



## MESSAGE FOUR: IDENTIFY WITH THE CROSS

### SUGGESTED PASSAGE: Galatians 2:20 (NASB)

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

### MESSAGE GOAL:

The goal of this message on **The Hope of the Cross for Today** is to help Christians find their identity in the cross, to die to self, and to experience the power of Christ in their daily lives.

### INTRODUCTION:

On one occasion a man went to a psychiatrist because he was having problems. They were serious problems so he thought he needed to seek out a serious solution. Entering the psychiatrist's cozy and neatly decorated office, the man took a seat. Then he headed straight into his problem. "Doc," he said. The doctor kept his eyes straight on him, and nodded his head urging him gently to continue.

"Doc, something's wrong," the man blurted out.

"What's the problem, sir?" the doctor asked, trying to get more information.

"Well, every time I go to the supermarket, I am drawn to the dog food. I just want to be around the dog food. In fact, I love to eat dog food."

The doctor shifted his weight in his chair, and decided to search for some background on this man's issue. "How long have you been struggling with this problem?" the doctor asked patiently.

"Ever since I was a puppy," the man replied.

You see, how you perceive yourself will determine what you seek after. If you perceive yourself as a puppy than you will naturally want to find some dog food. In other words, your identity is critical to your behavior, habits and ways of operating.

Many Christians today are confused about who they are which, in turn, brings about confusion in how they are to function. We function the way we function because of how we perceive ourselves to be. This means that if your self-perception is incorrect, your function will be errant as well.

### SERMON POINTS:

#### 1. THE CROSS IS CENTRAL TO A CHRISTIAN'S IDENTITY Examine the role the cross plays in your personal identity

- Though Peter was a Christian, he put his cultural identity above his Christian identity. (Galatians 2:11)
- Paul confronted Peter and reminded him that he wasn't functioning in light of identification with the cross. (Galatians 2:14)

#### Make the cross the centerpiece of your identity

- If you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior, a crucifixion has taken place. (Galatians 2:20)
- When you became a Christian, a legal transaction took place that justified you and made you one with Christ.
- When we find our identity in the cross, we will have the power to live a victorious life that pleases God.

#### 2. THE CROSS ESTABLISHED A NEW REFERENCE POINT Allow your oneness with Christ to influence your thoughts, actions, and decisions

- Paul died to himself daily in order to maximize his union with the cross. (1 Corinthians 15:31)
- To die means to put your desires, thoughts, and motives on the altar of Jesus Christ and pick up His instead.

#### Choose to die to yourself and live for God

- There can be no resurrection without a crucifixion.
- You don't belong to yourself. You were bought by Jesus Christ's blood.

#### 3. HOW TO IDENTIFY WITH THE CROSS

##### Live by the faith of the Son of God

- Paul trusted in Jesus' own faith in Himself. (Galatians 2:20)
- Trust in Jesus' ability to come through for you.





**Put your faith in the only worthy object**

- The object of your faith, not the size of your faith, is what matters.
- Jesus Christ is the only One worthy of your faith.

**4. THE CROSS GIVES US POWER**

**Identify with the Cross of Jesus and find strength**

- Paul found strength in Christ to face daily challenges. (Philippians 4:13)
- Christians today have access to the same power as Paul.

**Allow Christ to empower your mortal body for His service**

- Paul encouraged believers to let Jesus Christ live through them. (Colossians 1:27)
- When we yield to Christ, He will enable us to function supernaturally, not just naturally.
- A supernatural life will be glorious and victorious.

**5. IDENTIFY WITH THE CROSS THROUGH RELATIONSHIP, NOT RULES**

**Don't add anything to the cross**

- Paul warned Christians not to add anything to the cross thus rendering it null and void. (Galatians 2:21)
- When we add rules and rituals to the saving power of the cross, it no longer has an effect in our lives.

**Open the door to God's blessing by identifying with the cross**

- God will only flow His power through you if you're connected to the cross.
- God wants a relationship with you through Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

**SERMON ILLUSTRATIONS:**

**THE CROSS IS ESSENTIAL TO A CHRISTIAN'S IDENTITY:**

You probably own different appliances. Each appliance has a unique responsibility. The refrigerator keeps things cold. The stove makes things hot. The toaster toasts things. Can openers open things, and so on. But there is one thing that each appliance holds in common – none of them function for themselves. The refrigerator does not keep the food cold so that it can eat the food. The stove does not heat the food so that it can eat the food either. The toaster doesn't toast it and the can opener doesn't open it in order to consume it. Each appliance that you have purchased exists to serve you. If it didn't, my guess is that

you would no longer have it in your home. The reason why the appliances were bought and paid for was so that the one who bought them and paid for them would benefit from them. The purpose for the purchase was that the thing purchased might benefit the purchaser. Friend, you were bought with a price – the shed blood of Jesus Christ. You exist for the Purchaser, not for yourself.

