

Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Growth
Week 4 – Our New Identity in Christ

Overview:

- Our New Identity in Christ
- How New Identity Relates to Character Change
- Appropriating our New Identity

Introduction

"Who are you?" We all have a sense of identity, a sense of "who we are." Our upbringing, education, and life experiences all affect the way we view ourselves.

Our self-identity is important because how we think, especially how we view ourselves, affects the way we act.

(Prov. 23:7) For as a man thinks within himself, so he is.

The issue of identity is especially important for Christians because of something that happened to us when we began our relationship with Christ. The Bible repeatedly teaches that at the moment of our conversion, our identity fundamentally changed:

(2 Cor. 5:17) Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Tonight we want to explore the importance of this "new identity" in some detail. We will find that understanding the significance of this change in our identity is foundational to spiritual growth.

Understanding our new identity in Christ is what the author of Hebrews calls a "meat" truth. This concept may be tough to digest, but learning it has the potential to yield tremendous benefits in your spiritual life.

Our New Identity in Christ

Union with Christ

All Christians are united with Christ at their conversion.

(1 Cor. 12:13) For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

This union consists of two aspects:

" . . . we were all made to drink of one Spirit"	"By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body . . . "
Indwelling of Holy Spirit	Baptism by Holy Spirit
Christ In You	You In Christ
Basis of <i>new power</i> for change Rom. 5:5; 2 Tim 1:7; Col. 1:29; 1 Thess 1:5; Gal 5; Rom 8	Basis of <i>new identity</i>

The left-hand side: As we saw on week 2, the Holy Spirit indwells Christians and provides power to change their character.

The right-hand side: Because we have been united with Christ, what is true of Christ becomes true of us. We call this change in how God sees us our "new identity."

Definition of new identity: What is true of us now that we are in Christ

Our new identity in Christ is a *major emphasis* in the New Testament. Our growth as Christians is rooted in understanding how God sees us. In Paul's letters, he refers to this truth at least 126 times (in the identity sense): "in Christ" occurs 82 times; "in him" occurs 20 times; "with Christ" occurs 12 times; "with him" occurs 12 times. There are many other passages in the New Testament that remind us of our new position before God now that we are Christians.

Note to instructor: Briefly familiarize students with the various aspects of new identity so they are able to understand the significance of the next section. Quickly turn to the *Key Aspects of New Identity* table and name the seven aspects listed there.

Why is understanding our new identity so important?

1. Because identity precedes and affects behavior (also attitudes, emotions, values, etc.). Our actions are driven by the way we see ourselves.

Illustration: While visiting downtown Manaus (Brazil) one evening, I noticed a pack of young boys picking pockets, stealing from shops, etc. When I asked a native about these boys, he replied "Oh, those are the 'throw-away' kids." These children were abandoned downtown by their parents, and left to survive on their own. They (correctly) viewed themselves as throwaway children, so they stole to survive. Suppose I adopted one of those children and took him home with me. If I took him with me to the grocery store the next day, I wouldn't be surprised if he stole food and stuffed it under his shirt. *Until* he really understood and believed that his identity had changed (from a throwaway kid to my son), he would probably continue to act as if he didn't have two parents to care for him; once he understood his new identity as a child of loving, caring parents, he would look to us for his provision and his action of stealing would cease.

2. Understanding our new identity is also important because looking at Christian brothers and sisters through God's eyes will have an amazing impact on *their* spiritual life as well! This issue of our new identity is not just for you, it is also for others around you.

Illustration: Bruce Wilkinson, when teaching at a new college for the first time, was told by an older faculty member that one of his three sections of Bible Study Methods was designated for the top incoming freshmen - Section 2. The faculty member said, "I can't believe they gave you section 2. You're the rookie teacher. They are incredible to teach. They are so motivated and sharp." Sure enough, while he thought sections 1 & 3 were good, section 2 was electric. The lecture was the same but the difference was night and day. He looked forward to this class every time he taught it. The grades and the quality of their work in and out of class was remarkably different. There was just one wrinkle. That year, they didn't put the sharpest students in section 2. Section 2 was the same composition as the other two sections. This phenomenon is well known to educators and controlled studies have shown the very same effect. How we perceive others has a remarkable affect on how they behave. And new creatures in Christ have a much greater potential than we often recognize. We need to see others and relate to them on the basis of their new identity.

