

CHAPTER 4: YOU ARE VALUABLE

DISCOVER
YOUR
True
SELF

*How to Silence the Lies of
Your Past and Actually Experience*

WHO GOD SAYS YOU ARE

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YOU ARE VALUABLE

Ephesians 1:7-10

Despite her sharp mind, good looks, and many friends, Theresa felt unworthy and unimportant. No matter how many compliments I gave her or how kindly I tried to treat her, my words and actions bounced off her like light off a mirror. I saw a beautiful, kind, and godly woman with whom I was head over heels in love. When she looked in the mirror, Theresa saw an ugly woman who was worth nothing.

It was a long and at times painful journey in which we *both* desperately needed to learn to see ourselves as new creations in Christ rather than through the brokenness of our backgrounds. Her challenge was to overcome rejection and a sense of worthlessness. Mine was to stop trying to prove my value and worthiness by my overachieving and workaholic performance.

Somewhere along our journey, something clicked in me that helped us both. Although I didn't know much theology at the time,

I remember God speaking to me through a verse. Something Paul wrote helped me take a vague idea that God valued me into a concrete concept that we could get our arms and heads around.

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore honor God in your body. (1 Cor. 6:19–20 NASB)

It was the phrase “you have been bought with a price” that began to take me from wishful thinking to logical reality. I remember thinking, *Theresa may not think she’s worth very much; but God thinks she’s worth the ultimate price He could pay to redeem her: the very death of His Son. I may not think I’m worth much unless I excel in every area of my life, but God thought I was worth the death of His Son, the purchase price to redeem me.*

Imagine a box floating in front of you. We’ll call it box number one. Right next to it is a box exactly the same size and color. Let’s call it box number two. The only difference between the two boxes is that box number one has a price tag on it of \$1,000 and box number two has a price tag of \$1,000,000. You don’t know what’s inside each of those boxes, but you do know their relative worth. There’s a big difference between \$1,000 and \$1,000,000.

If you were on a game show, and you were told to pick between box number one and box number two without knowing the contents—but with the assurance that the price marked on the front was accurate—you wouldn't have much difficulty deciding. It doesn't take a genius to figure out that if something costs more, it's worth more. The cost of something may not always be an exact reflection of its value, but cost and value are certainly related. If a well-off man proposes with a ring that costs thirty dollars, it's a different statement than proposing with a ring that costs \$3,000. When something costs a lot—when the sacrifice for it is big—that tells us something about its value.

You and I cost a lot. God made an extraordinary sacrifice for our redemption. We know we are worth a lot to Him, because we cost Him the precious blood of His Son. That means we have infinite value in His eyes. Regardless of whatever problems, struggles, challenges, pains, and wounds you've experienced, regardless of what lies you've believed, and regardless of how you happen to feel about yourself at the moment, you are worth the blood of Christ. God sent His perfect Son from heaven into a world that would ridicule, torment, and kill Him for the sake of sinners. There is no greater statement of value than that. That's how much we matter.

Your relationship with God does not end with being chosen and adopted; you are also redeemed. Ephesians goes on to say, “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us” (Eph. 1:7–8).

Redemption is a theologically heavy word, but it simply means that you have been purchased by God and are His infinitely precious and treasured possession. It is the complete opposite of being loved and valued only for what you can do or how you look. Redemption is not about your performance, nor does it have anything to do with other people’s approval. Only your heavenly Father’s opinion matters.

That does not mean we have to deny that other people’s opinions matter to us. Approval can be nice. Most of us crave it. But as you grow more and more secure in your Father’s love, you don’t *have* to have it. Your approval comes from a much greater source than maintaining a certain lifestyle or image. If your status and validation are already irrevocably secured by the only One who matters, approval becomes a nice addition, not a necessity. As human beings, compliments and praise are music to our ears. We all love them, but they do not define us.

If you want this reality to move from your head to your heart, you must learn how to tell yourself the truth. It even helps to say it out loud to yourself again and again: “I am the precious treasure of my heavenly Father. I am loved and valued forever. My future is not dependent on what anyone else thinks, what anyone else does, or what anyone else says is cool or right or wonderful. I am holy, beloved, blessed with every spiritual blessing, chosen, and adopted. I’ve been redeemed.”

