

MORE THAN 2 MILLION SOLD

VICTORY OVER THE DARKNESS



REVISED AND UPDATED EDITION

REALIZE THE POWER
OF YOUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST

NEIL T.
ANDERSON



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, 2020 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

Printed in the United States of America

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—for example, electronic, photocopy, recording—without the prior written permission of the publisher. The only exception is brief quotations in printed reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Anderson, Neil T.

Title: Victory over the darkness : realize the power of your identity in Christ /
Neil T. Anderson.

Description: Minneapolis : Bethany House Publishers, 2020.

Identifiers: LCCN 2020000525 | ISBN 9780764235993 (trade paperback)

Subjects: LCSH: Discippling (Christianity) | Pastoral counseling.

Classification: LCC BV4520 .A55 2020 | DDC 253—dc23

LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2020000525>

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible® (NASB), copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations labeled NIV are from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Scripture quotations labeled KJV are from the King James Version of the Bible.

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

Cover design by Rob Williams, InsideOutCreativeArts

20 21 22 23 24 25 26 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

In keeping with biblical principles of creation stewardship, Baker Publishing Group advocates the responsible use of our natural resources. As a member of the Green Press Initiative, our company uses recycled paper when possible. The text paper of this book is composed in part of post-consumer waste.



Derek Faulkner was living under a bridge in Atlanta, Georgia, when he was forty years old. His alcohol and drug addiction had driven him away from his faithful wife and family. Attempts to abstain in the past had ended in futility, but then an opportunity came for him to attend Renewed Life Ministries in Tennessee. He not only gained sobriety, but also discovered his identity and freedom in Christ. He later became the director of the ministry and led many people to freedom. Derek was a ministry associate with Freedom in Christ Ministries, and his favorite book was *Victory Over the Darkness*. At the age of fifty-eight he lost his battle with cancer, and now he lives victoriously in heaven. I dedicate this book to the loving memory of Derek Faulkner, who was the “best friend” of hundreds who celebrated his life at his memorial service.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments 13

Introduction: *Lend Me Your Hope* 15

1. Who Are You? 21
2. The Whole Gospel 39
3. See Yourself for Who You Really Are 57
4. Something Old, Something New 73
5. Becoming the Spiritual Person God Wants You to Be 89
6. The Power of Believing the Truth 109
7. You Can't Live Beyond What You Believe 125
8. God's Guidelines for the Walk of Faith 137
9. Winning the Battle for Your Mind 153
10. You Must Be Real to Be Right 169
11. Healing Emotional Wounds 183
12. Loving One Another 199

Steps to Freedom in Christ Research Results 213

Freedom in Christ Ministries Books and Resources 217

Notes 221

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Writing a book was a project I intended to do when I retired. I love the ministry and the joy of helping others. So when I attended a writer's 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 thirty years ago when the first edition of this, my first book, went into print. More than seventy other books have come off the press since that time. God obviously had other plans for my life than what I envisioned.

A lot of water has gone under the bridge since that first edition. Now there are more than two million copies of this book in various languages in print worldwide, and the same goes for my second book, *The Bondage Breaker*. Freedom in Christ Ministries is now a global ministry, with offices and representatives in many countries (see www.ficminternational.org).

I am grateful for Biola University/Talbot School of Theology, where I had the privilege of teaching for ten years. Special thanks to the late Dr. Robert Saucy, who was my mentor, friend, and favorite theologian. The core message of Freedom in Christ Ministries became a part of my spiritual DNA during those years,

Acknowledgments

and I bounced a lot of my ideas off Dr. Saucy. Having a godly and reliable sounding board is priceless.

Many life illustrations have come from my early years on the farm in Minnesota. I am grateful for my parents who faithfully took me to church every Sunday, 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 helping many others 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

In my first pastorate, I was committed to disciple a young man in our church. It was my first attempt at one-on-one discipling. Russ and I decided to meet once a week and work our way through an inductive Bible study. We began with high hopes, but six months later we were still slogging through the same study. For some unknown reason, our Paul-and-Timothy relationship wasn't working. Our hope for making progress gradually deflated like a balloon with a slow leak, and we stopped meeting altogether.

