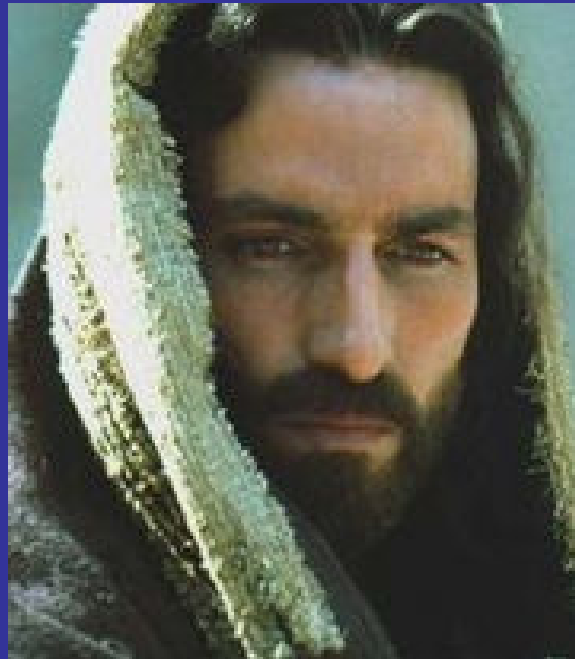


Sharpen Your Faith



Identity in Christ

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How Our Culture Identifies People

What phrases usually define us?

- "I am a tax broker."
 - "I am a mother."
 - "I am a TV addict."
- Our definitions of our identity often consist of our relationships, vocation, success, image, etc.
 - The key is to let Christ define who you are in every aspect of your life.
 - Our identity is our name.



Earning God's Favor

- When we "do things" for God (good works), what are we usually trying to gain?

We are trying to gain His love, acceptance, and approval. These cannot be earned.

- When I sin, instead of claiming God's forgiveness and approval what are some things I do to believe that God loves and approves of me?

Pray. Confess. Keep repenting. Keep feeling guilty. Etc.

- If we try to gain God's favor on our own effort, this is legalism.



Does God Like Me?

- Why do I doubt God's love and acceptance of me?

