

Beyond Addictions

Free to live a new life in Christ Jesus



Your New Identity in Christ

Lesson 7

Jesus Christ gave his life for you
so that he could give is life to you
so that he could live his life through you.
Kenneth Boa Conformed to His Image

In chapter five, you learned a bit about the loving and forgiving nature of Jesus Christ. In chapter six, you learned that Jesus is sufficient for all of your needs. Get ready for another amazing message that the Bible has for you as a believer in Jesus Christ.

In times past, you were identified by your old nature and your old behavior (drunkard, dope head, womanizer) or by your family (“Stay away from him; his family never did amount to much.”). Or you may have been known by your performance in school (bright but lazy, he talks all of the time).

I have some good news. When you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you were given a new nature, a new identity. You are now a truly new person! Speaking of you and me, II Corinthians 5:17 says,

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away;
behold, all things have become new.

You are a new creation and God now identifies you according to your new, spiritual nature! How can this be? First of all, this isn’t a matter of you coming to Jesus and starting to act differently. It isn’t a matter of trying harder to be good just because you appreciate what Jesus has done for you. It is a matter of Jesus Christ making you new by the power of His blood and the work of the Holy Spirit.

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Does your behavior change? Yes. But the change in your behavior is caused by the change in your nature.

Pastor A.W. Tozer put it this way:

“Sometimes Evangelical Christians seem to be fuzzy and uncertain about the nature of God and His purposes in creation and redemption. In such instances, the preachers often are to blame. There are still preachers and teachers who say that Christ died so we would not drink and not smoke and go to the theater. No wonder people are confused! No wonder they fall into the habit of backsliding when such things are held up as the reason for salvation. Jesus was born of a virgin, suffered under Pontius Pilate, died on the cross and rose from the grave to make worshippers out of rebels!”¹

In other words, Jesus did not come to just to get you to break sinful habits. The result of His coming was greater than that and the effect that He has on your life is deeper than that. When you accepted Jesus, He changed your nature and your identity. Once a rebel, you are now a worshipper of Jesus Christ. As we worship the Lord and grow closer to Him, we part ways with our old sinful nature.

Old things are passed away. Jesus put away your old nature when He took away your sin at the cross. According to I John 1:7, as a believer in Jesus Christ, the blood of Jesus cleanses you from all sin. Psalm 103:12 says that God no longer associates your sin with you anymore:

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Psalm 103:12

In the eyes of Christ, you are no longer a drug addict or a drunk or an adulterer. The blood of Jesus removed that sin from you. As a new creation in Christ, you are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a new life with a new spiritual nature. So you can stop dragging the baggage from the past around with you!

All things become new. In John 1:42 Jesus changed the name of one disciple from Simon to Cephas (or Peter). Cephas means “a stone”. So, this man who was as unstable as water before he met Jesus became a stone in the foundation of the church because of his new relationship with Jesus. The grace of our Lord is so great that He can do this in the life of everyone who trusts in Him.

When Jesus met Nicodemus this well-educated Pharisee wanted to know how one could enter the kingdom of God. Jesus told him, “Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of

¹ Tozer, A.W., *Whatever Happened to Worship*, pg. 11

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God” (John 3:3). Your ability to enter the kingdom of God is not based upon your works; it is based upon you being born again of the Holy Spirit. In Luke 18:18 a certain ruler asked Jesus what he had to do to inherit eternal life. The issue isn’t what you can do. If you have a relationship with Jesus based upon His shed blood for the forgiveness of your sin, then you have eternal life and the Spirit of God dwells in you. This changes who you are. In Tozer’s words, you stop being a rebel and you become a worshipper of Jesus. You are given a new, spiritual nature.

Many Bible teachers make the same mistake as the ruler in Luke 18. They focus on what God wants you to do without taking time to see who God wants you to be. He wants you to be His child, born not of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God (John 1:12-13). Once you are born again as a believer in Jesus and you begin to understand what He says about who you are as His child, then you start to do things that please Him. As Kenneth Boa says, “‘Being’ always precedes ‘Doing’ and ‘Doing’ can only flow out of our ‘Being’”².

I have wonderful children who know that I love them, and they know that I have certain authority over them because I am their father. They also know that they have a secure place in our family. They are my sons and daughters. Their sense of this identity influences their behavior. In the same way, our identity as sons and daughters in the family of God influences our behavior. Who we *are* as Christians effects what we *do* as Christians. As Mr. Boa puts it, our “being” as His children determines our “doing”.

