Introduction:

What comes into our mind when we think about ourselves is the second most important thing about us.

- In a fallen world, we all have warped mirrors

- We all experience pain and distortion that affect our lives and relationships because of the warped mirrors of our past and present.

- Universal fear = **REJECTION**

- Unhealthy responses include:
  - Pleasing people at all costs
  - Overly sensitive to criticism
  - Withdrawal from others to avoid disapproval
  - Driven to succeed to avoid rejection

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What does God say about our self-perception?

For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

Romans 12:3

Where can we get an accurate view of ourselves – The book of Ephesians

[1] Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus: [2] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[3] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

[4] just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love

[5] He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,

[6] to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

Ephesians 1:1-6

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What does God say about those who are "in Christ"?

- They are **CHOSEN** by Him:
  - Unearned – not based on what you do or don't do.
  - Eternal – before you existed.
  - Core Truth – you are **WANTED** by God!

- They are **ADOPTED** by Him:
  - Complete – all rights, privileges and blessings.
  - Irrevocable – never ends.
  - Core Truth – you are **ACCEPTED** by God and are His **CHILD**!

What does being "adopted" really mean?

- Love — 1 John 3:1
- Hope — Romans 8:16-17
- Intimacy — Romans 8:15
- Holiness — Hebrews 12:6-11
- Assurance — Romans 8:38-39

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How to see yourself as God sees you

- **The principle** = Replace your "warped mirrors" and misbeliefs by the Truth of God's Word.

- Identify the lies you believe and write them on one side of a 3x5 card.

> i.e. "I must be approved (accepted) by certain people to be happy." (or) "I need other people's approval to be happy."
>
> *side 1*

- Write the truth on the other side of the card and read daily A.M. and P.M.

> i.e. **Belongingness Truth**
>
> I am wanted, appreciated and loved by God, my Father, the most important person in my life. – *Romans 8:38-39*
>
> *side 2*

<u>Resources</u>:

Affirmation Cards – Theresa Ingram
Knowing God – J.I. Packer

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Introduction: Understanding our search for significance

From life's outset, we find ourselves on the prowl, searching to satisfy some inner, unexplained yearning. Our hunger causes us to search for people who will love us. Our desire for acceptance pressures us to perform for the praise of others.

Our desire to be loved and accepted is a symptom of a deeper need – the need that governs our behavior and is the primary source of our emotional pain. Often unrecognized, this is our need for **self-worth**.

Since the Fall, mankind has often failed to turn to God for the truth about Himself. Instead, he has looked to others to meet his inescapable need for **self-worth**. "*I am what others say I am,*" he reasoned. "*I will find my value in their opinion of me.*"

SELF-WORTH = PERFORMANCE + OTHERS' OPINION

Question: In what or whom do you tend to find **your identity** apart from Christ?

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Understanding your search for significance

Our attempts to meet our needs for success and approval fall into two broad categories: Compulsion and Withdrawal.

- **Compulsion:** Perfectionism, workaholism, driven to succeed, obsessed with our outward appearance, manipulate and use people for personal achievement.

- **Withdrawal:** Avoid failure, avoid risks, gravitate towards people who are comforting and kind. Avoid relationships that demand vulnerability. Appear easygoing, but often run from potential situations or relationships that might not succeed.

Result = We become **SLAVES**!

= We become **ACTORS**!

= The "real you" is never **SEEN**!

= The "real you" is never **LOVED**!

Jesus came to set you free

31 So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you continue in My Word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

John 8:31-32

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"In Christ" you are…

1. **CHOSEN** – Personally wanted, accepted, and appreciated by God, who is the most important person in your life.

   Ephesians 1:3-4

2. **ADOPTED** – God is your Father and has committed to protect you, provide for you, and cherish you as His child forever.

   Ephesians 1:5-6

3. **REDEEMED** – You have been purchased out of the slave market of sin by Jesus as His infinitely precious and treasured possession.

> *7 In Him **we have redemption** through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us.*
>
> Ephesians 1:7-8a

Message = The real you is **FREE** and **VALUABLE**!