Note: Someone may complain "I don't have a friend who believes in me the way Wilkinson believed in his students." Lacking such a friend is not excuse for failing to grow. Nor is your failure to grow the fault of people around you. God knows your potential and will help you realize it if you cooperate with him.

How our new identity relates to character change

Let's consider an important passage that demonstrates the relationship between our new identity and character change.

(Col. 3:1-3) If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.**

Note how this passage fits into the context of Paul's teaching on sanctification:

2:10-15: First, he explains their new identity.

2:16-23: Next, he warns against inadequate/false religious methods of sanctification (ritualism, legalism, mysticism). See especially v. 23: these "are of no value against fleshly indulgence."

Note: Verse 18 could mean they "worshipped angels" or that they had seen a vision of angels worshipping God. Regardless, Paul states these visions have "no value."

3:1-4: After that, he emphasizes the necessity of maintaining a mental focus on this new identity. Because we have received a new identity in Christ (vs. 1a, 3), we need to set our mental focus on this new identity (vs. 1b,2).

3:5ff: Finally, he begins to sketch out what it looks like to behave consistently with this new identity. Notice how Paul intersperses his commands with reminders of their new identity (see vs. 8-10; vs. 12,13).

Paul says that “self-made religion” (practicing rituals, self-abasement, visions, observing food laws) fails to hold our sin nature in check. Instead, real character change must begin in the way we think.

As we look closely at this section, we see **two different approaches to character change:**

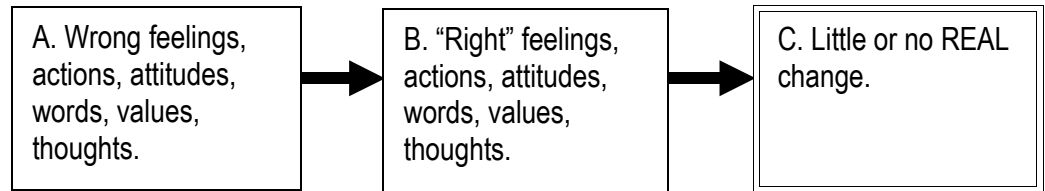
1. Legalistic approach

The legalistic approach involves teaching ethics and behavior without laying the proper foundation of identity truths. The legalist simply tries to replace wrong actions with right actions. Instructors: To illustrate, refer back to the “throw-away” kid example.

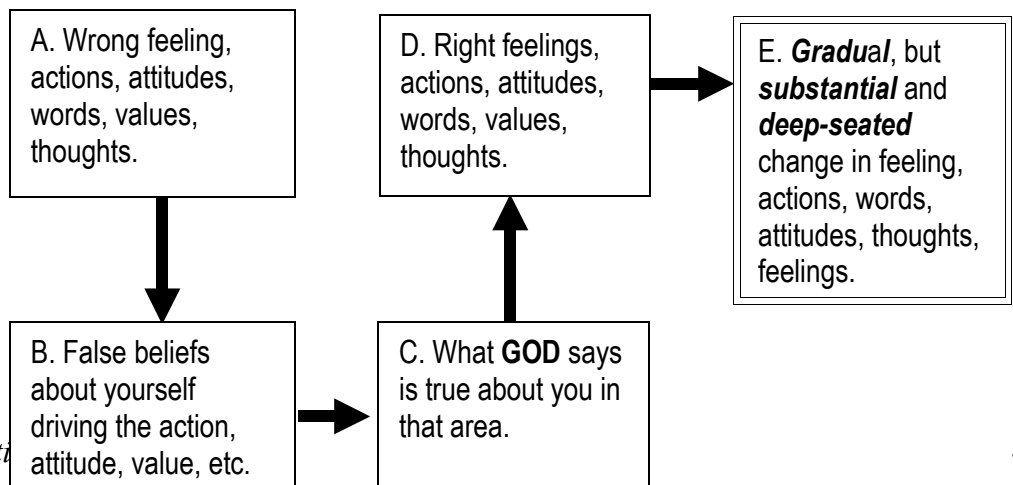
Jesus warned that sinful actions and attitudes can’t be addressed on the surface. Beneath our visible sins lie deeper problems.