Russ came to see me two years later after I was called to pastor another church. He shared what was going on in his life during our brief one-on-one relationship—a story that revealed a secret part of his life that I never knew existed. Russ was living in sin, and unwilling to share that with me. I could sense that he was struggling, but I had no clue as to why, nor how to help him.

The apostle Paul gives an explanation of why some attempts to disciple others isn't working. "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 Corinthians 3:2–3 emphasis added). Because of unresolved conflicts, carnal Christians are not able to receive the solid food of God’s Word. Some, like Russ, are willing and make the effort to attend a meeting or church services, but what is taught is going right over their heads.

When I was a senior pastor, I believed Christ was the answer and that truth would set people free, but I really didn’t know how. People at my church had problems for which I didn’t have adequate 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 and faith in God.

My seminary education had taught me about the kingdom of God but very little 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” (Ephesians 6:12). Through countless hours of intense ministry with defeated Christians, I began to understand the battle for their minds and how they could be transformed by the renewing of their minds.

In the course of learning this, my family and I went through a very broken experience.¹ For fifteen months I didn’t know whether my wife, Joanne, was going to live or die. No cause for her illness was ever determined. Medical bills cost us everything we had, including our house. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t fix her. When all you have is God and each other, you are in position to discover that God is all you need. I believe God intentionally brought me to the end of my resources so I could discover His. I had no idea that my stoic self-sufficiency was my greatest enemy to my sufficiency in Christ. That was the birth of Freedom in Christ Ministries. I am fully aware that I can’t set anybody free; only God can do that. I can’t heal the wounds of the broken heart; only God can do that. He is the Wonderful Counselor. Brokenness is the

key to effective ministry, and when that happens, God's presence works through us to accomplish His purpose.

Since those early years, the focus of my ministry, both as a pastor and a seminary professor, has been the interrelated ministries of discipling and counseling. I have also taught discipleship and pastoral counseling at the seminary level in churches across the country and around the world. I may be the only pastor/teacher who has written books on anger, depression, anxiety disorders, reconciliation, marriage, and chemical and sexual addiction. I firmly believe that a righteous relationship with God is the only answer for fallen humanity. I believe the greatest determinant of mental, emotional, and spiritual health begins with a true knowledge of God and a right relationship with Him. A good theology is an indispensable prerequisite to a good psychology.

I have found one common denominator for all struggling Christians. None of them 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 testifies with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:16), why weren't they sensing it?

After one of my conferences, a woman shared that her friend hadn't called her in a month—which was concerning, she said, because the friend had previously called every day for support. The woman's insecure friend struggled to survive by depending on friends, three counseling sessions a week, and a variety of prescription medications. During the conference, this woman realized that her friend's support system included everybody and everything but God. After the friend discovered who she was as a child of God, she went to her heavenly Father daily and learned to cast her anxiety upon Christ. After resolving her personal and spiritual conflicts, she began to step out in faith and renew her mind to the truth of God's Word. In just one month she was a different person.

In this book I will focus on being firmly rooted and grounded in Jesus. It is my hope that you will discover who you are in Christ,

what it means to be a child of God, and learn how to live by faith in the power of the Holy Spirit. I will explain the battle for your mind and how you are transformed by the renewing of your mind. You will learn how to manage your emotions and be set free from the emotional traumas of your past through faith and forgiveness.

The sequel to this book is *The Bondage Breaker*, where I share how we can overcome the forces of evil. Together they will enable you to be alive and free in Christ, which are essential prerequisites for maturing in Christ. There is no such thing as instant maturity. It will take us the rest of our lives to renew our minds and conform to the image and likeness of God, but it doesn't take long to establish our identity and freedom in Christ. The world, the flesh, and the devil are formidable enemies of our sanctification, but they are overcome in Christ.

I have talked to thousands of people who are struggling through life, wondering if this is as good as it gets. They can't seem to get over the top and get on with their lives in a meaningful way. They need to have their hope reestablished in Christ aided by liberated encouragers who have found their life, identity, and freedom in Christ. You may be one of them who is saying:

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.²

In the pages ahead I want to share my hope with you. Every born-again believer is a new creation in Christ. You can be free from your past. You can have the peace of God guarding your heart and your mind in Christ Jesus. Emotional wounds can be healed. You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory. You are loved unconditionally by the Lord God Almighty, and with Him all good things are possible.

