

# VICTORY OVER THE DARKNESS

REALIZE THE POWER OF YOUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

NEIL T. ANDERSON



BETHANYHOUSE

*a division of Baker Publishing Group*  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

© 2000, 2013 by Neil T. Anderson

Published by Bethany House Publishers  
11400 Hampshire Avenue South  
Bloomington, Minnesota 55438  
www.bethanyhouse.com

Bethany House Publishers is a division of  
Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Bethany House edition published 2014  
ISBN 978-0-7642-1376-2

Previously published by Regal Books

Printed in the United States of America

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The Library of Congress has cataloged the original edition as follows:

Anderson, Neil T.

Victory over the darkness / Neil T. Anderson.—2nd ed.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 978-0-8307-2564-9 (trade paper)

1. Discipling (Christianity) 2. Pastoral counseling. I. Title.

BV4520 .A55 2000

253—dc21

00-028084

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Some of the names in this book have been changed to protect the privacy of the individuals involved.

15 16 17 18 19 20 21      9 8 7 6 5 4 3



## DEDICATION

To my wife, Joanne, who has been my faithful companion, ardent supporter, friend and lover through all it takes to be the person God wants me to be.

And to my children, Heidi and Karl, who have borne the brunt of being PKs. You are number one in my eyes, and I thank you for sharing many difficult years with me. You never asked for a father who was called into ministry, but I have never heard you complain about that. Thank you for being the great kids you are. I love you next to God.



## CONTENTS

Acknowledgments .....	13
Introduction: Lend Me Your Hope .....	15
1. Who Are You? .....	23
<i>Your hope for growth, meaning and fulfillment as a Christian is based on understanding who you are—specifically your identity in Christ as a child of God.</i>	
2. The Whole Gospel .....	41
<i>Many Christians are not living free and productive lives because they don't understand who they are . . . and the dramatic change that occurred in them the moment they trusted in Christ.</i>	
3. See Yourself for Who You Really Are .....	57
<i>When your belief system is intact and your relationship with God is based on truth, . . . you will have very little trouble working out the practical aspects of daily Christianity.</i>	
4. Something Old, Something New .....	73
<i>Despite the fact that all believers at times still live according to the old self, like Paul, they are new persons—new in relationship to God and new in themselves.</i>	

5. Becoming the Spiritual Person God Wants You to Be . . . .	89
<i>The Spirit of Truth will always lead us to freedom. . . . The commandments of God are not restrictive; they are protective.</i>	
6. The Power of Believing the Truth . . . . .	107
<i>Believing you can live a victorious Christian life takes no more effort than believing you cannot.</i>	
7. You Can't Live Beyond What You Believe . . . . .	123
<i>You are right now walking by faith according to what you believe. Assuming your basic physiological needs . . . are met, you are motivated to live a successful, significant, fulfilled, satisfied, happy, fun, secure and peaceful life.</i>	
8. God's Guidelines for the Walk of Faith . . . . .	137
<i>It is imperative for your spiritual maturity that your beliefs about success, significance, fulfillment, satisfaction, happiness, fun, security and peace are anchored in the Scriptures.</i>	
9. Winning the Battle for Your Mind . . . . .	149
<i>Satan's strategy is to introduce his thoughts and ideas into your mind and deceive you into believing they are yours.</i>	
10. You Must Be Real to Be Right . . . . .	167
<i>If you fail to appropriately acknowledge your emotions, you may become spiritually vulnerable.</i>	
11. Healing Emotional Wounds from Your Past . . . . .	183
<i>Forgiveness is what sets us free from the past. . . . You don't heal in order to forgive. You forgive in order to heal.</i>	
12. Dealing with Rejection in Your Relationships . . . . .	199
<i>The thoughts and feelings of rejection that often plague us can be major deterrents to our maturity in Christ.</i>	
13. People Grow Better Together . . . . .	215
<i>You have the awesome privilege and responsibility both to be a teacher and a learner of what it means to be in Christ, walk by the Spirit and live by faith.</i>	
Topical References . . . . .	231

# VICTORY

## OVER THE DARKNESS



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Writing a book was a project I intended to do when I retired. I love the ministry, and interacting with God’s children is my life. So when I attended a writers conference at Biola University in anticipation of my first sabbatical as a seminary professor, I was probably the only one there who didn’t want to write a book.”

I wrote those words 22 years ago when the first edition of this, my first book, went into print. More than 60 books, youth editions and study guides have come off the press since that time. God obviously had other plans for my life than what I envisioned. Ed Stewart assisted me in writing the first edition of this book, and a Talbot student named Carolina typed the first manuscript. I have done my own writing and typing ever since.

I want to thank Gospel Light for taking the initiative and contacting me about writing this book. I probably would not have pursued that path. We are both delighted and surprised that 640,000 copies of the first edition have been sold, and an additional 400,000 copies of the second edition. I am especially grateful that many translations have been distributed around the world, which is where I have spent much of my time during these past few years. A lot of water has gone under the bridge since the first edition went into print. *Freedom in Christ Ministries* is now an international

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ministry, with offices and representatives in many countries (see [www.ficminternational.org](http://www.ficminternational.org)).