What Does It Mean to Be Redeemed?

How have we been redeemed? Through the blood of Jesus. Redemption is the forgiveness of our trespasses, a pardon for all those times we knew the right thing to do and crossed the line anyway. We are redeemed according to “the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us” (Ephesians 1:7).

If we lived in first-century Ephesus and heard these words about our redemption, we would immediately think of the agora, the central marketplace. Every agora had a small platform where slaves were bought and sold. People could go there to buy a man, a woman, a child, or even a whole family to serve in their home, business, or fields. Paul is using this vocabulary in Ephesians 1 to portray our

redemption as a purchase—the price God has paid to redeem us from our enslavement to sin and death and to set us free.

Our freedom came at an enormous cost because of our immense value to God. We dare not reject it or waste it. As Paul puts it in another letter, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free” (Galatians 5:1). God purchased us from the slave market of sin at the cost of Jesus’s human life, and He made us His infinitely precious and treasured possession, because He loves us.

Can you imagine how differently you would see yourself if you actually believed that the Creator of the universe paid such an extravagant price for you?

Your True Self Is Free and Valuable

Every single person on the face of the earth—you and I and everyone we know—has been caught up in the slave market of sin. It’s a relentless captivity. We know the right thing to do and don’t do it. We commit sin by doing the wrong things and by neglecting the right things. We don’t always intend to live this way, but every generation has inherited these tendencies. Sinfulness is our default nature outside of Christ, which explains why our

attempts to do the right thing often make us feel as if we are swimming against the tide.

Paul and other biblical writers describe this fallen nature in terms of captivity, and when Jesus came and died on the cross for us, He atoned for our sins. Literally, He ransomed us. He paid the purchase price of our salvation and freedom with His own life.

In the central marketplace of this universe, God bought us off the platform of slavery with the purchase price of the death of His Son.

That's how much we're worth. The blood of His Son is of infinite value, so God paid an infinite price. No matter what people have said about you, no matter what feelings and struggles and pain you have experienced, no matter what lies you have believed, you are worth the blood of Jesus. The perfect Son of God left heaven and lived a life of love for sinful people who matter more than any of us can imagine.

As you start believing that you are chosen, adopted, and redeemed, you will progressively take on a new identity. You will begin to embrace the message that your true self in Christ is free and valuable, even if you have felt just the opposite. You will learn to walk in extreme gratitude toward God and have confidence in

His purposes for your life. You will little by little become who you were created and designed to be.

When I teach this truth, I often hear a lot of emotional objections, even from people who accept it theologically: “You don’t understand, Chip. I had a very difficult childhood.” Or, “It’s a nice ideal, but life hasn’t worked out that way for me.” Or, “I’ve believed in Jesus for a long time, and I still feel the pain of all the ways I’ve been wounded in the past.”

Though all of those objections come from real feelings and authentic experiences, they are not the ultimate truth. They don’t trump God’s verdict about your identity. They describe the distortions that have come, not the original design and purpose you were given. It’s true that life can be hard, that sin is real, and that people have done wrong to you.

But what defines you? Is it all of those experiences or the *truth* that God declares above them? God’s opinion of you is reality. If you want to know your true self, you must anchor yourself in His Word.

Radical transformations take time and require an intentional, systematic process. This is a journey for all of us, an ongoing, replenishing process of identifying the lies, calling them what

they are, and replacing them with truth. The more we engage in this process, the more the truth sinks into our hearts. Mental assent is just the beginning; we change when the truth affects us emotionally and works its way out in our words and actions. Over time, our new identity feels like a perfect fit.

I know that, because the woman I married doesn't exist anymore. Her shattered self-image and negative thoughts have been replaced by a woman who sees herself as precious in God's sight. Over the years, it's been like watching a flower unfold. I'm here to tell you that this is God's plan for you too.

Your True Self Is Needed and Worthy

At some point in our lives, most of us ask some big questions:

Who am I? Why am I here? What is the meaning of life?

