

Instant Access Listener Guide #2

Who am I? Why am I Here?

Main Point: Why we need to KNOW who we are and why we are here if we are to have a chance to be the people God wants us to be.

What do you think of when you think of Easter?

- Most believers would say that Easter is the remembrance of when Jesus died for our sins so we could go to heaven when we die.

Jesus did more than pay the penalty for our sins on the day He died. There is much more to His death than making it possible for us to go to Heaven when we die.

- When we are born again by our faith in Jesus and His death for us, we are born again.
- We are restored to being people our first parents were created to be.
- On Easter, we do celebrate our death in Christ but we also celebrate the new life that is ours because of our resurrection with Christ.

What do I mean by our death in Christ and our resurrection with Christ?

- I mean the truth of our liberation from our bondage to sin that God speaks to us about in Romans 6-7-8.

However, in order to clearly understand the meaning and power of these three chapters, we must go all the way back to the beginning of Mankind's story.

- We must understand what God's original purpose for our first parents was. As their descendents, that is our purpose too.
- Then can we clearly see what He has done for us through our death in, and resurrection with, Christ.

At one time or another we have all asked ourselves the "Great Philosophical" Questions: Who am I?, Why am I here?, What gives meaning and purpose to my life?"

- God's answer to these questions is really very simple and very clear. When He created our first parents He stated who they were and what their purpose was.

26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." (Gen. 1:26)

“image” = “to be a copy of or a replica of”. In addition, the word carries the idea of being able to express the essential nature of the object being copied or replicated.

“likeness” = basically the same thing as “image”. In other passages of the Bible, the two words are used interchangeably. This is the only place in the Bible that they are used together. Thus, here, “likeness” means that the “image” is an “adequate” or faithful” representation of the original.

- **Adam and Eve, and all their offspring for generations to come (including us!!) were to be the image and likeness of God.**
- **Our first parents, and we who followed, were created to be a faithful expression of the essential nature of God.**

So, the question becomes, “What is God like?”

- **To name just a few aspects of His essential nature, He is intelligent, creative, powerful, forgiving, gentle, loving, and authoritative.**
- **Since Mankind was created in His image, we should not be surprised that we too exhibit these characteristics.**

But does the fact that men and women are also violent and vicious mean that God is too? Of course not!!!

- **Our first parents rebelled against God. They violated the limitation God had placed upon them. They sinned.**
- **“Sin” means “to miss the mark, to fall short”.**
- **By eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve disobeyed their Creator. They fell short of the standard He had set. They missed the mark.**

As a result of their sin, several things happened to them.

- **First, they lost intimacy with God. They hid themselves from Him.**
- **Second, they lost their innocence. They became governed by self-centeredness and pride.**
- **Third, they lost the meaning and purpose to their existence. They lost their ability to express the essential nature of God in its pure form.**
 - **God reveals Himself to us as being motivated by love**
 - **They were now motivated by self-centeredness and pride.**
 - **They were no longer an image and likeness of God.**
 - **Spiritually speaking, they died.**

Every human being born since then has been born spiritually dead. Every one of us is unable to fulfill our God-given meaning and purpose.

- As a result we have an emptiness inside that drives us to ask, “Who am I? Why am I here? What is the meaning and purpose to my life?”
- We try to fill this emptiness with the many things the world tells us will give a sense of meaning and purpose to our lives.
 - We strive for “success”.
 - We strive to acquire bigger and better possessions like cars, boats, and homes.
 - We wear the right labels on our jeans to show that we are “cool”.

None of this is satisfying. We are always striving for more because whatever we have isn't enough to fill our emptiness.

- As one philosopher has put it, “There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each person that cannot be filled by any man-made thing.”

In addition to emptiness, our intelligence, our creativity, our authority, and our gentleness have all been warped.

- Our pure motivation of love has been lost. Instead of seeing others as more important than ourselves, and serving them in love, we are threatened by them.
- Our hearts are filled with jealousy, maliciousness, bitterness, and hate towards others.
 - We express what these make us feel through our words and actions.
 - We make fun of others or look for ways to put them down.
 - We gossip about them.
 - We lie to them.

These words and actions the Bible calls sins.

These “sins” are not the only issue. The bigger issue is how one answers the question, “What causes me to do these things?”

- The fact that we are spiritually dead is what causes us to do these things.
- In order to overcome these words and actions we have to be reborn.
- We have to be made alive spiritually.
- We have to be restored to the purity of heart and intimacy with God that our first parents had before the Fall.

This restoration of heart and intimacy is the full story of Christianity.

- In His death, Jesus absorbed each one of our sins into His body.
- While on the cross, Jesus became every wrong thought, word, and action ever done by any human being – past, present, and future!
- God looked at Jesus while He was on the cross as if Jesus Himself had done all these things.
- Then Jesus died with them.

Paul put it this way to the Colossian believers:

“And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. (Col 2:13-14)

Every sin you and I have ever done, or will ever do, was nailed to the cross in the Person of Jesus. When you accept this truth, and put your trust and faith in Him, your sins are forgiven and your intimacy with God is restored.

Let me illustrate it this way:

- We have all seen and been moved by the tragedies of big oil-tanker spills. The oil-encrusted beaches and oil soaked birds sadden us. The reason that oil spills are a problem is that oil and water do not mix. They are unable to do so. When we stir sugar into our tea, a chemical change actually takes place. The tea and the water join together to form a new substance. But water and oil cannot join together to form something new. They just can't. As a result, the oil floats on the top of the water, soaking everything it comes into contact with.
- The Holiness of God and sin are like oil and water. They do not, and can not, mix. As long as we were dead in our sins, God could not have a relationship with us. Isaiah put the problem this way:
 - *“But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear.” (Isa. 59:2)*
- Our sins were keeping us from intimacy with God.