I am grateful for Biola University/Talbot School of Theology, where I had the privilege of teaching for 10 years. Special thanks to Dr. Robert Saucy, who has been my mentor, friend and favorite theologian. The core message of Freedom in Christ Ministries became a part of my spiritual DNA during those years, and I bounced a lot of my ideas off Dr. Saucy. Having such a sounding board is priceless.

Thousands of life illustrations have come from my early years on the farm in Minnesota. Thank you, Mom and Dad, for faithfully taking me to church and for the moral atmosphere in which I was raised. It has been my privilege to help thousands discover their identity and freedom in Christ. The thought of many others being helped through the printed page is awesome, and I am grateful to all who made this opportunity possible.

Dr. Neil T. Anderson

Founder and President Emeritus of Freedom in Christ Ministries





## INTRODUCTION

# Lend Me Your Hope

Several years ago in my first pastorate, I committed myself to disciple a young man in my church. It was my first formal attempt at one-on-one discipling. Russ and I decided to meet early every Tuesday morning so I could lead him through an inductive Bible study on the topic of love. We both began with high hopes. Russ was looking forward to taking some major steps of growth as a Christian, and I was eager to help him develop into a mature believer.

Six months later we were still slogging through the same inductive Bible study on love. We weren't getting anywhere. For some reason, our Paul-and-Timothy relationship wasn't working. Russ didn't seem to be growing as a Christian. He felt defeated and I felt responsible for his defeat—but I didn't know what else to do. Our once high hopes for Russ's great strides toward maturity had gradually deflated like a balloon with a slow leak. We eventually stopped meeting together.

Two years later, after I had moved to another pastorate, Russ came to see me. He poured out the story of what had been going on in his life during our brief one-on-one relationship—a story that revealed a secret part of his life I never knew existed. Russ was deeply

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involved in sin and unwilling to share his struggle with me. I could sense that he wasn't free, but I had no clue why this was the case.

At that time, I had little experience with people in the bondage of sin and was determined to plow on. I thought the major problem was just his unwillingness to complete the material. Now, however, I am convinced that my attempts at discipling Russ failed for another reason.

The apostle Paul wrote, "I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for *you were not yet able to receive it*. Indeed, even now *you are not yet able*, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?" (1 Cor. 3:2,3, emphasis added). Apparently, because of unresolved conflicts in their lives, carnal Christians are not able to receive the solid food of God's Word.

That's when I began to discern that discipling people to Christian maturity involves much more than leading them through a step-by-step, 10-week Bible study. We live in a country glutted with biblical material, Christian books, radio and television, but many Christians are not moving on to spiritual maturity. Some are no more loving now than they were 20 years ago. We read in 1 Timothy, "The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1:5).

Since that time the focus of my ministry, both as a pastor and a seminary professor, has been the interrelated ministries of discipling and Christian counseling. I have been a discipler and a counselor of countless people. I have also taught discipleship and pastoral counseling at the seminary level and in churches and leadership conferences across the country and around the world. I have found one common denominator for all struggling Christians. They do not know who they are in Christ, nor do they understand what it means to be a child of God. Why not? If "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom. 8:16), why weren't they sensing it?

As a pastor, I believed that Christ was the answer and truth would set people free, but I really didn't know how. People at my

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church had problems for which I didn't have answers, but God did. When the Lord called me to teach at Talbot School of Theology, I was searching for answers myself. Slowly I began to understand how to help people resolve their personal and spiritual conflicts through genuine repentance by submitting to God and resisting the devil (see Jas. 4:7).

My seminary education had taught me about the kingdom of God but not about the kingdom of darkness and that "our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12). Through countless hours of intense counseling with defeated Christians, I began to understand the battle for their minds and how they could be transformed by renewing their minds.

I am saddened by how we have separated the ministries of discipleship and counseling in our churches. Christian discipleship too often has become an impersonal program, although good theological material is being used. Christian counseling has been intensely personal but often lacks good theology. I believe discipleship and counseling are biblically the same. If you were a good discipler you would be a good counselor and vice versa. Discipleship counseling is the process where two or more people meet together in the presence of Christ, learn how the truth of God's Word can set them free and thus are able to conform to the image of God as they walk by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In the course of learning this, my family and I went through a very broken experience. For 15 months I didn't know whether my wife, Joanne, was going to live or die. We lost everything we had. God gave me something very dear to me that I could not fix. No matter what I did, nothing changed. God brought me to the end of my resources, so I could discover His. That was the birth of Freedom in Christ Ministries. Nobody reading this book knows any better than I do that I can't set anybody free; only God can do that. I can't bind up anybody's broken heart; only God can do that. He is the Wonderful Counselor. Brokenness is the key to effective ministry and

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the final ingredient for discipleship counseling. Message and method had come together.