(Matt. 23:25,26) “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. 26 You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also.”

The legalist seeks to keep up appearances before God and other people. His approach to character change only offers a superficial solution to the problem.



2. Biblical Approach



Boxes A & B: In our own life, and in working with others, we need to look below the behavioral symptoms and see the underlying connection between our actions and how we view ourselves. This is necessary for deep, lasting change because wrong actions, attitudes, values, thoughts, and feelings are often based in lies we believe about our identity.

Boxes B & C: Once we understand how we view ourselves and how this self-perception affects our actions, we must replace the lies we believe about ourselves with God's perspective—how he sees us. Our new identity is unseen. It is God's view of us now that we have a relationship with Him. And focusing on it is absolutely essential to the transformation process.

Illustrate this with the "throw away kid." Why does he steal and fight? Could you just tell him to stop? Yes, you could. And he would stop for awhile. But there would be no deep-seeded change in his character. For lasting change to occur, he needs to realize that as your adopted son, he will be provided for.

Boxes C & D: God wants to transform our actions and attitudes. We cooperate with him in this transformation process as we begin to accept our new identity. This involves choosing to affirm God's view of us and being open to God's leading as he shows us and empowers us to act in ways that are consistent with our new identity. The New Testament order is *not* "do in order to be," *but* "act consistently with who you are."

Boxes D & E: As God empowers us to act consistently with who we are (we call this "living out of your new identity"), we are supernaturally transformed. The fruit of this growth process is lasting character change and an increased ability to love others.

Note to instructor: Slow down and illustrate the second diagram with a personal example. Don't forget to emphasize box E, the outcome of this process. For example the "throw-away kid" may eventually become generous and worry free. Also connect this diagram to past material covered in week 2 on "indicative and imperative":

Relationship 1: imperatives (box D) in the diagram are based on indicatives (box C)

Relationship 2: experience (box E) flows from acting on the imperatives (box D)

Appropriating our New Identity (Romans 6:6,11,13): Know, Consider, Present**

Definition: "Appropriation" is *our* role in applying our new identity in an ongoing and practical way.

Appropriation consists of three sequential steps, which Paul outlines in Romans 6. In this chapter, he focuses on our identification with Christ in his death and resurrection. But these steps can also be used to appropriate any identity truth to our lives. We will also see that these steps are related to the

diagram above and an essential part of the spiritual growth process. We will describe each step and then walk through examples which will help make them relevant for you.

1st—"Know"

Definition: Learn what the Bible teaches about our new identity, and regularly reflect on these truths (2 Pet. 1:12,13,15).

(Romans 6:6) "*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;*"**

"Old self"

Paul says our "old self was crucified with Christ..." He is referring to our old identity in Adam which has been completely obliterated. Our old self was once a slave to sin, but that person no longer exists. See also Jn. 3:3,5; Col. 3:3; 2 Cor. 5:17.

"Body of sin"

The body of sin is not your old identity, but your *sin-nature*. The phrase "done away with" (*katargeo*) suggests that our sin nature has been removed, but other passages clearly teach that we still have a sin nature (Romans 7:17). What is the resolution? The Greek word *katargeo* can also mean "made powerless" (see the NASB margin) or (better) "put out of authority" (for an example of this usage, see Romans 7:2 " . . . she is released from the law . . . "). So the passage could read, "our sin nature has been put out of authority."

