

## The Way of Jesus

### Week 7 - Our Identity in Christ



#### **Key Verse**

*For you made us only a little lower than God,  
and you crowned us with glory and honor.  
You put us in charge of everything you made,  
giving us authority over all things—  
Ps 8:5-6 (NLT)*

#### **Key Term: Identity**

*"You are a never ceasing spiritual being, with an eternal destiny in God's great universe.*

- *Spiritual in substance.*
- *Never-ceasing in duration.*
- *Creative governance in destiny.*

*Your life as a human being is completed only by living in and from the kingdom, that is by trusting Jesus Christ, who brings us into the redemption and rule of God, and through our discipleship to him enables us to fulfill the covenant of Genesis 1.26-31 for eternity."*

*(Dallas Willard, Private Notes, cf Divine Conspiracy, p.86)*

#### **Reflections on Your Identity in Christ**

These sentences by Dallas Willard exploded in my thoughts. Hard to argue with it, really. But, like so many of Dallas' other phrases, I had just never thought of it that way before.

#### **Creative Governance In Destiny**

The pages of the Bible are full of this idea. Men and women are meant to have dominion over the earth...

*For you made us only a little lower than God,  
and you crowned us with glory and honor.  
You put us in charge of everything you made,  
giving us authority over all things—  
Ps 8:5-6 (NLT)*

What might the phrase 'over all things' include – or exclude?

Look at Gen 1:26-28:

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule..."  
...fill the earth and subdue it."*

This is why we instinctively want to be in charge and control and shape our world. It is why you want to hold on to the TV remote. It is why you don't want to ride in the passenger seat. This is why two-year-olds are such a proverb, and why marital unity is so difficult to achieve. Because everyone wants to be in charge!

But God made us that way – except he made us to be in charge in his Kingdom, to share His rule – the Bible says that is your destiny in Jesus. Because of our sin nature we have twisted that instinct... until life is all about my rule. That's not good. But even underneath "It's all about me" there is something of God, because he made us to share his rule.

Remember how this plays out in the Garden?

*The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*

Gen 2:15 (NIV)

Adam and Eve had a family partnership with God, learning how to share his rule over God's creation. Those garden partnerships are all over the place in our lives. Your family is one of those gardens. Your church is one. Your job is another. So is your neighborhood. So is the city you live in. Gardens you manage and rule in a partnership with Christ.

Do you remember the voice of Aslan (LWW, p.199, para 1)?

*"Once a King or queen in Narnia, always a king or queen. Bear it well, Sons of Adam! Bear it well, Daughters of Eve!"*

Jesus said we would sit on thrones. St Paul said we are to judge angels... Jesus hinted at this in several of his parables...

*The master was full of praise. 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities...'* Matt 25:21 (NLT)

The last chapter of the bible says it plainly...

*And they will rule with him age after age after age.* Rev 22:5 (The Message)

In Christ we have a royal destiny and a noble calling. C. S. Lewis, (Weight of Glory) wrote,

*It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses, to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and a corruption such as you meet now, if at all, only in a nightmare."*

We raise children in the face of those fearsome destinies. It may take a bit of imagination, but imagination solidly rooted in the realities of Scripture reminds us that Lewis is right. We are raising children for eternity! For God. For a royal destiny and a noble calling... If we are destined to rule, it is also true that...

### **We Are in "Training for Reigning"**

Coming face to face with Aslan, every character of Narnia finds out that they aren't who they thought they were. They discover that they are Sons and Daughters of the Highest King, with an eternity or creative governance stretching out before them...

*"you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."* Rev 5:10 (ESV)

When did he make us a kingdom and priests? That is the work of his gospel today. And he misses nothing, uses everything.

*And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.* Rom 8:28 (NLT)

When we come to Jesus, we quickly learn that behind the random events of our lives he has been gathering, shaping and weaving it all into his purposes. The successes and the failures, the temptations and the challenges, are all used by him to prepare us to be faithful Kingdom stewards over matters small and large, trustworthy to rule for him. We are in training for reigning!

That is what your life is about. Christ is shaping you, forming you. Your whole life is involved in this training, heads toward this destiny of sharing his rule.

Every conversation, every phone call

Every carefully planned day, every frustrating interruption

Every heart-breaking failure, every spirit-soaring achievement

Every small seemingly meaningless task, every large life-changing decision...

Jesus is training you for a royal destiny and a noble calling... and every moment of your life is part of your training. Everything gathered up and brought into his Kingdom, created for Him, governed for him, yielded to him, redeemed by him...

*Bear it well, Sons of Adam! Bear it well, Daughters of Eve!*

**Reflection Question:** Summarize the key ideas in the Reflection in your own words.

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**Bible Study**

1. Look up the following verses, and **summarize them** in the spaces below.

Reference: Psalm 8

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Reference: Genesis 1.26-31

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Reference: Matthew 25.14-30

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Reference: 1 Peter 2.5

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Reference: Col 3.17

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2. Explain the idea of "Creative governance in destiny" in your own words.

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3. Give an example of a moment when God had you 'in training for reigning"

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### Spiritual Tool for the Week

**Sleeping:** As I started my two week retreat in 2005, Dallas Willard gave us the following guidelines for our weeks together. Get 10 hours of sleep the next 3 nights. He called it "Elijah's discipline"! "Sleep until you don't want to sleep any more – even if you sleep into the first session. Most of us are so weary that we have forgotten what it is like you be well rested. "

I want to ask you to do this once a week over the next three weeks. The biblical day begins with the evening. Go to sleep praying. Psalm 23 and 127, the Lord's Prayer, or perhaps the prayer we learned as children, "Now I lay me down to sleep." Sleeplessness is a spiritual issue, tied to issues of the heart, especially our sense of self importance. God is able to care perfectly well for his world while you get the sleep and rest he gives to his children.

### Reflections on your experience

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### Readings for Next Week:

Read The Divine Conspiracy, Chapter One

Read Study Guide pp 1-20

In the bookstore and library we have copies of Dallas Willard's Study Guide to The Divine Conspiracy (hereafter referred to as SG for Study Guide) written by Dallas, Jan Johnson and Keith Matthews (Harper, 125 pp, \$13). Many of my discussion

questions, summaries, and illustrations over the coming months will be drawn from that very helpful book. I recommend it to you.

and answer the following questions

1. Read aloud the section, "Entering the Ordinary" (pp 13-14; SG p16), listening for what startles you about Jesus.

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2. Describe the difference between the "drive for significance" and "egotism" (pp. 14-15; SG p16)

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3. How does the idea or "ruling" in life circumstances mesh with how humans need to depend on God (pp. 21-25; SG p17)

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4. Read carefully the section "Made to Rule" (pp.21-28) Define our kingdom (p. 21); God's Kingdom (p.25)

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5. Read the last paragraph on p. 33. Which phrases in that paragraph give you hope? (SG p16)

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