Furthermore, it is my conviction that discipleship counseling must start where the Bible starts: We must have a true knowledge of God and know who we are as children of God. If we really knew God, our behavior would change radically and instantly. Whenever heaven opened to reveal the glory of God, individual witnesses in the Bible were immediately and profoundly changed. I believe that the greatest determinant of mental and spiritual health and spiritual freedom is a true understanding of God and a right relationship with Him. A good theology is an indispensable prerequisite to a good psychology.

Several weeks after one of my conferences, a friend shared with me the story of a dear Christian woman who had attended. She had lived in a deep depression for several years. She survived by leaning on her friends, three counseling sessions a week and a variety of prescription drugs.

During the conference this woman realized that her support system included everybody and everything but God. She had not cast her anxiety on Christ and she was anything but dependent on Him. She took her conference syllabus home and began focusing on her identity in Christ and expressing confidence in Him to meet her daily needs. She threw off all her other supports (a practice I do not recommend) and decided to trust in Christ alone to relieve her depression. She began living by faith and renewing her mind as the conference notes suggested. After one month she was a different person. Knowing God is indispensable to maturity and freedom.

Another point at which discipling and counseling intersect is in the area of individual responsibility. People who want to move forward in Christian maturity can certainly benefit from the counsel of others, and those who seek freedom from their past can also be helped by others. Ultimately, however, every Christian is responsible for his or her own maturity and freedom in Christ. Nobody can make you grow. That's your decision and daily responsibility. Nobody can solve your problems for you. You alone must initiate and follow through with

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that process. Thankfully, however, none of us walks through the disciplines of personal maturity and freedom alone. The indwelling Christ is eagerly willing to walk with us each step of the way.

This book is the first of two books I have written from my education and experience in discipling and counseling others. This book focuses on the foundational issues of living and maturing in Christ. You will discover who you are in Christ and how to live by faith. You will learn how to walk by the Spirit and be sensitive to His leading. The grace walk is living by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this book you will discover the nature of the battle for your mind and learn why your mind must be transformed so you can live by faith and grow spiritually. You will gain insight into how to manage your emotions and be set free from the emotional traumas of your past through faith and forgiveness.

In my second book, *The Bondage Breaker* (Harvest House Publishers), I focus on our freedom in Christ and the spiritual conflicts that affect Christians today. Being alive and free in Christ is an essential prerequisite for maturity in Christ. We cannot achieve instant maturity. It will take us the rest of our lives to renew our minds and conform to the image of God, but it doesn't take as long to realize our identity and freedom in Christ. The world, the flesh and the devil are enemies of our sanctification, but they have been and can be overcome in Christ.

I suggest that you complete this book first, learn about living and growing in Christ, then work through the subjects of spiritual conflicts and freedom by reading *The Bondage Breaker*.

*Victory Over the Darkness* is arranged something like a New Testament Epistle. The first half of the book lays a doctrinal foundation and defines terms that are necessary for understanding and implementing the more practical chapters that follow. You may be tempted to skip over the first half because it seems less relevant to daily experience. It is critical, however, to discern your position and victory in Christ so you can implement the practices of growth in Him. You need to know what to believe before you can understand what to do.

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I have talked to thousands of people like Russ, my first discipleship candidate. They are Christians, but they are not growing and they are not bearing fruit. They want to serve Christ, but they can't seem to get over the top and get on with their lives in a meaningful and productive way. They need to have their hope reestablished in Christ, as the following poem describes:

*Lend me your hope for a while,  
I seem to have mislaid mine.  
Lost and hopeless feelings accompany me daily,  
pain and confusion are my companions.  
I know not where to turn;  
looking ahead to future times does not bring forth  
images of renewed hope.  
I see troubled times, pain-filled days, and more tragedy.*

*Lend me your hope for a while,  
I seem to have mislaid mine.  
Hold my hand and hug me;  
listen to all my ramblings, recovery seems so far distant.  
The road to healing seems like a long and lonely one.*

*Lend me your hope for a while,  
I seem to have mislaid mine.  
Stand by me, offer me your presence, your heart and  
your love.  
Acknowledge my pain, it is so real and ever present.  
I am overwhelmed with sad and conflicting thoughts.*

*Lend me your hope for a while;  
a time will come when I will heal,  
and I will share my renewal,  
hope and love with others.<sup>1</sup>*

Do these words reflect your experience and echo your plea as a believer? Do you sometimes feel hemmed in by the world, the flesh

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and the devil to the point that you wonder if your Christianity is worth anything? Do you sometimes fear you will never be all God called you to be? Do you long to get on with your Christian maturity and experience the freedom God's Word promises?

I want to share my hope with you in the pages ahead. Your maturity is the product of time, pressure, trials, tribulations, the knowledge of God's Word, an understanding of who you are in Christ and the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life. You probably already have the first four elements in abundance; most Christians do. Let me add some generous doses of the last three ingredients. When Christians are alive and free in Christ, watch them grow!

### Note

1. Adapted from the poem "Lend Me Your Hope," author unknown.

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NEIL T. ANDERSON



## CHAPTER 1

# Who Are You?

I really enjoy asking people, “Who are you?” It sounds like a simple question requiring a simple answer, but it really isn’t. For example, if someone asked me, “Who are you?” I might answer, “Neil Anderson.”