Perhaps you have achieved all of your goals and realize something is still missing. *There has to be more to life than having money and the perfect house and a vacation home and connections with powerful people and . . .*

Or maybe you feel like a failure, because you've tried everything you know to make life meaningful, but nothing has worked. If

you've ever been there, you need to know that you are not only redeemed, but you are redeemed for a purpose:

In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him 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 1:8–10 NASB)

This whole sentence reflects the definition of our redemption. Paul calls it a “mystery,” which means only that it had been secret, a part of God’s will that was not known until the revelation of Jesus and our salvation. He did this “according to His kind intention,” which means our redemption is not another kind of slavery to the law or to impossible demands but for the purpose of having a meaningful, fulfilling relationship with Jesus. And the language Paul uses for how God put it into effect at the right time refers to the rules and management of His household—literally the economy of His home.

Just as we have a family budget, bedtimes for our kids, and chores for every member to carry out in order to fulfill family goals, God has a purpose and plan for the management of His family as well. He brought about our redemption and our

adoption to fulfill that purpose and plan. And He revealed the mystery of redemption through Jesus *at the right time* for the sake of His kingdom, the family business. Here Paul is referring to *kairos* time, a unique moment of opportunity. This unique fulfillment of time is a summing up of all things in Christ, bringing unity to everything under heaven.

In other words, you are an important part of God's big plan.

The central theme of this redemption plan is the church—those who believe in Jesus, both Jew and Gentile. This brand-new family is under a new covenant as the spiritual body of Jesus. Just as Jesus displayed the nature and character of the Father, loved extravagantly, healed the sick, fed the hungry, and demonstrated what it means to be salt and light in the world, so have we been called to do all of these things as we are conformed into the image of Jesus.

You have not been called to pursue your own happiness. You're now a part of the family of God, filled with His Spirit, carrying His nature, and walking out His mission as the very body of Christ. In a world that desperately needs Him, you are an indispensable agent of love and mercy.

So you see, God redeemed you first and foremost because you are infinitely valued by Him, and second, to grant you the unspeakable privilege of being Jesus's agents of blessing in your everyday world, 24/7.

Your infinite value and God-given purpose are a reality regardless of your track record, background, job, social standing, IQ, or any other standard the world uses to measure your usefulness. Jesus is putting together a puzzle, a temple of living stones that fit together as a beautiful collage of the grace of God. You have become part of a supernatural mission to display Jesus so others can see His love. Every day, you have an opportunity to reflect Him so that family members, neighbors, coworkers, fellow church members, and the people who do business where you buy coffee, groceries, and everything else can see redemption in real life. His life, lived out through you, provides hope for others.

If you need any motivation to get up in the morning, there it is. There is no greater purpose, no stronger message from your Father to prove how important you are. Your true self is needed and worthy.

Knowing and believing that you're needed and worthy will change your life. We all need to be needed. Our self-esteem and

sense of worth come not only from who we are but what we do. Our worthiness in God's kingdom is not about our performance or what anyone else thinks, it's about the calling we've been given and how we're able to contribute. In group Bible studies I've participated in, I've noticed that people tend to keep coming when they have something to contribute.

You've been given a priceless treasure and an invaluable calling. You're part of the family of God, and every person in His family is indispensable. Any sense of unworthiness or purposelessness is a lie. You've been made worthy through your redemption and given the eternal purpose of reflecting God's nature and demonstrating His love. You have not only been purchased from slavery but also given your freedom. You have been raised to a privileged position as a valuable, worthy, and very needed member of God's kingdom.

Replacing Misbeliefs with Statements of Truth

The best way to get these identity truths into our hearts is to replace our warped mirrors and beliefs with the truth of God's Word. Most of us carry plenty of misbeliefs about our own value, forgetting how much God sacrificed for our redemption and freedom. These misbeliefs generally fall into two categories:

MISBELIEFS

I must avoid failure at all costs. If I work harder and longer, then I will be a success and prove I'm not a failure.

I must avoid failure at all costs. It's better not to try than to fail. If people truly get to know me, they would reject me.

The first of these misbeliefs applies to compulsive people like me. If we're not careful, we get on a never-ending treadmill that keeps us running toward building our value but never getting anywhere.

The second applies to withdrawers who try to take themselves out of the equation before any evidence of unworthiness can come up. Those who withdraw get very upset when they make a mistake, because they assume others will be upset with them or think less of them. They fear the shame that comes from someone making fun of them.

