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FINDING OUR NEW IDENTITY

When a baby is born, he or she is totally helpless. He comes out of a warm, safe environment into bright light, pain, and noise. Have you seen a new-born baby? They are in shock! Mother holds baby in her arms, gives him his first taste of milk, cuddles him, coos to him, and he relaxes. Mother and dad give baby food, clothing, and relationship. He is secure. Over time he internalizes that security and love so that even when he is away from them at school or wherever he knows that he is loved and safe and secure. He develops a love-based identity.

That describes God's will for every baby that is born, but that is rarely if ever the situation in this fallen world. Babies are all born into dysfunctional families to a greater or lesser degree. Do you agree? If children are born into really unhealthy families where they are deprived of mother-love and father-love, they may not develop emotionally, mentally, or physically. Being in a counseling ministry like I am, I hear some awful stories of seriously dysfunctional families.

Children can be born into a home where there is

- **EMOTIONAL ABUSE:** rejection, arguing, fighting, cursing, screaming, blaming, control, neglect, abandonment (possibly because of drug or alcohol use, or divorce, or death of a parent).
- **PHYSICAL ABUSE:** slapping, beating, being locked in a room and deprived of food, etc. Of course, this is also emotional abuse.
- **SEXUAL ABUSE:** Incest - sexual abuse of any kind by a member of the family. Molestation - sexual abuse by others (80% of molestations are done by close personal friends of the family). Sexual abuse is the worst kind of emotional abuse.

When children are treated in these terrible ways they do not develop a love-based identity. They develop a combination of a fear-based or a shame-based identity.

When a child is abused emotionally, physically, or sexually, she is traumatized, she feels deeply rejected and full of fear. Her heart is deeply wounded. She feels, "My world is not safe!" She feels powerless, abandoned, and betrayed by her parents and by God who did not protect her.

Important: Children take personal responsibility for everything that happens to them! Psychology has many explanations for this, but I believe there is a spiritual explanation: There is a devil! He is the accuser. He accuses even vulnerable little children, and when something bad happens to them he tells them, "It's your fault! It happened because you are a bad person." They may start believing the three D's: that they are Dirty, Damaged, and Different. Can you imagine how terrible it would be to grow up believing about yourself that you are dirty, damaged, and different, and that you must hide your identity, your real self, from others lest they discover what an awful person you are!

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 says: *Though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does.* God is telling us that we have a real enemy and that we are engaged in a real war. *The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.* What is a stronghold? It is defined in the next verse: *We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.* So a stronghold is a prideful argument against God's rule over my life. I learned a simple definition long ago: "A stronghold is a lie in the mind."

I have in my hand a coffee-basket/filter from an old coffee pot. (If you close your eyes you can see it.) Every one of us comes into adulthood with one of these filters inside our brain. The problem is that the basket is not filled with coffee grounds, it is filled with something very filthy (I display the basket so that you can see inside it a black, rubber snake); it is filled with lies from the evil one! The lie may be that you are dirty, damaged, and different; that no one will love you if they learn the truth about you; that God doesn't love you; or some other lie.

The problem is that every experience of your life, everything you hear or see, passes through that filter in your mind before it reaches your heart. So if the preacher says, "God loves you so much!", his words pass through that filter, and you hear, "God may love other people, but He surely doesn't love me or He wouldn't have let my step-father abuse me." Your boss may give you some instructions about your work, and what you hear is, "You're so stupid, you can't do anything right." This is the source of ongoing problems between spouses. No matter what you say, your spouse interprets it as a criticism or an attack.

What is the solution?

(1) Expose the lies in the mind and "take it captive." Renounce it. Cast it down. Do not stay in agreement with it. Part of this process may be to find out when and how the lie got into your mind. Perhaps it came from words that were spoken to you by a parent: "You're never going to amount to anything. You're worthless. You're fat and ugly." Forgive them and renounce those "curses." Note that this is something that you and I must do. We must take those evil thoughts captive. We must resist the devil and renounce his lies. We must take action.