**THE CROSS ESTABLISHED A NEW REFERENCE POINT:** When people drink coffee in the morning, they usually find some cream or some milk to pour into their coffee. After they stir it, the coffee and the cream are now one. There is no way that they could possibly disconnect their coffee from the cream once they've stirred it. However, what many believers will do in their Christian lives is become one with Jesus Christ at salvation and then attempt to disconnect Him from their thinking, actions, choices, decisions and all else in their lives. The union is still there, of course. But they wind up with a big mess and a lot of wasted time and effort.

**HOW TO IDENTIFY WITH THE CROSS:** Have you ever taken a child on a piggyback ride? Do you know what that child believes in? That child is not just believing in you, he or she is believing that you believe in you. They believe that you have confidence in you. That is why they will ask, "Do you have me?" In other words, they are asking, "Do you believe that you have me?" This is because even though they may have doubts, if you believe then they will believe in your belief.

**THE CROSS GIVES US POWER:** When a pole-vaulter tries to clear a pole, he will typically try to get over a much higher level, even more than double of what the high jumper will attempt. This is because the pole-vaulter has a pole in his hands and he is not merely resting on his own ability to make it. He is resting in his confidence in the pole that the pole has enough strength and elasticity to do what is needed to be done in order to propel him to victory. The pole-vaulter is banking on what he is attached to rather than simply on himself. Because of this, he is able to go higher and further than he ever could on his own.

**IDENTIFY WITH THE CROSS THROUGH RELATIONSHIP, NOT RULES:** Let's say your refrigerator is not working. Your ice cream is melting, and your food is beginning to spoil. So you go online and you research how to fix your refrigerator. You find a manual for your model and it shows you all of the parts of your refrigerator. You spend a lot of time studying this manual. Yet, no matter how much you apply from this book, nothing seems





to be working. In fact, all you have done is frustrated yourself and wasted your time while your food rots even further. Yet after all that you have done, someone comes up to you and gives you a suggestion. "Why don't you plug it in?"

#### **BACKGROUND BIBLICAL HISTORY AND CULTURE:**

**CRUCIFIED:** (συνεσταύρωμαι) (Galatians 2:20) "to crucify with in a transcendent sense, crucify with..." and "...of identification w. Christ's crucifixion..."

**LOVED:** (ἀγαπήσαντός) (Galatians 2:20) "to have a warm regard for and interest in another, cherish, have affection for, love..." "of the affection of transcendent beings...for ordinary human beings..."

#### **SERMON LINES:**

This sermon will help you understand the biblical principle of dying to self and living for God.

This sermon will outline five aspects of Christian identity.

#### **QUOTES ATTRIBUTED TO DR. TONY EVANS:**

"If you received Jesus Christ as your Savior, a crucifixion has occurred."

"It is not just that we are to believe in Jesus Christ, but we are to believe in Jesus' belief in Himself. It is because of your full confidence that Jesus has full confidence in Himself that you discover the ability to piggyback on Him."

"It's not the size of your faith that matters, it is the object of your faith that matters."

"Friend, you can't identify with the cross of Jesus by rules. In fact, the cross did away with the system of rules and replaced it with a relationship."

"In order for God's grace to flow, your focus must be on Him. It must be on Jesus. It must be on the cross. Your identity must daily be in His crucifixion."

"Friend, no matter how hard you try and no matter how hard you work, you will have only wasted your time and your life if you do not live connected to the power of the cross in Jesus Christ."

"God is not free to flow His power through you if you are not identified with the cross."

"A lot of believers today are blocking what God wants to do in them and through them because they are trying to get there in their own strength."





our society's problem  
is not solely our *government's* problem.  
it is **the church's** problem.  
it is *our* problem.

**our mission field is not merely across the sea.  
it is across the street.**

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“You will be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea  
and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”  
*Acts 1:8*

**That includes in our Jerusalem. In our Judea.  
In Baltimore. Dallas. Miami. Detroit.**

**Our society's problems are not solely our government's problem.  
It is the church's problem. It is our problem.**

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churches to partner with schools to change our nation  
through a proven model of community impact programs.



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is not just commendable. It's  
absolutely necessary. It is a  
comprehensive answer to  
addressing the urgent and  
pressing issue in America.”

— Tony Dungy



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Intentionally*

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school-based mentoring, to meet the vast  
needs of public school youth and their families.

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vision • reaching the lost