“No, that’s your name. Who are you?”

“Oh, I’m a seminary professor.”

“No, that’s what you do.”

“I’m an American.”

“That’s where you live.”

“I’m an evangelical.”

“That’s your denominational preference.”

I could also say that I am five feet nine inches tall and a little over 150 pounds—actually *quite* a little over 150 pounds! My physical dimensions and appearance, however, aren’t me either. If you chopped off my arms and legs would I still be me? If you transplanted my heart, kidneys or liver would I still be me? Of course! Now if you keep chopping you will get to me eventually because I am in here somewhere. Who I am, though, is far more than what you see on the outside.

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The apostle Paul said, “We recognize no man according to the flesh” (2 Cor. 5:16). Maybe the Early Church didn’t, but generally we do. We tend to identify ourselves and each other primarily by what we look like (tall, short, stocky, slender) or what we do (plumber, carpenter, nurse, engineer, clerk). Furthermore, when we Christians are asked to identify ourselves in relation to our faith, we usually talk about our doctrinal position (Protestant, evangelical, Calvinist, charismatic), our denominational preference (Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Independent) or our role in the church (Sunday School teacher, choir member, deacon, usher).

Is who you are determined by what you do, or is what you do determined by who you are? That is an important question, especially as it relates to Christian maturity. I subscribe to the latter. I believe that your hope for growth, meaning and fulfillment as a Christian is based on understanding who you are—specifically, your identity in Christ as a child of God. Your understanding of who God is and who you are in relationship to Him is the critical foundation for your belief system and your behavior patterns as a Christian.

## False Equations in the Search for Identity

Several years ago a 17-year-old girl drove a great distance to talk with me. I have never met a girl who had so much going for her. She was cover-girl pretty and had a wonderful figure. She was immaculately dressed. She had completed 12 years of school in 11 years and graduated near the top of her class. As a talented musician, she had received a full-ride music scholarship to a Christian university. She also drove a brand-new sports car her parents gave her for graduation. I was amazed that one person could have so much.

She talked with me for half an hour and I realized that what I saw on the outside wasn’t matching what I was beginning to see on the inside.

“Mary,” I said finally, “have you ever cried yourself to sleep at night because you felt inadequate and wished you were somebody else?”

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She began to cry. “How did you know?”

“Truthfully, Mary,” I answered, “I’ve learned that people who *appear* to have it all together on the outside may not have it all together on the inside. I could ask almost anyone that same question at some time in their lives and get the same response.”

Often what we show on the outside is a false front designed to disguise who we really are, and we cover up the negative feelings we have about ourselves. The world would have us believe that if we appear attractive or perform well or enjoy a certain amount of status, then we will have it all together inside as well. That is not always true, however. External appearance, accomplishment and recognition don’t necessarily reflect—or produce—internal peace and maturity.

In his book *The Sensation of Being Somebody*, Maurice Wagner expresses this false belief in simple equations we tend to accept. He says we mistakenly think that good appearance plus the admiration it brings equal a whole person. Or we feel that star performance plus accomplishments equal a whole person. Or we believe that a certain amount of status plus the recognition we accumulate equal a whole person. Not so. These equations are no more correct than two plus two equal six. Wagner says:

Try as we might by our appearance, performance or social status to find self-verification for a sense of being somebody, we always come short of satisfaction. Whatever pinnacle of self-identity we achieve soon crumbles under the pressure of hostile rejection or criticism, introspection or guilt, fear or anxiety. We cannot do anything to qualify for the by-product of being loved unconditionally and voluntarily.<sup>1</sup>

If these equations could work for anyone, they would have worked for King Solomon. He was the king of Israel during the greatest years in its history. He had power, position, wealth, possessions and women. If a meaningful life is the result of appearance, admiration, performance, accomplishments, status or recognition, Solomon would have been the most together man who ever lived.

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Not only did he possess all that a fallen humanity could hope for, but God also gave him more wisdom than any other mortal to interpret it all. What was his conclusion? “Meaningless! Meaningless! . . . Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless” (Eccles. 1:2, *NIV*). Solomon sought to find purpose and meaning in life independent of God, and he wrote a book about it. The book of Ecclesiastes describes the futility of humankind pursuing a meaningful life in a fallen world without God. Millions of people climb those ladders of “success,” only to discover when they reach the top that their ladder is leaning against the wrong wall.

We also tend to buy into the negative side of the worldly success-equals-meaning formula by believing that if people have nothing, they have no hope for happiness. For example, I presented this scenario to a high school student a few years ago: “Suppose there’s a girl on your campus who has a potato body and stringy hair, who stumbles when she walks and stutters when she talks. She has a bad complexion and she struggles just to get average grades. Does she have any hope for happiness?”

He thought for a moment, then answered, “Probably not.”

Maybe he is right in this earthly kingdom, where people live strictly on the external plane. Happiness is equated with good looks, relationships with important people, the right job and a fat bank account. Life devoid of these “benefits” is too often equated with hopelessness.

