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[Statement of Faith](#)

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## THE BIBLE’S BIGGER PICTURES

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This more in-depth article builds on last month’s *Spiritual Warfare Combat Tips* featured article: “Satan’s Tactic: Influence Our Sense of Identity Without Us Knowing It.”

### **The Two Parts (Levels) to Our Sense of Identity**

God created us, human-kind, in an environment where we would experience spiritual battles. We know this because Satan was permitted to be in, and to attack us in, the Garden of Eden. In short, we cannot avoid choosing (whether consciously or UNconsciously) who we will identify with in a trial: God or Satan. In light of that, the relationship between our spiritual battles and our spiritual sense of identity is a very important one to discern as we seek to grow spiritually.

**Genesis 1:27** God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

When God first created humans, He wanted us to have free will. This was essential so we would have the capacity to choose whom we will serve in a given trial. Free will was (and is) a vital part of His plan given that He created us to participate in the spiritual war that was (and is) on-going. To assist us in exercising our free will, God also created us with:

1. A conscious portion of our minds. (This is the least powerful portion of our thinking.)
2. An UNconscious portion of our minds. (This is the most powerful portion of our thinking.)
3. A heart that can center on either God or Satan in any given trial.
4. The ability to use our hearts to change our minds, and to create *part* of our sense of identity.

Our hearts and minds are two of the “Keys” to understanding life in Christ and to getting the most out of our relationship with God. How we use them in a trial shapes our sense of identity in that trial. In contrast, the fact that God created us with the ability to have a sense of identity is often overlooked, even though it is one of the ways in which God created us in His image.

While part of being created in God’s image means we have the free will to create *part* of our sense of identity, we do not create it in a vacuum. We create it in the midst of the spiritual battles, which are often hard to see behind the real-life events that accompany those battles. Most of us know that Satan influences us during spiritual battles, and, of course, that the Lord seeks to influence us too! Still, doing our part to discern Satan’s attack and connect with God in a trial is sometimes challenging because there are two distinct aspects or levels of a sense of identity:

1. Identity based on association.
2. Identity based on the actual true or deeper nature of our being!

The following presents some important differences between the two levels of our sense of identity.

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**LEVEL 1: BEING ASSOCIATED WITH SOMEONE (GOD FOR EXAMPLE) IS A FORM OF IDENTITY**

The “association level” of identity deals with “*associating or affiliating one’s self with a person or group... the characteristics of someone or something.*”<sup>1</sup>

1. Whether we actually think about it or not, we associate ourselves with someone or something based on the fact that that relationship reflects some of what we want to guide our conduct, or what we want our conduct to be like.
  - a. When we claim to be a team member of Company X, it describes how we seek to work for Company X.
  - b. If you say you are so-and-so’s spouse, it reflects that the relationship between you two works to guide your conduct in some way.
  - c. When you associate yourself with a particular political party, you may do so because it reflects something about what you believe, but in the final run, those beliefs are what you intend to act on, to vote on.
  - d. When you claim to be a Christian, that claim is based on what you believe. It represents that which you desire to influence and guide your conduct.
2. Whether we act in accordance with a particular association often depends on the situation. We may associate ourselves in many ways, and sometimes those associations can actually conflict with one another such that we pick and choose which one we will act in accordance with. This is why the “association level” of identity does not actually define who we are in terms of the perspective of our conduct – *because* it does not consistently drive our conduct.
  - a. After work, you may purchase a product from Company Y, because while you are a team member of Company X, you also recognize there are limits to your association with the company you work for.
  - b. If you are a lawyer, that name represents an association with a profession. Let’s say you are also a dad. There might be times when being a lawyer may affect your conduct with your children. At times you may decide that acting as a lawyer isn’t always the most effective way to relate to your six year old, and so you may wisely choose to embrace the association of “dad” over “lawyer” from time to time.
3. **The association aspect of our identity is almost exclusively thought of with our conscious mind; therefore, it is not adequate to drive our conduct consistently.**

In terms of a relationship with God, the “association level” of identity is reflected in names like: God’s elect, The Redeemed, brothers/sisters in Christ, believers, Christians, disciples of Christ, etc.