1

Who Are You?

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man that You take thought of him, and the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, and You crown him with glory and majesty.

Psalm 8:3–5

“Who are you?” It sounds like an easy question requiring a simple answer, but it isn’t. If someone asked me that question, I would likely answer, “Neil Anderson.” But that is just my name. I could say, “I’m a pastor and seminary professor,” but that just defines what I do. Or I could say, “I’m an American,” but that only identifies where I live. If the questioning persists, I might respond in frustration, “You can see me. I’m a man who is five feet eight inches tall and weighs a little over 150 pounds—actually *quite* a little over 150 pounds! But the apostle Paul said, ‘We recognize no one according to the flesh’” (2 Corinthians 5:16).

Asking who we are is an ontological question concerning the nature of “being.” Five centuries before Christ, Thales of Miletus

was asked, “What is the most difficult?” He replied, “To know thyself.” Twenty-five centuries later, science is no closer to answering the question, “What is mankind?” We know far more about the chemical makeup of the body, but that tells us nothing about who we are when absent from the body and present with the Lord. Psychology can describe, but not unlock, the mystery of the *person*. Biology is the study of plants and animals, but none bear the image and likeness of God. Science cannot answer the most basic of all questions: Who are we, and why are we here?

The natural tendency is to seek self-verification, or become somebody special through appearance, performance, or social status. However, what people appear to be doesn’t always reflect who they are, nor does their performance or social status. It isn’t what we do that determines who we are; who we are determines what we do.

False Attempts at Self-Verification

A young lady appeared to have everything going for her. She was attractive, talented, and immaculately groomed. She completed twelve years of school in eleven years and graduated near the top of her class. She received a full-ride talent scholarship to a Christian university. Her parents had given her a sports car for graduation. After listening to her story, I asked, “Have you ever cried yourself to sleep at night out of feelings of inadequacy, and wished you were somebody else?”

She began to cry, and asked, “How did you know?”

I could ask anyone that question at some time in their lives, and get a similar response. Who hasn’t struggled with self-doubt and felt defeated by morbid introspection? Appearances can be deceiving. People often portray a false front disguising who they really are, and cover up negative feelings they have about themselves. Stroking one another’s egos and picking ourselves up by

our own bootstraps provides no lasting fulfillment. Don't be fooled by an arrogant person with an inflated ego. Drawing attention to themselves only reveals how shallow their existence really is.

In his book *The Sensation of Being Somebody*, Maurice Wagner wrote:

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.¹

If such attempts at self-verification worked, then Solomon should have been the most fulfilled man who ever lived. He was king of Israel during its greatest prominence. He had power, position, wealth, possessions, and a thousand wives to choose from. Not only did he possess all that fallen humanity could hope for, but God also gave him more wisdom than any other mortal to interpret it all, and what was his conclusion? “Meaningless! Meaningless! . . . Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless” (Ecclesiastes 1:2 NIV). Solomon sought to find purpose and meaning in life independently of God, and he wrote a book about it. The book of Ecclesiastes describes the futility of humanity pursuing a meaningful life in a fallen world without God. Millions of people climb ladders of “success,” only to discover when they reach the top that their ladder is leaning against the wrong wall.

We also succumb to the flip side of self-verification. If people can't measure up to the world's standards, they seemingly have no hope for a meaningful life. Suppose people have potato bodies and stringy hair, who stumble when they walk and stutter when they talk, and struggle to get average grades. Do they have any hope for fulfillment? Happiness? Satisfaction? Are they nobodies?

They may be perceived as such in the eyes of the world, but not in God's eyes, and that is not how life was from the beginning.

