

Introduction to Biblical Counseling

How to Recover from Spiritual Identity Theft

Introduction: On February 1, 2003, the Space Shuttle, Columbia, disintegrated over Texas during re-entry into the earth's atmosphere with the loss of all seven crew members, shortly before it was scheduled to conclude its 28th mission. Of all of Columbia's debris that was scattered over Texas, Louisiana and Arkansas, the one thing officials wanted most to recover was the "black box" or flight recorder. By analyzing it, they hoped to determine what went wrong before it blew up.

God has designed a "flight recorder" called the heart (literally mind). All of life's events, thoughts and emotions are recorded there. Our task is to go inside the heart (core belief system) and determine what is working and what is not working and adjust or correct the beliefs which are not working for us. Usually what is not working well for us are our negative emotions that are coming from three generational effects of Adam and Eve's sin (Gen. 3:1-7).

Three major losses took place the moment Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate the fruit that He clearly told them not to eat. God warned them of the results if they did (Gen. 3:1-7). Satan instantly accomplished the biggest robbery in human history. By succeeding in getting them to sin, he stole their sense of personal worth, their purpose in life and their identity (guilt, shame, fear, unloved, rejected).

In the first century there were believers who attempted to get their identity validated by their association with certain people (I Cor. 1:12). God has restored the believer's true identity, not through other people, but through his relationship with Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21; Col. 3:3).

Consequences of Sin

- I. **Identify at least three major consequences of Adam's sin which can be seen in every person and in every culture.**
 - A. **Man lost his sense of personal worth and value. He now believes he is of little value apart from what he can do for himself or others.**
 1. Jesus addressed His disciples' worries about food and clothes and went directly to the heart of their fear, not being worth enough to God that He would take care of them.
 - a. Matt. 6:26, "Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?"

- b. Fear of lack of provision is usually rooted in a secret belief that you are not valued enough by God to be taken care of.
2. People create a great deal of conflict in life and relationships by trying to re-establish their own worth and value apart from God.
 3. Every culture has its own human system to attempt to restore or establish its own sense of worth and value.
 4. People have become performance-based in order to reestablish their own value. They think that what they do gives them their worth. Religious legalism is one such effort to earn worth and value. This is the very issue the Apostle Paul sought to address in the churches of Galatia.
 - a. Gal. 3:1-3, “You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? 2) This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? 3) Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”
 5. Fame or fortune never changes anything that is truly important like your relationship with your Father. The loss of fame or fortune also never changes anything that is truly important (Phil. 3:7-11).
 6. Many New Testament believers also struggled with their worth and identity although they had a relationship with God.
 - a. Disciples – Luke 22:24; Mark 9:4
 - b. Apostle Paul – I Corinthians 4:13
 - c. Timothy – 2 Timothy 1:6,7
 - d. Peter – Galatians 2:11, 12

B. Man lost his purpose and goal (direction) in life and became self-centered with an inner emptiness.

1. The Apostle Paul described this self-centeredness.
 - a. Eph. 2:1-3, “And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, 2) in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world (culture), according to the prince of the power of the air (Satan), of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. 3) Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature (birth) children of wrath, even as the rest.”
2. King Solomon in Ecclesiastes admitted that in spite of having everything, life felt empty and without purpose.
 - a. Eccl. 1:1-2, “The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king of Jerusalem. 2) ‘Vanity of vanities,’ says the Preacher, ‘Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.’”
3. Purposelessness is the foundation of boredom and total selfishness which can lead to mood altering addictions (porn, sex, drugs, alcohol, food, internet).

- C. Man also lost his identity. He still is an image bearer of God (Gen. 1:26) but his mind has distorted (confused) who he is and replaced it with a shame-based identity. When sin entered Adam and Eve's lives so did shame. They became sinners (Romans 3:23) with the core identity of shame, the emotional pain of what they had now become.

Shame Took Over

- II. A God created identity was replaced with a deep sense of shame in the core belief system of the heart (Gen. 3:7-10).

A. Shame is the painful belief that you are a defective human being.

1. Guilt is the result of what you have done. "You have failed to rake up all the leaves that I told you to do." (action)
2. Shame is the result of being attacked for who you are. "You are a lazy, no good person that can't do anything right." (identity)

B. Shame attacks who you are.

Feelings of Shame

I am defective	I am broken
I am a mistake	I am flawed
I am dirty	I am soiled
I am not good enough	I am useless
I am inept	I am unwanted
I am unloved	I am not appreciated
I am not cherished	I deserve to be abandoned
I deserve to be forgotten	I deserve to be left out
I am weak	I am small
I am feeble	I am puny
I am bad	I am evil
I am awful	I am dreadful
I am despicable	I am pitiful
I am contemptible	I am insignificant
I am nothing	I am worthless
I am invisible	I am unnoticed
I am empty	I deserve criticism
I deserve condemnation	I deserve disapproval
I feel ashamed	I feel embarrassed
I feel humiliated	I feel dishonored

