

Summary

The right way to get ready isn't about striving—it's about transformation through divine life and divine love. Many try to make themselves holy through self-effort, but true readiness flows from Christ's life within you and His love poured into your heart through the Holy Spirit.

God created your deepest longings—for love, acceptance, intimacy, and purpose—to draw you to Himself. When you try to satisfy them apart from Him, they become disordered loves that lead to insecurity, pride, and spiritual emptiness. But in Jesus, every desire finds fulfillment. He is the Source of identity, belonging, and joy.

When you live from your new identity as God's beloved child and Christ's betrothed bride, you stop striving for worth and start living from it. Drink deeply from His living water—because only His love truly satisfies.

The Right Way to Get Ready

a) The Wrong Way to Get Ready

- The root problem is a misunderstanding of new covenant sanctification.
- Like old covenant Jews, many believe holiness comes by self-effort and striving.
- What if the very way we've been trying to make ourselves ready is actually what's keeping us from God?

b) The Right Way to Get Ready

- Readiness is not about striving—it's about transformation through
 - Divine life
 - A new nature
 - A fruit-bearing union with Christ
 - Loving God and others
 - Receiving and responding to the Spirit's enabling grace
 - Living from your new identity
- These are the right ways to get ready—not by fleshly works or self-effort, but by Christ's life working in you.

c) Divine Life and Divine Love

- Three weeks ago, we looked at getting ready by living from divine life—*zoe*.
- Two weeks ago, we looked at getting ready by living from divine love—*agape*.
- For the next two weeks, we are going to stay on the theme of getting ready by love. This week we will talk about loving yourself with God's love and next week about loving others.

The Divine Order of Love

a) Love Begins with God

- There is a divine order in love—it always begins with God’s love for you.
- “We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).
- God’s love is the fountainhead, the source from which all other love flows. You cannot generate *agapē* love; it must be *received* before it can be *released*.
- You must experience daily His overwhelming, personal affection for you—not just intellectually know it, but encounter it in your heart.
- “The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit” (Romans 5:5).
- As you receive His love, you become filled with it in fullness, and your soul finds rest in His acceptance.
- When the order of love is right—God’s love → love for God → love for self → love for others—your heart naturally walks in obedience.

b) Loving Yourself Through God’s Eyes

- From that place of divine love, you begin to see yourself as God sees you.
- You love yourself—not selfishly or pridefully—but in agreement with God’s truth about who you are in Christ.
- “You shall love your neighbor *as yourself*” (Matthew 22:39).
- The command to love others assumes a healthy, Spirit-formed love for self.
- God’s love dismantles self-hatred, shame, and unworthiness.
- His love replaces condemnation with affirmation, fear with peace, and insecurity with identity. You realize that you are God’s beloved, not by merit but by grace.
- When you love yourself through His love, you stop striving for worth and start living from worth. You stop performing for acceptance and begin living from acceptance.
- Loving yourself through God’s eyes hinges on seeing yourself as God sees you.

Identity Matters

a) The Universal Search for Identity

- Across every culture and generation, people search for a sense of identity—something that defines who they are and why they matter.
- Humanity’s search for identity transcends time, culture, and geography; it is part of what it means to be human.

b) False Sources of Identity

- Many look for identity in outward or temporary things:
 - *Appearance*: Some hope that how they look will determine their worth.
 - *Achievement*: Others pursue success, stacking up accomplishments, promotions, and wealth.
 - *Status*: Some build their identity on titles, influence, or recognition from others.
 - *Influence*: Some try to establish their worth by how many people they influence.
- Yet, even at the top, with impressive résumés or substantial net worth, there remains a deep sense that something is missing.

c) The Inner Longing for Something More

- Despite external success, people still search for something deeper—something transcendent.
- This hunger for meaning and purpose is not random; it is evidence of divine design.