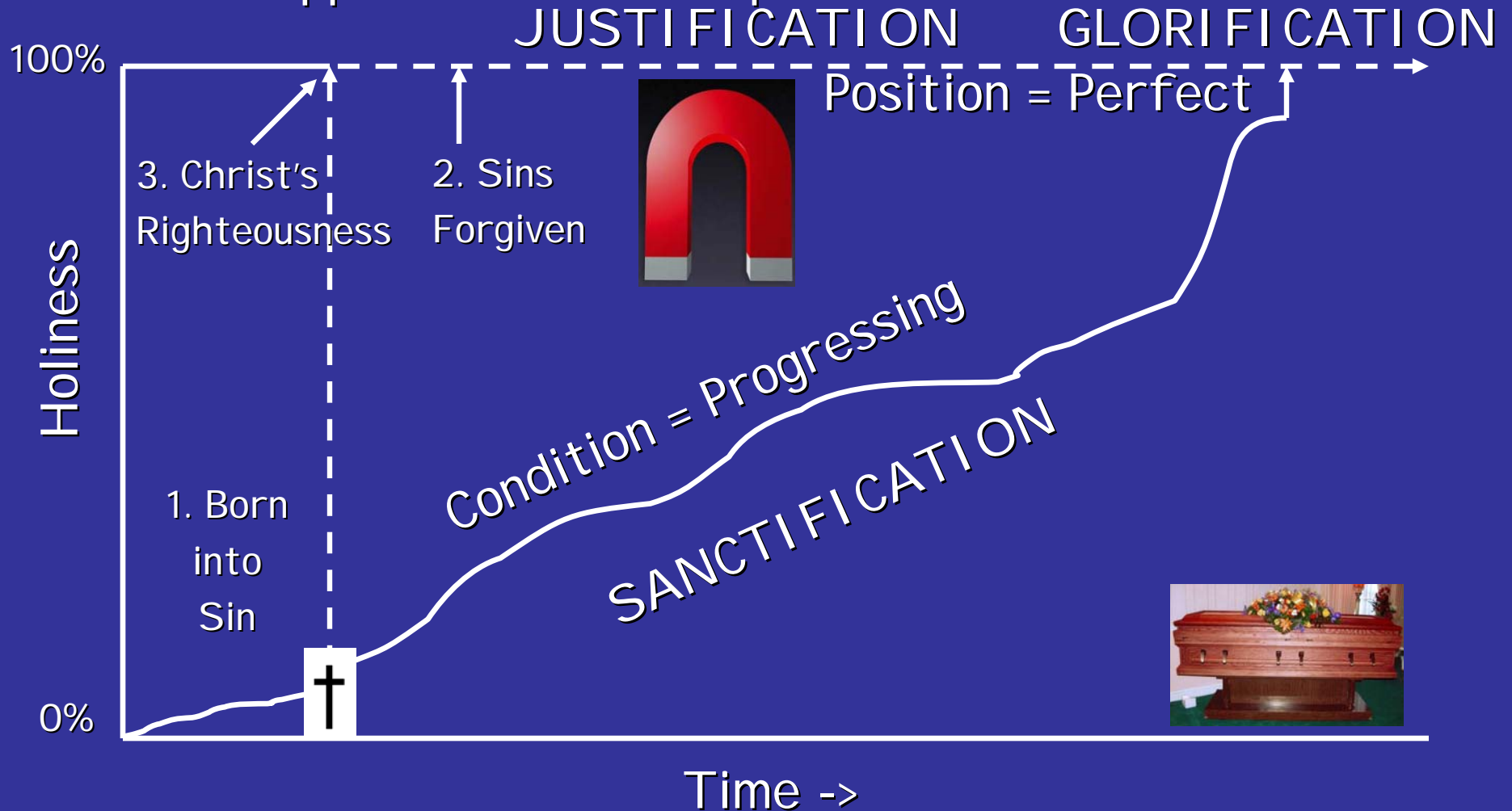
Often, we don't feel God's love emotionally. I don't know if He likes me.

- Psalm 37:23-24.
- Read Zephaniah 3:17.
- God delights in us!!



Position vs. Condition

- What happens to us at the point of salvation?



- Which of the two lines does God want us to focus on?

Justification vs. Sanctification

- Justification—God judicially declares us righteous and acceptable “just as if I never sinned” by grace alone through faith in Christ.
- WLC: Justification is an act of God's free grace unto sinners, in which he pardons all their sins, accepts and accounts their persons righteous in his sight; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone.
- Sanctification—the process of conforming believers to the image of Jesus so they may glorify God through the demonstration of their lives.
- WLC: “...applying the death and resurrection of Christ unto them, renewed in their whole man after the image of God; having the seeds of repentance unto life, and all other saving graces, put into their hearts, and those graces so stirred up, increased, and strengthened, as that they more and more die unto sin, and rise unto newness of life.”

Justification - Sanctification - Glorification Quip!

- In justification, God removes all the penalty of sin.
- In sanctification, God removes all the power of sin.
- In glorification, God removes all the presence of sin.

Identity: Before and After

- Read Ephesians 2:1-3, then v 4-7.
- We are sinners because we sin. T/F?
→ We are not called sinners because we sin sometimes!!
- We sin because we are sinners. T/F?
→ We were born into sin!!

flesh = sinful nature

= old self = our "naturalness"

"In Christ"

- We don't react out of who we really are, but who we perceive we are.
- Christ in Me (20 references), Me in Christ (200 references).
- Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.
- JESUS OFFERS A TRADE: My sin goes on Christ; the credit for his perfect life goes on me.
- Exchanged life is more Jesus living through me than me living through me.



Law vs. Grace



- Read Galatians 2:19-21.
- Read Galatians 3:2-3.
- The enemy wants us to focus on our condition as the basis for our approval before God.

What is grace?