C. Shame affects (controls) how you respond to life.

1. You are unable to respond to circumstances around you because you may be emotionally frozen or paralyzed at the time hurts were inflicted.
 - a. You cannot verbally protect yourself when being unjustly accused.
 - b. You cannot remove yourself from a difficult situation because you feel immobilized; stuck emotionally and physically.
 - c. You get angry at yourself for not being able to stand up for yourself.
2. You feel drained of energy and just crumble when you are being shamefully attacked therefore feeling weak, small and powerless.
3. You become an avoider and feel a need to escape when you are overwhelmed. With a desire to withdraw from people, you will seek out secluded, secure places so no one will see your shame.
4. You develop elaborate masks to cover your devalued self.
 - a. You may hide behind actions such as a constantly smiling face, pleasing others, appearing self-confident and in control.
 - b. You have a core belief that others would despise you if they saw the “real devalued self” you believe is your true self.
 - c. You fear you would be rejected if people saw through your self-defense masks into your true self.
 - d. You focus on hiding your secrets and then withdraw both physically and emotionally.
 - 1) Secrets are the wind that drives the sails of shame.
 - 2) God never gives grace, energy or encouragement for secrets. Jesus’ ministry and life was based on truth and grace (John 1:14). God desires truth in the inner most part of life (Psalm 51:6) and expects that truth and reality to be evident outwardly in our hearts.
5. Perfectionism becomes your defense lest others discover your perceived flaws (loss of identity) and reject and abandon you.
 - a. You believe that if you never make mistakes you can keep from re-feeling your shame.
 - b. You face a trap between being human and being perfect. Humans do make mistakes.
 - c. You will deny, blame shift and re-write history in order to avoid acknowledging You fall short in anything.
 - d. As a black and white thinker, you quickly decide if you can do a task perfectly and if not, you do not do it at all.
6. With a shame base and loss of a healthy identity, you become critical of others and blame them for your own behavior.
 - a. Being hyper-critical of yourself, you become critical of everyone else.

- b. You look for weaknesses or flaws in others to distract them from seeing flaws in you.
 - c. Shaming others makes you feel superior temporarily. Putting shame on others allows you to fight the shame externally rather than internally.
 - d. Shaming others through criticism temporarily keeps you from feeling your own inferiority and perceived loss of value.
 - e. By shaming and blaming others, you are able to shift the shame off of yourself and on to others, thus avoiding any personal responsibility for your own attitudes and actions.
7. Rage, not anger, is another response to being shamed.
- a. Attack first is a defense against being criticized by another supposed attacker.
 - b. As the anger builds you overreact to any slights that are perceived as being an attack.
 - c. Those who combine their deep sense of shame with rage often result in being verbally and physically abusive.
 - d. By attacking the personalities of others you are able to protect and defend your own fragile identity.
8. Denial is another method of defense against the presence of shame.
- a. You lie to yourself that you even have any shame and stay away from it.
 - b. Denial helps you to stay away from painful emotions.
 - c. Avoiding the feelings of shame prevents discovering where it is coming from and dealing with it.
9. You have a core belief that you should not even exist. You repeatedly say, "Sorry" for the slightest thing you think you've done wrong or for inconveniencing anyone.
10. People attempt to find (or recover) their identity through sports, clothes, wealth, looks, possessions, power, position or accomplishments, etc. First century believers who failed to fully understand their restored identity through their relationship to Christ still persisted in finding their identity by associating with certain religious leaders and groups.
- a. I Cor. 1:12, "Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, 'I am of Paul,' and 'I of Apollos,' and 'I of Cephas,' and 'I of Christ.'"

b. DRAWING



Apollos



Cephas, Paul



Christ

11. The loss of a Godly identity explains much of the bazaar cultural extremes in clothes, behavior and body markings (tattoos).
12. You live in fear of abandonment. You think healthy people believe the lie that you are bad and therefore they will ultimately abandon you. Result: you become a chameleon and are whatever you think others want you to be so they will not reject you. You take care of everyone else and neglect yourself physically, emotionally and spiritually.
13. Self-sabotage results in undermining any change of success or happiness because you do not think you deserve it. Shame that is internalized invites failure.
14. Lost identity resulting in feelings of shame can result in addictive behaviors that promise a temporary relief from internal pain and emptiness.
 - a. Addictive behavior can include shopping, drugs, alcohol, sex, internet, food, work, relationships, pornography, material possessions, gambling, T.V., music and {co-}dependent relationships
15. Shame-based people often form relationships with controllers who use shame to overly criticize, push hot buttons designed to hurt, point out mistakes, whether real or imagined, to prove superiority and attack independence, intelligence, common sense and sanity. They are always sending the message, "There is something wrong with you."
 - a. These attacks result in your forming internal thoughts such as:
 - 1) 'I can't do anything right.'
 - 2) 'I can't please anyone.'
 - 3) 'I'm inadequate.'
 - 4) 'I should stop trying.'
 - 5) 'I must perform well before I can be accepted.'
16. Shame prevents our ability to distinguish between a value statement and an observation (i.e. observation statement: "Do you think you need to clean off your desk a little?")
 - a. Value statement: Reaction: "You don't think I can keep my desk clean."
 - b. Clarification of the observation: "I am only making a suggestion; I'm not attacking your character or ability."
 - c. Shame takes all suggestions and observations as a personal attack on their skill level, education, talents, worth or value.