The Longings of the Heart

a) God Created Us To:

- Be in a heart-satisfying relationship with the Triune God and others
- Reflect His nature
- Experience His delight and love
- Fulfill His mission

b) What the Human Heart Craves

- *Love*: to be cherished and valued; to be loved without conditions.
- *Acceptance*: to belong without fear of rejection.
- *Intimacy (without shame)*: to be fully known and to fully know God and others without shame; to be fully known without masks.
- *Pleasure*: to experience the deepest pleasure possible.
- *Passion*: to overcome boredom by being consumed by the sublime.
- *Beauty and wonder*: to encounter something stunning and awe-inspiring beyond ourselves.
- *Significance*: to make a deep, lasting impact that helps others and pleases God.
- *Purpose*: to fulfill a life-giving mission that impacts others and has eternal meaning; to live lives that matter and make an eternal impact.

The Danger of Substituting the Source

a) The Core Problem

- Each of these desires—love, acceptance, intimacy, pleasure, passion, beauty, significance, and purpose—was created by God to draw us to Him and to partner with Him in His mission.
- Every heart craves these God-given desires. If God Himself doesn't meet them, the heart shrivels up, leaving you deeply unsatisfied and empty. Even worse, you'll seek to satisfy them through sources that only poison and distort those desires, leading to spiritual bondage.
- When we try to satisfy these longings apart from God, we repeat Adam and Eve's mistake—seeking to fulfill God-given desires in the wrong way.
- Sin is the attempt to fulfill a God-given desire apart from God and His provision for you.
 - Adam and Eve in the garden through the tree of knowledge.
 - Satan tempting a hungry Jesus in the wilderness to turn a stone into bread.
- This is the root of pride, rebellion, and idolatry—taking a God-given desire and trying to fulfill it independently from God.
- "My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jer. 2:13).

b) Substituting the Source Distorts the Desire

- When divine desires are pursued without divine relationship, they become disordered loves (Augustine).
- What was meant to give life becomes a false god that enslaves the heart.
- Example patterns:
 - Love → becomes dependency on people's approval or romantic infatuation.
 - Acceptance → becomes people-pleasing or fear of rejection.
 - Intimacy → becomes lust, pornography, or emotional enmeshment.
 - Pleasure → becomes addiction or escapism.
 - Passion → becomes obsession or burnout.
 - Beauty → becomes vanity or comparison.
 - Significance → becomes ambition for self-glory.
 - Purpose → becomes performance-driven identity.
- When we try to meet these desires the wrong way, it leads either to insecurity or to pride.
 - If our self-effort fails to satisfy them, we become insecure.

- If we succeed through our gifts, talents, or natural abilities, pride takes root.
- Both responses are equally wrong.

c) The Fragile Foundations of Self-Made Identity

- Left to ourselves, we build our identities on fragile foundations:
 - Appearance, wealth, possessions, and social status.
 - Performance, productivity, moral achievement, or influence.
- These sources cannot truly satisfy because they are:
 - *External*: rooted in what changes or fades.
 - *Insecure*: dependent on the opinions or validation of others.
 - *Empty*: unable to meet the soul's eternal longing for God.

d) Substituting the Source Creates Bondage

- This desire for identity is so strong that people often:
 - Compromise their values to meet these heart desires, whether to find love, gain approval, or to feel significant.
 - Chase fleeting pleasures to fill the emptiness within.
- Every human attempt to create identity apart from God ends in frustration and futility.
- What begins as a desire for fulfillment ends as a cycle of striving and emptiness.
- The more we chase counterfeit sources, the emptier we feel—like drinking salt water to quench thirst.
- This leads to:
 - *Spiritual frustration*: a sense that something is always missing.
 - *Emotional exhaustion*: endless striving for validation.
 - *Moral compromise*: bending values to protect idols.
 - *Relational damage*: using people instead of loving them.

e) Substituting the Source Blinds Us to God's Love

- When the heart is filled with substitutes, it loses its capacity to receive the real thing. It's like eating a Big Mac an hour before dinner—when a perfectly grilled ribeye is waiting for you.
- We become numb to the pleasure of knowing God, *mistaking noise for nourishment*.
- Jesus addressed this when He said, "You are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life" (John 5:40).
- The danger isn't merely moral failure—it's spiritual misdirection:

- Seeking fulfillment in things that can never deliver.
- Allowing idols to define who we are rather than the voice of our Father.