> *8 In all wisdom and **insight** 9 **He made known to us the mystery of His will**, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him 10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.*
>
> Ephesians 1:8b-10

Message = The real you is **NEEDED** and **WORTHY**!

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How to see yourself as God sees you

- **The principle** = Replace your "warped mirrors" and misbeliefs with the Truth of God's Word.

Misbeliefs

- I must avoid failure at all cost. I must work harder and longer to be a success and prove I'm not a failure.
- I must avoid failure at all cost. It's better not to try than to fail. If people really get to know me, they would reject me.

Worthiness Truth

"I am now a righteous person in God's sight since I have trusted Christ's redemptive sacrifice for me. I am covered by the robe of His purity and goodness. Also, since I have a new nature, I am a good person in my central practice of life as I continue to grow in Christ."

Resources:

Affirmation Cards – Theresa Ingram
**The Search for Significance* – Robert McGee

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You are Secure
Ephesians 1:11-14

Introduction: What does it mean to be secure?

noun

1. Free from danger or harm, safe
2. Firm, not liable to fail or become displaced
3. Affording safety, as in a place
4. In safe custody or keeping
5. Free from care; without anxiety
6. Firmly established, as in a relationship
7. Safe from unauthorized persons

verb

1. To get hold of, to possess, obtain
2. To effect, make certain of; ensure
3. To free one from danger, harm, provide safety

What most threatens your security?

1. Fear of physical harm; death?
2. Fear of relational rejection; aloneness?
3. Fear of punishment; judgment?
4. Anxiety, guilt, doubts, condemnation?

Question: In what or whom do you seek to find **security** apart from Christ?

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What is God's provision for our security?

*For Christ also **died for sins** once for all, the just for the unjust, **so that He might bring us to God**, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit;*

1 Peter 3:18

What must we do to experience this security?

*But as many **as received Him**, to them He gave the right to become **children of God**, even to those who believe in His name.*

John 1:12

What really happens when we RECEIVE Christ?

Justification – is God's legal declaration that all my sins are forgiven and that He has granted me the righteousness of Christ. It's my "new position" as His dearly loved child.

Romans 5:1

Regeneration – means that I am a new creation "in Christ" and have a new nature fully pleasing to God.

John 3:3-6

Reconciliation – means that although I was once hostile to God and alienated from Him, I am now His friend.

Colossians 1:21-22

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Propitiation – means that Jesus satisfied God's just wrath by His death on the cross; therefore, Jesus took all my punishment forever.

1 John 4:9-11

Sanctification – the process by which the Holy Spirit transforms my inner attitudes and outward actions to the character of Christ. "This practical righteousness" occurs as I walk by faith and obedience, trust in His promises, and give and receive encouragement in the body of Christ.

1 Peter 2:1-2

Can we know for certain we are secure?

In Him, [11] also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will,

[12] to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.

[13] In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, ***you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise****,*

[14] who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

Ephesians 1:11-14

- Child >> Heir >> Inheritance >> Sealed >> Down payment!

Message = You are **RICH** and **SECURE**!

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How to see yourself as God sees you

- **The principle** = Replace your "warped mirrors" and misbeliefs with the Truth of God's Word.

Misbeliefs

- Those who fail are unworthy of love and deserve to be punished
- Doubts, guilt over past mistakes, and condemnation are evidence that I am a bad person and unworthy of love by God or others.

STOP

Security Truth

I am secure in my relationship with Christ, in my daily safety and well being, and in my future outlook, whether on earth or heaven because I've been sealed by His Spirit. – Ephesians 1:13-14

Resources:

Affirmation Cards – Theresa Ingram
The Search for Significance – Robert McGee

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Introduction: The debilitating power of shame

What is shame? – it is a painful feeling of regret, self-hate, and dishonor. Brené Brown describes it as, "a painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and, therefore, unworthy of love and belonging.

* Shame usually results in guilt and self-deprecation, but it can also lead us to search for God and His answers.

*** Unhealthy responses to shame include:**

- Inferiority
- Destructive behaviors
- Self-pity
- Passivity
- Withdrawal / hiding
- Drivenness
- Co-dependency
- Hate appearance

Question: In what ways are you most tempted to deal with shame apart from Christ?

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What is God's antidote to shame?