D. God has re-established the believer's identity in relationship to who he is in Christ.

1. Gal. 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and 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."
2. Phil. 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

3. Col. 3:3, "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

What do you struggle with the most; loss of worth, purpose or identity?
 How has it impacted your life? What have you done up to this point to deal with it?
 Who has been the most helpful to you and how did they help you?

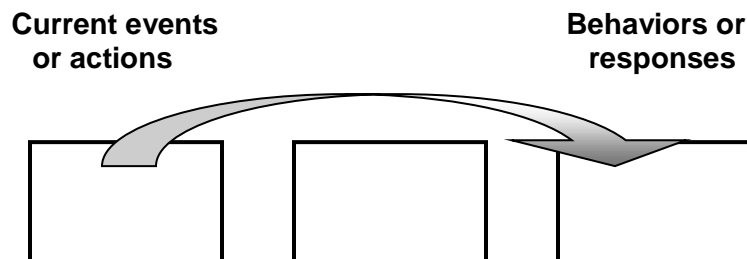
- E. **One of the tasks of a biblical counselor (discipler) is to lead the believer to change his core beliefs in these three areas: his value, purpose and identity. This will involve changing his core beliefs (thoughts) of who he thinks he is (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 2:1-10).**

Damaged Core Belief System

- III. **Understand the damage that took place in our core belief system (the heart) as a result of the presence of a generational sin nature (I Cor. 15:21, 22).**

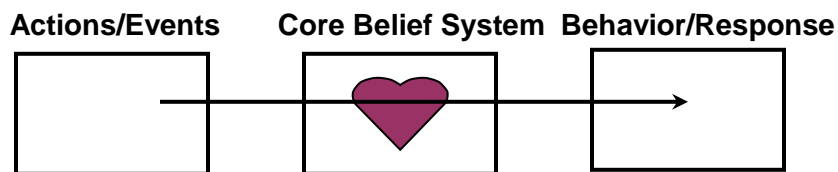
- A. **Realize the negative emotions that resulted from the loss of a God designed identity can control behavior.**

1. You may think that behavior and responses are direct results of some action of another (offense) or an event (car accident). We think that an event just happens and we respond.



2. In reality, present events or actions of others first go through our core belief system that the Scripture defines as the heart. They reveal what is already there.

DRAWING:



(Black Box)

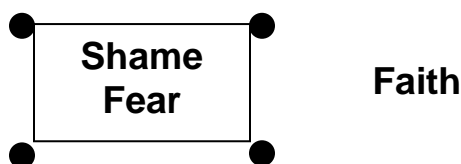
- a. Prov. 4:23, "Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it spring the issues of life."
- b. Prov. 23:7, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."

B. Sadly, negative emotions stemming from a loss of identity can still manage your life and relationships more than positive emotions.

1. Negative emotions can control your thoughts, feelings, goals, behaviors, relationships, spirituality, ministry, finances or careers.
 - a. A man in his early forties went to seminary. While standing outside the administration building ready to enter his first class, he said to himself, "I'm going to prove to my dad I'm not stupid" (identity crisis). Three years later he graduated with honors. The reality is that his dad had been dead for ten years. His father's criticism and the negative identity of being called stupid controlled him all his life.
2. Many people work hard to disprove the lie they believe about themselves, but no amount of achievement changes that lie embedded in their belief system. Another attempted solution is just to work harder to disprove them.
3. But you can still function in life although you're emotionally handicapped with a negative identity.

C. The loss of identity can not only manage your life and relationships but can define your sphere of safety, security, comfort and ministry. These spheres of comfort that we create to protect any further loss of identity are called "comfort zones."

1. Comfort zones, or restrictive spheres of our lives, are usually defined by fear and/or lies we believe about ourselves, others and/or God. They are not defined by our faith. The emotion of shame can also create a comfort zone to protect us from being exposed for who we are.



2. Comfort zones defined by fear and shame prevent at least three things:
 - a. They prevent you from enjoying a better quality of life in Christ.
 - 1) Joshua had to step out of his comfort zone of fear to cross the Jordan River in full flood stage in order to enjoy the benefits of the land of Canaan.
 - a) Josh. 3:13, "It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap."

- 2) Peter had to step out of the security of the boat in order to be able to walk on the water to come to Jesus (Matt. 14:28,29).

How do you think your quality of life would be improved if it was not controlled or limited by fear?

