

LIFE WITH GOD IN RECOVERY – Accepting our New Identity

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.
(Galatians 2:20 NKJV)

How do we identify ourselves? Our identity or how we choose to explain ourselves is usually expressed in ways we see ourselves. Sometimes we identify ourselves by our biological parents; the family in which we were raised; the country or town in which we live or lived; the schools we attended; the church and organizations we belonged to; the friends we made along the way; the work we were, or still are, involved in; our relationship to our spouse; our relationship to our children etc. etc. Do any of these truly explain the complex persons we are? What if we were to identify ourselves as God intends: ***“I am beautifully and wonderfully made in God’s image.” God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created man in his own image in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*** (Genesis 1:26-27)

What happens when some of our usual identification points are marred by events which were totally out of our control or by choices we have made? One or both of our parents may have abandoned us. Our family of origin may have been dysfunctional and, because of their lack of care, our basic needs were not met. We carry painful memories from the schools we attended or the churches or organizations we belonged to. Our friends may have let us down or encouraged us along a path which lead to a destructive lifestyle. We may have had a detrimental effect on someone else’s life. We may have abandoned our spouse or they may have left us. Our children may have suffered from our wrong choices or they may be causing us pain from their choices. How do we identify ourselves when one or more of these events have been present in our life? Do we hide in our addictions because who we are inside our heads is wrapped up in the painful way these events impacted us, or, have we chosen God’s path of acceptance and forgiveness of both ourselves and those who harmed us?

God is not surprised by anything that has taken place in our lives and He cares. King David wrote in Psalm 139:13-16, ***“For you created my inmost being you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”*** God knows all about each day of our lives to date. We can bring into His light all those things we are keeping in darkness because even darkness is as light to Him. When we accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as

payment for all the sins committed against us and by us we receive a new identity from God: New Creation in Christ ***Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*** (2 Cor. 5:17 NKJV)

Do we want to live today under our old identity of rejection, pain and shame, OR in our new identity given by Jesus where we are forgiven, healed, loved and accepted by God? Will we continue holding on to old ways of dealing with life as though we are a wreck even though the old is gone, or are we willing to choose to follow God’s good ways as we express the new creation that we are in Christ?

WHO I AM TODAY IN CHRIST

1. I am right with God, pure and holy, free from sin. (1 Cor. 1:30)
2. I am chosen, holy, and blameless before God. (Eph. 1:4)
3. Even though I was formerly darkness, now I am light in the Lord. (Eph. 5:8)
4. We are beloved sons and daughters of God. (John 1:12)
5. My body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who lives in me. (1 Cor. 6:19)
6. I am truly free because the Son has set me free. (John 8:36)

When thoughts of relapse enter our thinking, this choice for an identity has a significant impact on how we behave. If we let the things of the past continue to shape who we are, then we are clinging to our old self and at some point we are vulnerable to relapse. If we see ourselves as having to perform to some standard of religious activity to stay clean and sober then we are relying on ourselves rather than on God’s gift of grace. That way of behaving, even though it looks good on the outside, is also based on our old self and also makes us vulnerable to relapse.

The Bible states, ***“What actually took place is this: I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn’t work. So I quit being a “law man” so that I could be God’s man. Christ’s life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not “mine,” but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that. Is it not clear to you that to go back to that old rule-keeping, peer-pleasing religion would be an abandonment of everything personal and free in my relationship with God? I refuse to do that, to repudiate God’s grace. If a living relationship with God could come by rule-keeping, then Christ died unnecessarily.”***
(Galatians 2:19-21 MSG)

We are beloved sons and daughters of God. It pleases Him to support us and lead us into a life that is satisfying and pleasing. To take on our new identity we need to see ourselves as new creations free of all past offences that would hinder our new life in Christ. We don’t deserve it but God pours this grace on us. We need to see ourselves living in this generous grace of God when trying times come and receive the gifts that God is giving. We need to acknowledge that we can come to God and receive help so we can use new ways to deal with old temptations. We need to trust that God says He is able to complete in us what He has started.

Question for Reflection and Discussion

What difference does my relationship with Jesus Christ make in how I identify myself?