

[CODE OF IDENTITY.01: REMAIN IN GOD'S LOVE]

"MAKE YOURSELVES AT HOME IN MY
LOVE." —JESUS (JOHN 15:9 MSG)



When we become citizens of God's Kingdom, we look just the same as we've always looked. But, as citizens of God's Kingdom, who we are as people is very, very different. God wants us to live out who we are—to follow the Kingdom Code of Identity.

AS A CITIZEN OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD, YOU ARE CALLED TO LIVE IN HIS LOVE.

[READ] Before Jesus went to the cross, He told His closest friends: *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love"* (John 15:9).

God the Father has loved Jesus for all eternity—before the universe was even a reality. God the Father adores Jesus. He loves His tender heart, His passion for goodness and justice, and His character. The Father's love for Jesus is intense, unceasing, unwavering, unquestioning, and infinite.

Jesus loves you with the same intense, infinite love. Jesus' love for you is overwhelmingly intense and it never wavers or weakens. It's limitless and knows no boundaries. And Jesus wants us to live in His love. *"Remain in my love,"* He says. Jesus' love for us is not to be a high and lofty idea. We're to experience it, to live in it. We're to walk through life under its covering. We're to feel secure because of it. And we're never to leave it or walk out of it or turn our backs on it. Jesus says: *"Make yourselves at home in my love"* (John 15:9 MSG).

[MORE] Living in God's love for us isn't just a nice idea. It's crucial. As citizens of God's Kingdom, we run on God's love. It fuels us. While God tells us that the greatest commandment is to love Him, He also tells us that *we love because he first loved us* (1 John 4:19). Even before we can love God—to really love Him and mean it with the force of our hearts and emotions behind it—we have to know and really, truly believe that He is loving us.

If we don't make ourselves at home in God's love, our love for Him will be superficial. We won't really be able to love other people either. We'll be faking it. Any love we pour out must first come from us being filled up with the love He has for us. God's love is the foundation of His Kingdom.

[THINK] How do we remain in God's love? Often the biggest obstacle is believing that it's true. The reality is that God's love for us exists. It's there. It is always a reality. We just have to believe it.

We have a hard time receiving God's love because we tend to think if there's a lot of something, it means it isn't precious. We know that God loves everyone, and since we're roped in with everyone else, we tend to think His love for us isn't as meaningful. But that's not the way things work in God's economy. In God's economy, just because there's a lot of something doesn't mean that it isn't valuable. In heaven, the streets are paved with gold. Every street—every single street—in heaven is paved with earth's most precious metal. There's a lot of gold in heaven, but that's because it *is* valuable. God may love everyone infinitely and deeply, but that doesn't devalue His deep, intense, passionate love for you.

We don't understand the intensity of God's love. We don't understand His zeal or His passion for us. We don't understand how passionately He is pursuing us. Girls know that a guy who really likes her will go to the ends of the earth for her—nothing will stop him from pursuing her. And that's exactly what God did through Jesus. God's love is a "nothing-is-going-to-keep-Me-from-you" love.

[LIVE] For a few minutes every day, soak in God's love for you. Ask Him to help you see how much He loves you. Read Scripture and look for God's heart as you read. What would motivate Him to act as He is acting in each situation? God's anguish over the lack of love in His people tells a lot about His heart for us. Choose to see love in the way God deals with you. Believe that all of His actions toward you flow out of His love. Because they do.

[NXT LVL] Think about the most intense love that you've ever felt for someone. Call up the feelings. Sit in those for a while. Now imagine it doubling. Sit in that for a while. Then imagine it doubling again. The most intense passion you've ever felt is only a fraction of how God feels about you.

[IDENTITY.02: LOVE GOD]

As a citizen of God's Kingdom, there is to be one main theme of your life: Love God.

[READ] The Bible is a big book. Each sentence is packed full with meaning and guidance. But God gives us one single principle, the greatest and most important one, that He wants to be at the center of everything. This principle is above every other principle, but it's also involved in, running through, and guiding every other principle: Love the Lord.

"The most important commandment is this: 'Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is the one and only Lord. And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength' " (Mark 12:29-30 NLT).

It becomes easier to follow and obey God when you're loving Him. It's easier to follow Him when your heart is saying: "Oh yes, of course I'll follow You. I love everything about You. I love the way You forgive. I love the way You are merciful. I love the way You are good. I love the way You are fair, true, and faithful." When love for God is flowing out of your heart, you can't hold onto a grudge. Something about loving Him loosens that. When you adore the God who is so incredibly good and good to you, you can't worry. You can't be scared. You can't envy. When you love God, really, it changes everything.

That's why God said, "Start here. This is your most important mission. Love Me."

