

## Series Slide

Andre Agassi was one of the most successful tennis players in history...who hated tennis.

At a very early age, like 2 years old, his father put a racquet in his hand and didn't allow him to really know any other life other than tennis.

Andre turned pro on his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday...and would play professional tennis for the next 20 years of his life.

He was famously known as Tennis' rebel...with his long hair, bandana, sunglasses and acid washed denim shorts.

For that reason, the camera brand "Canon" signed him to a sponsorship deal for their "Rebel" line.

He had a commercial where he climbed out of a white Lamborghini and looked the camera in the eye, lowering his sunglasses and said **"Image is Everything."**

- Here's what he said about it in his wonderful Memoir- Open.
- **"Image is Everything. What's that supposed to mean? Beats me, its for a camera company. But overnight the slogan becomes synonymous to me. Sportswriters liken it to my inner nature, my essential being. They say its my philosophy, my religion, and they predict it will be written on my tombstone. They say I'm nothing but image, I have no substance, because I haven't won a major tournament. .... Fans at my matches begin taunting me with the slogan. 'Come on, Andre- Image is Everything'. .... They yell it when I win. They yell it when I lose."**
- So, what do you do when a slogan begins to define you? When everyone thinks you're just about image? No substance? Well, you go out and prove them wrong. You do something spectacular.
- Agassi won Wimbledon.
- ...and proves to everyone he's winner...
- **[PAUSE]**....except himself.

- See- even though he looked like a confident champion- he was still trying to figure out WHO he was.
- **"I didn't feel that Wimbledon had changed me. I feel, in fact as if I've been let in on a dirty little secret: winning changes nothing. Now that I've won a slam, I know something that very few people on earth are permitted to know. A win doesn't feel as good as a loss feels bad, and the good feeling doesn't last as long as the bad. Not even close."**
- But, almost like an insane disease, Agassi kept chasing his identity through. Through accomplishing more. Through having more trophies.
- He won Olympic gold medals.
- He became #1 in the world.
- He is only the 5<sup>th</sup> man in history to win all 4 grand slam tournaments.
- He won more than \$31 million in prize money
- ...and he married a supermodel actress in Brooke Shields.
- But each time he achieved a new level of success, he tasted the dissatisfaction of finally getting what he wanted.
- It wasn't until his best friend's daughter was in a terrible accident... as she suffered in the hospital, she complained to Andre about being hot. So Andre ran out and got the biggest, most powerful air conditioner he could find and installed it in her room.
- And then he turned it on her face full blast. And at that moment....helping that little girl...he realized something. He finally got a glimpse of what it means to really be Andre Agassi. To be human.
- **"A look of pure relief, and gratitude, and joy, washed over her face, and in this look in this courageous little girl, I find the thing I've been seeking, the thing that unites all the experiences, good and bad, of the last few years. Her suffering, her resilient smile in the face of that suffering, my part in easing her suffering—this, THIS is the reason for everything....This is why we're here. To fight through the pain, and when possible, to relieve the pain of others. So simple. So hard to see...I'd forgotten: its in hospital hallways that we know what life is about...."**

- **"After all these years I've got what I've always wanted, something to play for that's larger than myself and yet still closely connected to me. Something that bears my name, but isn't about me."**
- Look, that is what all of us want. It's what every false identity is searching for. Every one night stand. Every drunk party-goer. Every legendary sports star. Every multi-million dollar actor. Every over-achieving student. Every hovering mother. Every over-working father.
- Every one is looking for the same thing.
- An Identity that's truly ME...but isn't about me.

### **Title Slide "Image is Everything: How to Know Who You Are & Why You're Here"- Luke 4:1-15**

Today, you may be surprised to learn that Jesus was tempted just like Andre Agassi, and just like you and I are. To build our identity on something short term. Something fading...like a tennis career...or your intelligence, or strength or good looks

What we find in this passage today is something about Jesus that is absolutely paramount to understanding who you are made to be.

#### **Luke 4:1-15**

**Then Jesus left the Jordan, full of the Holy Spirit, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness**

**2 for forty days to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over, he was hungry. 3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread."**

**4 But Jesus answered him, "It is written: Man must not live on bread alone."**

**5 So he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. 6 The devil said to him, "I will give you their splendor and all this authority, because it has been given over to me, and I can give it to anyone I want. 7 If you, then, will worship me, all will be yours."**

**8 And Jesus answered him, "It is written: Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only."**

**9 So he took him to Jerusalem, had him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here. 10 For it is written:**

**He will give his angels orders concerning you,**

**to protect you, 11 and**

**they will support you with their hands,**

**so that you will not strike**

**your foot against a stone."**

**12 And Jesus answered him, "It is said: Do not test the Lord your God."**

**13 After the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him for a time.**

**14 Then Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread throughout the entire vicinity. 15 He was teaching in their synagogues, being praised by everyone.**

**TRANSITION:** In Luke chapter 3, Jesus was baptized...and the clouds broke and God's voice from heaven announced exactly who he was. "You are my son with whom I'm well pleased."