(2) Secondly, follow the words in Romans 12:2: *Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.* In other words, replace the lies in your mind with the truth in God's Word. Note that the exhortation in this passage of scripture is passive: *Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.* We cannot transform ourselves into Christlikeness, it is the work of God, the work of the Holy Spirit. Our part is to spend time in the Bible and in prayer, and God is the one who will transform us and fill our minds with truth.

Let me share my testimony about this subject. My family appeared to be a great Christian family from the outside, but there were hidden problems within. My mother was a good person, but she was very fearful, and she was unable to accept me or bond with me when I was born. I learned much later that she had been extremely abused as a little girl, and she had wounds in her heart that had never been healed. As a result, I turned to my father for nurture and affirmation. My dad was a godly man, and he was gentle and very brave. He was truly a man's man. He loved me with all his heart. The problem was that he wanted me to be like him while I was like my mother. I was very fearful and timid. So my dad loved me, but he was deeply disappointed in me. He never said that, but I felt it during all my growing-up years. Guess how this situation affected me? (I am not excusing my behavior, I am explaining how I got lies embedded in my mind.) I had a deep judgment (lie) in my mind about women, so I did not bond with my wife until the Holy Spirit started healing me years later. Also, after I became a Christian, I knew that God loved me, but I was absolutely sure (based on a stronghold in my mind) that He was disappointed with me. Therefore, I drove myself to win His approval. That put me under the law rather than under grace, under what is called "Performance orientation" - that God would only love me based on my performance, and it is a big lie.

You can see that I didn't have a terrible foundation, I wasn't beaten or abused or abandoned, but neither did I have a solid love-based foundation. I had a "shaky foundation." And that is what I find in many people. Perhaps you had a good father, but he spent all his time at work or distracted by television and sports. Perhaps your mother was a fine person, but she had other younger children, or a sick or disabled child, or she became physically or emotionally sick, and she was simply never there for you. And a lie was built into your mind: "God will never have time for me. I am a loser. No one will ever love me."

Following are some categories of lies:

(1) FEAR. Contains lies which tell us we are in danger or that something bad is about to happen. For example, if I was physically beaten by a drunken alcoholic parent, those memories and fears may surface if I am confronted by an angry boss or irritated spouse. Then instead of being able to stand my ground like an adult and respond calmly, I may shrink down in fear and become immobilized. This category will contain lies such as, *If I try to defend myself I will die. They are going to get me. Someone is going to find out what a terrible person I am, and that will destroy me. I know what needs to be done but I am too weak and powerless to do it. I am helpless and vulnerable.*

(2) ABANDONMENT. When a person has memories of being forsaken or deserted, this lie may manifest as follows: *I will always be alone. No one is going to protect me. God will not protect me. No one will believe me.*

(3) SHAME. A woman (or man) who has been sexually molested will have beliefs such as, *It was my fault. I felt pleasure, so I wanted it. I am stupid, ignorant, an idiot. I should have done something to stop it. I should have told someone. I deserved it. I am cheap.*

(4) CONFUSION. Little children who have been hurt or molested become confused as to why a big person would do bad things to them. As an adult this lie may surface in times of pressure in the form of overwhelming confusion.

HOW CAN WE BE HEALED?

- (A) **Forgive those who have wounded and hurt us.**
- (B) **Repent of judging and condemning.**
- (C) **Honor your father and mother.**
- (D) **Break all ungodly spiritual connections (soul-ties).**
- (E) **RENOUNCE LIES AND SHAME** *Take every thought captive to Christ.*
- (F) **Receive healing for trauma and for your heart.**
- (G) **Spend much time in the Word, and in prayer.** *Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

NUMBER 17

(Joseph Prince had a fascinating teaching about numbers in the Bible, and I will share a part of it and hope I didn't miss a key part of the explanation):

- 1 - Unity (one God, universe).
- 2 - Agreement, "In the mouth of 2 or 3 witnesses."
- 3 - Resurrection, on the 3rd day.
- 4 - Earth, 4 corners (NSEW), 4 winds.
- 5 - Grace, The 5th time Noah's name was mentioned it says, "Noah found grace."
- 6 - Man, created on the 6th day. 666 is the anti-Christ, supreme man without God.
- 7 - Perfection or rest.
- 8 - New beginnings.
- 9 - Holy Spirit, Nine gifts.
- 10 - Completion
- 12 - Government, 12 tribes, 12 apostles.