What is the identity truth Paul says we should know?

Our old identity as a slave to sin has been destroyed. As a result, our sin nature has been put "out of authority"—it no longer controls our actions. We are no longer slaves of sin. Notice that instead of simply calling on Christians to stop sinning (see the "direct approach" above), Paul begins by explaining how our status as slaves to sin has fundamentally changed.

Why is knowing this identity truth important?

Illustration: When the Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves in the South on Jan. 1st, 1863, the legal identity of these slaves was instantly changed. Their new identity as citizens fundamentally changed their relationship to their previous owners. Their old identity as property/slaves was "killed." Their previous owners continued to exist, but their authority over them was now removed, so that they were no longer legally obliged to live as slaves.

How important was this knowledge? Do you know that thousands of them continued to live out their lives as slaves because their ex-masters successfully kept this information from them?

Many Christians assume that though they are forgiven for their sins, there is no basis for deep-seated change in their lives. If we don't know that we have been freed from the authority of our sin-nature, we will try to sanctify ourselves by the flesh, leading either to self-righteous self-deception, or fatalistic honesty about our sins.

Therefore, we need to study truths like this until we understand them. We need to ask God to help us understand their significance in our lives, meditate on them and remind ourselves of them. Remember Paul's exhortation in Romans 12:2 "... be transformed by the renewing of your minds."

What does it look like to “know” other identity truths?

We often draw conclusions about ourselves that are simply untrue. These lies that we believe about ourselves spill out in negative ways and affect our behavior. But most of us rarely reflect deeply enough to uncover the identity issues that drive our actions. “Knowing” means identifying specific identity truths that contradict the lies we believe. Doing this takes deep thought! For example:

e.g. Your roommate points out your failure to do your part to keep the house clean. After a long week at school and a couple stressful exchanges with some coworkers, this is the last thing you want to hear. Hurt and tired, you start to angrily defend yourself and the confrontation turns into a shouting match. The next day, you realize that you shouldn't have exploded. What should you do? Many Christians would resolve to do better or even apologize. After further reflection, verses like Phil. 2:3 (“Regard one another as more important than yourselves.”) may even come to mind.

This is helpful, but it doesn't address the thinking that led to your angry outburst. Did your roommate's critique confirm something you were already thinking about yourself? Is your self worth tied to how others view your performance? Are you looking for people to respond to you in a certain way so you can feel a certain way about yourself? Questions like this will help you uncover lies that you believe about yourself that drive your actions.

Once you've identified the lies that drive your behavior, you can reflect on identity truths that contradicts those lies. In this example it may help you to reflect on how God has forgiven you through Christ and accepted you apart from your performance. Instructors: Finish this example by directing students to row 1 on the *Key Aspects of Our New Identity* chart.

We must encourage young Christians to identify specific identity truths that replace lies they believe about themselves. As they get in the habit of replacing these lies with what God says is true, they will begin to “know” who they are in Christ. “Knowing” is an essential first step in appropriating our new identity.

We also need to pray that God will help us “know” what is true of the people around us.

2nd—"Consider"

Definition: Affirming that a specific identity truth is true of *you in your specific situation*, and doing so in spite of contrary feelings, thoughts, past experiences or what others say about you.

(Romans 6:11) “Even so *consider* yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”**

“Consider” (*logizomai*) is an accounting term and often refers to making an accurate ledger entry. When making a deposit, for example, a ledger entry reflects the accountant’s belief that a certain amount of money actually has been deposited.

Illustration: Let's assume that you have never had more than \$150 in your checking account. Suddenly, a trusted friend informs you that he has deposited \$100,000 into your account. You check with the bank and ascertain that this is indeed the case. How important is it that you enter that amount in your check ledger, and believe that entry? What if you listened instead to your feelings or to other friends who keep telling you that you only have \$150? If you want to reap the benefit of the \$100,000, you have to choose to believe you have the actual amount! Otherwise, you could go on living as though you were poor!

