

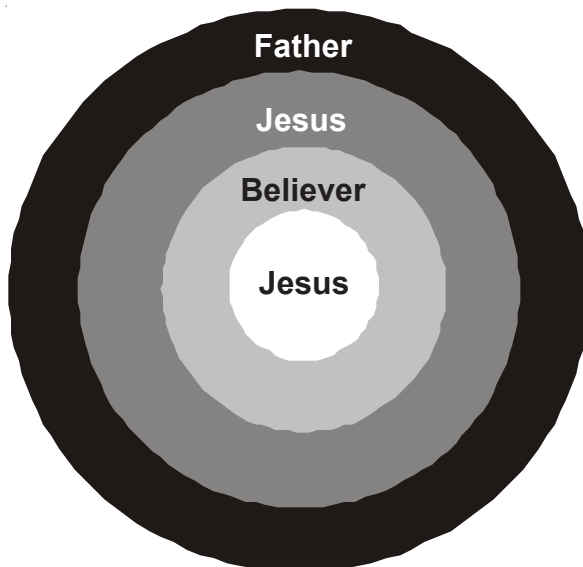
In order to experience a true sense of personal worth, it is vital that we understand the very heart of the gospel message: *we have become one with Christ*. On the night before his crucifixion, Jesus sought to encourage his insecure and helpless disciples with a promise that reveals this gospel. He said, “At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye are in me, and I in you.” (John 14:20) In this lesson, we shall focus our attention on the biblical basis for personal worth, as revealed in the promise of Christ that we are in him, and he is in us. In short, we shall examine our union with Christ as it applies to our personal needs.

The Promise

Before considering the exact meaning of our union with Christ, it is important to consider the context in which it was promised. The twelve had been following Jesus for about three years. They were trusting him to be the King of the Jews; the Messiah of Israel. Like all of us, they naturally believed that being with the King would give them personal worth. They were anxiously awaiting the day when Jesus would set up his kingdom on earth,

John 14:20

On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and that you are in me and I am in you. (ncv)



and they would receive prestige, money, and power by reigning with him. The fact they had left their natural ways and means of making themselves secure and significant would no longer worry them if Jesus would actually raise up his kingdom now. It was an investment to them.

Instead, Jesus told them he was leaving them now! All of their dreams and hopes for personal gain in the kingdom were crushed by this announcement. Immediately, they were overcome by feelings of insecurity and despair as the shocking news began to sink into their

Alpha Series
Foundation of Our Needs

"I am one with the father."

It is this claim by Jesus that separates true Christianity from all other religions of the world.

Because of our union with Christ we are worthy as persons.

Because of our union with him we are secure and significant as persons whether we feel like it or not.

hearts.

It would be difficult to imagine a more desperate situation than the one facing those worried disciples that night.

Clearly, they needed encouragement on a supernatural basis. Against such a background of darkness, shines the light of the gospel in Jesus' promise about their union with him. In contrast to the insecurity they naturally felt by the coming separation, the promise of their union with Christ offered comfort and joy for those who would believe. Likewise, only the promise of our union with Christ can truly comfort those who are feeling

worthless.

John 14:20 states the promise Jesus made to his disciples concerning their union with him. Jesus' statement, "As I am in the Father" refers to his being one with the Father. It is this claim by Jesus that separates true Christianity from all other religions of the world. Jesus did not claim to be just another good teacher or prophet of Israel. He claimed to be God! Being "In the Father," means what is true of the Father is also true of Jesus because they are one in essence.

In exactly the same way he is in the father, Jesus promised his disciples (believers) they are in him. Whatever is true of Jesus being "In the Father," must also be true of the believer "In Christ." Thus, believers are one with Jesus just as he is one with the Father. In addition, he went on to promise *he is in the believer while the believer is in him*. The wonderful news is we are totally and inseparably joined to Jesus.

The concept of our union with Christ does not come only from this promise of Jesus. The Bible reveals the same truth through *different analogies*. Later Jesus would express the same promise to his disciples through the analogy of *the vine*. As the vine and its branches are one, so are believers one with Christ. The apostle Paul uses three different analogies in his letters to demonstrate the same promise. Believers are one with Christ as *a building and its foundation* are one (Ephesians 2:20-22); as *a husband and wife* are one (Ephesians 5:31-32); as *the head and the body* are one (Ephesians 1:22-23). The frequent use of the phrases, "In Christ," "In him," or "In whom" in the New Testament, all reflect the basic promise that believers are in a vital union with Jesus Christ. It is from this union the believer draws incredible benefits of personal worth.

Whatever is true of Jesus being "In the Father," must also be true of the believer In Christ.

