**Week 2 – Identity**

**Purpose:**
In order to be able to announce and demonstrate the kingdom as Jesus did, we need to be in the kingdom and the kingdom needs to be in us. It must have made its way, deeply, into our lives, so that the powers of the coming age are resident in us. This is what makes us new creatures or born-again believers. Through the new life of the risen Christ, a new person is born within us. We need to be secure in this new identity to become representatives and carriers of the kingdom of God.

**Objectives:**

* Discuss the many factors that contribute to low sense of identity and establish the importance of high identity in Christ.
* Explain how the identity of Jesus is the basis of Christian identity and track his unique sense of identity through birth, youth, baptism, death, resurrection, and ascension.

**Overview:**

John Wimber (founder of the Vineyard movement) on Christian identity:

*I used to tell people that “I was just a sinner saved by grace.” But I no longer say that. True, I was once a sinner who repented and believed and as a result was saved by grace. But now I am a child of God, healed of my spiritual sickness, “set free from sin and a slave to righteousness” (Rom 6:18). That is to say, my fundamental identity is that I am a child of God, a new creation.*

Since we are called to continue the ministry of Jesus, our adoption as sons/daughters is based on Jesus’ identity as the Son of God.

* Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, making him the Son of God *(Luke 1:32,35).*
* After visiting the Temple, Jesus was aware of a special Father/Son relationship. He told his earthly Father, “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” *(Luke 2:49).*
* This sense of Sonship was elevated when he was baptized at the Jordan *(Luke 3:21-22)* and his Father affirmed him as “my son, in whom I am well pleased”. This was the trigger to his public ministry.
* Immediately following his baptism, Jesus entered into spiritual warfare. The key strategy of the devil was to cast doubt on his Sonship *(Luke 4:3, 9).*
* Because Jesus won this battle, he returned to Galilee “in the power of the Spirit” *(Luke 4:14).*
* Because of his unique sense of Sonship, Jesus related to God like no other human had ever done. He used the unheard-of name for God, the Aramaic “Abba”, or “Daddy” *(Mark 14:36).* He taught his disciples to pray, “Our Father…”
* Jesus performed the striking act of washing the disciples’ feet *(John 13:1-17)* when “he knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God” *(3).*

There are four key aspects of the coming of the kingdom in Jesus that ground our identity:

* His ***humanity***
	+ Humanity was created in the image of God. The image of God means that we are meant to rule creation as God’s vice-regents *(Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 8:4-6).*
	+ This status, lost through the fall, is first restored in Jesus as the true human *(Hebrews 2:7-10)* representing God’s destiny for humanity. Jesus is the true Adam, restored to the image of God, ruling as God’s vice-regent. The coming of the kingdom is the coming of the new humanity, restored to authority under God.
* His ***death***
	+ Because Jesus embodies humanity, as the Son of Man, when he died on the cross, all of humanity was drawn into him. Jesus said the cross was the Day of Judgment occurring in advance *(John 12:31-32).* If we are “in him”, when he died, then we died. That means we have been judged and cannot be judged again *(John 5:24).*
* His ***resurrection***
	+ The gospel resurrection narratives show that Jesus had a new kind of body, transcending the limitations of our bodies.
		- This is the prototype of our future resurrected bodies *(Philippians 3:20-21).*
		- In this risen state, he breathed the new creation life into his disciples, evoking the first creation of humanity *(John 20:22; Genesis 2:7).* This is the beginning of the new humanity.
* His ***ascension***
	+ When Jesus was exalted at the right hand of God, he did not leave his humanity behind. He therefore became the pioneer (trail blazer) for humanity “in him” to be glorified *(Hebrews 2:10-11).*
		- *To the one who is victorious, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne (Revelation 3:21).*
	+ This is the ultimate identity of humanity restored, to rule as God’s vice-regent.

**Discussion:**

* There are many reasons why we may be robbed of a positive sense of identity. Share stories of experience on your identity. Share factors in your life so far that may have either contributed to the loss of identity, or to the positive formation of identity, or to the recovery of identity through Christ.
* The identity of Jesus goes through a clear sequence, or progression. Can you describe this sequence? How do we connect with each aspect of his identity?
* Discuss how the identity of Jesus is the basis of our identity in his humanity, death, resurrection, and ascension. Talk on how we identify with these elements.
* Spend time giving thanks to Jesus for who he is for us and praying for one another.