So, let’s take a look at what the Bible says about your new identity in Christ.

You have been chosen by God.

Have you ever wanted to be chosen for a special assignment? Well, you have been.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. Ephesians 1:3-5

Why did God choose you? According to Ephesians 1:3-5, it was to display His love. This passage says a mouthful about God’s love for you. Here are just a few points: 1) the God of all creation chose you, 2) so that you could live a life that is separated to Him in love and 3) that all of this was done according to the good pleasure of His will. He loved you and He drew you to Himself. Now you have the privilege of living in His good pleasure.

² Boa, Kenneth, *Conformed to His Image*

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What else does the Bible say about your selection as a follower of Jesus Christ?

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. I Peter 2:9

You are part of a chosen group of people, part of the king's family of priests. The Old Testament priests were responsible for representing God to men and representing men to God. This is what we do as believer-priests; we are representatives of God to those who are lost. You are also part of a nation or group of people who have been set apart to worship the Lord. You are one of His own special people.

God has adopted you into His family.

Ephesians 1:5 says that you, as a Christian, were adopted into the family of God by Jesus Christ. Welcome to the family! Romans 8:14-15 helps you understand this a little better and it shows you one of the benefits of being adopted by God.

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." Romans 8:14-15

By grace, God has adopted you into His family. You were not born into it and you did not do anything to earn it. He chose you and brought you into His home. As an adopted child of God, you are no longer an orphan of the world or a servant to sin. You have a new identity as a child of our Heavenly Father. You do not have to indulge in the ways of the world just to get by because your Father has promised to supply all of your needs. You no longer have to sell yourself on the street in attempt to find love because your loving Heavenly Father holds you in His perfect, pure embrace.

Years ago some close friends of ours adopted seven Russian orphans. These children had lived in an abusive home and in various orphanages. These seven children had learned how to survive as orphans. The life of Russian orphans is extremely hard and unloving and many of them flee the orphanages because of abuse or harsh treatment. Some choose instead to live on the streets, going down in the sewers to sniff glue and escape the severe winter cold.

These seven children were rescued from the harsh environment of Russian orphans and placed in the care of two loving Christian parents. Within a few days they were given new names

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and moved to their new home in the United States. Imagine the shock of it all. They were in new, permanent surroundings with trees, a yard, and room to play. Best of all, they had loving parents.

Initially, the children weren't accustomed to their new life and they still acted like residents of a harsh orphanage. They took food from the kitchen and hid it in their rooms; they stuffed their clothes under the covers at night so that no one would take them. The father and mother continued to love them and to reassure them, "You are our children now. This is your home. Everything in the kitchen is yours; you don't have to hide food in your room." "Put your clothes in the hamper. You can trust that they will be returned to you clean." Whenever the parents disciplined the children, they tried to help them understand that they were loved and that they had a new life in their family. "You are our son and we love you. What you have done is wrong and it isn't what we are about as a family." Over time, the children began to respond to their new parents and they began to accept their new life.

As the children realized that they had a new life and a new identity, their old ways faded away. They were no longer orphans on the streets of Russia; they were now the sons and daughters of loving parents in America. As they understood their new life and their new identity, their behavior began to change.

When God adopted us into His family, we also brought some baggage from our past - old sinful habits that are not part of our new nature. You may still struggle with old sins of lust, anger and pride. If so, you need to let go of the past and receive the love of your heavenly Father. You are in his family now. So, if you are still dabbling in drug use, looking at pornographic pictures or living for other pleasures of this life then you need to stop. That isn't who you are any more and it isn't part of your new life in Christ. There is no need to go back to the streets or into the sewer! God has adopted you into His family. You have a new spiritual nature and a new home with Him in the heavenlies!

You are now redeemed by God to Himself.

In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace. Ephesians 1:7

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Romans 3:23-24

Redemption means "to deliver by paying a price". You and I had a problem. We were sinners and we owed a debt for our sin that we could not pay. Jesus loves us so much that He

intervened and paid our debt in His own blood. Only Jesus could deliver us and He has done it. This incredible gift is described in Romans 5:8:

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

Jesus Christ paid the debt for all of our drunkenness, violence, drug use, adultery and other sin. That old debt is no longer hanging over our heads. You and I are debt-free because of the blood of Jesus.