[THINK] God asks for love to come first because He wants our actions to flow out of our hearts. He doesn't want us to be robots who just behave and follow orders. He wants us to follow Him because we're delighted to and because we trust Him.

When we're in love with God, we trust Him because we know who He is. Sometimes God's ways and thoughts are hard to understand. But a person in love with God can say

with confidence, "I don't understand what You're doing in this situation. But I do know that You are good. I do know that there's no darkness or cruelty in You. And I do know that You work all situations for good. So even though I don't understand, I trust You. Have Your way, God. My eyes are on You."

[MORE] It takes intentionality to love. Think about a marriage. Would it be a good marriage if the husband didn't say hello to his wife when he saw her? Would it be a good marriage if the wife spent every evening with other friends? No. In a good marriage a couple spends time together. They're mindful of each other all day long. They enjoy each other's company.

But when a husband doesn't feel very in love with his wife, the last thing he should do is to say, "I'm sorry, but I don't feel in love with you right now so I'm just going to spend some time away from you." No! He should fight those feelings of distance by making time to reconnect with her.

When you don't feel in love with God, let a warning flag go up in your mind. It's time for the two of you to get together and reconnect. Talk to Him. Read His Word. Remember who He is and what His heart is like. When the love fades it's time to draw close to the Lord and fall in love again.

[LIVE] If you're not loving God, it'll be exhausting to try and look like a citizen of the Kingdom. So if you're trying to act like a citizen because you simply feel an obligation to, stop. Go back to the most important command. Love the Lord. Start by looking at who He is. Remember what He has done. Fill up with His love. Once you encounter Him again, you will find that He is impossible not to love.

[NXT LVL] Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9. What does God ask His people to do so they never forget the greatest commandment?

[IDENTITY.03: THINK KINGDOM THOUGHTS]

As a citizen of God's Kingdom, there's a new way to think.

[READ] The kingdom of darkness really is dark. When we were citizens of it, our eyes and minds were blinded to the truth of reality. Since we couldn't see what was true in the world, life was all about satisfying the longings at the core of our souls. That's what drove us. We just wanted to feel satisfied, to be happy, to feel whole. But even when we got what we were after, it didn't satisfy. Nothing ever did. Nothing could go deep enough or last long enough or be fulfilling enough. In fact, a lot of things that we sought after ended up hurting us. That's the awful catch of the kingdom of darkness.

In the process of searching for the things that could make us whole, we became okay with things that we should have never been okay with. We established a way of thinking and living that we were never meant to accept as normal. We became really focused on ourselves, which weakened our ability to consider other people. We saw them only as mere actors on the stage of our lives—insignificant and valueless. We started to build our identities on what we could do or how people thought about us, when God designed us so that His great love would determine our worth. We conformed to a certain way of thinking. It kept us in chains, but we didn't know anything better.

But in God's Kingdom, things are different. And what we've accepted as normal is drastically abnormal. What we've been comfortable with, we must become uncomfortable with. We have to

change. Our minds must line up with the thoughts of God's Kingdom, the thoughts that lead to life. *Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2).*

Our conformity is over. Transformation must begin.

[THINK] As citizens of a new Kingdom, there is a new way to think. This is a life-long process of unraveling and unwinding what we've lived in and known and accepted and strived for. And it will continue to be a lifelong process because we still live in the world, and it's always enticing us to think and operate according to its ways.

But the beautiful thing is that God is totally committed to setting us more and more free. For the rest of our lives God will personally point out areas where we need to transform the way we think to line up with His Kingdom. You've probably experienced this when a Scripture verse leaps off a page and challenges you. It's as if God is saying: "Do you see this truth about the way My Kingdom works? Do you see how this part of your heart doesn't line up with it? This is where I need to do a little work. You obey, and I'll mend, and we'll get you closer to whole."

[LIVE] We have an active role in this transformation process. We are to marinate in the culture of God's Kingdom. To do that, we are to put ourselves before His Word and obey what it says. It will transform us. We are to spend time with other Kingdom citizens, because we absorb a lot of truth through our interactions with people who are on the same journey. We are to avoid things in the world that lure us back to dark-kingdom ways. And we are to be aware of how we're thinking. We are no longer captives. Freedom is ours to live in.

[NXT LVL] What are you seeking to fill the core of your soul?

[IDENTITY .04: CLAIM YOUR RIGHTS]

As a citizen of the Kingdom, you must keep your mind set on the truths of who you are.

[READ] While you may look just like a normal human being, that's not the full picture of who you are. The King has made royal proclamations on your life and has crowned you with the good things of His Kingdom. And since a lot of these things about your life are unseen, as a citizen of God's Kingdom it's your responsibility to think on these things and to live in these things.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things (Colossians 3:1-2).

Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things (Philippians 4:8).

While God, through His Spirit, will settle these truths in your heart so that they stick, it's your responsibility to keep your mind set on the truths of who you are. You must make the choice to live as a child of the King.

[THINK] What has God declared to be true about you? Right now, you are completely forgiven for all of your sins (Colossians 2:13). Right now, you stand spotlessly blameless before God (Ephesians 1:4). Right now, the kingdom of darkness has no legal claim on you (Colossians 2:14-15). Right now, you are seated with Jesus

at God's right hand (Ephesians 2:6). Right now, you have access to all of the heavenly blessings that Jesus has access to (Ephesians 1:3). Right now, the Spirit of God and Jesus Himself live inside of you (Ephesians 1:13-14; Colossians 1:27). Right now, in Jesus you have the authority to take a stand against the forces of evil (Colossians 2:9-10).

This is what's true about you. God says these things are true. If you could see the full picture of reality, you'd see and realize these things as true. The angels know that these things are true. Satan and his demons know too. It's time for you to believe them.

[LIVE] Unkingdom thoughts about who you are flow all throughout this world like hopeless tunes: "You are worthless and unloved." "You are so messed up that God can't forgive you and doesn't want anything to do with you." "You have no spiritual authority in Jesus, all of this spiritual talk is a bunch of baloney."

Changing the way you think involves tuning in to and believing the sweeter song, the real song—the true song—that plays over your life. When you recognize that your heart is starting to listen to the sad tune of the unkingdom, lift your heart and mind up to reality. Switch to the right song, the song of truth. And fight the good fight to keep believing what's true.

Set your heart on things above, child of the King! You are valuable. You are in a position of power. You are Kingdom royalty. There is a vacant seat in Jesus, at the right hand of the Father, that has been reserved for you. Step into it.

You are royalty. Live regally.

[NXT LVL] Look up the passages listed in the THINK section. Pick a few to memorize. While all of these truths may not make sense to you, and you may not be sure of how to live them out, they are still true. Believe them. Ask God to show you what it means to live them out as you walk with Him.

[IDENTITY .05: LIVE AS THE NEW YOU]

As a citizen of the Kingdom, you aren't who you used to be. Live as the new you.

[READ] We're not who we used to be. Before Jesus, we had a sinful nature, and we were slaves to sin. Sin owned us. We couldn't help but sin. But when Jesus died, that part of us died with Him. And when Jesus rose from the dead, He rose to live a new life. Scripture teaches that we rose with Him.

Our old self was crucified with [Jesus] so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him . . . death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God (Romans 6:6-10).

Just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life (Romans 6:4).

Those Scriptures are crystal clear. We're no longer slaves to sin. We are free to live for God. That means applying this big shift in our thinking: *You should consider yourselves dead to sin and able to live for the glory of God through Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11 NLT).*

We are to consider ourselves dead to sin. God tells us to.

[THINK] The reality is that what we think about sin and its power over us has a lot to do with how much authority we give it in our lives and whether we'll be subject to it. And what we understand about our new life determines to what extent we'll

experience it. If we consider sin an overwhelming battle—something that we'll never be able to beat and always struggle with—it will be exactly that. But if we count ourselves dead to sin but alive to God, we will live for Him.

That sounds simple, but that doesn't mean it's easy. This isn't a mind trick that we're playing on ourselves—trying to convince ourselves that the battle with sin is really won when it isn't. That's not what's going on here. Sin is still real and it exists. But God wants us to think about ourselves in line with His truth. This is a matter of accepting what the Bible says about the death and resurrection of Jesus. Did Jesus' death defeat sin? Yes, it did. Did it set us free from sin? Yes, it did. Did Jesus rise to live a new life? Yes, He did. Does He want us to rise to a new life and live dead to sin like we really are? Yes, He does.

When we consider ourselves dead to sin we're not just trying to make ourselves feel better. We're believing what God says is true and thinking the way He's telling us to think.

[LIVE] Instead of hoping you will die to sin, count on the fact that you already have. If you see yourself as a sinner trying to be a better Christian, that's how you'll live. If you see yourself as a sinner whose sinful nature was buried with Jesus and who has been raised to live freely for God, that's how you'll live.

This is a shift in thinking. But it's a very important shift. Sin used to be a language that we spoke in the dark kingdom. But we don't have to speak it in our new Kingdom. It's not a part of us anymore. It doesn't have the authority over us that it did before. We're fundamentally different creatures than we used to be.

Change the way you think. Don't focus on not sinning. Focus on walking with God and living in a way that honors Him. Live like the child of the King that you are.

[NXT LVL] Read Galatians 2:20.