The Original Creation

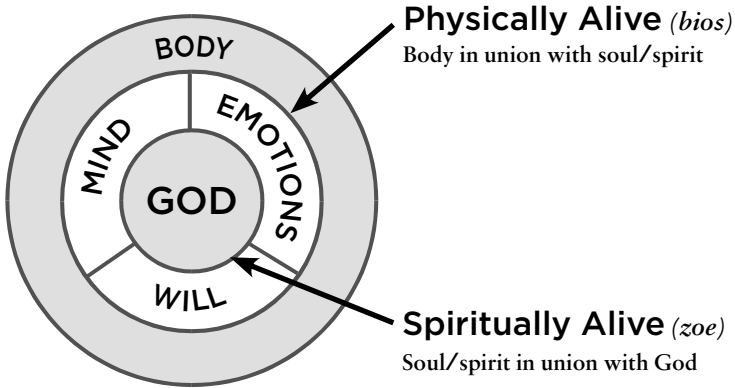
"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). The Hubble Space Telescope enables us to view the extravagance of creation, and what we see is beyond our ability to comprehend. We can only marvel as we stare into space. "The heavens are telling of the glory of God; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands" (Psalm 19:1). The universe has supernovas, galaxies, and stars so large that if depicted on a printed page, they would render the earth a tiny dot in comparison. All this created matter is finite, devoid of life, and did not originate from preexisting matter. On the other hand, the Creator is living and infinite, the Mind behind the universe.

Earth and possibly other planets have organic life in the form of plants, birds, animals, and fish. Such life is subject to the natural law of death. It perpetuates its species by sowing seeds for the next generation before it dies, or it will face extinction. "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" (Genesis 2:7). Something new and totally different was introduced into the universe. God shared His divine life with Adam, who was created in His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26). This combination of clay and divine breath is what constituted the original man.

Paul refers to humanity as having an outer person and an inner person (2 Corinthians 4:16), i.e., a material part and an immaterial part. The outer person is our body; the inner person is our soul/spirit, comprised of the mind, will, and emotion. Most theologians are dichotomous and understand the soul and spirit to be essentially the same. Some are trichotomous and understand the body, soul, and spirit to be separate entities; however, soul and

FIGURE 1-A

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.

spirit are often used interchangeably in Scripture. For our discussion, we are going to think holistically and consider the body and soul working together in unity.

Scripture also refers to the heart, which is most often understood as the center of self. H. Wheeler Robinson counted 822 uses of the word *heart* for some aspect of human personality. According to his categorization, 204 of the uses refer to intellectual activity, 195 to volitional aspect, and 166 to an emotional state.² It is more accurate to think of the heart as the seat of reflection rather than the popular notion that it is the seat of our emotions. Only in the heart does the mind, will, and emotion converge in one holistic

unity. Worldly education wants to enlarge the mind. God wants to enlarge the heart. It is possible that one can have intellectual knowledge that never touches the heart, and therefore results in no or little transformation. David wrote, “Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being” (Psalm 51:6).

Physically Alive

After God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, Adam was both physically and spiritually alive. The Greek term for physical life is *bios*. Bios is the union between body and soul. We are physically alive when our soul is in union with our bodies. Physical death is the separation of body and soul.

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 Corinthians 5:8). Obviously, who you are encompasses more than your physical body, because the body returns to dust when you physically die, and believers will be present with the Lord.

The real you, your immaterial inner self, needs your material outer self to live and function in this world. For example, your physical brain is like the hardware of a computer system, and your immaterial mind is like the software. A computer is basically worthless without software, but software needs a computer in order to function. You need your physical brain to control your body’s 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 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 long as I live in the physical world, I must do so in a material body. I try to be a good steward by maintaining a proper

balance of rest, exercise, and diet. There is no hope for the eternal preservation of my body. “Though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16). Paul referred to the believer’s body as a tent, the temporary dwelling place of the soul (see 2 Corinthians 5:1–4). I admit that my tent pegs are slowly pulling out of the ground, my tent poles are sagging, and my tent seams are becoming frayed. At my age, I’m glad there is more to me than the disposable earth suit in which I walk around.

Spiritually Alive

God’s divine breath made Adam spiritually alive, which is the Greek word *zoe*. His soul was in union with God. However, when Adam sinned, his union with God was severed. Jesus died for our sins, but He did much more. He came to give us life. He restored our union with God. Being spiritually alive “in Christ” is what defines who we are as children of God.

Significance

Adam and Eve had dominion over all other creatures: “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.’ 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).

