



3 If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. ³ For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.

We've all heard the expression "his mind is in the gutter". That means that no matter what is said, someone will take what you say and twist it into the most gross or debased thought. Every comment becomes a sexual innuendo. When you come to the Lord, it still isn't natural to "seek those things that are above". When you accept the Lord, you do indeed have the Holy Spirit of God living within you, but YOU HAVE TO MAKE A CHOICE as to where you will direct your thoughts.

This is not automatic. It takes focus, and it takes discipline. Again, it's not a white-knuckled kind of focus, but nevertheless, it is focus. Everyone knows what I'm talking about if you've ever decided to focus and pray about this or that. You begin praying for your friend's hospital visit, and the next thing you know, you're making a "to do" list. Jesus asked His disciples to pray, and when He returned, they were all asleep.

⁴⁰ Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Couldn't you men keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. ⁴¹ "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matt 26)

- 1 Learn to think intentionally – sometimes during my prayer time (like last Sunday), I just clicked on a song that is on my desk top. It's that Chris Tomlin song, "Take my life, Let it be, always only Lord for Thee." It's almost like listening to a piece of worship music keeps my mind focused on the things of God.
- 2 Create a strategy to bring your mind back to the throne of grace (God's presence) throughout the day.
 - a. Try thanking God for every good thing that might happen during the day. Maybe you thank Him for breath when you wake up. Thank Him for the

beauty you see when you walk out the door. Thank Him if you suddenly solve a problem that's been bothering you. This is PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF JESUS.

- b. Maybe pray for people you run into during the day.
 - c. Think about glancing at a scripture several times a day; and just breathing a few words in your brai
- 3 When a thought, word, or deed comes out of you that is not of Him, just silently confess it. This is a great habit. You are admitting to God your shortfalls. I confess it to God, admitting it is wrong, and thank Him for cleansing me from all unrighteousness. This is not somehow saying that He didn't pay for your sins on the cross, instead it is helping my mind to get back to where it needs to be. If it's a recurring temptation, admit it and ask Him to fight the battle for you. When I was a child, our pastor called that "rebound". I like to think of it as "reboot" in today's terminology.

In verse 3, Paul gives us the reason for doing this. He says, "*For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.*" I think Paul is speaking to our new identity. He is saying, "Set your mind on Christ because that's what you do when you're a child of the King".

When I was a little boy, when my dad was trying to teach me about how I should behave, he would remind me of who I was and he said that would help me know how I should conduct myself. For example, if I told a lie, he wouldn't just spank me or yell at me. He would say something like, "McMullens don't do that kind of thing". My conduct resulted out of my identity as a McMullen. If I did things that were not in conformity with my identity as a McMullen, it was not pretty. Dad was a strict disciplinarian, and he structured discipline around five rules that were contrary to my identity. I'm not saying this is the only way to rear a child, but it is how he chose to do it.

He would say, "There are 5 rules that we keep because of who we are".

- 1 Respect God
- 2 Respect Others
- 3 Respect other's property
- 4 Respect Yourself
- 5 Respect your own property

If I was in trouble, he would ask me which rule I had broken. He would say, "Because you are my son (a McMullen) we do not do these things. You have broken rule four, and you'll have to pay the price."

I know all of this may sound a little weird, but my dad was forming my identity, secure in him, and then that identity govern how I was to behave. At that point my identity was hidden in my dad's identity (my family's identity), and I acted the way I did because that is who I was. When I became a new creation in Christ (2 Cor 5:17), I began to act a different way because of my identity in Christ. I am prompted now not to follow a set of dad's rules, but to submit my flesh with its desires, to the power of the Holy Spirit to change me and shape me exactly into God's very best version for me. That's wonderful.

All of this identity business comes with a great payout. There is a great reward. I will spend eternity with Jesus because in receiving His work for me personally on the cross, I have died to myself, and as we learned Sunday, I have been raised into newness of life.

Several years ago, Sandy and I had our tombstone made. We listed five characteristics of each of our lives. It was a very serious thing. I knew that those inscribed traits would sort of govern how I was to act for the rest of my life. I figured if I messed up and wasn't what the tombstone said I was, it was a lie that would be found out, or worse yet, I'd have to pay to get it altered. I'm just too Scottish and too tight to let that happen. I'm making sort of a joke there obviously, but the point is that there are traits that identify you and me as God's children. We are living out who we are and not living out a lie when we step into those traits. Some of those traits are exactly what is listed in Galatians 5:22

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴ And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵ If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. ²⁶ Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

Let us pray.