He has made you alive for the first time.

And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Ephesians 2:1

Even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:5-7

Death means that you are separated from something or someone. You probably have relatives who have gone on to be with the Lord. They are dead to you or separated from you but they are very much alive to Jesus Christ. There are other people who are physically alive; their heart is beating and their brainwaves are functioning but they are spiritually dead because they are separated from God. The Bible says that we were dead to Christ when we were living in sin. In other words, we were separated from Him because of our sin.

Before we knew Jesus we were dead in our sins, separated from God. As a result, we had no spiritual life, no real joy, no real peace or love. When we were given new life in Christ Jesus we began to experience real joy, peace and love for the first time. In my own life, it was like walking from a dingy gray existence into a world of living color!

God has made you alive to Him and with Him and you now have real spiritual, eternal life.

You are His workmanship.

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10

Based upon your past performance, you may have thought that you were the product of some shoddy workmanship. That is not true any more. You are now God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus and God is at work in your life. In Philippians 1:6, you are assured that He will complete what He has started. There are no unfinished projects in God's workshop.

You are complete in Him.

For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. Colossians 2:9-10

We addressed this in chapter six but since it is an important part of your new nature it bears repeating here. All of the fullness of God dwells in Jesus Christ and you are complete in Him. This is some of the best news in scripture! You don't need to look for a bottle, or a joint, or some illicit sex to try to be complete or to escape the emptiness you feel. You are complete in Christ! You can come to Him and He will meet your needs.

... His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue. II Peter 1:3

The source of your completion is Christ. He gives you all things that are necessary for righteous living. The closer you are to Jesus, the more you receive of what you need to live a good, godly life.

The relationship that is most crucial to life is the one that you and I ignored or ran from for years – it is our relationship with Jesus Christ. Before you pick up the phone to call a friend or pick up a book to search for knowledge, sit with the Lord and talk with Him; ask Him for the answer to your questions.

In *Conformed to His Image*, Kenneth Boa explains your new identity this way:

Our former identity in Adam was put to death, our new eternal identity in Christ became a living reality when we placed our faith in Him. Without Christ, we were out of harmony with God, life was all about self and we were driven to use people, things and circumstances to meet our needs. In Christ, we are in harmony with God; for us as believers, life should be all about the One who has already fully met our needs. ³

As you can see, your identity in Jesus Christ is vastly different from the one you had before He entered your life. You are a new creation in Christ Jesus and this changes everything – the way you view the world, the way you work, your ideas about love, your attitude towards people, everything. As you read your Bible and get to know Jesus more you lose desire for old sinful habits. The old things have passed away; all things have become new.

The following story is told of the early church father Augustine who lived in North Africa from 354-430 AD. He grew up in good family but as a young boy he was influenced by bad

³ Ibid

companions and became a drunkard, a thief and a womanizer. Looking for answers, he studied philosophy, paganism and other world religions. He traveled far from home, working in Carthage, Rome and Milan but none of his studies or experiences satisfied his longing for real truth. At 31 years of age while studying in Milan, he came to faith in Jesus Christ. He soon returned to his home in North Africa and as he was walking down the street one day a harlot recognized him from years ago. She called out to him, “Augustine!” But he just kept walking. She cried louder, “Augustine, Augustine!” But he paid her no attention. Thinking that he may not have recognized her, she yelled, “Augustine, it’s me!” Augustine stopped, turned around and said, “I know, but it’s not me.” Augustine was no longer the young man who found pleasure in sexual immorality; he was a new creation in Christ Jesus. The woman may have been the same person with the same old nature but he was not. By living according to his new spiritual nature, Augustine could fulfill God’s call to us in Romans 13:13-14 to “walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”

When Satan uses the old temptations of this world to cry out, “Hey it’s me!” you can resist because you are a new man in Christ, you have a new nature and a new identity. You can say to those old temptations, “I know who you are but it’s not me.” Galatians 2:20 sums up the reason that we can live a new life in Jesus.

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

You have been crucified with Christ. As a new creation, the life of Jesus dwells in you. So you and I live this new life by faith in the Son of God who loved us so much that He gave Himself for each of us. That changes everything!

Remember, no more an addict, you are now ...

- Chosen by God
- Adopted in His family
- Redeemed to God
- Alive to Christ
- His workmanship
- Complete!!!