The Answer Is Found in Jesus Christ

a) The True Source of Identity

- The search for identity finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
- In Him, you are no longer defined by:
 - *Your past*: you are forgiven, cleansed, and made new.
 - *Your failures*: you are no longer a measure of your worth.
 - *The world's labels*: you are no longer defined by culture, success, or comparison.
- Identity in Christ is not something you achieve; it is something you receive through grace.
- The real issue isn't your spirit—it's your unrenewed mind and preprogrammed brain. To live in alignment with your new identity in Christ, you must continually renew your mind and rewire your brain to agree with who God says you are.

b) The New Identity You Receive in Christ

- Through regeneration and union with Christ, you receive an identity that satisfies the deepest hunger of your soul and reshapes you from the inside out.
- You are reborn as a child of God, regenerated as a partaker of the divine nature, and joined to Christ as His very own betrothed bride.

c) The Transforming Power of This Identity

- When you embrace who you are in Christ, you find what your heart has always longed for:
 - *Belonging*: you are known and loved by God and His people.
 - *Purpose*: your life has eternal meaning and impact.
 - *Beauty*: you behold His beauty and reflect His glory, starting now and increasing into eternity.
 - *Passion*: you are consumed with the fire of His love and the impact of His mission.
 - *Intimacy without shame*: you no longer feel the need to hide or perform.
 - *Love without conditions*: you experience His affection which is constant and secure.
 - *Empowerment to live with meaning and impact*: your life impacts people for eternity.
- The ultimate goal of identity is not self-expression but conformity to Christ's image.
- Christ Himself is your destiny—the One in whom all desires are fulfilled and all purposes find meaning.
- When you begin to see yourself through His eyes:

- Your identity shifts from striving to abiding.
- Your motives transform from self-centeredness to Christ-centeredness.
- Your life changes from mere existence to eternal significance.
- You begin to drink from His well of living water that truly satisfies your soul, instead of from the broken cisterns that can't hold life-giving water.

d) Going Deeper

- Who does God say you are?
- What would it look like to truly live from that identity?
- Transformation begins when revelation becomes realization—when truth moves from your mind to your heart and into your lifestyle.
- Living from this identity means allowing Christ's life within you to express itself through love, holiness, and purpose.

Your Identity as a Child of God

a) Regenerated As a Child of God

- At the moment of regeneration, your spirit came alive.
- It was created righteous, holy, and Christlike.
- This was not symbolic or partial—it was a complete spiritual transformation.
- In that instant, you became a child of God—not just by title but by nature.
- John 1:12–13: “As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God... who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”
- You were born again into God's family, not as a distant servant but as His beloved child.
- 1 John 3:1: “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are.”

b) At New Birth

- The Holy Spirit implanted Christ's nature within you.
- You became God's *teknon*—a true child sharing in His spiritual DNA (1 John 3:9).
- You are not merely legally adopted—you are spiritually begotten.
- His life now flows within you.
- His character is being formed in you.
- His image is being restored through you.

c) Your Relationship With the Father

- As His beloved child, you no longer relate to God as distant or unapproachable.
- You cry out, “Abba! Father!” — Romans 8:15
- In biblical times, Abba was an intimate family term of love, trust, and closeness.
- Only family members could use it—it expressed belonging.
- Even Jesus used this word in Gethsemane, showing that in both suffering and joy, we can draw near to our Father.
- Through regeneration, this is now your sacred privilege—to approach God with confidence, not fear.

d) The Father’s Love for You

- The Father loves you just as He loves Jesus: “You... loved them, even as You have loved Me” (John 17:23).
- Not less intensely. Not conditionally. Equally.
- His love for you is:
 - *Unchanging*: not based on your performance.
 - *Unfailing*: never withdrawn even in weakness.
 - *Transforming*: it reshapes your heart and identity.
- Even when He disciplines, it’s not rejection but refinement. His correction flows from love to draw you deeper into His embrace.
- His plans for you are:
 - *Breathtaking*: beyond imagination.
 - *Redemptive*: turning pain into purpose.
 - *Good*: filled with eternal promise.

e) The Fulfillment of Every Longing

- Every deep longing of the human heart—belonging, purpose, love—is fulfilled in relationship with the Father.
- As His child:
 - *You are fully known*: He sees you completely.
 - *You are fully accepted*: He delights in you, even in your shortcomings and failures.
 - *You are fully loved*: nothing can separate you from His affection.
- This reality frees you to:

- Enjoy Him without fear.
- Worship without pretense.
- Live with confidence that cannot be shaken.
- From this place of intimacy, you are empowered to:
 - Fulfill your destiny.
 - Impact the world for His kingdom.

f) The Call to Live from Your Identity

- This is who you are—a beloved child of God.
- This is whose you are—the Father’s own possession.
- Therefore, live from this reality:
 - Rest in His love.
 - Walk in your new nature.
 - Represent your Father’s heart to the world.