The very next verse, Jesus walks out into the wilderness and hears the devil's voice say "Are you SURE you're God's son?"

So, Before I show you what difference Jesus makes to your identity, let me show you three false identities that most of us have trouble shaking...

**1) You can't answer "Who am I?" with what you want, what you do, or what you have.**

- Before we get to these temptations...take a look at
- **4:1-2**

- Led by Spirit.
- This is intentional discipline. Its building resilience.
- God doesn't just say "This is my son with whom I'm well pleased" as a feel good moment.
- He is preparing him for the testing. The trial.
- 
- There is grace.- A gift, Charis.
- Followed by a call to Grit. Resilience in the face of temptation and evil.
- You're gonna hear this phrase a lot. Grit & Grace.

This happens with us too. And if you aren't grounded in the deep love of God as a father- you give into temptation a lot easier.

Also note- the temptation comes when Jesus is at his weakness. Self-control is a muscle.

- The Devil tempts Jesus in 3 ways.
- They are all attempts to change his mind about WHO he is.
- **V 3 & v 9a (end at "down")**
- The first and last begin with the phrase "IF you are the son of God"
- In other words the Devil takes something God has ALREADY said about Jesus...and doesn't say "that's not true". He just says...you'll need to prove it. Test him. Lets see if you really are the son of God.
- Do you really think the son of God is supposed to starve to death? Make bread.
- Don't you think if your "Father" really loves you...that when you jump off this tower that he'll let you die? Jump!
- Listen, that temptation is the life of a child of God.
  - Really, so you're a child of God. And God loves you, is that right?
  - Why are struggling to pay bills then?
  - Why are you in such a terrible job?
  - If he loves you so much, why did he let your parents treat you that way?
  - Isn't a good Father supposed to protect you?
  - Are you **sure** you belong to God?

- And, see, when you begin to doubt...he dangles a different identity in front of you. Tennis player. Winner of Wimbledon. Dating a supermodel... the funny guy, the classy girl, the smart kid, the nice guy....and his hope is that you spend your life chasing it...never attaining it....because he knows, just like Agassi found out...when you finally get what you want...when you finally perform to the ceiling...and when your life is filled with good looks, accolades, and trophies...all you'll want is to hear is God's voice saying "I love you, kid..." but that's exactly what you left behind. It's exactly what you already had before you started chasing it.
- **V 2-3**
- Jesus was first tempted to make his life about getting what he wanted.
- See, He was hungry. So the devil says. You're hungry. You have the power to make bread. Feed yourself.
- In other words, that's who you are. You are your desires.
- If you want it, and you have the power to do it, nothing else matters. Feed it.
- It's our culture's view on everything from food to sex. As long as you aren't hurting anyone...do it.
- Because you are what you want. Don't deny yourself. That's not authentic.
- **"The truest thing about you is your desire.** Anyone that tries to get you to stop your desire- is evil"
- See, this is a temptation for Jesus to use his power to satisfy himself. But Jesus knows there is something deeper to his identity than feeding his stomach- Trusting his Father's Word and Timing.
- **V 5-6**
- The Devil says "Ok, so you're supposed to be a king. A Son of God should rule, right? Didn't the prophets write about how you'd rule the nations? Great. I'll help you have all of that.
- All you have to do, is when I say "Who's your daddy?" You say, "You are, Satan."

- See, Satan's next temptation is for Jesus to define himself by what he has. Kings...have kingdoms. Sons...have an inheritance. If you are going to eventually have it- why go through pain. Get it the easy way.
- Look, you and I are all too familiar with that temptation.
- You ever get a new phone? New car? New house? New computer?
- **New chair for Xmas. BORN AGAIN.** Then my dog jumped on it with muddy paws.
- You know when its time for the phone upgrade...its almost like you become a better person...at least we think so.
- But the next morning or the next month, or the next year, or the next break-up, or when the new car gets old, the new house needs a roof and an HVAC...we always wake up with an identity hangover... because that stuff never really changes who we are
- Then finally in **v 9-10**
- the devil comes back again.
- And this time he tempts Jesus to base his identity, on **what he does.**
- See, Satan takes Jesus up to the top of a tower..and he tells him **"do something spectacular."**
- Just show people what you're worth. Never mind that you are the son of God, what good is being the son of God if you aren't famous and loved by everyone. Think of how the people would love you. They'd cheer. They'd stand up and tell you how awesome you are.
- Come on. Jump.
- You know, this was Agassi's problem. If you can just be a pro. No I mean, if you can just win a grand slam. No, I mean...you just have to be number 1 in the world.
- Just perform a little more...and then you'll convince everyone who you are.
- But Jesus knows what it took Agassi years to figure out, that the more spectacular things you do, the more people just want more miracles.
- The more success you have, the more you'll tell yourself you have to rise to the next level to be somebody.