What does it look like to “consider” identity truths?

“Considering” requires that we monitor our thoughts (see the “symptoms” column in the *Key Aspects of Our New Identity* chart) and challenge them. This includes evaluating the feelings that go along with them.

Start by asking the Lord to sensitize you to lies that you believe about yourself. Then ask him (along with mature Christians) to help you see how aspects of your new identity are true of *you in the specific situations* you face each day. Then reject the lies you have believed and consider what God says about you to be true.

(D. M. Lloyd-Jones) ". . .we must talk to ourselves instead of allowing 'ourselves' to talk to us! Do you realize what that means? I suggest that the main trouble in this whole matter of spiritual depression in a sense is this, that we allow our self to talk to us instead of talking to our self. Am I just trying to be deliberately paradoxical? Far from it. This is the very essence of wisdom in this matter. Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning. You have not originated them, but they start talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you? Your self is talking to you. Now this man's treatment was this; instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' he asks. His soul had been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says: 'Self, listen for moment, I will speak to you'. Do you know what I mean? If you do not, you have had but little experience.

The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to your soul: 'Why are you cast down'—what business have you to be disquieted? You must turn on yourself, upbraid yourself, condemn yourself, exhort yourself, and say to yourself; 'Hope you in God'—instead of muttering in this depressed unhappy way. And then you must go on to remind yourself of God, Who God is, and what God is and what God has done and what God has pledged Himself to do. Then having done that, end on this great note: defy yourself, and defy other people, and defy the devil and the whole world, and say with this man: 'I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance, who is also the health of my countenance and my God.'”¹

This is contrary to how many Christians operate. They are either mentally passive and will not challenge their thinking or they have a therapeutic view of feelings (all feelings are good and need to be validated). Which do you tend toward? The therapeutic view of feelings would insist that actions proceeding from feelings are excusable and that the route to better actions begins with avoiding bad feelings. Often, people with this perspective look to others to make themselves feel better.

But monitoring your thought-life is at the heart of long-lasting change in the Christian life. People won't see changes in your thinking, but they will see changes in your attitudes and behavior as you gradually “consider” God's view of you to be true.

Why is “considering” important?

Illustration: How important was it for those ex-slaves who knew about the Emancipation Proclamation to choose to "consider" that they actually were free citizens? How difficult was it for them to choose to "consider" this—especially when their own thoughts and feelings, their ex-owners, said "You're nothing but a slave. You always have been a slave, and you always will be a slave."

Here is an even greater tragedy than the suppression of the news: thousands of ex-slaves knew about the Emancipation Proclamation, yet still lived out the rest of their lives as slaves because they didn't choose to believe what was true of them and instead chose to go on believing what their ex-owners and own conditioning told them.

How important is it for you as a Christian to choose to believe that you are no longer a slave to sin? How many of us continue to live as slaves, not because we don't know this truth, but because we don't choose against our feelings and consider it to be true of us? “Knowing” alone is not enough.

When we fall back into old patterns of sin or come under accusation, it's easy to conclude “I will never change.” Every day, we should consciously remind ourselves:

¹ D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), pp. 20,21.

"I am free from sin's authority and am therefore able to change." We must consider this to be true of *us* in the *specific areas* we struggle with.

Are you helping a young Christian overcome sinful habits in his/her life? Be sure to show them truths about who they are in Christ that replace lies they have grown up believing about themselves. Insisting on good behavior without teaching someone to "consider" how identity truths apply to them is the "direct approach" (see above) and rarely leads to lasting change.

3rd—"Present"

Definition: Choosing to step out in faith and act in specific ways that are consistent with your new identity.

(Romans 6: 13) "and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God."**

(Note: "Walking in Victory" does not differentiate between "consider" and "present" to the extent we will in the notes that follow.)

What does it look like to "present" yourself to God?