- b. A negative identity can hinder you from pleasing God because it is based on fear, not faith and freedom of who you are. It takes an expression of faith to please God.
- 1) Heb. 11:6 “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him.” (Those who seek Him outside of their fear zone.)
 - 2) The greatest discovery you can make is that nothing is impossible, especially if God wants you to do it.
 - a) Luke 1:37 “For nothing will be impossible with God.”
 - b) Mark 10:27, “Looking at them, Jesus said, ‘With people it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.’”
 - c) Phil. 4:13, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”
 - 3) Scripture is designed to lead you by faith out of shame-based fear-control to faith-control which is evidenced by self-control (Gal. 5:23). The ninth fruit of the Holy Spirit is self-control, not control of people, places or things. People who try to control these three do so out of fear, guilt or shame.
 - a) One of the reasons God designs problems is to stretch your faith and to get you out of your shame-based fear zones into the realm of faith and blessing.
 - (1) James 1:2-3, “Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, (3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance.”
 - (2) Deuteronomy 8:16, “...who fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end.”
 - 4) All of the men and women of faith listed in Hebrews 11 had to walk out of a zone of fear into a sphere of faith that had potential loss, risk and pain for them – all “by faith”.

In the past, what have you felt God prompting you to do, but because it was out of your comfort zone you chose not to do it? What did it take to get you out of your comfort zone? What were the benefits of this brave step?

D. But God came into the cage to take us out.

1. 2 Cor. 5:21, “For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”
2. We are now out of the cage but our brain is still in the cage.
 - a. Rom 12:2, “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think *of himself* more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.”

E. When we become believers, God restores our lost identity through our relationship with Christ.

Restored Identity

IV. What does a spiritually restored identity look like? God uses physical word pictures to explain spiritual realities. Let’s answer the question, “Who am I?”

A. I am a saint (Eph. 1:1).

1. 60 times in the New Testament believers were called saints while they were still alive and they did not need to wait 100 years for a religious body to declare them saints.
 - a. Eph. 1:1, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus.”
 - b. I Cor. 1:2
 - c. Phil. 1:1
 - d. Col. 1:2
2. The word “saint” (*hagiois*) is the word “holy” which has the root meaning of “separated” (or dedicated to). You are called to be separated from others to God, not by human effort but by His grace. You are holy having been washed clean by the blood of Christ (I Cor. 6:11) and now you are dedicated to God for special use (Rom.12:1). Believers were first called “saints” in the book of Acts (9:13).
3. God alone makes saints! No churches, religious leaders or human rituals make a saint, no miracles have to be performed, nor are you required to possess exceptional holiness. All believers are called saints by God without any extraordinary actions apart from trusting Christ as personal Savior.
4. Saints do have personal problems and are not perfect. The believers in Corinth were referred to by God as “saints” even though there were quarrels (1 Cor. 1:11), selfishness (3:1-3), incest (5:1), suing each other in court (6:1), marital problems (7:1-16), idolatry (10:14), gluttony and drunkenness (11:17, 18).
5. No believer who was made a saint through personal faith in Christ was ever meant to be prayed to in order to request a favor from God. You can go directly

to God. “There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (I Tim. 2:5).

6. You can ask others to pray for you (Eph. 6:18-20) but we are never instructed to pray to others (fellow saints) on our behalf.

B. I am a priest (I Peter 2:9).

1. The Old Testament priests totally failed God. So in the New Testament God made every believer a priest, instead of just a special group.
2. Yes, you are designated a priest by God without acquiring any formal religious education or ordination. In God’s spiritual priesthood, both men and women are not only priests; they are *holy* priests.
 - a. I Peter 2:9, “But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light:”
 - b. I Peter 1:15,16, “but as He who called you *is* holy, you also be holy in all *your* conduct, ¹⁶ because it is written, “*Be holy, for I am holy.*”
3. You are a “royal priest” yourself (I Peter 2:9) royal because Jesus is King. You do not need a priest, preacher, rabbi or mullah to pray for you. As a priest, you can skip the “middle man” and go directly to God (I Tim. 2:5). God has authorized you to go directly into His presence with bold confidence (Heb. 4:14-16) because He is the One who appointed you a priest in the first place.
4. The Christian church in Rome did not start calling ministers priests until the second century because they wanted the special religious trappings of the Old Testament priests and the pagan priests.

C. I am a holy temple (I Cor. 3:16).

1. Instead of a tabernacle or physical temple, God chose to live in us instead of a building made with human hands.
2. Your body is God’s holy residence here on earth. Almighty God has chosen (Col. 3:12; I Thess. 1:4) to come live inside of you through His Holy Spirit.
 - a. 1 Corinthians 3:16, “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?”
3. When Saul (later renamed Paul) was beating and killing Christians, Jesus abruptly stopped him with a bright light and asked him, “Why are you persecuting Me?” Jesus did not say, “Why are you persecuting Christians?” (Acts 9:4, 5). This is the first glimpse God gave Saul into the great doctrine that Christ lives in believers; therefore, any offense against a believer is directly felt by Jesus Himself. He lives in you!!!

