

# Union With Christ

A New Identity—Who Am I?

RANKIN  
WILBOURNE

UNION  
WITH  
CHRIST

*The Way to Know and Enjoy God*

Foreword by JOHN ORTBERG

# What, Exactly, Is Union with Christ?

*1. You are in Christ.*

*2. Christ is in you.*

# Union with Christ

## GRACE & DEMAND

- *The Way of Extravagant Grace*

*Believe the Gospel More – You are In Christ!*



- *The Way of Radical Discipleship*

*Obey Jesus More – Christ is In You!*

# Union with Christ: Where did it Come From (as a Doctrine?)

- The Bible
- Church history

# Col 3:1-4

- What is a “mindset”?
- What does this verse say about our mindset?
- How does our Union with Christ come into play?

# Two Competing Mindsets

- You are what you make of yourself
- Your identity is based on who you are and what you do
- You cannot be self-made
- Your identity is based on your relationship with Christ

# Identity

- What is meant by “identity”?
- What movies or books can you think of that have the theme of someone finding their identity



# Examples of Finding Identity

- Pinocchio
- Beauty and the Beast
- Frozen
- Luke Skywalker in Star Wars
- Rocky (“All I wanna do is go the distance...[so I’ll know I’m] not just another bum from the neighborhood”)
- Spider Man, Superman, etc.
- Jean Valjean in Les Miserables
- Just about any “coming of age” story

# Identity

- What is meant by “identity”?
- What movies or books can you think of that have the theme of someone finding their identity?
- Some have said that the “search for identity” is THE American theme. Why might this be?
- Theme of this chapter: our identity is found *outside* of ourselves in Christ

# Society's Prevailing Culture: “Choose Your Own Identity”

- Autonomy. Authenticity. Individuality. Freedom.
- Theme: We all have a true, authentic self hidden within us and the path to human flourishing involves discovering and expressing that “true self”
  - We must be free from external authority or expectations that constrain who we are
- Examples?

# Common Statements from our “Choose Your Own Identity” Culture...

- No one can tell me what I can and can't do
- I'm the master of my own fate
- I pulled myself up by my bootstraps
- A self-made man/woman
- I need to make sure people respect me (being respected is paramount)
- I'm not defined by what others think about me
- Others?

## Problems with “Choose Your Own Identity” Approach:

1. Accent on unlimited freedom often leads to paralysis

- Having all options open can make decision making difficult
- It's normally helpful to have at least some limitations
- Simple example: Pasta Sauce

## Problems with “Choose Your Own Identity” Approach:

1. Accent on unlimited freedom often leads to paralysis
2. Leads to anxiety

- Depression/anxiety has become more common
- One reason is a feeling of inadequacy arising from a context in which success is attributed to and expected of the autonomous individual
- Example: pressure of social media

# Quote From Rankin Wilbourne

Suppose you are one of the rare individuals who actually does know what you want to do with your life. Great! Now all you have to do is go do it. And do it well. And keep it up. That's an unrelenting pressure that no amount of success can relieve because the question is always, "Now, what will you do next?" And if you don't make it or can't make it? If it's all up to you, and you fail, then who do you have left to blame? Age of anxiety, indeed.

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3. Having more choices makes us discontent

- Increased choices can lead to increased expectations of how good a choice should be
- This leads to increasing dissatisfaction with whatever choice you end up making
- Example: Smartphones

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2. Leads to anxiety
3. Having more choices makes us discontent
4. The freedom enthroning narrative of “Choose Your Own Identity” often ends up robbing us of the very freedom it promises

- We can easily become enslaved to the identity that we have chosen
- Example 1: pornography
- Example 2: Demands of “climbing the corporate ladder”

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5. This mindset negatively affects how we view God

- We may bring God in to bless our plans, but we don't want him planning for us.
- We see God as an authority figure who will impede our freedom
- God becomes a stagehand to the play we are writing and starring in

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## Contrast: Union with Christ

1. Union with Christ gives us permission to rest
  - There is one choice more important than the rest: **Thy** will or **my** will be done?
  - As long as our will is set on following Christ, we can rest in the choices we make.
  - Your life is no longer in your hands—you can surrender your plans to Christ, who has joined his life to ours

To be continued next week...

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