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

2 Corinthians 5:17

Context – The apostle Paul has reminded the Ephesian church, and us, of our dramatic new standing with God and the **spiritual blessings** that we now possess because of our relationship with Jesus. Ephesians 1:3-14

Paul prays for that 18-inch journey

15 For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 16 I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. 17 ***I keep asking*** *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that* ***you may know Him better****.*

18 I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that ***you may know***

1. *The hope to which He has called you,*
2. *The riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and*
3. *His incomparably great power for us who believe.*

That ***power*** *is like* ***the working*** *of His* ***mighty strength****, 20 which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under His feet and* ***appointed Him to be head over everything*** *for the Church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.*

Ephesians 1:18-23

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How do we overcome "true" and "false" shame?

- **RECEIVE Christ** — 2 Corinthians 5:17

- **ASK the Father** — Ephesians 1:15-17

- **BELIEVE 3 historical facts:**

1. My **PAST** no longer defines me. — Ephesians 1:18

   As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.

   Psalm 103:12

2. My **FUTURE** happiness is guaranteed. — Ephesians 1:18b

   But just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.

   1 Corinthians 2:9

3. I have incomprehensible power to meet all my **PRESENT** challenges and opportunities. — Ephesians 1:19-23

   But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.

   1 Corinthians 15:10

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How to see yourself as God sees you

- **The principle** = Replace your "warped mirrors" and misbeliefs with the Truth of God's Word.

Misbeliefs

- I am what I am, I cannot change.
- I can't help myself; this is just the way I've always been and always will be.

Competency Truth

I am a competent person, equipped by the Holy Spirit to carry out God's will in my daily life in a way that pleases Him, regardless of what stage of growth I may be in at the present. My real importance in life is connected with the way I am touching other people's lives with the love of God and message of Christ.

– Philippians 4:13

Resources:

Affirmation Cards – Theresa Ingram
**The Search for Significance* – Robert McGee

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Introduction: Understanding the complexity of guilt

What is guilt?

- **Literal meaning =** "the state of having committed an offense. It's the opposite of innocence." – vocab.com

- **Psychological meaning =** "an emotional response to the perception that we have broken a prohibition or fallen short of a standard. Thus, guilt can be both a **fact** and a **feeling** and the two are not necessarily related." – Dr. Becca Johnson

  - Distinctions of "guilt" and "guilty feelings"

  - Distinctions of "good/true" guilt and "bad/false" guilt

- **Theological meaning =** it is the moral and legal condition of all people prior to salvation; our personal accountability and just condemnation for sin and transgressions against God's law. – Romans 3:9-23

  - Result = **Prior to salvation** all are guilty/condemned.

  - Result = **Post salvation** all guilt and condemnation is permanently obliterated.

Question: How do you tend to cope with guilt?

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What is God's antidote for guilt?

Examining the universal problem:

*1 As for you, you were **dead** in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are **disobedient**. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature **objects of wrath**.*

Ephesians 2:1-3

- We are all **GUILTY** and members of a **CONDEMNED** dysfunctional family.
  - The source = Romans 5:12
  - The result = Death, disobedience, destruction

Understanding God's solution

*4 But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 **made us alive** with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved. 6 And God **raised us up** with Christ and **seated us with Him** in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, 7 in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

Ephesians 2:4-7

- Jesus' **INTERVENTION** rescued us from condemnation and into His **FAMILY**.
  - His motive = verse 4
  - His action = verses 5-6
  - His purpose = verse 7

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Experiencing God's provision

[8] *For it is **by grace** you have been saved, **through faith** – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God –* [9] *not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Ephesians 2:8-9

- Our **RESTORATION** can only begin when we recognize the full extent of our need.
  - The source = 100% **GRACE**
  - The reception = through **FAITH**
  - The result = No **CONDEMNATION**

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Romans 8:1

Embracing the beauty of God's re-creation

*For we are God's **workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Ephesians 2:10

- You are His **MASTERPIECE**.

- You are uniquely gifted and **BEAUTIFUL** in your inward character and outward appearance in God's eyes.

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How to see yourself as God sees you

- **The principle** = Replace your "warped mirrors" and misbeliefs with the Truth of God's Word.