Both compulsives and withdrawers are tempted to think that if they can't do something well, there's no point in doing it at all.

Misbeliefs like these drive us either to avoid risks or throw

ourselves into them recklessly, to withhold our best efforts from those who would benefit from them or put forth our best efforts so relentlessly that we're never satisfied. Neither approach is healthy or satisfying.

What truth replaces these lies?

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 general practice of life as I continue to grow in Christ.

I recommend writing down this truth and then reading it over and over, thoughtfully and slowly. Think about how God accomplished this truth. Meditate on what it means for your life. Let it sink in.

As you do, you will begin to realize you are a righteous person in God's sight; you never need to earn His favor, and you can stop trying to impress everyone else. You will stop pursuing what God has said you already have.

Beware of the mental objections that might come up at this point. Your guilt and shame over past mistakes will quickly tell you, “You’re not righteous.” But if you look at yourself as God sees you, your past mistakes will become irrelevant. They are covered by the blood of Jesus. One of the most remarkable statements in the New Testament assures us of this: “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21).

Do you believe that? *You have become the righteousness of God.* The moment you trusted Christ, God made a legal declaration that you were, and will always be, righteous in His eyes. You may not experience the fullness of that righteousness practically yet, at least not as much as you would like, but this is your legal position as far as He is concerned. As you begin to see yourself as God sees you, you will grow in your experience of His righteousness. His Spirit will be at work within you to change you from the inside out, and you will find yourself living out the change.

The first misbelief card below is the one Theresa and I reviewed years ago. The second card is one I wrote recently to help me continue to grow free of my people-pleasing tendency.

As members of our church began reviewing these truths and letting them sink into their hearts, I had people line up after services to tell me how much more they were experiencing God's love and acceptance. You too will realize how much God wants you to be able to live a life of joy, rest, and fruitfulness, and how much He has done to accomplish that life for you. And you will come to know, deep in your heart, that He values you just for who you are.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- 1) When the sacrifice is great, it speaks to the value of an item. Do you have something that is very valuable to you because the giver, out of a great love for you, sacrificed to give it to you?

- 2) How do you *know* that you are infinitely valuable to God and loved by Him? What was the price God paid for your freedom?

- 3) Not only are we chosen and adopted, we're redeemed. Paul says in Ephesians 1:7-8, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us." According to this verse, how have we been redeemed?

- 4) In Galatians 5:1, Paul says, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.” God purchased us out of sin’s captivity into true freedom because He loves us dearly. Radical transformation takes time. One step in this long journey includes gratitude toward God. Take some time each day this week to thank Him for what He has done for you. Each day, write down five things He has done in your life that you are thankful for.
- 5) Which camp do you tend to fall into: the *withdrawers* or the *compulsives*? Why do you think so?
- 6) Create an index card or a digital version out of the Worthiness Truth and put it where you will see it regularly. Read the truth slowly and aloud. Allow it to renew your mind and ask God for His help in replacing the lies with this truth.

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 general practice of life as I continue to grow in Christ.

WHAT DO YOU SEE WHEN YOU LOOK IN THE MIRROR?

Someone insignificant, insecure, REJECTED?

Most of us look at ourselves with warped mirrors, believing lies from our past that lead to insecurity, guilt, shame, and spiritual stagnation.

Pastor and author Chip Ingram wants to open your eyes to your true identity. God longs for you to see yourself as He sees you:

- Wanted
- Valuable
- Secure
- Competent
- Beautiful
- Called to a purpose only you can fulfill

Starting today, you can experience who God says you are and silence the lies of your past, including the feeling of rejection.

This excerpt is taken from *Discover Your True Self: How to Silence the Lies of Your Past and Actually Experience Who God Says You Are* (August 2020), based on the first three chapters of Ephesians.



Chip Ingram is the teaching pastor and CEO of Living on the Edge, an international teaching and discipleship ministry. A pastor for more than thirty years, Chip is the author of many books, including Culture Shock, The Real Heaven, The Real God, The Invisible War, and Love, Sex, and Lasting Relationships. Chip and his wife, Theresa, have four grown children and twelve grandchildren and live in California.