Illustration: Who were the ex-slaves who actually experienced a life of increasing freedom? They were the ones who knew about the Emancipation Proclamation, who chose to consider it to be true in spite of the contrary input of their ex-masters, their memories, etc.—and what else? Who actually began to refuse the orders of their ex-masters *and* instead walked off the "security" of the plantations and put themselves in places where the power of the government supported their freedom (MOVED TO NORTHERN CITIES; FOUND PAYING EMPLOYERS). It was this scary risk, based on the previous two steps, that resulted in increasing experiential freedom for them.

e.g. You are angry with a person for not paying enough attention to you. The fact is that they ARE being unloving and insensitive. At a teaching, you learn (*Know*) that God will meet all of your relational needs and that we should therefore not look to other people to do this. Realizing that this is what you have been doing, you choose to affirm that God will provide for you in this area (*Consider*). Now what would it look like to *present* ourselves based on this identity truth? You could choose not to lash out or punish with silence and instead choose to freely give to that person in some way. You may also need to address their insensitivity for their own good.

e.g. You are depressed and resentful because your friend is much more gifted in a certain area than you are. As you study 1 Cor. 12, you realize that God has gifted you to play a unique role in his Body (*Know*). You agree that the differences between you and your friend in gifted areas is part of God's design rather than you getting the short end of the stick (*Consider*). What would it then look like to *Present* yourself—to act in a way consistent with your new identity? You could thank God for your friend's contribution; compliment, encourage, and promote your friend's accomplishments in

that area; thank God for what he has shown that you can do for him and look for opportunities to serve in that area.

"Presenting" usually involves both a negative and positive step.

It is necessary to choose to *turn away from* immoral habits (Vs 13a: "do not go on presenting yourselves to sin . . . ")

It is also necessary to *turn to* God in ways that expose you to his alternative (Vs 13b: ". . . but present yourselves to God . . . "). Real change involves the willingness to say "No!" (e.g., STAYING OUT OF SEXUALLY TEMPTING SITUATIONS)—but this is ultimately futile unless we also say "Yes!" to the ways that expose us to God's life-changing power. This is the "Resist-Replace" principle.

The principle is seen in 2 Tim. 2:22

(2 Tim 2:22) "Flee youthful lusts and pursue righteousness.

e.g. **Sensuality:** Finding practical ways to avoid tempting situations (*resist*) and developing Christ-centered love relationships (*replace*)—see 1 Thes. 4:3-10.

e.g. **Materialism:** Finding practical ways to avoid shopping binges when depressed, etc. (*resist*) and developing your ministry role (*replace*). Shopping binges lose their appeal as we experience fulfillment in loving others (1 Tim. 6:10,11).

e.g. **Self-focus:** I'm depressed so I think I'll just stay home tonight rather than going to home church: Realizing that I am a part of the body and should seek fellowship (*resist*) and going to home church with the prayer that God will use my gifts to edify others (*replace*).

If you are trying to help a young Christian grow, teach them identity truths that apply to specific situations that they face. Then ask them to identify actions consistent with those truths. Remind them that presenting themselves to God involves *active faith*: acting on the truths of God while depending on him to perform through us.

Key aspects of our New Identity (Eph. 1:3-14, 2; Col. 2; ROM 6)**

The New Testament refers to dozens of aspects of our new identity in Christ. See Dennis McCallum, *Walking In Victory*, pp. 24,25—which refers to 16 aspects. See Neil Anderson, *Victory Over The Darkness*, pp. 45-47, 57-59—which refers to 68 aspects. We want you to be familiar with the main passages that explain our new identity and the key aspects of this new identity. THIS WILL BE ON THE TEST!