Foundation of Our Needs

The Benefits

Since Jesus' promise is true we can begin to realize the marvelous personal benefits of our union with him by reminding ourselves that what is true of Jesus is true of us as well. *Was Jesus secure in God's love?* Certainly he was, and **so are we**. *Was Jesus significant in God's plan?* Certainly he was, and **so are we**.

Because of our union with Christ we are worthy as persons. As we begin to recognize and believe in our union with Christ we enter into *the fullness of the gospel of Jesus Christ in our daily lives*. Because we are one with Christ (we are in him and he is in us) we are said to be loved unconditionally (Ephesians 2:1-10), totally accepted (Ephesians

1:3-6), forever forgiven (Colossians 2:9-15), important as ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:17-21), meaningful in ministry (John 14:12), and adequate in power (Philip-

We are:

- Loved unconditionally (Ephesians 2:1-10)
- Totally accepted (Ephesians 1:3-6)
- Forever forgiven (Colossians 2:9-15)
- Important as ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)
- Meaningful in ministry (John 14:12)
- Adequate in power (Philippians 4:13)

pians 4:13). In short, our union with Christ meets all our personal needs to make us worthy *because he is worthy*.

It is necessary at this point to consider an important distinction between *being* worthy and *feeling* worthy.

Jesus promised to be one with us to make us worthy; not necessarily to make us feel worthy. It is possible for us to *be* absolutely secure, and yet *feel* insecure. Carnival rides and amusement parks entertain people by causing them to experience a feeling of insecurity, while they really are secure. Jesus has promised to make us absolutely secure and significant in his love and calling regardless of what we may experience in our feelings. Because of our union with him ***we are secure and significant as persons whether we feel like it or not.***

The Faith

In spite of the fact Jesus has promised to identify himself with us and us with him in order to give us a true sense of worth, there are many other things we have learned to depend on for our personal security and significance. Before we are old enough to abstractly conceive that there is a God at all, let alone one who loves us and gave his life for us, *we have all been conditioned to trust in ourselves, others, and our circumstances to make us worthy*. As

The Faith Factor

Our union with Christ

Alpha Series
Foundation of Our Needs

small children we learn to *trust in our own performance* to make us significant in this life. We also learn to *depend on the approval of significant others* to tell us we are loved, and, therefore, secure. These early learning experiences make it very difficult to later believe Jesus is the one who makes us secure and significant.

The multitudes turned away, and walked no more with Jesus (John 6:66) because they were not willing to believe that he could satisfy their personal needs by himself. When Jesus refused to give them another “free lunch,” they, thinking only physically in their natural, pre-conditioned ways, could see nothing Jesus had to offer to get their needs met.

Each of us fight the same kind of battle today. When we honestly ask ourselves what we depend on for our worth (i.e. security and/or significance) we also find that we have been conditioned from birth to trust everything and everyone but Jesus. In our natural condition, what Jesus has to offer does not make any sense to us either.

For instance, suppose I bought a Lotto ticket, and won ninety million dollars. The money I would have won would generate a *false* sense of security as people begin to say they “love” me, they “accept” me, and they “forgive” me for any wrongdoing. Likewise, I might develop a *false sense* of significance as I enjoyed a new sense of “importance,” “purpose,” and “power” in my money. All my conditioning in this world’s value system would tell me that I am now “worth” ninety million dollars. Trusting Jesus, rather than ninety million dollars for my worth, would be a great deal easier to *say* than to *do*.

As we shall see in later lessons, the factor that allows us to develop, and maintain a healthy sense of personal worth, is simply *faith in our union with Christ*. The reality is, as far as God is concerned, only those who are “in Christ” or “one with Christ” have any real worth as persons. For this reason he sent his son Jesus to identify himself with us in our worthless condition of sin that we might identify ourselves in his worthy condition of righteousness. *In Christ, we have all that is necessary to make us secure and significant*. Apart from Christ we have nothing. The only thing left for us to do is to believe. That is, we must chose to base our worth each day on our union with Christ (eat his flesh, and drink his blood, daily). “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is by grace, through faith, that we are saved from eternal death (the condition we are already in because of our natural birth, and will stay in without being reborn from above). It is also by grace through faith that we are saved from the personal death of worthlessness.

Alpha Series
Foundation of Our Needs

*BECAUSE WE ARE ONE IN CHRIST
WE ARE:*

Totally accepted (Ephesians 1:3-6)

Forever forgiven (Colossians 2:9-15)

Loved unconditionally (Ephesians 2:1-10)

Important as ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

Adequate in power (Philippians 4:13)

Meaningful in ministry (John 14:12)

QUESTIONS

CHAPTER TWO: FOUNDATION OF OUR NEEDS

Lesson Two: Our Union With Christ

1. What is the significance of the promise Jesus gives in John 14:20?
2. Why does our union with Christ meet our personal needs and make us worthy?
3. What role does our faith play?
4. List the things mentioned that are true of us when we are in Christ.