? #1) You have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. (**Eph. 1:3**) #2). You are holy, blameless and covered with

God's love. (**Eph. 1:4**) #3). You have been adopted as a child of God through His glorious grace revealed through Jesus Christ. (**Eph. 1:5,6**) #4). Because of Jesus, your new identity is one of being bought back from sin and the devil through the blood of Christ. This means you now have "the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding." (**Eph. 1:7,8**) If you really believe what Paul is saying in this book of Ephesians, your view of who you are will radically change. What do each of the above 4 insights mean to you and your identity? "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the *hope* to which He has called you, the *riches* of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and His incomparably *great power* for us who believe."(**Eph. 1:17-19**)

Instead of living in this new identity, some chose to let sin dominate their lives. David's sin with Bethsheba provided a bad example that reflected itself in the lives of his children. Please read **2 Samuel 13** and then describe what Ammon did to Tamar and then what Absalom did to Ammon? How do lust and hatred destroy one's true identity? In **2 Samuel 18:14-18**, what does it say happened to Absalom? Often our identities can be a mixed up bag of emotions if they are not anchored on the reality of God's love. Joab, David's commander-and chief, was such an individual. On the one side, he is a great commander who is an excellent planner and fighter. He was instrumental in bringing David and Absalom together, only to later kill Absalom in spite of David's orders not to do such. Joab was ruthless, violent and vengeful. In **2 Samuel 20:8-10**, what does he do to Amasa? Joab plotted with Adonijah against David and Solomon. What happened to Joab as a result of this and the other evil things he did? (**1 Kings 2:31**)

"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world."(**Eph. 2:1,2**) That is your old identity. What does **Eph. 2:5,6** say is your new identity? Stop and think about it. As a redeemed child of God, you have been raised up with Christ. In your old way of life, you were an object of God's wrath.

"All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions (sins) it is by grace you have been saved."(**Eph. 2:3,4,5**) How does Paul describe this

free gift of grace further in **Eph. 2:8-10**? What does this mean to you personally? When one receives a free gift, you don't ask, how much do I owe you? No, you say thank you and show your appreciation through your actions. The same is true in response to God's free gift of salvation resulting in a new identity in Christ. There is no way you can earn your salvation through anything you do. It's a free gift. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- not by works, so that no one can boast." (**Eph. 2:8,9**) This new life is God's free gift. Our response is one of thanksgiving, reflected not only in our words but also in deeds. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."(**Eph. 2:10**) We haven't been saved for our own benefit but to let the light and love of God shine through us as we help those who are in need. God intends for our salvation to result in acts of love. Remember your new identity involves the fact that you are God's work of art. His "workmanship created in Christ Jesus to do good works." (**Eph. 2:10**)

As you serve the Lord, remember you are not alone. He is with you and having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal the *promised Holy Spirit*, Who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession- to the praise of His glory."(**Eph. 1:13,14**) You have an inheritance coming—heaven. Think about it. Your identity now not only includes the present, but also the future when you will be with God forever and ever. "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the Chief Cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit." (**Eph. 2:19-22**) Your new-found identity involves not only you, but also the larger community of believers. That's why you must realize that your actions have a direct impact on others. Paul goes into more detail on that in Ephesians 4-6. As part of a community of believers, we now share in "the promise in Christ Jesus."(**Eph. 3:6**) Because of this promise, we can now pray with freedom and confidence as we come into God's presence. (**Eph. 3:12**) This freedom and confidence through Christ enables us to pray with power and to be rooted and established in love. "For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom His whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name."(**Eph. 3:14,15**) What does Paul go on and pray for in verses **16-19**? Have you grasped the extent of Christ's love? "Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us."(**Eph. 3:20**)

Next time you think you can't do the job that the Lord has given you, you need to meditate on this verse. What do you feel that it is telling you now?

Remember, God has called you to do a very special work at this time in this special place that He has placed you in. Look at what Paul has to say about your calling in **Ephesians 4:1-7**. "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle: be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it." Paul was so sold out to Jesus and is so excited about his calling that he refers to himself "as a prisoner for the Lord". What is evident in a life worthy of the calling according to verses **2,3 of Ephesians 4**? Do you think the calling or job you have is sometimes difficult? Then you had better take a look at Jeremiah's calling in **Jeremiah 1:4,5** where he says, "The Word of the Lord came to me saying, '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.'" As you study the rest of chapter 1, please state what this calling involved. Note particularly verses **17-19**. When you feel resistance, be sure to keep verse **19** in mind.

