

Battle for the Mind – Lesson 4

Identity, Christ-like Character and Service

Introduction:

Ephesians 3:20-21

Having seen how important the way we think is, we will now look at how important it is to understand who we are in Christ, and how he is making us more like him.

This section is differing from the other on one primary issue; instead of looking more at ourselves, even at our future selves we are focusing more on Christ and who we are in him.

1. Vision, Faith and Identity

a. Identity

Part of the battle for the mind is understanding who we are because of Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 states *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. The old has passed away, and behold the new has come.”*

Our Identity is tied into our being in Christ. We are no longer the people we once were, because of Christ we are a new creation.

b. Faith

Faith is described in Hebrews 11:1 as ‘being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see’. It is the ‘firm persuasion and expectation that God will perform all that he has promised us in Christ’ (Matthew Henry). The certainty of faith rests in the fact that it is based on the unchanging Word of God (Romans 10:17).

Our new identity is encapsulated in our faith in Christ.

c. Vision

In the natural world dreams are powerful. Martin Luther King motivated millions through his famous ‘I have a dream’ speech. Another wise observer said: ‘The most has come to those with the greatest dreams.’ And it’s true. Without a vision or goal, man is not motivated to achieve his full potential in life.

If this is true in the natural realm, how much more it is in the spiritual, where our vision and goals not based simply on our own good ideas, but on Christ.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Christ is our vision and he sustains us by faith. Unless we come to terms with the powerful resource we have in Christ, we will never ‘ask or imagine’ much outside our natural ability. However, with Christ things are different, as Paul wrote:

Philippians 4:17

Conscious of his resources in Christ, secure in his faith in Christ for himself and with Christ as his vision Paul was able to persevere forward.

Philippians 3:13-14

2. Knowing Who God Created You to Be

Our faith as Christians should encapsulate both who God has made us, and who He is making us into. Psalm 139:13 says “For you formed my inward parts, You knitted me together in my mother’s womb”. This shows that God very intricately and deliberately made us who we are, even before we were born. However, the process doesn’t end at birth, we continue to grow and mature, moving from one stage of life to the next.

When we come to Christ we are “re-born” as a new creation that is alive in Christ, and reflective of who he is. We also go through a similar process of growth and maturing. This growth happens by God through faith, and as Christians we need to trust in what God can and will do in and through us.

In the scripture below we read of a woman who had faith to be made well by Christ:

Matthew 9:20-22

Her faith encapsulated who Christ was and what she was certain she would become with him.

It is God’s desire is to transform you into a person who truly represents the full glory of Christ’s character, and He will bring this process to completion.

Philippians 1:6

3. Becoming Christ-like

We must have a revelation of what God wants to accomplish in us before we can accomplish it. As Bryn Jones once said: ‘You must see what you can become before you can become what you see.’

See yourself complete in Christ and through faith be motivated to move towards it.

James 1:4

Ephesians 4:13

Ask Christ to give you a revelation of his fullness. Fill your mind and heart with who he is. Then because our identity is in him, you will then start to become more Christ-like, more of who we are meant to be.

Ephesians 3:14-21

4. Being Christ-like, Becoming Who You Already Are

Becoming more Christ-like is not an unattainable goal. As you cease to conform to the pattern of this world and fill your mind with God's purpose for you, you *will* become more like him (Romans 12:2). You are, in fact, becoming what you *already are*. You have, through faith, the full potential to develop Christ-like character in this life.

Scriptures teaches that our spiritual rebirth can be likened to a natural birth in which a single microscopic sperm carries all the father's characteristics into the newborn baby. As the child grows, these traits become seen in its character and appearance.

1 Peter 1:23

At your spiritual birth a 'seed' was deposited within you. The word 'seed' used in the above text is the Greek word *sperma*, from which we derive our word sperm. At spiritual rebirth the seed of our heavenly Father was deposited within us. That seed carries all his character qualities and as we grow spiritually they become more and more evident in the form of a Christ-like character.

You can become what you already are in seed form. Through faith understand the fullness of who you are becoming in Christ, and continue to walk in that.

