

SERIES: DO YOU KNOW WHO YOU ARE
PART 11: I AM NEW

Julia grew up in a Christian home. Her father was the worship pastor, and, as most pastor kids, she was deeply involved in the church. There became a shift for her family after the fallout between her father and the lead pastor. Her father became depressed, and the entire family stopped going to church. So, Julia lost the home church she grew up in, and because of her parents' frustration with church life, they didn't really talk it through with Julia, and they never really helped her develop her identity in Jesus Christ. This happens way too much, church, that kids grow up in church and do not develop their own biblical basis for truth and how to live it out. I am grateful for Kids' Place! and EPICC and the great job that Beth and her team and Josh and his team are doing to help lay a good biblical foundation.

Julia described that, since she didn't have a good biblical foundation and relationship with Jesus, she found her identity in boys and found her worth when they worshipped her body. She struggled with being sexually active but believed satan's lie that it wasn't a big deal. She writes, "I did not have the character and values of Jesus. My faith was conditional, and my repentance was minimal." Her Junior year in college Julia started going to a Bible teaching church and community. Julia said she grew up understanding God's love for her and that Jesus was loving, but she didn't know what Jesus Christ had truly done for her on the cross. "God opened my eyes and revealed to me the truth, and I saw for the first time what I had done to Jesus. I was a wretched

sinner.” For nine months Julia confessed, repented and surrendered her sin to Jesus. “My pride was humiliated, my foundation was crumbled, and my idols were cast down. I saw myself as a prostitute and sexually impure. But this is where the devil had a hold on me. I forgot the Good News that we are sinners, and through Jesus there is no condemnation but His love and grace.”

But what happened to Julia happens to too many people. Julia switched from an identity in body image and boys to an identity as a condemned sinner, both of which were lies of the enemy. For months she struggled with feelings of guilt, insecurity, and inferiority, and inadequacy. During a conference something clicked, and she came to a fuller understanding of the Good News that is only in Jesus Christ. She wasn’t just a sinner condemned by God, but she was once a sinner, now saved by God’s grace and made new in Jesus as a daughter of God. Julia said, “God’s grace was a new revelation for me. The Holy Spirit filled me up, and I clearly felt His love and saw that I am adopted as His daughter, He has reconciled me to Himself and I am part of the His family, the church. Most important, through the power of Jesus I am victorious over satan, sin and death. I am freed from my sins! Jesus Christ had truly changed my identity from the inside out.”

This is what I want to talk with you about today. It is only through a personal relationship with Jesus that you can be made new. Please follow along as I read Ephesians 4:17-24, **“With the Lord’s authority I say this: Live no longer as the Gentiles do, for they are hopelessly confused.** ¹⁸**Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against**

Him.¹⁹They have no sense of shame. They live for lustful pleasure and eagerly practice every kind if impurity.²⁰But that isn't what you learned about Christ.²¹Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from Him,²²throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception.²³Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.²⁴Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.”
Ephesians 4:17-24

I. Four ways people use to explain how they can be vindicated (justified) from their sins

A. I am good enough

“I don’t need to commit all of my life to God for Him to be pleased with me.” People like this will make moderate life corrections and learn occasional new life lessons, but for the most part they believe that only “really bad” people, and not themselves, need to be made new. They believe they are good and justified by God as they are.

B. I can overcome my evil with my good

People who consider themselves religious will work hard at social justice issues, because they think they’re good and need to overcome evil with their good. These people trend towards focusing on other people’s problems more than their own, and, in their own conceit, they think they’re God’s gifts to the culture. They’re here to change it and make it new. They justify, vindicate themselves, by saving the rest of us.

C. I can change myself with self-improvement techniques

The 3rd non-Christian “spiritual” people try to change themselves with ambiguous spiritual self-help insights, wanting to become new and achieve transformation but not understanding how to do that through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. From this perspective, God gives them principles to save and vindicate themselves and only helps those who help themselves.

