

# Week 6 “God made them male and female: A Fresh Look at Biblical Personhood”

Kevin Wilhite, OBC Senior Pastor

*Word of the year (4):* By, or, “standing beside” ἐκ (ek) 'out from' of, out of; from, away from. Spatially: extension from a space to a goal outer in reference, separation; logically: the means or source of an activity, disassociation or separation

This 6-week sermon series will explore the concept of personhood as God designed it in the Bible, examining how it relates to sex and gender, race, roles and responsibilities, marriage, family, and the various pursuits and passions that shape our lives. Each week will build upon the foundation of God’s creation of humanity, focusing on specific aspects of biblical personhood in a holistic, culturally relevant way.

## Week 6: Personhood in Christ: Finding Fulfillment and Identity in Him

### Scripture Readings

- **2 Corinthians 5:17:** “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”
- **Galatians 2:20:** “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”
- **Philippians 3:7-11:** “But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...”

(SLIDE 1)

### Introduction

#### Story

Imagine walking through a beautiful apple orchard in the North Georgia mountains in October. You notice that the ground is littered with beautiful apples like gems among the leaves. However, after walking for a few minutes you find that the apple trees are dead and someone has been placing apples around the orchard giving the illusion of healthy fruit bearing trees.

We are entering into a time period (and perhaps are already there) where this reality is playing out right in front of us. Not with apples, but with faith. What do I mean by that? We are entering into a

season of "cultural Christianity" where the adoption of the Christian faith will **seem** to gain in popularity. It is hard to tell how long this will last, but as devotion to Christ continues to decline, many people in America will grasp for and try to hang onto a form of Christianity that denies it's savior.

There are two ways I believe this is currently occurring:

**(SLIDE 2)**

1. **Social Christian ethics:** Richard Dawkins recently confessed to being a "cultural Christian". While he maintains his atheism, he believes in the power of a Christian based social ethic. According to Dawkins, it is preferable to have a Christian moral system based on loving your neighbor as yourself, than any other ethical system. This will be attractive for people who are of the more liberal political persuasion.

**(SLIDE 3)**

2. **Christian Nationalism:** There is a growing reaction to "woke" culture where people want prayer put back in schools, and have biblical instruction that teaches children that our American roots are grounded in scripture. However, Christian nationalism is more akin to first century Judaism ascribed by the Pharisees and Sadducees because it holds to a religious legal system, rather than a spiritual devotion. Jesus' words towards the Pharisees and Sadducees can be echoed here: "This people honors me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." People who are more politically conservative will be drawn to this.

Both of these interpretations should be concerning to genuine Christians. First, we cannot love our neighbor if we cannot love God. And to love God means to honor God's created order of the world, and to walk in his commandments of living a self sacrificial life. Second, Christianity cannot be forced upon a people or nation. It is a relationship with God through Jesus Christ that must be entered into voluntarily.

**(SLIDE 4)**

**In other words, to be identified with Christ is not just a title but a transformation that touches the very substance of who we are and the evidence of how we live.**

This transformation is also tied to our creation in the image of God. While sin distorted that image, Christ restores it, making our identity both a reflection of who God is and an expression of His work in us.

**(SLIDE 5)**

**If you have your bibles this morning, I want to invite you to turn with me to 2 Corinthians 5:14-17. Once you have found the scripture, I want to invite you to stand with me as we read the word of God**

*For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.*

**(SLIDE 6)**

*From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

**(SLIDE 7)**

**Prayer**

**(SLIDE 8)**

## **1. Substance: Identity in Christ is Our Essential Nature**

**Key Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:17**

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."*

To be in Christ is to become a new creation. Our old identity—rooted in sin, failure, or even success—is replaced by a new, eternal identity. This transformation is not superficial; it goes to the very core of who we are.

**A Restored Image:**

- **Created in God's Image:** Genesis 1:27 tells us we are made in the image of God, designed to reflect His character and glory.
- **Distorted by Sin:** Sin marred this image, leaving us alienated from God and from our true selves.
  - The atheist philosopher Alain DeBotten bemoans that as religious devotion disappears, so does one of its most important features— an insistence on ideas like original sin. He notes, "It's quite a helpful starting point, right? Because if you think, well, alright, I'm a bit broken but so is somebody else."
- **Restored by Christ:** In Christ, the image of God is renewed. We are reconciled to God and empowered to live as we were designed.

**(SLIDE 9)**

**Illustration:**

Think of a butterfly which is transformed from a caterpillar to a gorgeous expression of God's creative ability.



Think of a masterpiece painting covered in grime. It is still valuable, but its beauty is obscured. Through Christ, God restores the masterpiece of our identity, bringing back its original brilliance.

**(SLIDE 10)**

## **2. Evidence: Identity in Christ is Outwardly Expressed**

**Key Scripture: Galatians 2:20**

*"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

While our identity in Christ is internal and spiritual, it must also be evident in how we live. If Christ is alive in us, our lives will bear the marks of His presence.

