

Identity in Christ

As children of Adam, we inherited several benefits—both physical and spiritual—that came from being made in the image of God. However, through the fall we died spiritually, and the image of God in us was marred. Jesus Christ came to restore the image of God in us. In Christ, the very essence of our being is transformed. Our lives are no longer our own; rather Jesus lives His life in us and through us. Understanding who we are in Christ will impact every area of our lives.

Our Positive and Negative Inheritance

As a result of our relationship to the first Adam, we have an outer self (a physical body which relates to the world through the five senses), and an inner self which is created in the image of God. (Gen. 1:26-27) Somewhere in the inner self we find our mind (allowing us to think), our emotions (allowing us to feel), and our will (allowing us to choose). Adam enjoyed several benefits from creation, and we have inherited these benefits from him or from Jesus Christ who restored them to us after Adam forfeited them through sin.

Our Positive Inheritance from Creation

1. Physical life (bios)—*“We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 5:8)*

2. Spiritual life (zoe)—In the New Testament, *zoe* stands for spiritual life: the soul/spirit is in union with God. Adam was created both physically and spiritually alive. We also inherited from Adam the capacity for spiritual life. *“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day.” (2 Corinthians 4:16)*

3. Significance—*“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ 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)*

4. Safety and security—*“And God said, ‘See, I have given you every herb that yields seed which is on the face of all the earth, and every tree whose fruit yields seed; to you it shall be for food.’” (Genesis 1:29)*

“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)

5. Belonging—It was not good that man dwell alone.

Our Negative Inheritance from the Fall

1. Spiritual death—*“Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.”* (Genesis 3:18-19)

2. Lost knowledge of God—When Adam and Eve sinned, they lost the true knowledge of God because their intimate relationship with God was terminated.

3. Dominant negative emotions—shame, fear, anger, disgust, sadness, and hopeless despair

4. Too many choices—*“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’”* (Genesis 2:16-17)

5. Attributes become needs

- Separated from God by sin, we no longer feel accepted by God or others, and we have a need to belong.
- Innocence was replaced by guilt and shame; therefore, we have a need for self-worth to be restored. *“So he said, ‘I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.’”* (Genesis 3:10)
- Authority was replaced by weakness and helplessness. We desperately attempt to control our own fate, yet we were not designed to function as a master.

Our New Life in Christ

- **New life requires new birth.** *“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’”* (John 3:3)
- **New life brings new identity.** *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”* (2 Corinthians 5:17)
“Being a Christian is not just a matter of getting something; it’s a matter of being someone....Being born again transformed you into someone who didn’t exist before. What you receive as a Christian isn’t the point; it’s who you are.” (Victory over the Darkness, p. 43)
- **New life results in a new title.** According to the New Testament, one of the most frequently used words to identify common, ordinary Christians is “saints”—holy people. We’re not called saints because we have earned the title through our own efforts. We are *“saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (1 Cor. 1:2, NASB)

The Exchanged Life in Christ

Romans 8:10-13—“*But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*”



Ephesians 4:20-24—“*But that is not the way you learned Christ!—assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*”

The exchanged life concentrates on the reality of a new identity through being in Christ. This relationship in Christ can drastically transform us as we grasp it in our experience.

- **We substitute Christ’s life for the self life.**

Colossians 3:10—“... *put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.*”

- **We are identified with Christ in his crucifixion, burial, resurrection and ascension.**

Galatians 2:20—“*I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*”

- **The basis of our salvation is also the basis of our sanctification.**

Galatians 3:2-3—“*Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?*” Just as we are justified by grace through faith, so we are sanctified by grace through faith. Good works are not attained by our own fleshly efforts; they flow from the power of the Spirit of Christ who indwells us. (Galatians 5:16-25).

- **Brokenness and unconditional surrender are part of the process of appropriating Christ's life.**

2 Corinthians 12:9-10—“But he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

- **Only Christ Himself can live the Christian life, and He does this in us and through us.**

John 15:1-5—“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

Rev. Jeffrey Pokone, has been a Biblical counselor and Center Director with the Indiana Biblical Counseling Center since 1998. He counsels in the following areas; marriage, trauma and abuse, sexual addictions, spiritual conflicts, and relationships. Jeff has been married for over 30 years to his wife Suzette and has five adult children.