A prophetic calling at a time when people are more concerned about serving themselves rather than God or others is never easy. "My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken Me, the Spring of Living Water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water."(**Jeremiah 2:13**) "Your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you. Consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the Lord your God and have no awe of Me, declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty."(**Jeremiah 2:19**) The broken cisterns of materialism have caused many today to lose their sense of awe towards God and His creation. "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."(**Romans 1:20**) How many today, who fill a church pew every Sunday, really are in awe when they see a flower, a bird, a deer or another human being to the extent they feel like breaking out in praise to the Creator? The lack of this sense of awe robs God of the praise He deserves and results in the destruction of creation. "I looked, and there were no people; every bird in the sky had had flown away. I looked, and the fruitful land was a desert."(**Jer. 4:25**) When the people of a nation live in sin,

it has a direct negative impact on the environment. They treat nature as something that they can use and abuse for their own natural resources. The sense of awe no longer exists. The way they treat the environment carries over to how they treat the poor and fatherless. “Among my people are wicked men who lie in wait like men who snare birds and like those who set traps to catch men. Like cages full of birds, their houses are full of deceit; they have become rich and powerful and have grown fat and sleek. Their evil deeds have no limit; they do not plead the case of the fatherless *to win it*, they do not defend the rights of the poor. Should I not punish them for this?’ declares the Lord! Should I not avenge Myself on such a nation as this.”(**Jeremiah 6:26-29**) Those who claim to get their identity from Jesus, then do not have a sense of awe for God and His creation and have no regard for the poor and fatherless, God would say, “From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit. They dress the wound of My people as though it were not serious. ‘Peace, peace,’ they say when there is no peace. Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them, says the Lord.” (**Jer. 6:13-15**) How does verse **16** describe that the only way to find peace and rest is to walk on God’s path? This means to repent from the self-centered, self-serving life style. How does God describe this repentance in **Jer. 7:3-8**? According to **Ephesians 4-6:9**, what lifestyle changes does Paul say are necessary if we have truly repented and find our identity in Christ? “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (**Eph. 5:1,2**.) Identity with God results in obedience and walking with Him in fellowship daily. (**Jer. 7:23**)

Instead of following God, our nation has wandered far from Him. We have placed our faith in our military weapons, resulting in a fear of terrorism. What does God say to such a nation in **Jeremiah 8:15-20**. Those who are called by God care about the lost. How does **Jeremiah 8:21-9:2** show the love that God has for the lost and how He desires for them to return to Him?

God is an awesome God. How does **Jeremiah 10:12,13** describe God and His awesome works of creation? In light of this, how does the remainder of this chapter reflect the tragedy of people who do not turn to Him?

David, in spite of his shortcomings, knew that God is an awesome God. How does He reflect this in **2 Samuel 22-23:7**? David’s identity as one who depended on God touched the lives of those around him. In **2 Sam. 23:8-23**

David's mighty men are described. Please study this section of Scripture and state what characteristics these mighty men portrayed? What tragedy resulted when David, for a brief period, wanted to count his military strength rather than find his strength and identity in the living God? (**2 Sam. 24:1-17**) David repents, turns to God and wants to make a sacrifice unto God. How does **2 Sam. 24:24** make it clear that a true sacrifice always costs us something?

As a mighty warrior in God's army, **Eph. 6:10-18** makes it clear we must put on the full armor of God. After reviewing relationships described in **Eph. 5:22-6:9**, please state why putting this armor on daily is essential if we are going to succeed in maintaining these relationships? Please study each piece of this armor found in verses **10-18** of **Eph. 6** and state how you plan to get dressed in it daily.

Now after taking this journey in God's Word, please once again describe who you are? What are you living for? What do you plan to do with the rest of your life? As a new creation in Christ, please join me this week in reading **I Kings 1-12**, **Jeremiah 11-20** and **Galatians 1-6**. "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them."(**Eph. 5:8-11**) "Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love."(**Eph. 6:24**)

Yours in Christ,

Larry Rice