Your Identity as Christ’s Betrothed Bride

a) Regenerated as Christ’s Bride

- At regeneration, you were not only born again as a child of the Father—you were also betrothed to Christ as His bride.
- “I betrothed you to one husband, to Christ, that I might present you as a pure virgin.” — 2 Corinthians 11:2
- This truth unveils the relational and covenantal depth of salvation:
 - Justification by faith is a legal declaration of righteousness.
 - Betrothal reveals an intimate, passionate love story between Christ and His redeemed bride.
- The moment you were born again:
 - You became Christ’s cherished bride.
 - You were clothed in His righteousness—purified, set apart, and made His own.
- Before Christ redeemed us:
 - We were like spiritual prostitutes, enslaved by sin, corrupted by greed, and consumed by lust and selfishness.
 - Guilt, shame, and condemnation defined our identity.
- Yet even in our defiled condition:

- Jesus, our Bridegroom, pursued us with relentless love.
- He left heaven's splendor, endured the cross, and poured out His blood to claim us as His own.
- His motivation was love—He suffered for the joy of having us as His bride (Heb. 12:2).

b) Transformed By His Righteousness

- Through His imputed righteousness, you are justified—declared righteous before God.
- Through His imparted righteousness, you are transformed—your spirit is made righteous in nature.
- You are no longer defined by sin, failure, and brokenness.
- In His eyes, you are:
 - A pure virgin, cleansed and set apart.
 - Chosen, beloved, and treasured beyond measure.
- Jesus declares, "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you." — John 15:9

c) The Divine Pattern of Love

- In the divine relationship within the Trinity: the Father is the Lover; the Son is the Beloved.
- In your relationship with Christ: He is the Lover. You are His beloved.
- This love is:
 - *Personal*: He knows you intimately.
 - *Unshakable*: nothing can separate you from it.
 - *Unrelenting*: it endures through every failure.
 - *All-consuming*: it transforms your entire being.

d) The Fulfillment of Every Longing

- Every deep longing of your heart—love, acceptance, belonging, and purpose—finds its ultimate fulfillment in Christ.
- As His betrothed:
 - You are not only loved but delighted in.
 - He is captivated by you (Song of Solomon 4:9).
 - His affection is unwavering, and His devotion secure.
- You now have the joy of:
 - Loving Him in return.
 - Resting in His unwavering devotion.

e) The Call to Wholehearted Devotion

- This love demands your whole heart.
- Betrothed to Him, you are called to:
 - Passionate, wholehearted devotion.
 - A love that fuels obedience, worship, and mission.
- Through this sacred bond:
 - He draws you into the beauty of who He is.
 - He reveals His majesty, glory, and wonder.
- His love transforms you:
 - Clothing you in the radiance of His righteousness.
 - Making you a reflection of His light to a world in darkness.

f) The Privilege of Intimate Union

- United with Him through the indwelling Spirit, you can:
 - Approach Him without shame.
 - Experience closeness without barriers.
 - Stand before Him without masks or pretense.
- In His loving embrace:
 - You are wholly accepted.
 - Freed from fear and shame.
 - Welcomed unconditionally into His arms.

g) The Overflow of Intimacy

- Intimacy with Christ gives birth to purpose.
- From intimacy flows impact:
 - His love compels you.
 - His beauty shines through you.
 - His glory is revealed in your life.
- In Him, you are:
 - A vessel of His presence.
 - A light in the darkness.

- A witness of His transforming power.
- Your life leaves an eternal imprint on everyone you touch.

h) The Final Affirmation

- You are betrothed to Christ:
 - Loved beyond measure.
 - Chosen and cherished.
 - Called into a love story that will never end.
- This is who you are. This is whose you are. Now, live from that reality.