Adam didn’t have to search for significance. Significance was an attribute of creation. Satan had to crawl on his belly like a snake in the presence of Adam who was in union with God. Satan was not the god of this world at that time, but he became that when he usurped the authority given to Adam and his descendants.

Safety and Security

Not only did Adam have a sense of significance, but he also enjoyed a sense of safety and security. God had provided for all his needs. “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 everything that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food’” (Genesis 1:29–30). He could eat of the tree of life and live forever. He was safe and secure in the presence of God.

Belonging

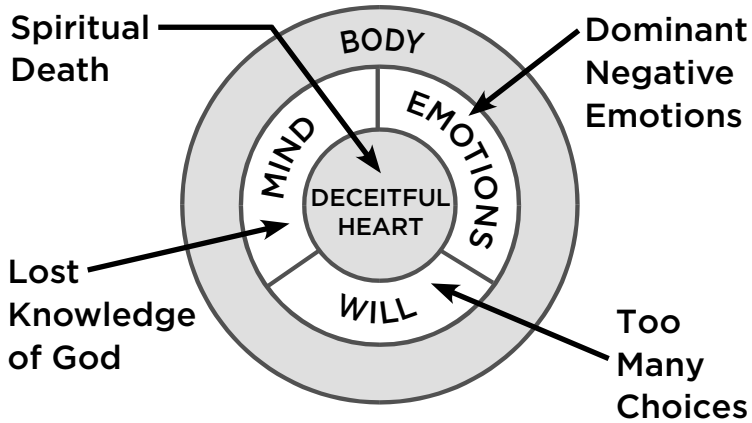
Adam enjoyed intimate, one-on-one communion with God, but something was missing. “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him’” (Genesis 2:18). Adam and Eve not only had a sense of belonging with God, but also with each other. When God created 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 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

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.

FIGURE 1-B

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.

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 from it you will certainly die” (Genesis 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" (Genesis 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 Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:21–22). Consequently, every human being who comes into the world is born physically alive but spiritually dead, i.e., separated from God (see Ephesians 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. As recorded in Genesis 3:7–8, they tried to hide from God, revealing 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" (Ephesians 4:18 NIV).

In essence, when Adam and Eve sinned, they lost a true knowledge of God, and therefore reality, since the ultimate reality is God. In God's original design, knowledge was relational. In Old Testament literature, wisdom and understanding are often personified. "Acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding! Do not forget nor turn away from the words of my mouth. Do not forsake *her*, and *she* will guard you: Love *her* and *she* will watch over you" (Proverbs 4:5–6, emphasis added). The Hebrew concept of knowledge implied an intimate personal relationship. For instance, "Adam knew

Eve his wife; and she conceived” (Genesis 4:1 kjv). 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. Paul wrote that, “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 Corinthians 2:14).

The necessity of being in relationship to God in order 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 at the time in a world heavily influenced by ancient Greek philosophy. To the Greek philosopher, *logos* represented the highest form of philosophical understanding. 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. We can’t separate His words from who He is. The Hebrew *dabar*, translated as “word,” also conveyed the ultimate wisdom of God. Knowledge is incarnated in believers by the presence of God when the Truth, i.e., Jesus, enters our hearts.

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 Corinthians 2:16) in our inner selves at salvation.

This truth has profound implications for Christian education. Knowledge to the Western rational and natural world is little more than the collection of data. Paul warned us that having such

knowledge makes for arrogance, but love edifies (see 1 Corinthians 8:1), “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5). The truth (Christ and His Word) should set us free and enable us to conform to the image of God, who is love (see 1 John 4:8). “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

Dominant Negative Emotions

Adam and Eve were not only darkened in their understanding, but they also became fearful and anxious. The first emotion expressed after the fall was fear (see Genesis 3:10). The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom (see Proverbs 9:10), and is the basis for conquering all other fears (see *Letting Go of Fear*³). Fear is a God-given natural reaction anytime our physical or psychological safety is threatened. Phobias are irrational fears, which means that such feelings are not based on truth. Irrational fears of anything other than God are mutually exclusive to faith in God. Anxiety disorders are the most prevalent emotional illnesses of the world, and “fear not” is the most repeated command in Scripture.