4. People may refer to their center of religious activity as a temple, but God does not live in buildings made of stones, cement, brick etc. (Acts 7:48)). Your body is His temple (I Cor. 6:19) which illustrates just how special He thinks you are. Your body, not a building, is a sacred place!
 - a. Because your body belongs to God, He clearly tells you not to engage in immoral sexual activity inside or outside of marriage (I Cor. 6:15-20) because you involve Him in it.
5. You are a living stone chosen to be part of a spiritual house. You are to offer up sacrifices of praise and adoration, not rituals or sacrifices of animals to gain God's favor (I Peter 2:5).

D. I am God's child now (I John 3:1, 2).

1. When you confessed Jesus as your Lord (Rom. 10: 9-10), God gave you the right or authority to become His child here and now! (John 1:12; I John 3:1, 2)
 - a. With Christ in your life, you can know now (not guess, hope, wish) that you have eternal life (I John 5:13).
 - 1) 1 John 5:13, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue* to believe in the name of the Son of God.
 - 2) Only believers have an assurance of eternal life with God. Muslims and others do not.
 - b. Many religious groups say you cannot know for sure you have everlasting life. One of their reasons for this untruth is that they want to control you and force you to stay in their system for the sake of their power and control and your money. If you are kept guessing, you will be kept off balance and dependent on them. You will become a religious performer.
 - c. Your assurance of salvation rests squarely and sufficiently on the direct promises that God has made to you and not on your performance as a saint (Gal. 3:1-3; I John 1: 9). It is not a matter of your good outweighing your bad. It is totally a matter of God's grace wiping out your bad altogether (Eph. 2; 8, 9).
2. No one is born into God's family by natural birth. Being born into a religious family does not make you His child! Notice the apostle John said that by receiving Jesus as your Lord and Savior you "become" a child of God implying you were not one before (John 3:3).
 - a. John 3:3, "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'"
3. Through His Spirit God Himself communicates to your spirit that you are right now (not are becoming) a child of God (Rom. 8:16).

- a. Romans 8:16, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,"
4. As an adopted child (Eph. 1:5) you are free to affectionately call your heavenly Father, "Daddy" because God placed His Spirit of sonship (lit. placing as a son) into your heart (Gal. 4:6).
- a. Galatians 4:6, "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"
 - b. Abba is used by children in addressing their father. It is very appropriate to equate "Abba" with the English word, "Daddy." Jesus also used this word to address His Father (Mark 14:36).
 - c. "Sonship" is also translated "adopted." You are placed in the family with all rights and privileges as a son or daughter (Eph.1:5).
- 1) Ephesians 1:5, "having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will..."
5. As a son or daughter you are an heir to all that God has (Rom. 8:17; Gal. 4:7). You may not experience this reality here on earth but you will experience it forever with Him in eternity.
- a. Galatians 4:7, "Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."
6. All that Jesus is going to receive for eternity He is going to share with you equally because you are not just an heir, you are a fellow heir with Christ (Rom. 8:16, 17).
- a. Romans 8:16-17, " The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17) and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together."
 - b. Just as in a family, children inherit their parents' estate, each child is an heir and the kids together are co-heirs (equal heirs). You receive all the spiritual blessings (benefits) (Eph. 1:3) now and you will share in all the future riches of God's kingdom (John 17:24). You may have to suffer now like Jesus did, but that suffering will be nothing compared to the riches you will enjoy forever (Heb. 12:2).
7. You belong to a huge family of born again brothers and sisters all around the world (Heb. 3:1).

E. I have a new citizenship (Phil. 3:20).

1. Because you belong to God's family, you are right now a legalized citizen of heaven where there are no illegals. You are not abandoned, alone or outcast. You totally belong and have full citizenship in heaven (Eph. 2:19; Phil. 3:20).

- a. Ephesians 2:19, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, “
2. You not only have a permanent, irrevocable citizenship in Heaven, but you have a permanent place, especially prepared just for you (John 14:1-6). Since you are a citizen of heaven you may well feel like an alien, stranger or pilgrim here on earth (I Peter 2:11). There are no illegitimates in heaven.

F. I am an important member of Christ’s body on earth (Eph. 1:22, 23).

1. His ‘body’ refers to the universal church which is not a building but is made up of all Christians.
2. Just as every part of the body is important and interconnected, so you are a valuable part of Christ’s body and spiritually connected to all believers (Col. 1:18, 22, 24).
 - a. This connection does not depend on church membership. There was no such thing as local church membership in the first century as membership is viewed today. There were local churches, but they were made up of believers who already belonged to the universal church of God.
 - b. It is important to be associated with a Bible believing church but that local membership has absolutely nothing to do with you being connected to the Lord Jesus Christ. Your connection is a result of faith in His death, burial and resurrection and receiving His pardon for your sin (Rom. 10:9,10; Rom. 6;23).
3. This word picture of a body is designed to illustrate just how important you are and how connected you are to other believers whether they acknowledge it or not (I Cor. 12:12-27).
 - a. 1 Corinthians 12: 27, “Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.”

G. I am the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13) and the light of the world (Matt. 5:14).

1. You can have an impact on your world.
 - a. Matthew 5:13, “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.”
 - b. Matthew 5:14, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.”
 - c. Acts 17:6b, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.”
2. Your life, characterized by practical holiness, will create curiosity in others as they observe your Christ-like character. They will ask why you are different.