17 - Victory. Genesis 8:4 - *The ark rested in the 7th month, on the 17th day of the month, on the Mountains of Ararat.* Thousands of years later when Moses established the Feast of First Fruits, it would be on the 7th Month, the 17th day of the month. That is also the day, exactly (1,500 years later) when Jesus rose from the dead!

Jeremiah prayed 17 prayers in the Old Testament. The 17th prayer was when God told him to go to a certain place and buy a piece of land from a relative (Jeremiah 32:9). *So I bought the field from Hanamel in Anathoth.* Hanamel in Hebrew means "God is grace." Anathoth means "Answers to prayer." Jeremiah paid 17 shekels for the land.

Romans 8 says, *Who shall separate us from the Love of God? Shall (1) trouble (2) hardship (3) persecution (4) famine (5) nakedness (6) danger (7) sword (8) neither death (9) nor life (11) nor angels (12) nor demons (13) nor things present (14) nor the future (15) nor height (16) nor depth (17) nor anything else in all creation - - will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (When Joseph Prince listed these things in the Greek it came out to 17 things, but different translations may add an extra word.)

When the resurrected Christ called from the beach to the disciples in their boat and told them to cast their net into the sea, they caught 153 fish. (John 21:11) If you add 1 plus 2 plus 3 up through 17 you get 153. The Hebrew alphabet has 22 letters, and each letter is assigned a number which also represents a name. The number 153, in the Jewish system of gamatric counting of numbers, represents: 1 = *Ani*, or I, 50 = *Ha*, or Am, 3 = *El* or *Elohim*, or God. Thus, *Ani - ha - Elohim*. "I am God."

One can go off into a tangent with numbers and mysterious, hidden messages, like the Kabala or the New Age. But these numbers are not New Age, they are in the Bible, and every word, every number, every jot and title (apostrophe and comma) is inspired by God and has significance. And our God is really smart. Really, really smart.

CHRISTIANS IN LAS VEGAS!

Did you know there seems to be a prophecy in the Bible that there would be Christians in Las Vegas? In Philippians 4, Paul says that there were believers in Caesar's Palace!

EXPERIENCES OF GOD'S PRESENCE

John White is a Christian psychiatrist, of all things, and his book, When the Spirit Comes with Power, analyzes what happens when God "visits" His people during revivals or at other times. He extensively interviewed many people and worked as a missionary in the Third World. He also thoroughly studied revivals of the past, highlighting the differences and the similarities to what is happening today in various countries. Following is a taste of his fascinating observations:

(From Chapter 2) God is, of course, present everywhere. But there seem to be times when he is, as it were, more present - or shall we say more intensely present. He seems to draw aside one or two layers of a curtain that protects us from him, exposing our fragility to the awesome energies of his being. Even the presence of an angel can cause bodily failure. Daniel collapsed in terror when Gabriel appeared to him. A trancelike sleep overwhelmed him. As Gabriel approached him he was conscious, yet powerless to move. *As he came near me, I was terrified and fell prostrate....While he was speaking to me, I was in a deep sleep with my face to the ground.* (Daniel 8:16-18) The physical effects of this encounter were extreme. Our minds and bodies can stand only so much. *I, Daniel, was exhausted and lay ill for several days.*

On another occasion, several hundred years later, the disciples heard the voice of God on the Mount of Transfiguration. *They fell facedown to the ground, terrified. But Jesus came and touched them.* (Mt. 17:6-7) John describes his vision on Patmos in similar terms to Daniel's. *When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me...* (Rev. 1:17)