Another emotional by-product of sin is guilt and shame. To be judged guilty means we have done something wrong, whereas to be deemed shameful implies there is something wrong with us. Before Adam and Eve disobeyed God, they were naked and unashamed (see Genesis 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 plagued 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 down-

cast. 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 what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it’” (Genesis 4:5–7 NIV).

Why was Cain angry and depressed? Because he didn’t do what was right. In other words, 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). Rage is today’s ruling online emotion, and the “one most likely to spread across social media, with one angry post powerful and persuasive enough to negatively influence a follower of a follower of a follower.”⁴

Depression is so prevalent that it is called the “common cold” of mental illness. Depression is most often the result of experiencing losses in our lives that can be real, threatened, or imagined. It is a sense of helplessness and hopelessness (see *Overcoming Depression*⁵). Depressed people have a negative view of themselves, the circumstances surrounding them, and the future.

Too Many Choices

Adam and Eve’s sin also affected their will. 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 Genesis 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, believe or not believe, read your Bible or not read your Bible, go to church or not go to church. You can choose to live according to the flesh or live according to the Spirit.

Adam and Eve went from acceptance, security, and significance, to being fearful, anxious, shameful, guilty, depressed, and angry, and there was only one thing that precipitated that change. They died spiritually. They were separated from God. Therefore, what must happen in order for humanity to overcome spiritual, mental, and emotional depravity? Jesus said we must be born-again (see John 3:3).

Attributes Become Needs

Attributes before the fall became glaring needs after the fall, and each of these needs is continuous in our lives until we are “complete in Christ” (Colossians 1:28).

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 met by having fellowship with God 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 (Genesis 2:18). God met that need by creating Eve.

Ever since Adam’s alienation from God, we have experienced a deep need to belong. Even when people come to Christ and belong to God, they still need to belong to the community of God’s people. If churches don’t provide opportunities for legitimate Christian fellowship for its members, they will seek to fulfill their need to belong someplace else. The spiritual union of Christian fellowship, *koinonia*, is essential for building up one another. Koinonia is the Head (Jesus) and the body (Church) working together in unity. We will never understand the power of peer pressure until we acknowledge the legitimate need to belong, and the fear of rejection.

2. *Innocence was replaced by guilt and shame; therefore, there exists the need to fulfill a legitimate sense of worth.* Those who work with people know that a suffering humanity struggles with a poor sense of worth. An identity crisis and a negative self-image

have accompanied a suffering humanity since the fall. Our sense of worth is not a question of giftedness, talent, intelligence, or beauty, or only those who have such qualities have a sense of worth. A true sense of personal worth comes from knowing who we are as children of God, and increasingly realized with growth in character. If you knew that you were a child of God, you were loved, accepted, and forgiven, and your life was characterized by the fruit of the Spirit, would you feel good about yourself? Of course you would, and everyone has the same opportunity to experience that.

3. Dominion was replaced by weakness and helplessness; therefore, we have the need for strength and self-control. People attempt to meet these needs through personal disciplines, or by seeking to control and manipulate others. Nobody is more insecure or sick than a controller. They wrongly believe they can fulfill themselves by trying 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 Galatians 5:23).

Extreme efforts at self-discipline without the grace of God often lead to legalism or perfectionism resulting 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 Matthew 6:24), being deceived into thinking we are serving ourselves.

So Who Are You?

“See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are” (1 John 3:1). “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name” (John 1:12). Beloved, *now* you are a child of God. In the final analysis there is

only one criteria that defines who we are, and that is our new life in Christ. “And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:11–13). Eternal life is not something we get when we physically die. If we have not received eternal life before we physically die, all we would have to look forward to is being eternally separated from God, which is hell. Therefore, “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

Every temptation is an attempt by the devil to entice us to live independently of God. Satan tempts us just as he did Jesus by appealing to our most basic and legitimate needs. The question is: Are we striving to meet our own needs in this fallen world ruled by Satan, 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” (Philippians 4:19)? The most critical needs are the “being” needs, and they are the ones most wonderfully met in Christ as follows:

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.

Who Are You?

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 discipline.
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 co-worker (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.