- a. 1 Peter 3:15-16, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; ¹⁶ having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.”
3. As you create curiosity in those around you (like salt flavors food), you will be able to shine forth like a bright light into their darkened lives devoid of purpose and the knowledge of their identity (I Thess. 5:5). God has chosen you to explain the gospel and shine the light of truth and hope into a dark and hopeless society (John 3:19).
 - a. Eph. 5:8, “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.”
 - b. 1 Thessalonians 5:5, “You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness.”
 - c. You are called to live a Spirit-controlled life so that others will see your love in action and glorify God (Matt. 14:15-16; I Peter 2:11-12).
 4. Your godly influence will also act as a preservative (like salt) to slow down the moral decay in the world around you (Eph. 5:11-13).

H. I am an ambassador for Christ (2 Cor. 5:20).

1. Just as world leaders appoint men and women to speak on their behalf in foreign countries, God, the King of kings, has appointed you as a citizen of heaven (Phil. 3:20) to represent Him on earth as His ambassador (2 Cor. 5:20).
 - a. 2 Corinthians 5:20, “Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.”
2. People have greatly offended God (Rom. 3:23) but He has allowed His only Son to be punished for earthlings’ sins (2 Cor. 5:21). He has given you an assignment as His ambassador to offer to an offending world (Rom. 3:23) an opportunity to be reconciled to an offended God (2 Cor. 5:10). You are the one who will offer a pathway to peace that goes through the cross of Christ (John 14:27).
 - a. Explain to people that God has reconciled earthlings (us) to Himself (2 Cor. 5:18).
 - b. His Son has paid the price that God demanded to bring reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19, 21).
 - c. Now God will not demand payment for their sin debt because Jesus paid the bill and it will not be on their record as due any longer (2 Cor. 5:19) if they receive the gift of salvation.
 - d. Your task is to plead with people to accept His offer of the free gift of salvation (Rom. 6:23) and then be reconciled to Him (2 Cor. 5:20).

3. As an ambassador of God you may be rejected or even abused (Eph. 6:19, 20), but you will reap incredible rewards for your faithful representation (2 Tim. 4:7, 8).

I. I am a masterpiece created by God (Eph. 2:10).

1. God is at work inside of you, where He lives, creating a beautiful masterpiece, a new you (Eph. 2:10; Phil. 1:6). Just like a cocoon hides the beauty of the butterfly so your body hides the real you designed by God.
 - a. Ephesians 2:10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."
2. When you enter eternity, you will leave the body (cocoon) behind and the real you, like a gorgeous Monarch butterfly, will be fully transformed (1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 Cor. 15:50-52). You put your faith in Christ and He does the transforming.
3. You are wonderfully designed for the purpose of doing good deeds for God's glory. You don't do good works to earn God's favor but to express your gratefulness for His mercy (Titus 2:14; 3:5, 8).
 - a. Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service.*"

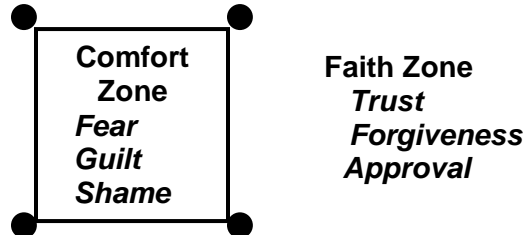
J. I am totally safe (Col. 3:3).

1. Nothing can change or destroy the new you in Christ. The old self has died and the new you has been raised with Christ (Rom. 6:3-8). Regardless what people have done or will do to you (Col. 3:3), the new you is securely concealed in Christ who is in God.
 - a. Colossians 3:3, "For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God."
2. From your position of security, you now can focus your thoughts on the same issues and priorities that God has (Col. 3:1).
 - a. Colossians 3:1, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God."
 - b. Matt. 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."
3. You can adjust your concentration from the things (issues) on earth that are temporary to those things that last forever (2 Cor. 4:18).
 - a. 2 Corinthians 4:18, "...while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen *are* temporary, but the things which are not seen *are* eternal."

4. You will fulfill what is in your circle of responsibility here in time (Rom. 12:18), but you will live with a constant mental focus on the person of Christ, His priorities and His plans for you (Col. 3:2).
 - a. Colossians 3:2, "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth."
 - b. Matthew 28:19-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age. Amen."

5. You will enjoy your secure place while you look with anticipation to the physical return of Christ who will snatch you up to Himself to be with Him and reign with Him forever (I Thess. 4:13-18).
 - a. 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18, "Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. ¹⁸ Therefore comfort one another with these words."

6. You can leave your comfort zone of fear and step into the faith zone of blessing (Heb. 11:6). True, you can be hurt in the faith zone (II Tim. 3:12; I Peter 2:21) but a wealth of blessings will be yours forever when you go to be with Him (II Tim. 4:7,8).