Even though God is willing to meet our deepest needs, we often look to people to care for us and become disappointed when they can't. This puts us in a position of dependence on others in relationships. But God wants to provide us with strength anchored in him. *God* has met our deepest needs through our *New Identity* in Christ (Eph. 4:13,14; Ps. 62:5-7). To the extent that we are ignorant of and/or don't appropriate this, we will go on suffering as needlessly "needy" people. When

we become secure in how God sees us, we can serve from God's strength instead of taking what we need from others.

e.g. An insecure spouse needs to look to God who is able to meet his/her needs, not to their spouse's actions for their source of security.

See chart next page

Key Aspects of Our New Identity

ASPECTS OF OUR NEW IDENTITY	RESULTING SPIRITUAL PROVISION	SYMPTOMS OF NOT "KNOWING", "CONSIDERING", AND/OR "PRESENTING"	EXAMPLES OF HOW TO "PRESENT"
Adoption as God's child (Eph. 1:5)	Belonging, security in the this life.	Idolatrous human relationships. Material anxiety. Fear of rejection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loving discipline and witness. • Financial Giving.
Forgiveness through Jesus' death for sin (Eph. 1:7; Col. 2:13,14)	Acceptance apart from performance.	Destructive reactions to guilt feelings (defensiveness, self condemnation), resentment, bitterness toward others, man-pleasing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forgiving others • Honesty with others about our sins
Unique role in God's purpose (Eph. 1:9,10; 2:10)	Significance.	Making unhealthy comparison to others. Vulnerability to career identity. Reactive to critique of performance or lack.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciate & support others in their ministries • Focused ministry involvement • Evaluate performance critique before the Lord - is it true? He loves me nonetheless.
Inheritance (Eph. 1:11,14)	Security in the next life.	Vulnerability to temporal security. Fear of death.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to take risks and even suffer. • Long-term investment in ministry, including material generosity.
Delivered From Sin Nature's Authority (ROM 6:6; Col. 2:11,12)	Freedom from sin's control.	No deep seated change or growth in our lives, superficial view of sin, helplessness and fatalism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness about your besetting sins • Faithful, patient persistence as we cooperate with God's strategy for change • Other-centered focus in spite of besetting sins
Delivered From Satan's Authority (Eph. 1:20,21; 2:6; Col. 2:10,15;)	Freedom from demonic control.	Vulnerability to temptation; accusation, the kosmos, oppression. Fear & superstition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refusal to cave in & quit • Following God's will • Prayer warfare
Given one or more gifts and a role in the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:7,14-18)	Value and purpose.	Comparing myself to others, lack of zeal, jealousy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pray for their success. • Look for ways to encourage others. • Focus on using your own gifting.

This chart emphasizes the importance of knowing how to appropriate your new identity . . .

Pulling the parts together – The “Appropriating Our New Identity” Worksheet

At the beginning of this lecture we said that our new identity is a meaty truth. Learning to appropriate your new identity (“know,” “consider,” “present”) is a concept you will need to “chew” on for a while. This worksheet is one practical way to apply what you’ve learned to your life this week!

Tips on using this worksheet

- Each of the “boxes” below corresponds to a box on the diagram depicting “a biblical approach to character change” covered earlier in this lecture.
- This approach is not a formula that works the same way with every person in every situation. God’s dealings with you will look different than his work with someone else, even if you both are working through similar issues! The steps below are simply a starting point.
- We recommend using a journal to record your thoughts. It is difficult to think through all of the elements of knowing, considering, and presenting without writing them down.
- Always start by turning to God and asking for illumination and guidance.

Box A: Identify wrong actions, feelings, attitudes, etc.

- What area does God want to change in your life? What is he *intent* on changing? No doubt there are many areas he needs to work on, but what do you sense he is prioritizing? Do your best to write a description of this area. What “symptoms” (actions, thoughts, words, attitudes, feelings) are most consistently tied to this problem area?
- The Bible emphasizes what God prioritizes. As we saw earlier in the course, when the Bible talks about growing spiritually it emphasizes three areas: moral transformation, serving love, and sound doctrine. The area God is addressing in your life will often fall in one of these three categories.