At the same time, God's perfect justice required that the penalty for our sins be imposed upon us.

- The penalty is separation from Him now, in this life, and separation from Him forever in eternity.

Yet, because He loves us, He found a way to restore our relationship with Him.

- Without compromising His Holiness and His justice, God overcame the separation by having Jesus become each one of our sins for us.
- When we accept Jesus as our personal Savior, God applies to us what Jesus has already done for us. Jesus died with our sins.
 - Let me illustrate this way:

If I was infected with a deadly virus and had no hope of survival and you came along with out the virus but offered to take the virus from me and into yourself, what would happen to you? What would happen to me? You would die and I would be virus free.

“He (God the Father) made Him (Jesus, God the Son) who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Cor. 5:21)

- Then God says we are as Holy as He is.
- God calls this “justification”. It is “just as if we had never sinned.”

Now the first half of our problem has been solved.

- The sins that kept us separated from God are removed.
- We have been restored to relationship with God.

Now we can look to our bigger problem. Now we can look to the dead heart that is the source of our sins. God has solved this problem as well!!

- At the moment we put our personal trust and faith in Jesus death on the cross as payment for our sins, God says He also regenerated and renewed us.

“He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, (Titus 3:5-6)

“regeneration” = to “reproduce”.

“renew” = “to restore to a former state after decay or impairment, to restore to a former perfection”. God is saying to us, “When you put your faith in Jesus as your Savior, not

only did I remove the barrier of your sins that separated us, but I also restored your heart to its original state. I reproduced in you the original heart I gave to Adam and Eve.”

This is another way of saying God’s prophecy in Ezekiel 36:26-27.

- God foretold of a time when He would remove the hearts of stone from His people and give them hearts of flesh.
- He said He would put His spirit within them at the same time.

“Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ” And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

In the Book of Titus God calls this process of heart transformation the regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.

This then is the foundation we need to lay as we prepare to look in depth at Romans 6 – 7 - 8.

- Our faith in Jesus as our Savior has removed the sin barrier between God our Father and our selves.
- We have been restored to intimacy and fellowship with Him.
- Our Father has also given us new hearts that are alive to Him and desires to serve Him.
- The Spirit of God Himself now resides in us to lead us, empower us, and guide us.

What we need to know:

(6:1) “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? (2) May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? (3) Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death. (4) Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection, (6) knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; (7) for he who has died is freed from sin. (8) Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, (9) knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. (10) For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.” (11) Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (Rm. 6:1-11)

Three times in these verses Paul says we are to “know” something:

1. In verse 3 - 4 we are to “know” we have been baptized into Christ’s death and raised with Him to newness of life.

baptize = to be placed into, to be immersed

- In non-Biblical usage this word was used to describe the process of dying cloth. The cloth was immersed into the dye and came out a different color.
 - In that moment of time when we put our personal faith in Jesus as our Savior, we were placed into Him and we died with Him. Our old self, with a heart of stone, died with Him.
 - Then we were raised with Him to a new life. We became new creatures with new hearts.
2. In verse 6 we are to “know” that our old self was crucified with Jesus so we could be freed from slavery to sin.
 - A slave is under the authority of his master as long as he lives. He must do what the master says as long as he is alive.
 - When he dies, no matter how many times his master tells him to do something, he cannot comply. Dead people are not able to obey the commands of others.
 - By our co-crucifixion with Jesus, we are freed from having to obey our old self. We have died to obeying our old patterns of thinking, feeling, and doing.
 - Sin no longer has authority over us to command us to commit sins.
 3. In verses 9 - 10 we are to “know” that as Jesus was raised from the dead to live unto God we were raised with Him to live a new life unto God.

On the basis of our “knowing” we then are to “consider” ourselves dead to sin but alive to God “in Christ Jesus”.

- *consider = to believe as true, to count as true, to remember what is true*
- How can we be expected to believe what God says is true when we don’t “feel” like it is? Isn’t that being irrational? Aren’t our feelings the true measure of what is true?
Not necessarily!!!!!!

Pilots must learn to believe their instruments even when their feelings are telling them something else. When a pilot is caught in dense fog or cloud cover, causing them to lose sight of the horizon, they may “feel” like they are flying

right side up when they are really flying upside down. There is a connection between the inner ear and the horizon that stabilizes one's balance. When the horizon is lost, one's sense of "feel" is not a safe way to determine if one is flying right side up or not. A pilot must learn to trust his instruments over his "feelings" if he wants to stay alive.

So it is with spiritual truth and us. Our "feelings" tell us that we are not new creatures. Our "feelings" tell us we are not dead to their authority over us. Our "feelings" tell us we are the same person we have always been.

We must reject these "feelings". What our "feelings" tell us is not true. We must choose to believe what God says is true about us, even if we don't "feel" like what He says is true. God's word is the spiritual "instrument" that keeps us alive.

Believing in the truth of our co-crucifixion and co-resurrection with Jesus is critical. Until this truth has been powerfully implanted into our hearts so that we "know" it is true no matter what we "feel", we cannot go on to experiencing a victorious life over sin.

Do you "know" you are dead in Christ to sin and alive in Christ to God? If not, ask your loving Heavenly Father to give you a powerful heart-centered understanding and belief of this truth.

He will answer you!! He knows you must "know" this if you are to experience the best He has for you.