V. This is who I am.

- A. My true identity has been restored in Christ (Phil. 1:21).
- B. I am a saint (Eph. 1:1).
- C. I am a priest, a royal one at that (I Peter 2:9).
- D. I am a holy temple that God resides in (I Cor. 3:16).
- E. I am God's child right now (I John 3:1, 2).
- F. I am a part of Christ's body (the universal church here on earth) (Eph. 1:22, 23).
- G. I am the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13) and the light of the world (Matt. 5:14).
- H. I am Christ's ambassador here on earth (2 Cor. 5:20).
- I. I am a beautiful work of art, a masterpiece (Eph. 2:10).
- J. I am totally safe and secure in Christ (Col. 3:3).

Correct the Identity

VI. How can you correct your feelings if they do not agree with what God says is true about you?

A. Admit (acknowledge) any feelings that do not agree with what God says about you.

1. "I don't know who I am."
2. "I'm anything but a saint."
3. "I'm not trained or religious enough to be a priest."
4. "I'm the last person God would want to live in."
5. "I rarely ever go to church or feel connected to a church."
6. "I've not lived a life that would stop any evil around me and no one would ever want to look to me for any guidance."
7. "I can't be a representative of Christ here the way I've lived."
8. "I feel like I'm not worth much."
9. "I'm scared to death and very insecure."

B. Discover the source of these thoughts.

1. In prayer give yourself freedom to feel these negative thoughts, then ask the Lord where they came from and wait for an answer.
 - a. "Lord, I don't feel that I am worth much. Would You please reveal to me where that feeling is coming from?"

C. Look for the wounds (hurts) you may have experienced earlier or currently in life that have contributed to these negative thoughts.

1. "Lord, I've come to realize I don't think much of myself even after You have told me who I am. I see now that my dad was constantly critical of me and put me down often."
2. There may be many people who have hurt you so make a list of who they are and what they said or did.
3. Whether they hurt you intentionally or unintentionally, the hurt is the same.
4. There are at least two categories of wounds: First, the things that were done to you verbally or physically. Second, the things that you needed (love, security, validation) and were not given to you.

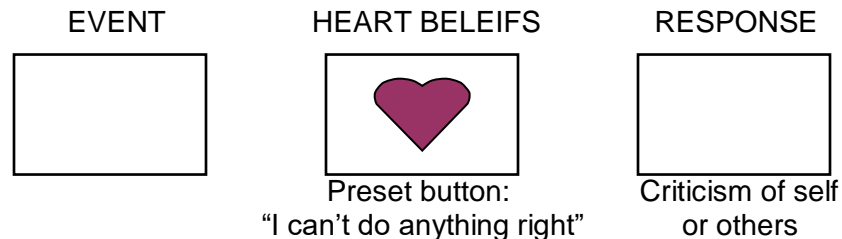
D. Forgive the persons who caused those wounds.

1. First identify the person(s) specifically.
2. Next, list the wounds without excusing them or explaining them away.

3. In prayer tell the Lord who they are and what they did or failed to do. Be honest and name their specific actions that inflicted hurt.
4. Now send them and their sin over to the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a. The word, “forgive,” is made up of two words (“to send,” and “away.” Lit. “to send away”).
 - b. Picture in your mind sending the offender(s) and his sin over to the Lord Jesus as you pray.
 - 1) “Lord, I acknowledge my dad was critical of me and never complimented me. That hurt! I now forgive my dad by sending him and his sin over to You, Lord Jesus, and I release him to you.”

E. Identify and renounce the lies that were inserted at the time of the sin (hurt, offense) and replace them with the truth.

1. The offenses were the wounds. The lies were inserted into your thinking at the time of the offense.
 - a. Your mother (offender) criticized everything you did. The lie injected in your mind was “I can never do anything right.”
 - b. These are like preset on your computer. When a difficult time comes into your life you {default} (click on) to your preset ways of thinking and acting and your response always remains the same.



2. Once the lies (presets) have been identified, they must be renounced (rejected, disowned) and replaced with truth. It is like you have to push the reset button and change the way you think to truth and reality.
 - a. “Lord, I have forgiven my dad for his criticism and failing to praise or affirm me as a kid. I also realize my dad intentionally or unintentionally inserted the lies that :
 - 1) “I can’t do anything right.”
 - 2) “I can’t please anyone.”
 - 3) “I’m inadequate.”
 - 4) “I should stop trying.”
 - 5) “I must perform well before I can be accepted.”

"I now renounce (disown) these as lies! If there is any evil influence behind these lies I command it to see the blood of Christ (Rev. 12:11) and go!"

- b. You may have to reset (change) your entire way of thinking and return to the original factory settings as described in God's Word.
3. Now, affirm aloud the truth.
 - a. "I now affirm that I can do anything that God expects of me through Christ who gives me the strength to do it" (Phil. 4:13).
 - b. "I now affirm I can live in a way that does please God" (I Cor. 7:32).
 - c. "I am totally adequate in my relationship with Christ."
 - d. "I do not have to perform to be liked, I am totally accepted in Christ and I now will live my life in appreciation for what God has done for me instead of performing to get God to accept me" (Rom. 12:1).
 - e. "I now choose to focus on the truth that God has revealed to me instead of the lies that have managed my life for years"(John 8:32).