- Jesus knows that he's not here to do spectacular magic tricks. He knows being the son of God doesn't mean making flying leaps off of buildings to prove himself...he knows who he is...before he has to DO anything.

### **Back to 1)**

- The chair is stained. The phone is...well, its a phone. And no matter how high we stack the cash...it doesn't reach heaven. And we're left saying just like Andre Agassi... **"The win doesn't feel nearly as good as the loss feels bad."**

**TRANSITION:** Jesus, in the face of temptation to doubt his father's word that he is the son of God...said 'NO' to making his identity about what he wanted, what he did, or what he had.

Because he knew being the Son of God meant something else. He knew....

### **2) Jesus isn't just a good example, he's a substituting servant.**

- You know, there are lots of different folks in this room today.
- People from different faith backgrounds.
- Christians...even some atheists.
- I don't for a second assume that everyone in here thinks reading the Bible is important.
- But, I know that there are bound to be a few of you who do.
- So, this question is for you.
- What is the Bible good for?
- If you were going to describe it to a friend who knew nothing about the Bible, what would you say?
- "The Bible is basic instructions before leaving earth."
- The Bible is my playbook.
- It's a like a manual for how to live life God's way.
- If that's how you'd describe it, if you see the Bible that way, with all due respect....you are interpreting it like the devil.
- Did you notice that every single time that Jesus' identity is confronted by the devil that they talk about the Bible?



- Jesus quotes a verse from the Old Testament in each of the 3 instances, the Devil directly quotes one when Jesus is on top of the tower, and inherent in every temptation, the Devil is playing off of something Jesus read in his Old Testament or heard directly from the Father.
- All three of the devil's temptations are aimed at either Jesus' identity as a "son" or as a "king"
  - Right?
  - The first one is about being a son
    - "A son of God shouldn't be hungry". A good dad feeds his kids.
  - The second one is about being a son and a king
    - Because the goal is that when he throws himself off this tower and is rescued by angels, that everyone will follow him.
- Then, the third one, is about being a king. You're a king. Here...take these kingdoms.
- In other words, the Devil is fine with Jesus reading the Old Testament and realizing that he is the son of God...and that he is the King of kings.
- As long as the devil gets to define what it means to be a son and a king.
- KNOW AND READ YOUR BIBLE. YOU'LL BLEED WHAT YOU READ.
- YOU WON'T RISE TO THE OCCASION...YOU WILL FALL TO THE LEVEL OF YOUR TRAINING
- Think of the ordinary years of Hebrew School. Of reading the Scriptures. Don't forget Jesus in Luke 2 asking questions at 12 years old to the Rabbis.
- **CITY CHURCH BIBLE READING PLAN. MEMORIZING SERMON ON THE MOUNT**
- The Devil is 100% ok with Jesus getting a bunch of followers. As long as he remains just a good example.
  - As long as the Bible is a playbook.
  - As long as it's an instruction manual.
- But the Bible is not an instruction manual. It's not a playbook. It's not the book that tells you how to live your life.
- It's an autobiography.

- Its not good advice. Its good news.
- Look, let me show you
- **Luke 3:22**
- Just before this event in the desert happens, Jesus is baptized and hears the voice of his Father say **"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."**
- Do you know that phrase isn't just something God the Father came up with on the spot. Its not that he was just bursting with pride at Jesus' baptism and said "Hey, that's my boy..." You know, like a proud father at a football game when his son scores a touchdown.
- No. See this is a quote from something God said a long time ago.
- In fact, it's a mash-up. God the father is taking two chapters of the Old Testament, summarizing them in one phrase, and then putting them together.
- This is Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42.
- You should go read those later since we don't have time to this morning.
- Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42 are two strange passages to put together.
- Psalm 2 is about a Son and King. God's son. God's king.
- But Isaiah 42 is about a servant. A suffering servant. A servant who dies.
- And at his baptism, God says, "Yes, this is the son and king I told you about...but this is also the suffering and dying servant I told you about."
- For the Jewish people, this is a declaration that the King is the servant. That the Son is going to suffer.
- And the Devil's temptations to Jesus are to believe Psalm 2 "You're the SON! You're the KING!"...while he quietly brushes away the passage about a suffering servant...
- The Devil is tempting Jesus to believe the Bible is a book about how he acts...instead of a book that tells him who he is.
- The Devil is tempting Jesus to be a good example...instead of a suffering substitute.