Box B: Identify wrong beliefs about yourself that drive the “symptoms” above

- Are there ways you view yourself that contradict what God says is true of you? Which of these false views of yourself drive the symptoms above? Specifically think of ways that you view yourself that lead to the wrong attitudes, feelings, and actions you are falling into.
- If you can’t easily identify what the underlying identity issues are, consider using the “New Identity Worksheet.” Look at the column entitled: SYMPTOMS OF NOT “KNOWING”, “CONSIDERING”, AND/OR “PRESENTING.” When you find symptoms similar to yours, look to the far left of that row and find the corresponding identity truth. Are you regularly reminding yourself of this aspect of your new identity?
- Review the elements of your new identity listed in *Walking in Victory*. Do you see something God says is true of you that you refuse to believe?
- Consider asking a mature Christian to help you uncover lies you may believe about yourself.
- Throughout this process, pray for insight and be sensitive to the Spirit’s leading.

Box C: Discover what God says is true about you based on your new identity

- Review the lists of identity truths in *Walking In Victory*, by Dennis McCallum (pp. 24,25) and *Victory Over The Darkness* by Neil Anderson (pp. 45-47, 57-59).
- You may find it helpful to write out relevant passages and paraphrase what they say about how God views you.
- Spend time in prayer affirming with God that you believe what He says is true. Acknowledge your struggle, yet affirm who He is and that you trust His provisions in the specific areas you are struggling with.
- Feeling cynical? Tell God you are having a hard time trusting him and ask him to help you (Mark 9:24).

Box D: Present yourself to God

As you consider how to act consistently with your new identity, you may find it helpful to recall the three components of walking by the Spirit:

1. Set your mind on the things of the Spirit
2. Keep in step with the Spirit
3. Sow to the Spirit

When you “know” what God says about your new identity and “consider” it to be true of *you*, you are setting your mind on the things of the Spirit. This mental orientation is the foundation for right actions.

Focused on what God says is true of you, ask him to guide you (keep in step with the spirit) into the appropriate response/action.

Then expose yourself to ways God will empower you to step out and serve him (sow to the Spirit).

Write down the specific actions you intend to carry out. Remember the “resist and replace” principle. What actions and attitudes should you be resisting? What actions and attitudes should you be pursuing?

Conclusion (Box E):

Remember the “throwaway” kid? If, after 5 years, he is behaving and “feeling” like he really is your son and part of the family, it will be because he truly accepted the reality of his adoption and learned to live consistently with this new reality. But if, after 5 years, he is still picking pockets and rummaging through trash cans for food, you will have to conclude he never fully understood the implications of his adoption.

What will happen in your life? Will you embrace what God says is true of you and let these truths transform your life? God has made you a new creature. Our prayer is that you will increasingly know the joy and power of living out of your new identity.

When you confront a new sin area for the first time, you may need to prayerfully “know,” “consider,” and “present” several times in a very systematic and thorough way. Over time, though, as you learn to walk in the Spirit, you will move through this process more quickly with a deeper sense of dependence on God working through you.

Gradually, as your trust in God's view of you grows more and more, you will begin to see substantial (though usually not complete) victory in areas where you once repeatedly failed. This process of working through deep-seated issues may take years, but the outcome is worth it!

Memory Verses

Eph. 1:3-14 - Key new identity passage**

Col. 3:1-3 - Importance of setting mental focus on new Identity for sanctification (context)**

Rom. 6:6, 11, 13 - Know, Consider, Present**

Assignment

Read *Walking in Victory*, chapters 10-12 and complete the *Old Self vs. New Self* Assignment.

Week 4 Exam Review Guide

- **Be able to explain both aspects of our union with Christ (indwelling of Holy Spirit & new identity in Christ).**
- **Know why the new identity is so important for sanctification: identity precedes and affects behavior, *or* what I do will tend to flow from who I perceive myself to be.**
- **Know the 7 aspects of your new identity from the chart and what basic needs they meet.**