

37 Identification For The Social Area of Life

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Identification for the Social Area

Applying who you are in Christ to the social area of life is not only necessary but critical to living a life that is in line with Christ in you.

"For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20)

I hope you read this verse carefully – Christ is telling us unless our righteousness surpasses (rises above) that of the most righteous men on earth – behavior wise, we cannot go to Heaven when we die. The righteousness that “surpasses” or “exceeds” that of human religionists is the righteousness of God Himself. There is only one way the Word tells us how we can obtain such Righteousness – that is only found in Christ. The apostle Paul wanted this kind of righteousness – remember when he said; *“found in Christ not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law (like the Pharisees), but that which is through faith in Christ, the Righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith”* (Philippians 3:9).

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Yes, you read that correctly, all those who are in Christ have literally become the Righteousness of God Himself. How can this be – isn't that what we strive to gain throughout all of life? No, we cannot strive to have such a gift. The identification with Christ and Christ's Righteousness means that the believer not only possesses this Righteousness by faith, but more than this, the believer takes the form of this very Righteousness. Whatever we find our identity in is what we become; this is why identification in Christ is such a major doctrinal truth for our daily living. If the believer maintains a false identity of the “old nature,” that is exactly what we will become in earth and vessel. Our behavior is sure to match that of belief.

Christ knew full well that the Pharisees tried to obtain a measurement of God's righteousness through effort by changing external appearances or behaviors. This kind of righteousness is nothing short of what the Word classifies as “self-righteousness.” Their self-righteousness was produced by self-effort, which granted an appearance of knowing and having relationship with God, which is exactly what Satan does. In reality, they were manifesting a righteousness of that of their father – Satan.

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (John 8:44)

Social behavior reveals the heart of what one believes! If the behavior is replicating someone else beliefs or righteousness, it is nothing more than replicated faith and faith that is replicated is what the enemy is best at. That is why Jesus said the Pharisees were of their father the devil. True Righteousness is not replicate but rather released from the Life of Christ that lives in the believer. Ownership of Righteousness is singular and that single person is the Person of Jesus Christ. We as believers become His Righteousness because we have become His Bride, who shares in all of His attributes. I know it sounds complicated but it really isn't.

"Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 6:1)

Those who "practice" righteousness instead of release it from within, are clearly seen as fake by our God who is in Heaven. He (God) knows authentic Righteousness because He Himself put His Righteousness in His Son. Therefore, when He sees a "practicing" of righteousness instead of a release of Life from within – He is quick to garnish the rewards on Heaven's side.

One of the leading applications of **Identification in the Social Area of Life** is expressed through a mind-set of reconciliation. As we review the Matthew 5, we see the outworking of the "righteousness which exceeds." The immediate application Christ makes is in reconciliation of human relationships, which is presented to us in vs 21-26. Therefore we can now look at all anger, verbal condemnation, and rejection – in short, all sorts of interpersonal conflicts are to be dealt with through reconciliation.

Reconciliation must come out of repentance. This is seen as the recognition and acknowledgment that in this relationship or personal interactions with the statement "I was wrong." More than this, the recognition and acknowledgment must be followed by a decision of the will to "right my wrong" toward those that we have offended.

As one thinks of their ways, evaluates their actions and attitudes toward other people, recognizes and acknowledges WRONGNESS on one's own part, and then turns their feet – takes the action that is in keeping with God's Holy Word and testimonies – true repentance becomes evident.

Both the GRACE to forgive and the humility to seek forgiveness are our by means of Christ as Life in reality within our lives.

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; (Hebrews 12:15)

To be aware of anyone in your present or past life with whom you have any unresolved conflict is of utmost importance. In order to sharpen your memories, perhaps considering the following possible situations might help:

1. Is there anyone whom you sense is distant or evasive toward you in a manner that seems to spring from something other than individual differences?
2. Is there anyone who has made accusations toward you, even though you are satisfied that they are false?
3. Is there anyone toward whom you have been unloving, or unforgiving, or dishonest, or slanderous, or critical, or resentful, or hostile, or indifferent?
4. Is there anyone whose property you have stolen or borrowed without permission, or used with permission but never returned?

One of the leading issues of reconciliation is an emotional and/or sexual relationship that was not in harmony with God's principles for life. Other ways are actions that you have taken toward someone else that did not demonstrate the love, righteousness, or GRACE of Christ who lives within your sphere of influence. Grudge carrying is another sure sign of lack of reconciliation – no matter how old the relationship might be. All these require restitution whenever possible – like; debt to repay, a repair to make, an item to replace, a fine to pay, a dishonesty to confess, or payment to make.

Both repentance leading to salvation (for the unbeliever) and repentance leading to restoration (in the believer), must center on the Life of Christ. Brokenness resulting from submission before God is the "narrow gate," the cross, by which one enters into newness of Life in Christ. His Life to and in us comes through crucifixion – both His and our (Rom. 6:6). This is true identification in the social area of life. This is why we are to reconcile all broken relationships that God reveals to us. As He displayed His extension of forgiveness toward us – we are to show the same kind of ministry of reconciliation to others. True identification in our social arena is demonstrated in this ministry.

On the basis of the believer's true spiritual identity "in Christ," is evidenced in becoming reconciled to others on a day-to-day basis.

Questions to ask ourselves and those we disciple:

1. Can you think of someone right now whom you have not forgiven?
2. What relationships do I have that demonstrate unforgiveness?
3. Who are you holding guilty?
4. What relationships am I involved with that I hold a grudge?
5. What actions do I demonstrate that reveals separation?
6. What ways am I resisting in showing my identification in Christ to others?

KEY SCRIPTURES:

It is always a good idea to wash with the Word after processing questions like the above. Here are a few that may assist in this washing process: Proverbs 6:30-31; Ezekiel 33:14-16; Matt. 5:23-26; Matt. 6:14-15; Matt. 18:21-22; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 7:47; Rom. 12:17; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Galatians 6:1-2; & Eph. 4:32.

Discipleship Points:

When discipling others we should consider the following ideas:

1. Is the person(s) you are discipling a “so called believer” or the real deal?
2. Gather data on their relationships and who they might be un-reconciled.
3. Detail, or outline, their social life (friends, activities and beliefs).
4. Watch for expressions or attitudes that signal grudges or lingering resentment.
5. Test to see if they truly understand their identity in Christ.
6. Walk them through what forgiveness is and is not.
7. Make a list of what they need to bring before the Lord in repentance.
8. Help them see the necessity for true extending and seeking forgiveness.
9. Set up homework – who they need to go and reconcile with.
10. Make sure you apply who they are in Christ after this lesson.