Misbeliefs

- I am a bad person. My past mistakes and "guilty feelings" confirm I am dirty, ugly, and unlovable.
- If only I could be as beautiful, talented, and morally pure as _____?_____, then I would be happy.

STOP

Appearance Truth

My Soul (the real me), my physical appearance, my natural talents and my personality (in their unchanging aspects) are beautiful in God's sight.
He is my designer and maker.
– Psalm 139:13-17, Ephesians 2:10

Resources:

Affirmation Cards – Theresa Ingram
The Search for Significance – Robert McGee
Good Guilt, Bad Guilt – Dr. Becca Johnson
Tired of Trying to Measure Up – Jeff VanVonderen

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Introduction: Dealing with dangerous emotions

Angst – A feeling of deep anxiety and dread that is unfocused and hard to identify. It's a sense of frustration and apprehension with the general state of the world and one's future in it. It is often accompanied by depression.

- Angst's emotional cousins are recurring thoughts of:

    1. Meaninglessness – feeling like my life has no value or significance.

    2. Purposelessness – to be without aim, goal, or plan. Life feels pointless, senseless, without direction.

    3. Hopelessness – despairing, despondent, a belief/feeling that nothing good can happen, and a happy ending is impossible.

Unhealthy responses to angst – Withdrawal from people, addictive behavior or relationships, acting out, victim mentality, trivial pursuits, suicide.

Question: How do you tend to deal with these dangerous emotions apart from Christ?

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God's antidote to angst?

- **Remember the hope of your CALLING.** Ephesians 1:1-23
  - **Chosen =** You are accepted (verse 4)
  - **Adopted =** You are wanted (verse 5)
  - **Redeemed =** You are valuable (verse 7)
  - **Sealed =** You are secure (verse 13)
  - **Empowered =** You are competent (verse 19)

"Call" is one of the biblical words associated with our salvation. In both Hebrew and Greek "call" can be used in a sense of naming (Genesis 2:19, Luke 1:13), and in biblical thought to give a name of someone was to bestow an **identity**…when God is the one who bestows names, the action is almost equivalent to **creation** (Isaiah 40:26)

- **Reflect on the MAGNITUDE of your calling.** Ephesians 2:10-3:21

1. God calls us into a new **RELATIONSHIP**. Ephesians 1:3-4

*For He **chose us** in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight.*

Ephesians 1:4

2. God calls us into a new **PURPOSE**. Ephesians 2:10

*For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **to do good works**, which God prepared in advance **for us to do**.*

Ephesians 2:10

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3. God calls us into a new **FAMILY**. Ephesians 2:11-22

   *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but **fellow citizens with God's people** and members of God's household.*

   Ephesians 2:19

4. God calls us to fulfill His new **PLAN**. Ephesians 3:1-13

   According to His **eternal purpose** which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

   Ephesians 3:11

5. God calls us to make our hearts **CHRIST'S** home. Ephesians 3:14-21

   *So that Christ may **dwell in your hearts through faith**. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, **to grasp** how wide and long and high and deep is the **love of Christ**, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you **may be filled** to the measure of **all the fullness of God**.*

   Ephesians 3:17-19

Vital questions to remove "the angst" in your life

1. Have you responded to Jesus' calling you to Himself?

2. Have you discovered Jesus' purpose for your life?

3. Are you an active, connected member of Jesus' family?

4. Are you actively a part of God's plan to reach, teach, and serve others?

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How to see yourself as God sees you

- **The principle** = Replace your "warped mirrors" and misbeliefs with the Truth of God's Word.

Misbeliefs

- I am not wanted or needed by anyone, my life has no purpose or meaning. I'm a victim of an unfair, uncaring world that only brings me pain.
- Significance and meaning come from success in life. I will be happy someday when my relationships, career, and finances reflect my success and accomplishments.

Significance Truth

My life has an eternal purpose to fulfill. I have been created, equipped, and called by God in this moment of history to fulfill a unique role in His body that will demonstrate His mercy, love, diversity, and unity to the world.

Resources:

Affirmation Cards – Theresa Ingram
Holy Ambition – Chip Ingram

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