D. I work hard to keep the rules so that God must see I’m good

Devoutly religious people work hard at keeping the rules of a system or religion in an effort to justify themselves as good, righteous people in God’s sight. People like this endeavor through hard moral and ethical work to do the right thing and be good so God must be pleased with them. These people, like the religious leaders in Jesus’ day, looked on others with contempt. Mark 2:15-17 says, **“Later, Levi invited Jesus and His disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. (There were many people of this kind among Jesus’ followers.)¹⁶But when the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw Him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked His disciples, ‘Why does He eat with such scum?’¹⁷When Jesus heard this, He told them, ‘Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.”**

II. How do we become a new person?

A. You accept and agree with what Jesus did through His life, death, burial, and resurrection

Paul writes in Ephesians 2:1-5, “Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. ²You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. ³All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else. ⁴But God is so rich in mercy, and He loved us so much, ⁵that even though we were dead because of our sins, He gave us life when He raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!)” Paul is saying that we deserve death and God’s wrath because of our disobedience and defiance against God’s holy nature and purpose for His Kingdom and our lives. God would be right to declare that none of us would be vindicated. As Mark Driscoll writes, “God would have remained perfectly just in handing down a death sentence to everyone who ever lived, because not one of us is righteous.” For those who reject Jesus, they will be condemned, but for everyone who receives what Jesus Christ did for them on the cross, they will be justified. The term justification is a legal term that appears some 222 times in various forms throughout the N.T., and it refers to a double transaction whereby God takes away our sinful unrighteousness through Jesus’ substitutionary death, which means He took our place on our cross as our substitute, and when we put our faith in Him, He imputes His righteousness to us. **To impute means to ascribe or attribute**

something to someone. Jesus gives you His righteousness so that you are perfect and right in God's sight. Paul puts it this way in Romans 3:19-26, "**Obviously, the law applies to those to whom it was given, for its purpose is to keep people from having excuses and to show that the entire world is guilty before God.**

²⁰For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

²¹But now God has shown us a way to be made right with Him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writing of Moses, and the prophets long ago. **²²We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.**

²³For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. **²⁴Yet God, with underserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when He freed us from the penalty for our sins.**

²⁵For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed His life, shedding His blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when He held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past,

²⁶for He was looking ahead and including them in what He would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate His righteousness, for He Himself is fair and just, and He declares sinners to be right in His sight when they believe in Jesus."

The first step to becoming new is to acknowledge that you are guilty before God because of your sin and transgression. As vs. 19 says, I stand guilty before God. I have broken all 10 of the 10 commandments in my heart, mind and thoughts, if not in reality.

You can never live before God perfectly. Paul argues that the purpose of the law is to simply show how sinful you and I are. To reject God's truth about us is to stand in utter defiance of who He says He is and who He says we are. But because of God's love, grace, mercy, and forgiveness, He has provided a way for us to be in right relationship with Him. It is by accepting and agreeing that Jesus Christ is Lord and that you place your faith in Jesus and in His life, death, burial, and resurrection.

B. You understand that Jesus took your sin and declares you not guilty

This truth will take your breath away. Not only does Jesus give, impute, ascribe, and attribute to us His righteousness, but our sin is imputed, attributed to Jesus' life and account. **This doesn't mean that Jesus became bad—but that our sin was placed on Him.** This is exactly how Jesus Christ paid our sin debt to God. He had no sin in Himself, but our sin was placed on Him, so He paid our penalty for our sin. This is what Paul means when he states in Galatians 2:20, "**My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me. So, I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.**" Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:19-21, "**For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And He gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.** ²⁰**So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making His appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, 'Come back to God!'** ²¹**For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.**" This

is one of the most amazing, life-transforming truths in all of the Bible. Murray J. Harris says, “**Because of God’s transference of sinners’ sin on to the sinless one, because sin was reckoned to Christ’s account, it is not now reckoned to the believer’s account. This total identification of the sinless one with sinners at the cross, in assuming the full penalty and guilt of their sin, leaves no doubt that substitution as well as representation was involved.**”

I want to make this as relevant and understandable as possible. Justification—God’s vindication of our sin, is all about who Jesus is and what He accomplished in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. It is Jesus’ work, not our works, saves us. Jesus’ life, not our own life, is our hope. Jesus’ death, not our religious works, is our payment. Jesus alone forgives sin. So, we must repent of our sin to Jesus. Jesus alone gives us His righteousness or right standing with Father God. So that is why we trust in Jesus alone for our justification-vindication and acquittal. Our vindication, justification and salvation is not accomplished in any part by our own work, morality, or religious devotion. Justification, salvation is accomplished by Jesus plus nothing, and Jesus plus anything ruins everything.

(Closing comments and prayer. Invite people to surrender their lives to Jesus Christ and involve this aspect in my prayer.)