What about life in God’s kingdom? The success-equals-happiness and failure-equals-hopelessness equations don’t exist. Everyone has exactly the same opportunity for a meaningful life. Why? Because wholeness and meaning in life are not the products of what you have or don’t have, what you’ve done or haven’t done. You are already a whole person and possess a life of infinite meaning and purpose because of who you are—a child of God. The only identity equation that works in God’s kingdom is you plus Christ equals wholeness and meaning.

If our relationship with God is the key to wholeness, why do so many believers struggle with their identity, security, significance,

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sense of worth and spiritual maturity? Ignorance is probably the primary reason. The prophet Hosea said, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (4:6). For others it is carnality, the lack of repentance and faith in God, and some are being deceived by the father of lies. This deception was brought home to me a few years ago when I was counseling a Christian girl who was the victim of satanic oppression.

I asked her, “Who are you?”

“I’m evil,” she answered.

“You’re not evil. How can a child of God be evil? Is that how you see yourself?” She nodded.

Now she may have done some evil things, but at the core of her being she wasn’t evil. This was evident by the deep remorse she felt after sinning. She was basing her identity on the wrong equation. She was letting Satan’s accusations influence her perception of herself instead of believing the truth.

THE ONLY IDENTITY EQUATION THAT WORKS  
IN GOD’S KINGDOM IS YOU PLUS CHRIST EQUALS  
WHOLENESS AND MEANING.

Sadly, a great number of Christians are trapped in the same downward spiral. We fail, so we see ourselves as failures, which only leads to more failure. We sin, so we see ourselves as sinners, which only leads to more sin. We have been deceived into believing that what we do determines who we are. That false belief sends us into a tailspin of hopelessness and more defeat. On the other hand, “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16). God wants us to know who we are so we can start living accordingly. Being a child of God who is alive and free in Christ should determine what we do. Then we are working *out* our salvation (see Phil. 2:12), not for our salvation.

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## The Original Creation

To understand the gospel and who we are in Christ, we need to look at the creation account and the subsequent fall of humankind (see Figure 1-A). Genesis 2:7 reads: “Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” This combination of clay and divine breath is what constitutes humankind.

Theologians have debated whether the individual members of Adam’s race are made up of two or three parts. Those who hold to a trichotomous view believe we are comprised of a body, soul (containing mind, emotions and will) and spirit. Those who hold to a dichotomous view believe we are comprised of a material and immaterial part, an outer person and an inner person. They would understand the soul and the spirit to be essentially the same.

For the sake of our discussion, we are going to describe who we are from a functional perspective. Suffice it to say, we have an outer self, a physical body that relates to this world through the five senses, and an inner self that relates to God and is created in His image (see Gen. 1:26,27). Being created in the image of God is what gives us the capacity to fully think, feel and choose. After God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, Adam was both physically and spiritually alive.

### Physically Alive

The physical life we inherited from Adam is best represented in the New Testament by the word *bios*. *Bios* describes the union of your physical body and your immaterial self—mind, emotions and will. To be physically alive means the soul or soul/spirit is in union with your body. To die physically means that you separate from your temporal body.

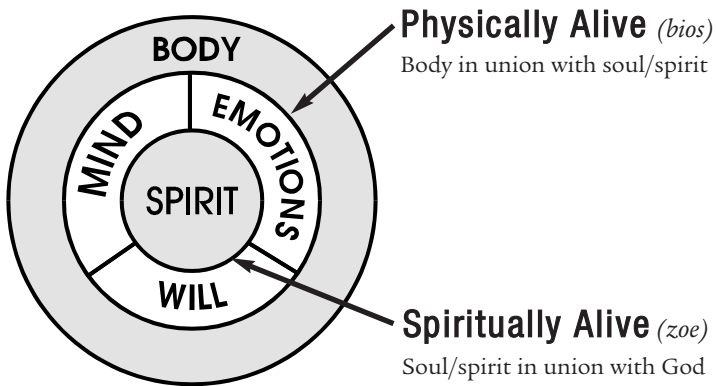
In the Bible, to die means to be separate from, and to be alive means to be in union with. Paul said to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (see 2 Cor. 5:8). Obviously, who you are encompasses more than your physical body, because the body is left behind when you physically die and yet you will be present with the Lord.

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Although your principal identity is more than physical, in this life you cannot exist without your physical body. Your immaterial inner self needs your material outer self to live and function in this world.

## ORIGINAL CREATION Genesis 1–2



1. Significance—Man had a divine purpose (Gen. 1:28).
2. Safety and security—All of man's needs were provided for (Gen. 1:29).
3. Belonging—Man had a sense of belonging (Gen. 2:18).

*bios* = The soul is in union with the body.

*zoe* = The soul is in union with God.

Figure 1-A

For example, your physical brain is like the hardware of a computer system and your immaterial mind is like the software. A computer can't function without software, and software needs a computer to function. You need your physical brain to control your movements and responses, and you need your immaterial mind to reason and make value judgments. The brain can't function independently of how it has been programmed. The finest organic

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brain can't accomplish anything in a corpse that lacks a mind. Your mind can be perfectly programmed, but if your brain is damaged by Alzheimer's disease you cannot function well as a person.