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Take a few minutes and jot down a few notes regarding the areas in your life where this truth is most needed. Then continue daily to be transformed by the renewal of your mind as you read the Bible and take God at His Word. Read the following scripture passages until you have a clear understanding of your new identity as a believer in Christ.

Who does God say I am?

The following list of scripture passages is taken from *Conformed to His Image* by Kenneth Boa. This is just a sample of what the Bible says about you as a believer in Jesus.

| | |
|---|--------------|
| I am a child of God | John 1:12 |
| I am a branch of the true vine, and a conduit of Christ's life | John 15:1,5 |
| I am a friend of Jesus | John 15:15 |
| I have been justified and redeemed | Romans 3:24 |
| My old self was crucified with Christ, and I am no longer a slave to sin | Romans 6:6 |
| I will not be condemned by God | Romans 8:1 |
| I have been set free from the law of sin and death | Romans 8:2 |
| As a child of God, I am a fellow heir with Christ | Romans 8:17 |
| I have been accepted by Christ | Romans 15:7 |
| I have been called to be a saint | Col. 1:2 |
| In Christ, I have wisdom, righteousness and sanctification | Cor. 1:30 |
| My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells in me | I Cor. 3:16 |
| I am a new creature in Christ | II Cor. 5:17 |
| I have become the righteousness of God in Christ | II Cor. 5:21 |
| I have been made one with all who are in Christ | Gal. 3:28 |
| I am no longer a slave but a child and an heir | Gal 4:7 |
| I have been set free in Christ | Gal. 5:1 |
| I have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places | Ephes. 1:3 |
| I am chosen, holy and blameless before God | Ephes1:4 |
| I am redeemed and forgiven by the grace of God. | Ephes. 1:7 |
| I have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise | Ephes 1:13 |
| Because of God's mercy and love, I have been made alive with Christ | Ephes, 2:4-5 |
| I am seated in heavenly places with Christ | Ephes 2:6 |
| I am God's workmanship created to produce good works | Ephes. 2:10 |

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|---|--------------|
| I have been brought near to God by the blood of Christ | Ephes 2:13 |
| I am a member of God's body and a partaker of His promise | Ephes. 3:6 |
| I have boldness and confident access to God through faith in Christ. | Ephes. 3:12 |
| My new self is righteous and holy | Ephes 4:24 |
| I was formerly darkness, but now am light in the Lord | Ephes. 5:4 |
| I am a citizen of heaven | Phil. 3:20 |
| The peace of God guards my heart and mind | Phil 4:7 |
| God supplies all my needs | Phil 4:19 |
| I have been made complete in Christ | Col. 2:10 |
| I have been raised up with Christ | Col. 3:1 |
| My life is hidden with Christ in God | Col. 3:3 |
| Christ is my life, and I will be revealed with Him in glory | Col. 3:4 |
| I have been chosen by God, and I am holy and beloved | Col. 3:12 |
| God loves me and has chosen me | I Thess. 1:4 |

(Source: Boa, Kenneth, *Conformed to His Image*)

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Free to Live a New Life In Christ



Your new Identity in Christ

Assignment 7/8

Name: _____

1. According to A.W. Tozer, why did Jesus suffer and die? _____

How does this enable you to part from your old sinful nature? _____

2. Re-read the portion of the lesson that deals with your adoption into the family of God. What does this mean to you? _____

Can you relate to the struggles of the Russian orphans who were adopted by their American parents?

_____ If so, how do you relate? _____

3. What does it mean to be dead to sin? _____

4. As a Christian, you are complete in Christ. Where did you try to find fulfillment in the past?

Practically, what does it mean to know that you are now complete in Christ? _____

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5. How do you apply II Corinthians 5:17 to your life? _____

6. The Bible says a lot about you as a believer in Jesus. Which of the descriptions on pages 14-16 are most important to you? _____

7. Making the Change – How has your understanding of addiction changed since you started the class? _____

8. How has your relationship with Jesus changed since you started the class? _____

Once you complete this worksheet, mail it to:

Free In Christ Prison Ministries
PO Box 1492
Yanceyville, NC 27379

We will review your answers and return this sheet to you along with the next lesson. Study the Foundational verses included in this chapter and continue to allow the Lord to transform you by the renewing of your mind. People are praying for you!