

*He said to them, "But **who do you say that I am?**"*

Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

*And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For **flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.**" (Matthew 16:15-17 NRSV)*

Who do **you** say I am?

Where did you get that **answer**? Not from yourself.

*Behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "**This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.**"*
(Matthew 3:17)

God said Jesus was His **beloved Son**. That means it was **true regardless** of how Jesus felt or thought. God is the **Source of all truth**, unaffected by anyone's feelings or opinions.

Adam was created as **God's son**. So what happened to cause Adam to **think less of himself**?

Adam chose to identify with the Tree of the Knowledge of **Good and Evil** which led to death.

What death did Adam **experience** that very day? The death of his **reliance on his true identity**.

Adam **chose** to believe a **false source of identity**, leaving him **separated** from the only Source.

We are **born with the lie of separation** from life, from importance, from knowing the Source directly.

We are born in sin, but that does **not mean that sin is our identity**, but rather how we feel about it.

***I will put enmity** between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will bruise your head, and you will bruise his heel.* (Genesis 3:15)

God put enmity between **Satan's version of identity** we inherited and God's **truth about our identity**. This **implanted animosity** is a **resistance** to living in the **lies** about life. It is the **gift of grace** in our soul.

*For I say, through the **grace that was given me**, to every man who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to **think reasonably**, as **God has apportioned to each person a measure of faith.*** (Romans 12:3)

The **Spirit arouses this desire** for **something better** inside of us to awaken us to be aware of the truth.

Jesus is the Source of truth that **alone sets us free** from slavery to sin and self-preservation.

Believing in Jesus is **not a head trip or legal formula**, but rather an act of our **will** to agree with God.

What we **believe to be true about God** will transfer into what we imagine is **true about ourselves**.

Because humans by default **reflect** whatever we imagine to be true about God, that will determine **how we react** to any given situation or relationship.

How do we know what is true?

What makes us **feel better**?

What **people around** us believe?

What we were raised and **conditioned** to rely on as being true (**tradition**)?

What **religion insists** is true?

We **choose to believe truth** that does **not depend** at all on how we **feel** or **what we have done**. **Authentic truth** is **not** the same as what we have **experienced** or are **feeling in the moment**. True truth is **entirely objective**, yet it is **increasingly affirmed in our spirit** over time as valid. **Lies** can **seemingly be confirmed** over time because of their capacity to be **self-fulfilling**. This is **why truth must be objective**, because lies believed, while seemingly affirmed, are rooted in self-replicating feelings produced, while **truth is always** based on the **objective Word** of God.

*If it seem evil to you to serve Yahweh, **choose you this day whom you will serve**; whether the gods which your fathers served that were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh. (Joshua 24:15)*

The **war** over our soul is all about **what source we choose to believe** about what is true about our **identity**, value and purpose.

When we **imagine God is judgmental**, critical and exacting, **we will act accordingly**.

When we **imagine God** to be **unforgiving**, demanding and obsessed with **legal conformity**, we will **react accordingly** and **either reject** Him or feel constantly **compelled** to meet **impossible expectations**. We will also **treat others as unforgiven** and **demand conformity to our demands** as payment for tolerance.

*Don't you know that **to whom you present yourselves as servants to obedience, his servants you are** whom you obey; whether of sin to death, or of obedience to righteousness? (Romans 6:16)*

Do you believe you are forgiven, loved unconditionally and **extremely important to God**?

When you really believe that in your heart, the **same disposition will motivate** how you relate to others.

When we **know and believe the love** our heavenly Father has for us, we **live free of the lies** and power of sin, **fear** and **shame**.

We **don't experience freedom** because we **believe a theory**, but rather **we believe an objective truth** that we have **no ability to change** or alter in the slightest – that **God is love and loves us** personally.

How can I get there from here?

How can I know I am loved when all my life my feelings have screamed the opposite?

How can I escape feeling lonely, depressed, abandoned, **condemned, ashamed** when that is how I have felt nearly all my life?

Go back to what we just considered about **where we anchor truth**. It **cannot be our feelings**.

Feelings are the puppet strings by which the enemy of our soul **jerks us around** like a yoyo.

We have been **conditioned** to give more **credibility to our feelings** than to the **faith of Jesus**.

We are called to fight the **good fight of faith**. What does that actually mean in **practical** terms?

It involves **changing how we think** (repentance), what **inputs** we allow to **occupy our imagination**. Jesus (the author of truth) says that we will **know the truth** and it will **set us free**.

What does free really mean here?

When I **choose to believe what He says and reject what any contradictory feelings insist**, I open my mind and heart to tap into the Tree of **Life that releases power inside** of me to **live in true love and freedom from fear**, lies, torment, selfishness and condemnation.

We know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and he who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him. In this love has been made perfect among us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, even so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has punishment. He who fears is not made perfect in love. (1 John 4:16-18)

The **gospel** of Jesus Christ is the **truth** that alone has **inherent power** that sets me **free from the law of sin and death**. This is **not religious assertion** but is the **reality** that controls the universe.

My part is to **choose to believe the truth** from the Source of truth instead of my feelings and fears. That is my part – to **use my will to submit to God's will**, God's reality, **God as the Source of truth**. When I choose to **believe God instead of myself** and my **feelings** or other people's **opinions**, I **give God authority** to do the work needed to rescue me from the pit of hell that swallows up hope, faith and love.

We are in an **identity war** more than anything else.
We are being constantly assaulted with strident **assertions about who we are** and who God is.
Jesus mentors us how to posture ourselves to **live in freedom in the middle of this war**.

Who do you (God) say that I am?

The **original I AM** is the **only reliable Source** who will consistently tell us the truth about who we are. You can **ask Him directly** any time, all the time, repeatedly all day and all night who you are. And **God is faithful** to keep telling you the truth, for **He cannot lie** and He is **delighted when we press in** hard to know the truth that sets us free. That's because **He never wavers in His relentless passion** for us to know His heart and experience deepest **intimacy in His love** for us.

Reinforce the truth God declares about you by choosing to **fill your mind** and memory with the **promises and declarations** about this truth in the **objective written word** of inspired Scripture. In this way the objective words that have already proven themselves true for centuries become **anchors that cannot be shaken** by any storms of doubt, fear, shame or lies that seeks to dislodge us from living loved.