As long as I live in the physical world, I must do so in a physical body. As such, I am going to take care of my body as well as I can by exercising, eating right and so on. The truth of the matter is that my body is corruptible and it is decaying. I don't look the way I looked 20 years ago, and I don't have great prospects for the next 20 years. In 2 Corinthians 5:1-4, Paul referred to the believer's body as a tent, the temporary dwelling place of the soul. Using his illustration, I must confess that my tent pegs are coming up, my poles are sagging and my seams are becoming frayed. At my age, I am just glad there is more to me than the disposable earth suit in which I walk around.

### Spiritually Alive

We also inherited from Adam the capacity for spiritual life. Paul wrote: "Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day" (2 Cor. 4:16, *NIV*). He was referring to the spiritual life of the believer that doesn't age or decay as does the outer shell. To be spiritually alive—characterized in the New Testament by the word *zoe*—means that your soul or soul/spirit is in union with God. That is the condition in which Adam was created—physically alive *and* spiritually alive, in perfect union with God.

For the Christian, to be spiritually alive is to be in union with God. This spiritual life is most often conveyed in the New Testament as being "in Christ," or "in Him." Like Adam, we were created to be in union with God. As we shall discover later in this chapter, however, Adam sinned and his union with God was severed. It is God's eternal plan to bring human creation back to Himself and restore the union He enjoyed with Adam at creation. That restored union with God, which we find "in Christ," is what defines who we are as children of God.

### Significance

In the original creation, humankind was given a divine purpose for being here. Humanity was given dominion over all the other crea-

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tures: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:26,27).

Adam didn’t have to search for significance. That attribute was the result of creation. Satan had to crawl on his belly like a snake in the presence of God. He was not the god of this world at that time. He usurped the authority given to Adam and his descendants after Adam sinned and lost his relationship with God.

### Safety and Security

Not only did Adam have a sense of significance, but he also enjoyed a sense of safety and security. All his needs were provided. Genesis 1:29,30 records: “Then God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food.’” Adam was completely cared for in the garden. All of his needs were provided. He could eat of the tree of life and live forever. He was safe and secure in the presence of God.

### Belonging

Adam apparently enjoyed intimate, one-on-one communion with God, but something was missing. “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him’” (Gen. 2:18). Adam and Eve not only had a sense of belonging with God, but also with each other. When God created Eve, He established human community: a meaningful, open, sharing relationship with one another. Adam and Eve were naked and unashamed. They had nothing to hide. Their bodies consisted of no dirty parts. God created them male and female and told them

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to be fruitful and multiply. They could openly have an intimate sexual relationship with each other in the presence of God.

## The Effects of the Fall

Unfortunately, the idyllic setting in the Garden of Eden was shattered. Genesis 3 tells the sad story of Adam and Eve's lost relationship with God through sin. The effects of their fall were dramatic, immediate and far reaching, infecting every subsequent member of the human race.

### Spiritual Death

What happened to Adam and Eve spiritually because of the Fall? They died. Their union with God was severed and they were separated from God. God had specifically said, "You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die" (Gen. 2:17, *NIV*). They ate and they died.

Did they die physically? Not immediately, although physical death would be a consequence of the Fall as well. They died spiritually; they were separated from God's presence. They were physically cast out of the Garden of Eden and a cherubim waving a flaming sword was stationed at the entrance "to guard the way to the tree of life" (Gen. 3:24). Some believe this act preserved a way back as God's plan of redemption unfolded.

Just as we inherited physical life from our first parents, so we have inherited spiritual death from them (see Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21,22). Consequently, every human being who comes into the world is born physically alive but spiritually dead, separated from God (see Eph. 2:1).

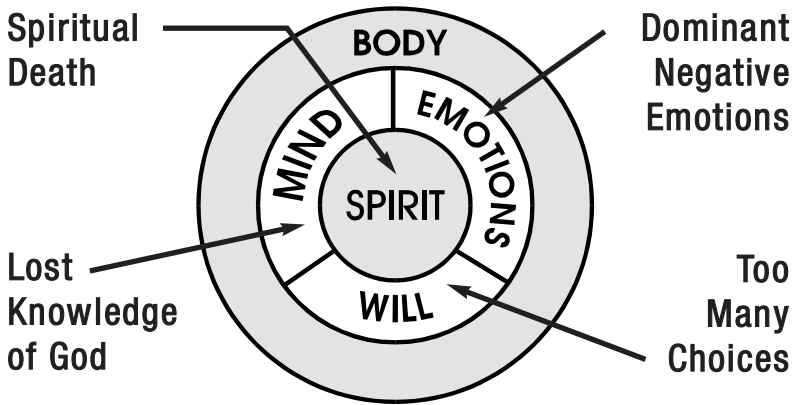
### Lost Knowledge of God

What effect did the Fall produce in Adam's mind? He and Eve lost their true perception of reality and the idea of knowing was no longer relational. We read in Genesis 3:7,8 that they tried to hide

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## EFFECTS OF THE FALL Genesis 3:8–4:9



1. *Rejection*—therefore a need to belong!
2. *Guilt and shame*—therefore a need of self-worth!
3. *Weakness and helplessness*—therefore a need of strength and self-control!