**(SLIDE 11)**

**Living Out the Evidence:**

- **Reflecting His Character:** Our actions, words, and attitudes should reflect Christ's love, humility, and righteousness (Philippians 2:5-8).

- *"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."*
- **Engaging His Mission:** Just as Christ came to serve and save, we are called to live missionally, sharing the gospel and loving others sacrificially.
- **Bearing Fruit:** Galatians 5:22-23 speaks of the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—as evidence of Christ’s transforming work in us.

### **Challenge:**

If someone looked at your life, would they see evidence of Christ? The substance of our identity in Him must produce tangible expressions of His presence.

**(SLIDE 12)**

## **3. Identity in Christ and the Image of God: A Unified Expression**

### **Key Scripture: Philippians 3:12-16**

*"Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. Only let us hold true to what we have attained."*

Our identity in Christ is not just about personal transformation but about returning to our original purpose as image-bearers of God. Through Christ, we are not only made new but also called to show the world who God is.

### **Rejecting False Identities:**

- Society often tempts us to define ourselves by career, appearance, achievements, or societal roles. These false identities can never fulfill us because they are not rooted in God’s eternal truth.
- Philippians 3:7-8 reminds us that all these things are loss compared to knowing Christ.
  - *"But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain*

*Christ"*

### **Illustration**

Galatians 2:27-28:

*"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."*

### **Updated**

In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, there is no gay or straight, nor conservative or liberal, democrat or republican, no cisgender or trans, married or single, for you are one in Christ.

### **Embracing True Fulfillment:**

- As image-bearers, we find our fulfillment in living for God's glory, not our own.
- Our identity in Christ aligns us with God's purpose, allowing us to live with confidence and hope in a broken world.

**(SLIDE 13)**

### **Application: Substance and Evidence in Daily Life**

- **Embrace the Substance:** Spend time with God through prayer and Scripture, allowing Him to shape your identity.
- **Live Out the Evidence:** Actively reflect Christ's character in your relationships, work, and community.
- **Proclaim the Image:** Let your life point others to God, showing His love, truth, and grace in all you do.

### **Story**

Forgiving someone who hurt my deeply

### **Conclusion: Identity in Christ is Both Substance and Evidence**

Our identity in Christ is a work of God's grace, transforming the very substance of who we are and calling us to live as evidence of His presence in the world. It is also a restoration of our original purpose: to reflect the image of God.

### **Call to Action:**

- Examine your heart: Are you living in the substance of who you are in Christ?
- Examine your life: Is there evidence of Christ in your actions, relationships, and priorities?

## Story

The late afternoon sun filtered through twisted, skeletal branches as Clara wandered deeper into the orchard. It was her first time here—a hidden gem, someone had called it—and she could see why. The ground was littered with apples of every shade: crimson, gold, and speckled green. They glistened like jewels against the brown earth.

Yet something felt... off.

Clara bent down and picked up one of the apples. It was unblemished, perfect, as though it had leaped straight from the pages of a catalog. She turned it over in her hands. There was no bite from insects, no bruises from falling, no scent of sun-soaked fruit. Just a faint, sterile smell of wax.

Her curiosity piqued, she inspected the nearby trees. Their bark was dry and cracked, the branches brittle and gray. Not a single leaf swayed in the gentle breeze. When she looked closer, she saw no apples hanging from the limbs, no remnants of blossoms or life. The trees weren't just dormant—they were dead.

"Strange, isn't it?" a voice startled her.

Clara turned to see an old man leaning on a rake, his face weathered like the bark of the trees. He wore a plaid shirt and a dusty cap that read *Miller's Orchard*, but there was no warmth in his smile.

"Why are the trees dead?" she asked, holding up the apple.

"They've been that way for years," he replied, his tone matter-of-fact. "Blight came through. Killed every last one."

Clara frowned, glancing again at the apples scattered at her feet. "But these—"

"Not from here," he said, cutting her off. He tapped his rake against the ground. "Bought 'em from the grocery store in town. Keep up appearances for the tourists, you know? Folks love the romance of an orchard. Not the reality."

The pit in her stomach grew heavy as she looked around. The apples weren't a harvest but a performance. A facade scattered across the graveyard of trees.

"Why not just let the orchard go?" she asked, her voice barely above a whisper.

The old man shrugged. "Because people don't come for the truth. They come for the story. And they'll believe whatever story we give them, as long as it looks real enough."

Clara set the apple back down, her fingers feeling sullied by its waxy perfection. She walked away, the crunch of her footsteps echoing through the barren orchard. For the first time, the beauty around her felt like a lie, and she couldn't help but wonder how many other stories she had swallowed whole, never stopping to question what lay beneath.

Behind her, the man bent down to arrange the apples she had disturbed, returning them to their illusory charm.

## Additional Resources

## Week 6

- 1.
2. Paul Tautges- Identity in Christ [There's More to Identity than You Think](#)
3. Erik Erikson [How People Develop an Identity or Cope With Role Confusion](#)
4. Lyman Stone, Institute for Family Studies: [Author: Lyman Stone | Institute for Family Studies](#)