5. Both Now and a Process, Identity and Service

It is important that, in developing and working towards a Christ-like character you start from the right place. When we come to Christ our identity has changed, we are made righteous, we are new creations. The old has gone and the new has come. We are free from sin, we no longer have to live in it. Other Christ-like characteristics develop as we grow in our faith. These and many other characteristics of Christ have been imputed to us through salvation. Others we have the beginnings of that we continue to grow into such as the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

We also understand that being Christ-like means serving. As we grow in our faith we grow in our service to Him. God prepares us for the things He has for our lives. But for now, assess the condition you find yourself in right now. From this point we begin to move in faith towards a more Christ-like character.

- a. Soberly assess your measure of faith

Romans 12:3

What can you believe God for right now? As you use the faith you already have, it will grow until ultimately you will by faith be able to take hold of and become the 'fullness of Christ' (Ephesians 4:13).

- b. Soberly assess your gift areas

Romans 12:6

What are you good at? What do you enjoy doing? We were all created with particular God-given gifts, skills and abilities. When you submit yourself to God He will strengthen those gifts in you to help you accomplish those things you were always meant to.

c. Soberly assess your present activity

Ephesians 2:10

What is it you are doing now? What do you have a passion for? What has God called you to submit to Him? We're called to serve wherever we are at so assessing your present activity is a good place to begin to grow in the things of God in your life.

A young man who had returned from an overseas missions conference came to see the church elders to announce that God had called him to full-time evangelism and he was therefore thinking of giving in his notice at work. The problem was that up to this point he had shown no personal initiative in reaching the lost, neither had he any significant involvement with the church's program of evangelism. He had to be brought back into reality. His heart was good – but he was not starting from the right place. He had to see that he would only reach his goal if he submitted his passion to God, took notice of where he was now and then took appropriate steps in the right direction.

Who we are now is encapsulated in Christ, but becoming more Christ-like is a process. Soberly assess who we are now, where we are at now, and what we are doing now, submit ourselves to God and move more towards who God has called us to be. Trust in Him completely. Serve where you are now and He will begin to develop that more Christ-like character in you, preparing you for the future things He has for you (Ephesians 2:10).

6. The Word and Identity

Having taken stock and established a sober starting point, you now need to press on in faith towards who God has made you in Christ. Develop a strategy that causes your faith to grow, your gifts to develop and your activity to be channeled into purposeful tasks. The key to doing this is to understanding the word.

Romans 10:17

Because faith comes by hearing God's word, we need to feed our dreams and thinking with Scripture. Your faith in who Christ has made you will then grow and develop as you come to understand more of God's ultimate purpose for you. Big ideas may feed your ego, but they will do nothing for your faith – only God's word can cause faith to come in increasing measure.

Look into the Bible and see what it says about you. Start by asking the following three questions. A few examples are given in each instance.

a. What does God say I am?

2 Corinthians 5:17

Romans 8:16

Romans 8:37

b. What does God say I can do?

Philippians 4:13

John 15:5

c. What does God say I have?

Philippians 4:19

2 Peter 1:3

As you feed your mind with these truths about yourself, your faith will develop and become established. You will be more sure of your identity in Christ.

7. Passion for God's Will

Successful businessmen always find a way to succeed. For them, motivation and determination are key factors. We, too, must be motivated to succeed in our Christian life. This passion for service comes from our faith in Christ. Faith in who we are in him, who he is making us into, and the work he does through us. A passion for service is a passion for God's will.

Jesus had faith in God's purpose. He knew what the future held for him.

John 13:3

Secure in this knowledge he was able to wash the disciples' feet, cleanse the temple with a whip, expose the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, and even endure the cross. It didn't matter to him what people thought. He did only his Father's will and was motivated to fulfill his task on earth by the certainty of future joy.

Hebrews 12:2

That joy was the leading of many sons to glory and the sharing of his kingship with the redeemed people, his church.

Your faith in Christ will produce in you a similar sense of destiny and a passion for His will in this life. It will cause you to endure hardship and opposition, just like Christ did.

Hebrews 12:3

It will also make you secure and confident in all you do for Christ, for you know that your faith is secure in God and He *will* be with you.

Hebrews 10:23

8. And More...

Understand your identity in Christ and with faith in him grow more into that Christ-like person we were always meant to be. Serve where you are at and fill your mind with God's purposes for your life. Trust in God's future plans for your life, and understand that God:

'is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine.' Ephesians 3:20