- Don't rely on your Father, feed yourself.
  - Move out of the place of weakness...and into the place of strength.
- Throw yourself off the temple, and show them you're invincible instead of dying.
- Don't be the suffering servant, be the Son. Be the king. Skip the cross, take your crown.
- In others words....the Devil wants Jesus to establish a religion like every other religion on the face of the earth.
- He's saying "I want you to come down as an example, not as a Savior. I want you to come down in strength and say, 'Be like me and I will save you.' Don't come down in weakness and say, 'I will come and live your life so that all you weak identity-seekers can be saved.'"
- No, come in Power.
- Start a religion.
- Get followers.
- Give people something to live up to. Give them something to achieve.
- When they turn pro, tell them they have to win a grand slam.
- When they win that, tell them they have to be number 1.
- If they do that, show them they have to marry a supermodel.
- Show people a good example, then tell them to "do their best"

Listen, Every other religion says, "Live a good life and give it to God, and maybe he'll be impressed and do something good with you."

But Christianity says, "Jesus lived a righteous life in your place and he is giving it to you."

**John 1:12** says "to those who believed in the name of Jesus, he gave them the RIGHT to be children of God."

That's past tense. That's before you lift a finger. That's before you have a chance to win a single point with him. Its before you prove yourself to anyone. God says, "If you'll trust my son, the king, who suffered and died in your place...as your substitute...you are my beloved child with whom I'm well pleased."

### **Back to 2)**

- And here's how that changes everything.

If you believe Jesus is an example and not a substitute. If you believe the Bible is a book of rules or instructions more than a revelation of a God that died for you...

When you face difficulty and suffering, you will have to say either, "I deserve better than this, because of what I've done. And then you'll hate the God who's trying to tell you he loves you.

Or, if fail to keep all the rules, if you keep letting Jesus, your great powerful example down, you'll tell yourself, "I deserve this pain. My life is falling apart because I haven't been a good person."

But if you read the Bible as a story of a Son and a King who was your substitute.

If you see Jesus NOT as the founder of a religion, but the God who lived the life you couldn't live FOR YOU...died the death you should have died IN YOUR PLACE...in the face of the deepest pain and suffering in your life...you'll say

- "I'm his beloved child, because of JESUS, he's pleased with me."

...and all the pain and suffering in your life, all the disappointment, all the failure....

- You'll say, "This is not punishment, because Jesus took that from me on the cross."
- And so I know whatever I'm going through is to grow me, its so I can comfort someone else...or its to expose in me some way he wants to make me look even more like his son or daughter.
- ...and that's how that resilient smile comes through right in the middle of hell's testing.

### **3) Jesus is a better Adam. Jesus is a better Israel. Jesus is a better you.**

- There's one more thing I didn't tell you about this passage.

- It's a part of a big story.
- When God created the world, he made a man named Adam.
- Adam was surrounded by a beautiful garden.
- Everything any of us could ever want.
- And in the middle of paradise, he was tested...by the Devil...and he failed.
- Thousands of years later, the people of God, Israel came along.
- In the middle of desert, on the way to a promised land...they were tested. And they failed.
- Centuries later, Jesus came along, and while he was in the desert, he was tested. By the devil. And he passed.
- **4:14-15**
- And when Jesus passed the test, he came out of the desert he received the beginning of all the stuff Satan tempted him with.
- What Satan said "take now" God was already going to give him.

He was empowered. News about him spread. He was praised by everyone.

- Matthew says, the angels ministered to him.
- Big Fan, Grapes.
- On the other side of the wilderness, was the paradise Adam gave up.
- Jesus succeeded where Adam failed.
- Jesus succeeded where Israel failed.
- Jesus succeeded where you failed.
- And because of that, simply by trusting him. By taking him as your substitute instead of your example, he gives you back the garden. He's holding out paradise for you. Not because you deserve, but because he does.
- Because the Son substituted. Because the King served.
- You and I have the right to become children of God...and all the rights and privileges that come along with that are ours.

## CONCLUSION

- At the end of the age, at the end of the story, you and I will never be tempted again.
- Forever, we'll know exactly who we are, because we know exactly who HE IS.
- But in the meantime, in pain, in suffering...you don't have to search for who you are anymore...because you know exactly who he is.
- **Right now, today, with your faith in Christ as your substitute...you can say**
- **"I've got what I've always wanted, something to live for that's larger than myself and yet still closely connected to me. Something that bears my name, but isn't about me."**

You don't have to be what you want, what you do, or what you have...  
...you can be a beloved child of God.

## PRAY