

Your Identity in Christ

Topic: Identity in Christ

Purpose of this study:

To give a basic understanding of a person's new identity in Christ and the struggle that exists between his old nature and his new nature.

Motivation for teaching this study:

Some Christians experience drastic changes in their lives when they believe in Christ. For others the changes are not so dramatic. In fact, they find that they continually have to deal with sin and temptation throughout their entire lives even though they are a new creation in Christ. Why is this? It is because as a new creation in Christ, we still have an old sin nature that battles for control of our minds. In order to truly live a godly life, your disciple needs to know and understand the relationship between his two natures and the Holy Spirit. This study communicates the basic knowledge needed to walk with Christ.

Introducing the Lesson:

You could ask the following questions: *"Since inviting Christ into your life how has your Christian life been going? Have you been able to live in obedience before God all the time? Why not? Let me show you an illustration to help you understand some of the struggles you may have been facing..."*

Teaching the Bible study:

This diagram illustrates the new believer's identity in Christ. When used in context with the scripture it will serve in providing a format for understanding our two natures. This diagram should be drawn in three parts:

1. Draw the first well to the right of the house with its shaft sunk into an underground stream.

Then you can begin explaining the illustration like this: The way you were before you became a Christian could be represented by this well. The farmer who owned this well drew water from it all the time. The trouble was, the water that came out of it was contaminated. The underground stream that fed it ran under a toxic waste dump, and his family always felt weak and ill. (Blacken the underground stream to show that it is a bad stream). But since they had drunk from that well all their lives, they didn't even know they were sick. This is how the natural man is, how both you and I were before we met Christ. The farmer represents your mind, the underground stream represents your old self or your old nature, and the contamination represents your sinfulness. Read the two verses and summarize them in a one- to three-word phrase of the passage. The scriptures to read are Mark 7:20-23 and Ephesians 2:1-3.

Just as the farmer only had one well to go to, and wasn't aware of the contamination, so we had only one character to draw on, and it was contaminated. And just as the farmer and his family were headed for an early grave, so we were headed for an eternal grave. Paul tells us about the kind of behavior that this contaminated well produces in Galatians 5:19-21 [the works of the flesh]. Isaiah tells us in Is. 64:6 that the best we could be in this condition was like filthy rags to God.

One day a man from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) came and tested the farmer's well, and he alerted the farmer to the contamination. Of course, the farmer immediately stopped using his well, but he still needed water. He consulted some well-drilling experts and they informed him there was a crystal-clear underground stream on the other side of his property. He sent down another well shaft and sure enough, the water there was perfectly pure.

2. Draw another well way over on the other side of the paper, along with its shaft and the underground stream.

This new underground stream represents your "new man" or new nature, and it has no contaminating sin nature. Second Corinthians 5:17, says that God made you into a whole new creation, with a whole new character or nature. Galatians 5:22-23 talks about the kind of behavior that will come out of this "pure well." This new man is the opposite of the old man. Romans 8:1-2 talks about how the law of the Spirit of life has set us free from the law of sin and death, just like the pure water of this well set the farmer and his family free from the sickness and death of his contaminated well.

Sometimes we decide to go back to the old well and draw from it. The farmer may, from time to time, think it's too far to walk all the way over to the new well. After all, the new well is over this hill, through these bushes across this ravine and down this hill, while the old well is right outside the door. (Draw each of these obstacles as you mention them).

Or, sometimes he may doubt the EPA man's test. Or, he may rationalize that "just a little of this contaminated water shouldn't hurt." In the same way, our minds may find it easier to draw from our old man. Or, we may be so used to following the dictates of our old man that we don't even think about listening to our new man. We forget. For thirty years, when the farmer wanted water, he went out his front door and turned left. It may take him a while to get used to turning right.

3. Now draw arrows coming out of the farm house, one going toward the old well, one toward the new.

Paul talks about this in Roman 7:18-25. Just as the farmer truly wants to quit drinking the contaminated water, so Paul wants to quit following the dictates of his old nature. But it's not easy. In fact Paul even calls it a "war" (verse 23). In the end, Paul says that the only way he will be able to do it is with God's help (verse 25). This is where the ministry of the Holy Spirit comes in. He's like a big neon sign planted right outside the farmer's front door flashing "TURN RIGHT!" (Draw a box underneath the two arrows coming out of the farmhouse with the word TURN RIGHT! in it.)

However, the farmer can still choose to disregard the sign. In the same way, you can still disregard the direction of the Holy Spirit. That's why ultimately it's going to be up to you to choose which well you draw from. God will help you, but you make the decision. That's why Paul said in Ephesians 4:20-24 that we should "put off" our old self and "put on" our new self. It requires an act of our will. Every day. Every time we are tempted. And in Romans 12:1-2, Paul urges us to be "transformed by the renewing of your mind." Our minds have to be re-taught to draw upon the supernatural resources of our new man instead of the contaminated sewage of the old man.

Closing the Lesson:

Give the printed diagram to your Bible study to take home. Encourage them to share it with one other person in the coming week.

Evaluation:

Here are some good questions to ask yourself once you have completed this study:

1. What did you receive from God when you believed in Christ that you didn't have before? (A New Nature)
2. How can you explain we are new creations in Christ, but, we still have a tendency to sin and act like we used to before we knew Christ?
3. How can we keep from continually drawing from the old well?
4. What activities help you to draw from your new well and forget about the old?

* Many concepts in this study are from *Personal Disciplemaking* by Chris Adsit. Visit www.ccci.org/disciplemakers or call 888-342-2235.