**Note:**

All sinful behavior is a wrong attempt at meeting basic needs. The essence of sin is man living independently of God, who has said that He will meet all of our needs as we live out life in Christ.

Figure 1-B

from God. Doesn't that reveal a faulty understanding of who God is? How can you hide from an omnipresent God? Their distorted perception of reality reflects Paul's description of the futile thinking of those who don't know God: "They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts" (Eph. 4:18, *NIV*).

In essence, when Adam and Eve sinned they lost a true knowledge of God. In God's original design, knowledge was relational. The Hebrew concept of knowledge implied an intimate personal

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relationship. For instance, “Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived” (Gen. 4:1, *KJV*). Yet we don’t generally equate a knowledge of someone with personal intimacy. When they sinned and were banished from the garden, Adam and Eve lost their relationship with God and the knowledge of God, which was intrinsic to that relationship.

In our unregenerate state, we may have known something *about* God, but we didn’t *know* God because we had no relationship with Him. “But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised” (1 Cor. 2:14).

The necessity of being in relationship to God to know God comes into sharp focus in John’s announcement: “And the Word [*logos* in the Greek] became flesh” (John 1:14). That was an incredibly significant statement in a world heavily influenced by ancient Greek philosophy. To the Greek philosopher, *logos* represented the highest form of philosophical knowledge. To say that the Word became flesh meant that the *logos* was incarnated, that ultimate knowledge became personal and relational. Jesus embodied the truth because He is the truth. You couldn’t separate His words from who He is. The Hebrew *dabar*, translated as “word,” also conveyed the ultimate wisdom of God.

The Gospel of John brings these two cultures and dominant concepts together in Christ. God was announcing to the world through John that the true knowledge of God, which can only be discovered in an intimate relationship with God, is now available to the world through God who came in the flesh—Jesus Christ. In Christ we are able to know God personally because we have received the “mind of Christ” (1 Cor. 2:16) in our inner selves at salvation.

This truth has profound implications for Christian education. Knowledge to the western world has become nothing more than the collection of data. That kind of knowledge makes us arrogant, but love edifies (see 1 Cor. 8:1). Paul says, “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Tim. 1:5). The truth (Christ and His Word) should set us free and enable us to conform to the image of God. “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

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## Dominant Negative Emotions

Adam and Eve were not only darkened in their understanding, but they also became fearful and anxious. The first emotion expressed by fallen humankind was fear (see Gen. 3:10). Fear of anything other than God is mutually exclusive to faith in God. Why is the fear of God the beginning of wisdom (see Prov. 9:10) and how does it expel all other fears?

THE TRUTH (CHRIST AND HIS WORD)  
SHOULD SET US FREE AND ENABLE US TO  
CONFORM TO THE IMAGE OF GOD.



As I was writing the book *Freedom From Fear* with my colleague Rich Miller, I became aware that we are living in an age of anxiety. People around the world are paralyzed by fear of anything and everything but God. Chuck Colson said, “For the church in the West to come alive, it needs to resolve its identity crisis, to stand on truth, to renew its vision . . . and more than anything else, it needs to recover the fear of the Lord.”<sup>2</sup>

Another emotional by-product of sin is shame and guilt. Before Adam and Eve disobeyed God they were naked and unashamed (see Gen. 2:25). God created them as sexual beings. Their sex organs and sexual activity were holy. When they sinned, however, they were ashamed to be naked and they had to cover up (see 3:7). Many people mask the inner self for fear that others may find out what is really going on inside. When dominated by guilt and shame, self-disclosure is not likely to happen.

Humankind also became depressed and angry after the Fall. Cain brought his offering to God and, for some reason, God was displeased with it. “So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do

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what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it'” (Gen. 4:5-7, *NIV*).

Why was Cain angry and depressed? Because he didn't do what was right. In other words, God is saying, “You don't feel your way into good behavior; you behave your way into good feelings.” Jesus said, “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them” (John 13:17).

While researching and writing the book *Finding Hope Again*, I discovered we are also experiencing a blues epidemic in this age of anxiety. Depression is so prevalent it is called the “common cold” of mental illness. Visits to the doctor that resulted in a diagnosis of depression almost doubled from 1985 to 1995 in the United States, and overall there was a tenfold increase in the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup>

### Too Many Choices

Adam and Eve's sin also affected their will to choose. Do you realize that in the Garden of Eden they could make only one wrong choice? Everything they wanted to do was okay except eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (see Gen. 2:16,17). They had the possibility of making myriad good choices and only one bad choice—*only one!*

Eventually, however, they made that one bad choice. As a result, you and I are confronted every day with myriad good *and* bad choices. Apart from the Holy Spirit in your life, the greatest power you possess is the power to choose. You can choose to pray or not pray, read your Bible or not read your Bible, go to church or not go to church. You can choose to walk according to the flesh or according to the Spirit.

