



Foundations of Christian Spiritual Formation

Lesson 3 *A New Identity and the Hidden Heart*

A New Identity

*In the midst of chaos, in the midst of despair, something glorious has happened. God has stepped in and changed the game.

So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin[a] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

—2 Corinthians 5:16–20

*While we are still sinners, God reconciles us to himself. He makes peace with us and removes our guilty verdict.

*He gives us a new identity, and He becomes the true source of this new identity. We then move from a place of death to a place of becoming.

*The key to all of this is the key to a mystery that has now been revealed to us: Christ in us.

Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

—Colossians 1:24–27

The Hidden Heart

*The sad reality is that most of us don't live in the truth that we are loved by God. We live in fear of God.

*We slip back into living with a false sense of identity because deep within us, at the core of the core of who we are, we have a storehouse of repressed sin, hurts, and emotional trauma—the hidden heart.

To the degree that you are surprised by what comes out of your heart, is the degree that you are unaware of the contents of your hidden heart.

—John Coe

*The work of Spiritual Formation is a purgative work that purifies the hidden heart. As the junk leaks out, we must resist the temptation to stuff our bad back down inside us.

*Since we now know that everyone is acting out of a brokenness and hidden heart, we must follow Paul's admonition and not view others from a worldly point of view.

*Here are a few simple steps to practice the ministry of reconciliation:

- Create a feeling or an environment of safety and acceptance.

- Ask questions or share life experiences that help the other person uncover the hidden parts of their heart.

- Once the layers of the heart are peeled back, speak the truth into the core of the other.

The Prayer of Reconciliation

♣ Affirm that you have a finite physical body.

I have a body that is here. My body has limitations. I am not infinite. I cannot grant everybody's wishes. I am grateful for the truth that I am not God. Only God can meet all the needs that surrounds me. Thank you, Lord, for being there in my weakness and for meeting my needs.

♣ Affirm that you are a finite spirit.

a. Disregard all the potential idols of your soul. Expose and invalidate the false identities which give you a false sense of who you are.

At the core of my spirit, I am not a father or mother. I am not a husband or a wife. I am not a daughter or a son. I am not a friend. I am not a student. I am not a kind person. I am not an angry person. I am not a _____.

b. Affirm the reality of your soul's true identity.

I was created for union with God. I came into the world a naked spirit, longing for perfect love. I am now clothed with Christ's righteousness and long for a deepening oneness with God. I am precious in God's eyes. That is who I truly am.

♣ Examine how you have been approaching God.

a. Ask your soul in the presence of God:

Have I been praying to God as if He was a genie? Have I been praying to God knowing that He, too, has a will? Has my will alone been consulted? Have I been using God as an idol to meet my needs? Have I been acknowledging Him as if He is the God Shepherd of my life?