F. Confess and receive forgiveness for any wrong actions you have done in response to the offenses you experienced.

1. We usually react in wrong ways because of the wounds we received. It is our responsibility to deal with those actions.

"Lord, I acknowledge I've been critical of my wife and kids out of my own wounds and I was wrong. I acknowledge I have had wrong priorities by being a workaholic to try to gain approval from others at the expense of my family. I have acted out of fear instead of faith because of my fear of failure and rejection. As a result I have only trusted myself. I've been a controller and I've failed to be sensitive to the feelings of my wife and kids. Thank you for washing me totally clean from this disgusting selfishness and pain I have inflicted" (I John 1:9).

G. Cut the control of the past.

1. Take back any ground (control, foothold, place) you have given over to the evil one because of your sin.

"Lord, in my anger, bitterness and selfishness, I've given Satan control of areas of my life. I, now, through the power of Your blood take back all the ground (strongholds) I've given to the evil one (Eph. 4:27). I now surrender all the areas of my life to You that in the past were off limits to You (Rom. 12:1). I now cut the control those habits and thoughts have had on me. I'm now going to live out the reality that I have been crucified with Christ and the life I now live will totally be the result of my faith in Christ" (Gal. 2:20).

2. I am now going to experience the power I have in Christ to yield myself as a tool or an instrument of God for His honor and His glory (Rom. 6:1-14).

H. Choose to use your spiritual weapons and be pro-active by attacking the lies of Satan as to who you are (Eph. 6:10-18).

1. Your quality of life on earth will be in direct proportion to what you believe about yourself.

2. Choose to live today with your identity restored ...
 - a. as a saint.
 - b. as a holy priest.
 - c. as a holy temple.
 - d. as God's child.
 - e. as a part of Christ's body.
 - f. as salt and light in a dark world.
 - g. as a personal ambassador for Christ.
 - h. as a beautiful masterpiece.
 - i. as a totally safe person.

3. The above is only a glimpse of who you really are, your true identity. May this be a start and make it your daily prayer.

"Dear Heavenly Father, today I choose to celebrate who I really am as a result of my personal relationship with Your Son, Jesus. I want to enter Your courts with thanksgiving (Ps. 95:2; 100:4).

- I thank You for taking the initiative to restore my identity.
- I thank You for making me a holy person, then setting me aside for special use with the title of "saint."
- I thank You that You made a choice to come and to live Your life in me and to call my body Your home, a holy temple.
- I thank You that You chose me, then adopted me into Your family and You are not embarrassed to call me Your child; a relationship that will never end.
- I thank You for giving me the assurance I now belong by declaring me part of Your body here on earth.
- I thank You that You have entrusted me like salt (a preservative) to slow down the evil in this world and to offer light and truth that can set people free in this enslaved world (Matt. 5:13, 14).
- I thank You that You have chosen me to personally represent You and Your kingdom to the people of this hostile world.
- I thank You for the beautiful masterpiece You have created inside me in spite of how I appear physically to this world.
- I thank You that You have concealed me safely and securely in Your Son and any loss I experience here in time will be greatly rewarded in eternity" (Matt. 25:34).

I KNOW WHO I AM!

I am God's child (John 1:12)
 I am Christ's friend (John 15:15)
 I am united with the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17)
 I am bought with a price (1 Cor 6:19-20)
 I am a saint (set apart for God). (Eph. 1:1)
 I am a personal witness of Christ. (Acts 1:8)
 I am the salt & light of the earth (Matt 5:13-14)
 I am a member of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:27)
 I am free forever from condemnation (Rom. 8: 1-2)
 I am a citizen of Heaven. I am significant (Phil 3:20)
 I am free from any charge against me (Rom. 8:31 -34)
 I am a minister of reconciliation for God (2 Cor 5:17-21)
 I have access to God through the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:18)
 I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (Eph. 2:6)
 I cannot be separated from the love of God (Rom 8:35-39)
 I am established, anointed, sealed by God (2 Cor 1:21-22)
 I am assured all things work together for good (Rom. 8:28)
 I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit (John 15:16)
 I may approach God with freedom and confidence (Eph. 3: 12)
 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Phil. 4:13)
 I am the branch of the true vine, a channel of His life (John 15: 1-5)
 I am God's temple (1 Cor. 3: 16). I am complete in Christ (Col. 2: 10)
 I am hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3).. I have been justified (Romans 5:1)
 I am God's co-worker (1 Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor 6:1). I am God's workmanship (Eph. 2:10)
 I am confident that the good works God has begun in me will be perfected. (Phil. 1: 5)
 I have been redeemed and forgiven (Col 1:14). I have been adopted as God's child (Eph 1:5)
 I belong to God
 Do you know
 Who you are?

“To God be the Glory!”