

YOU ARE HIS

6 SEPTEMBER 2026

SUMMARY

Drawing from Romans 8:14-17, Bruce Downes explores the profound truth that believers are not merely followers of a distant God but adopted children of the Father. The message unfolds within a spiritual rhythm of presence, identity, and mission, arguing that a genuine encounter with God's presence must lead to a transformed understanding of who we are. Identity rooted in achievement, reputation, career, or the opinions of others is shown to be fragile and insufficient. In contrast, the identity received through adoption in Christ is secure, freely given, and unchanging. Bruce Downes challenges listeners to move beyond intellectually affirming this truth and to actually live from it, particularly in moments of criticism, comparison, failure, and sin.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Presence leads to identity. As we grow more conscious of God's presence, we begin to discover who we truly are in relationship with Him. The spiritual rhythm of presence, identity, and mission means that knowing God comes before knowing ourselves, and both come before what we do for Him.

Identity is received, not achieved. Before Jesus performed a single miracle, the Father declared over Him, "You are my beloved Son." In the same way, our identity as children of God is given to us by grace before we earn anything.

Adoption means belonging. Paul's language in Romans 8 is not merely theological. It is deeply personal. To receive the Spirit of adoption is to be brought into a family, to have a Father, and to be told that what He has is yours.

Our identity is tested in ordinary moments. Criticism, comparison, failure, and rejection are the places where we discover what is actually telling us who we are. Christian identity does not make us emotionally bulletproof, but it gives us a foundation that does not shift when circumstances do.

There is a difference between "I failed" and "I am a failure." The story of the prodigal son shows that repentance is real and necessary, but failure is never allowed to become the final definition of who we are.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

- Romans 8:14-17, which describes believers as those who have received a spirit of adoption, who cry out to God as Father, and who are therefore children and heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ
- Mark 1:11, in which the Father declares his love and pleasure over Jesus at his baptism before his public ministry begins
- 1 John 4:19, which affirms that believers love because God first loved them
- Luke 15, the parable of the prodigal son

STORIES:

- Bruce Downes describes online videos of children in foster care who hand a written letter to a caregiver asking to be adopted, and the emotional response of the adult who then embraces the child, used as an illustration of what divine adoption means
- The baptism of Jesus at the Jordan River is referenced as a biblical narrative showing that the Father's declaration of identity preceded all of Jesus's public works and miracles
- The parable of the prodigal son from Luke 15 is discussed, highlighting how the younger son returned home having rewritten his identity around his failure, preparing a speech declaring he was no longer worthy to be called a son, yet the father refused to allow that failure to become the son's defining identity

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SMALL GROUP GUIDE

This guide is designed to help your small group dive deeper into the message.

OPENING PRAYER

Invite the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and open hearts to God's transforming work. Pray the IMPACTERS Community Prayer .

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Opening

1. When someone asks who you are, what is the first thing you tend to say? What does your answer reveal about where you have been drawing your sense of identity?
2. Have you ever found yourself living as though God's love was something you needed to earn? What did that feel like, and what contributed to it?

Going Deeper

3. Bruce describes a spiritual rhythm of presence, identity, and mission, and emphasizes that the order matters. Why do you think it is significant that presence comes before identity, and identity comes before mission? What can go wrong when that order is reversed?
4. Romans 8:15 contrasts a spirit of slavery and fear with a spirit of adoption. In your own life, which of those two spirits tends to shape the way you approach God? What do you think feeds each of them?
5. Bruce Downes points to the moment of Jesus's baptism in Mark 1:11, where the Father declares His identity before His public ministry begins. What does it mean to you personally that God speaks identity before He sends us into mission?
6. Bruce says, "Your identity is received before it is achieved." Where in your life do you find that truth hardest to actually believe and live out?
7. Bruce Downes identifies several places where our identity gets tested: criticism, comparison, failure, rejection, and the mistakes of people we love. Which of those tends to be most destabilizing for you, and why?
8. Thinking about the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15, the younger son came home with a speech that redefined himself around his failure. Have you ever done something similar, allowing a failure or a sin to become the story you tell about who you are? What would it look like to let the Father interrupt that speech?

PERSONAL REFLECTION

9. Bruce suggests adding the phrase "God is here, I am with Him, and I am His" to the hourly reminder practice. How do you think that small addition, "and I

am His," changes the nature of the practice? What difference might it make throughout a day?

10. Bruce says, "If I am His, another person's blessing does not diminish me." Is that easy or difficult for you to believe? What would change in your relationships and your inner life if you genuinely lived from that place?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Extend the hourly practice. Set an hourly reminder on your phone with the phrase "God is here, I am with Him, and I am His." At each prompt, pause for thirty seconds and let those words settle. Notice what thoughts or feelings arise.

Examine your identity sources. Spend some quiet time with a journal and honestly list the things that most powerfully tell you who you are, whether those are roles, relationships, achievements, failures, or other people's opinions. Bring that list to God and ask Him to speak His truth over each one.

Read the Who We Are document. Visit the Catholic Guy Ministry website and read or listen to the Who We Are document referenced in Bruce Downes. Come back to your group next week prepared to share one thing that stood out to you.

Sit with Romans 8:14-17. Read the passage slowly each morning this week. Each day, focus on one word or phrase and ask God what He wants you to understand about yourself through it.

Practice receiving, not earning. Each day this week, before you begin your work, your service, or your responsibilities, say aloud: "I am loved before I do anything today." Notice how that changes the spirit in which you approach the day.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, we thank You that You have not given us a spirit of fear and slavery, but a spirit of adoption. We confess that we often look to the wrong places to tell us who we are. We allow what we do, what others think of us, and even our own failures to speak more loudly than Your voice. Teach us to live from the truth that we are Yours. Help us to stop during our days, to remember that You are here, that we are with You, and that we belong to You. May that truth change the way we face criticism, comparison, failure, and fear. We ask this in the name of Jesus, through the power of Your Holy Spirit. Amen.