

Grace

Living testimonies from a pilgrim's journal.

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2006

Your old life is dead. Your new life, which is your real life – even though invisible to spectators – is with Christ in God. He is your life. When Christ (your real life, remember) shows up again on this earth, you'll show up, too – the real you, the glorious you. Meanwhile, be content with obscurity, like Christ.
(Colossians 3:3-4, The Message Bible)

I am convinced that life comes down to one issue – **identity**. And I have figured out what every crying baby born tries to say from the get-go: "WAH! WHO AM I? WAH! WHO AM I?!" ☺ And we all try real hard to answer this our first question. Growing up was awkward for me. Even now I there is some old programming and deceptive thoughts trying to convince me that something is still wrong with me. I became so excited a few years ago to begin seeing the truth of my new identity in Christ...to begin seeing that so **much more** happened through the cross in addition to forgiveness of my sins. You see, forgiveness opened the way for God to give me a new identity (a new nature) in His dear Son Jesus! *Much more having been justified by His blood, we shall be saved by His life (Romans 5:9-10)*. So, nothing is wrong with me! Finally...I'm free. Whew! I hope this newsletter affirms or encourages you in your freedom, too.

A GREAT TESTIMONY OF IDENTITY

Here is a recent email from a friend: *Gregg, what a wonderful time I had at lunch listening to you. I feel you're right... we should listen to our hearts to understand God's will in our lives. Since my retirement from a corporate culture in 2003, I have experienced a wonderful sense of freedom to simply be myself. This allows me to focus on God's blessings each day without fear of being ordinary. Praise God!*

A most wonderful quote I'll never forget: *I'm free to focus on God's blessings without fear of being ordinary!* Wow. I sense Jesus telling my friend, "Blessed are you, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:17).

THE GREATEST PRINCIPLE OF IDENTITY

Tony Evans, a pastor in Dallas, Texas, writes the following in his book *Freedom in Christ*: *If you have a heart that desperately desires to know and serve God, the place to begin is by understanding and believing the biblical truth of your identity in Christ. This is a watershed issue, one that determines whether you will live free in Christ or live as a slave of the world, the flesh, and the devil. I consider the truth about our identity in Christ to be THE greatest principle of Christian living in Scripture.*

THE GREATEST QUESTION ON IDENTITY

Dudley Hall (www.sclm.org) recently asked what I believe is the greatest question regarding identity: *Can a lily that blooms in the desert unseen by any human or animal, fulfill its destiny? In other words, is the value of something (including a person) in being or in being seen?* Think about that awhile. Humans will always strive to DO things to put on an identity to cover the shame and fear that come from being in Adam. This is an attempt to be seen as someone other people will accept. This is also a temptation to those who are in Christ. However, God tells us that we are already totally accepted in Christ (Ephesians 1:6), and that we are free to BE who He has made us to be (Galatians 5:1)...free from the bondage of having to rely on what others say...free to personally hear the truth from God.

THE GREATEST IDENTITY - JESUS

Immediately after Jesus identified with us by being baptized in the Jordan River, God the Father audibly spoke from heaven, "This is My Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Do you hear the precious loving focus on identity? The Father did not say, "I am pleased with My Son for all the good things He does and will do." God the Father is so pleased with His Son, unconditioned on what His Son does. Do you hear the Father say this about you, too? It's the gospel truth! And immediately after the Father spoke these words, Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness for 40 days and nights. And what did the devil attack? The very identity of Jesus! The devil first said, "If You are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread." That's the essence of the original lie in the Garden of Eden, i.e., "You can DO something to add to the identity God created you." So, what did Jesus do? Nothing. He simply stood in who God the Father said He was. With Christ in our hearts, we also are called to stand firm in His princely majesty.

In January and February, I had the opportunity to help teach a 10-hour GraceLife Conference at Christ Life Ministries in Hendersonville, NC and a conference at Grace Life Fellowship Church in Asheville, NC. During this time, I also shared living truths with 10 families in discipleship counseling sessions. In each case, identity was the underlying heart issue where transformation and healing start. I believe that trying to minister at any other level may only address symptoms.

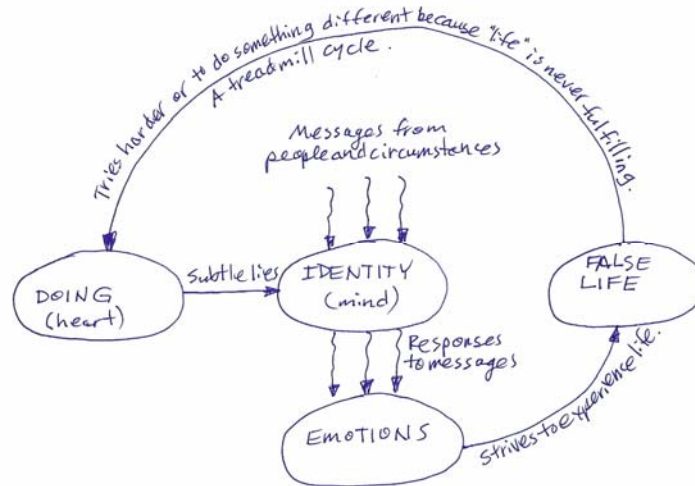
Next GraceLife Conference in Simpsonville, SC April 7-8!

On the back are two schematics (from the engineering mind-set with which God has wired me ☺) that present key truths about identity.

Who I am in Christ is the *security* of my identity (nature). However, *who Christ is in me* is the *source* of my identity. It is Christ's eternal life in me that enlivens me to experience my true identity in Him. There are only two identities in the world...a person is either *in Christ* or *in Adam* (Romans 5:12-21). Below is a comparison of these two identities through the grid of my engineering mind ☺.

IN ADAM

- Starting point:** You are born separated from God...therefore there is no life source to start from.
- Mode of operation:** With no life source, your only choice is to DO things to establish an identity in a subtly desperate search for "life."
- Identity:** Identity is conceived in the mind by messages received from people and circumstances based on how well you DO.
- Emotions:** Emotions are indicators of how well or how poorly you are DOING based on messages from people and circumstances.
- Life:** Because true life is in God, and you are separated from God, you never really achieve a fulfilled life.
- Fate:** Because you are never fulfilled, you try harder or try something different to revise your idea of identity in hopes it will lead to life.
- Goal:** You continually try to improve what you DO in order to prove to yourself and to the world that you have worth.
- Attitude:** You strive for acceptance, often characterized by conflict and frustration because it is a never-ending treadmill cycle.
- Motto:** If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. It's all about you.



IN CHRIST

- Starting point:** The cross. You are re-born in Christ through His death, burial, and resurrection...you start with Christ's life as your life!
- Mode of operation:** You operate from the life of Christ in you. However, you can still be tempted to live *as if* you were lifeless in Adam.
- Identity:** Your identity is based on what Christ has DONE, not on what you can DO. You have been given the very nature of Christ!
- Emotions:** Emotions are God's gifts for you to entrust to Him for revealing the root issues causing the emotions.
- Life:** Christ's life is truth revealed to you and is a never-ending source of living waters flowing through you and overflowing your life!
- Fate:** You are already seated in the heavenlies in Jesus! However, you can still be tempted to depend on worldly measures of success.
- Goal:** You yearn to manifest God's glory (to know Christ), whether or not anyone acknowledges you.
- Attitude:** You rest in God's total acceptance of you. You dearly want those who are in Adam to know this peace of Christ.
- Motto:** Christ is your victory, no matter what people, circumstances, or feelings tell you. You are willing to die for those who are in Adam.