### Attributes Become Needs

Another long-term effect of sin is that humankind's attributes before the Fall became glaring needs after the Fall. This sad transition occurs in three areas. Each of these three needs is continuous in our lives.

1. *Acceptance was replaced by rejection; therefore we have a need to belong.* Even before the Fall, Adam had a need to belong. His need to belong to God was filled in the intimacy of his fellowship with God

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in the garden. Of all the things that were good in the garden, the only thing that was “not good” was that Adam was alone (Gen. 2:18). God filled that need by creating Eve.

Ever since Adam and Eve’s sin alienated them from God and introduced strife into human relationships, we have experienced a deep need to belong. Even when people come to Christ and fill their need to belong to God, they still need to belong to the community of God’s people.

If your church doesn’t provide opportunities for legitimate Christian fellowship for its members, they will seek it someplace else. Those who study church-growth trends have discovered that a church can give people Christ, but if it doesn’t also give them friends, after a few months the church will lose them. The spiritual union of Christian fellowship—called *koinonia* in the New Testament—is not just a nice thing the church ought to provide; it is a necessary thing the church *must* provide.

You will never understand the power of peer pressure in our culture until you understand the legitimate need to belong and the fear of rejection we all share.

2. *Innocence was replaced by guilt and shame; therefore the need for a legitimate sense of worth has to be restored.* Those who work with people recognize that a suffering humankind struggles with a poor sense of worth. An identity crisis and a negative self-image have been human problems since the Fall. The secular advice of stroking one another’s ego and picking ourselves up by our own bootstraps is not a sufficient answer. Our sense of worth is not a question of giftedness, talent, intelligence or beauty. Your sense of personal worth comes from knowing who you are as a child of God and your growth in character. We will talk more about the dimensions of our identity in Christ and how it contributes to our sense of worth in the chapters ahead.

3. *Dominion was replaced by weakness and helplessness; therefore we have a need for strength and self-control.* People attempt to meet this need by learning to discipline themselves or by seeking to control and manipulate others. Nobody is more insecure or sick than controllers. They wrongly believe they can establish themselves by trying

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to control and manipulate other people or circumstances in life. In other words, they are trying to play God. The fruit of the Spirit is not spouse control or staff control or environmental control; it is self-control (see Gal. 5:23).

On the other hand, extreme efforts at self-discipline without the grace of God often lead to legalism or perfectionism and result in self-destruction. The world would have us think we are the masters of our fates and the captains of our souls, but we really aren't. The human soul was not designed to function as a master. We cannot serve God and wealth, but we will serve one or the other (see Matt. 6:24), being deceived into thinking we are serving ourselves.

Every temptation is an attempt by the devil to get us to live our lives independently of God. Satan tempts us just as he did Jesus by appealing to our most basic and legitimate needs. The question is: Are these needs going to be met by the world, the flesh and the devil, or are they going to be met by God who promises to meet all our needs "according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19)? The most critical needs are the being needs and they are the ones most wonderfully met in Christ.

## Who I Am in Christ

### I Am Accepted

John 1:12	I am God's child.
John 15:15	I am Christ's friend.
Romans 5:1	I have been justified.
1 Corinthians 6:17	I am united with the Lord, and I am one spirit with Him.
1 Corinthians 6:20	I have been bought with a price. I belong to God.
1 Corinthians 12:27	I am a member of Christ's Body.
Ephesians 1:1	I am a saint.
Ephesians 1:5	I have been adopted as God's child.
Ephesians 2:18	I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit.

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Colossians 1:14 I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins.  
 Colossians 2:10 I am complete in Christ.

### I Am Secure

Romans 8:1-2 I am free from condemnation.  
 Romans 8:28 I am assured all things work together for good.  
 Romans 8:31-34 I am free from any condemning charges against me.  
 Romans 8:35-39 I cannot be separated from the love of God.  
 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 I have been established, anointed and sealed by God.  
 Philippians 1:6 I am confident that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected.  
 Philippians 3:20 I am a citizen of heaven.  
 Colossians 3:3 I am hidden with Christ in God.  
 2 Timothy 1:7 I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind.  
 Hebrews 4:16 I can find grace and mercy in time of need.  
 1 John 5:18 I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me.

### I Am Significant

Matthew 5:13-14 I am the salt and light of the earth.  
 John 15:1,5 I am a branch of the true vine, a channel of His life.  
 John 15:16 I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit.  
 Acts 1:8 I am a personal witness of Christ.  
 1 Corinthians 3:16 I am God's temple.  
 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 I am a minister of reconciliation for God.  
 2 Corinthians 6:1 I am God's coworker (see 1 Corinthians 3:9).  
 Ephesians 2:6 I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realm.  
 Ephesians 2:10 I am God's workmanship.  
 Ephesians 3:12 I may approach God with freedom and confidence.  
 Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.



## Notes

1. Maurice Wagner, *The Sensation of Being Somebody* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), p. 163.
2. Neil T. Anderson and Rich Miller, *Freedom From Fear* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1999), p. 259.
3. Neil T. Anderson, *Finding Hope Again* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1999), p. 32.