- *Grace = unmerited favor.*
- It means God is “for” you, and you can't do anything about it!! God is on your side no matter your obedience or disobedience.
- Performance based approval, T/F?
- Approval based performance, T/F?

Sinful Nature vs. The Spirit

Why can't Jesus always live His life through us?

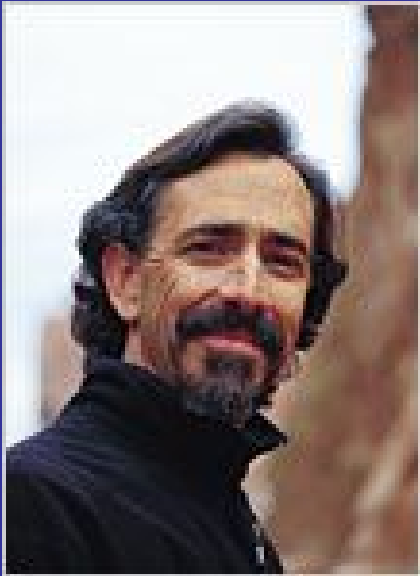
- *We live out of our flesh (sinful nature, old self).*

What does it mean to Walk in the Spirit?

- *Walking by the Spirit*—you follow God's desires moment by moment. You obey the written law of God, and you don't even realize that you are doing it.
- An old Chinese proverb said, "There is a good dog and an evil dog inside of you. Which one will dominate?"

→ Answer: The one you feed.





“In an attempt to explain the biblical doctrine of sin, we’ve let something else creep in. You’ll hear it come up almost automatically whenever Christians talk about themselves: ‘I’m just a sinner, saved by grace.’...It’s unbiblical. ‘I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.’ (Rom. 7:18) Notice the distinction [Paul] makes. He does not say, ‘There is nothing good in me. Period.’ What he says is that ‘in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.’ The flesh is the old nature, the old life, crucified with Christ. The flesh is the very thing God removed from our hearts when he circumcised them by his Spirit.”—John Eldredge¹²

Receiving the Blessings

- In the case of a death, someone inherits all that belonged to the person who passed away.
- In placing our faith into Christ's death, we inherited all of the blessings that were the possession of Jesus.



Who Does God Say that We Are?



Which of these resonates most with you?

The Greatest Blessing

- Read Ezekiel 36:24-28.
- God will give us new hearts. He is going to ransom our hearts.
- Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to live in our hearts as the deepest part of who we are. This transforms our values, desires, and belief system.





"All sorts of awful things can seem to issue from your heart—anger, lust, fear, petty jealousies. If you think it's you, a reflection of what's really going on in your heart, it will disable you. It could stop your journey dead in its tracks. What you've encountered is either the voice of your flesh or an attempt of the Enemy to distress you by throwing all sorts of thoughts your way and blaming you for it. You must proceed on this assumption: your heart is good. If it seems that some foul thing is at work there, say to yourself, *Well, then—this is not my heart. My heart is good. I reject this.*"—John Eldredge

Identity in Temptation

- Often, the reason we sin is because we forget who we are in Christ. We forget the great power He has given us. (1 Peter 2:9)
- When Jesus said "It is finished" (John 19:30), we often think that is a blanket statement about all sin. True...but it is true at every moment.
- Thus, when I face a temptation, I must remember that Jesus already has victory over this sin!!

Identity in Victory



- True self: Respond from your true self—The Holy Spirit inside of you!! Do not seek to gratify your sinful desires any longer, but walk in the Spirit.
- Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit inside of you who DOES NOT struggle with sin!! A decision not made from the Spirit will only lead to frustration.
- Power: 2 Peter 1:2-4. Read Romans 8:11.

Identity in Viewpoint

- Note that believers are no longer sinners but saints. This is the way God looks at us.
- How differently would we treat one another if we saw one another the way God sees us?
- Remember, "The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)
- WWJD vs.
→ LJDI (Let Jesus Do It!)

Weekly Sharpening Session

Highlight the three most important parts of your identity that you want to understand. Look up the Scriptures and study them this week. Be prepared to discuss how you were affected next week.