We would be mistaken to suppose that extraordinary experiences mark God's favorites or that they are a sign of superior spirituality. Two contrasting passages in 1 Samuel describe what happened to King Saul. On both occasions the Holy Spirit caused him to prophesy for an extended period of time. On the first occasion he was blessed, but on the second he was humiliated and left hardened in sin. (1 Samuel chapters 10 and 19) Manifestations of the Spirit's power do not ever reflect credit to the person in whom they are manifest. They reflect only the power, the glory and the mercy of God. They can never be a ground for boasting. They are never a sign of God's favoritism or of superior spiritual attainment.

(From Chapter 7) In Scripture there seem to be two different types of fear of God. There is the fear of the disobedient servant, and there is also what has been called numinous fear. Moses experienced both kinds on different occasions. In Exodus 4 there is a disturbing account of the fear caused by disobedience. Moses had failed to circumcise his firstborn son, and at a lodging place on the way, the Lord met Moses and was about to kill him. Only after Zipporah carried out the circumcision, smearing the blood on Moses' foot, did the danger pass. Moses was a servant chosen for a special mission for which absolute obedience and devotedness to God and his word are essential, but Moses' attitude had been ambivalent.

During the past two years I have come across two episodes of such a terror - the terror of persons who, caught up in a mystical experience, thought that God was about to kill them. Both were servants of God who were about to back away from his call on their lives. In terror they both instantly repented. We shrink from the concept of God this suggests to us, but that is because we have no real understanding of his burning rage against all sin.

Rudolph Otto uses the term *numinous* to describe another quality of fear that is made up of an overwhelming sense of one's creaturehood, such that one experiences a "submergence into nothingness before an overpowering absolute might." I have felt such a fear. I have trembled, perspired, known my muscles turn to water. Once as I prayed with elders and deacons in my home I suddenly knew by some kind of knowing that transcended the use of my intellect that I was in the presence of the God of holiness. In stunned amazement I watched a rising column of flames that suddenly appeared in our own living room, while my brothers remained with their heads quietly bowed and their eyes closed. They could not have perceived the blend of stark terror and joy that threatened to sweep me away.

I, Glenn, would simply add that I, too, have experienced both types of the fear of God. The fear of the disobedient servant happened in January, 1973, when demons were cast out of me and I came to perceive the consequences of being disobedient to God. I experienced such a fear of God that for several weeks every time I thought about God I would shake and tremble with terror. I believe that most Christians in our culture have no idea, no concept, of the God who would make one tremble. He is the God who holds our very breath in his hand; and, moreover, who holds our eternal destiny in his hand. Many treat him in a casual, flippant way.

And I experienced the fear of God in the numinous sense on several occasions; once when he came to me in my church office and rescued me from deep depression. On another occasion, I was walking to the sanctuary on a Sunday morning when I looked out of a window at a corn field. (I know this sounds weird, but it was a precious experience in my life.) The Bible speaks of *The Glory of God covering the whole earth*. I suddenly "saw" the glory of God as I looked at that corn field. I started weeping and could not stop. I became "drunk in the Spirit" and could hardly walk (Remember when the disciples were accused of being drunk on the day of Pentecost? It happened to me. Wow! And I didn't get a hangover.) When it was time for me to preach, I could not speak. I sat in a chair on the platform and wept. The congregation experienced something of what I was experiencing, and we had a time of prayer and worship that morning that was very unusual.

If we experienced God in such a fashion all the time we could not grow in maturity, so it's not going to happen, but oh, the pity! Just a reminder to us that our God is mighty! He is amazing, beautiful, majestic. He is not only a God to be loved, but a God to be feared. Let us choose once again to seek after Him with all our hearts.

MINISTRY

As I mentioned last month, our team is going to Guadalajara from December 5 - 19th, so my newsletter next month will be late.

Blessings to you all,

Glenn

WEBSITE: glennbrownministries.com

I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry.

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