1. God says we can call ourselves by those names because God associates us to Himself through Christ. *He* enables us to claim the association. Our association with God is “set” and does not change *because* the essence of the association reflects God’s perspective of us in Christ. We can call ourselves by those names, but fundamentally it is only because they reflect God’s perspective of us once we enter into a relationship with Him through Christ.
  - a. We may claim to be brothers/sisters in Christ. However, when Satan’s deceptions cause us to lose sight of that we may treat each other sinfully as if we are not spiritually related! Satan’s attacks may cause us to carry some behaviors and standards associated with our biological families (which are actually dysfunctional) into the spiritual family.

- b. Similarly, we may know that as believers we are disciples of Christ. However, Satan’s deceptions may cause us to lose sight of the fact that God’s Spirit seeks to disciple us during our trials. We may overlook the fact that a big part of being a disciple means learning through His correction. As a result, we may associate ourselves with the concept of being disciples by studying God’s provisions for us; yet we may not conduct ourselves as disciples by seeking out what the Lord wants us to change in us during our trials.
2. Technically speaking, we do not associate ourselves with God; rather, we can choose to accept His association with us during each trial. This is an important distinction. It means that even though we may say we are associated with the Father through Christ Jesus, that claim does not necessarily guarantee we’ll act like it. (During each trial in which we sin, we are not accepting His association with us.)
3. The primary purpose why the Father permits us to accept His association with us, to call ourselves certain names, and to see how He views us, is so we might be motivated to do our part to center our deeper sense of identity to Him in a trial. (The purpose of knowing we are disciples of Christ is so that in a trial, we may seek to be disciplined by God in it.)

*Simply remembering that we are associated with God doesn’t consistently help us to accurately discern what the Spirit is telling us to do or not do in response to a trial.*

Our association with God through Christ is extremely meaningful, hugely important and is a sacred description of who we are in Christ. That being said, while we can remember our association with God during a trial, that doesn’t always help us to actually transform Satan’s attack on Christ in us during the trial. Simply remembering that we are associated with God doesn’t consistently help us to accurately discern what the Holy Spirit is telling us to do or not do in response to a trial. This is because Satan’s influence on our deeper sense of identity often remains unrecognized, even

when we consciously claim association with God as His children. Our deeper sense of identity is what actually drives our actions. Unless we hear and heed the Holy Spirit’s counsel concerning our deeper identity in Christ during a trial, we cannot consistently act as followers of Christ in the trial.

**LEVEL 2: OUR ACTUAL IDENTITY IS SHAPED BY OUR PERCEPTION (USUALLY  
AN UNCONSCIOUS ONE) OF OUR TRUE, DEEPER NATURE**

The second level of identity, involves our deeper sense of identity. It deals with “the *nature* of something or someone.”<sup>1</sup>

1. **Our deepest sense of identity is primarily created and developed by the UNconscious part of our thinking. However, we can become aware of Satan’s influence on that part of our thinking when we partner with God’s Spirit in a trial. (Doing so is a big part of being disciplined by The Teacher, the Holy Spirit. It helps us to do our part better in trials.)**

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2. **Unlike God’s association with us, our own deeper level of our identity is not “set” just because God consistently views us as being “in Christ.”** This is because part of having the free will God wanted for us means we have to make choices to center the deeper level of our identity “in Christ,” during EACH trial. Making a godly choice in a trial requires interacting with The Teacher, the Holy Spirit; sometimes we do this, sometimes we don’t.
  - a. When we forget this or fail to apply it, we may find ourselves overwhelmed in the face of very unexpected and difficult trials. Sometimes trials can be very difficult to handle in the Spirit, and occasionally they cause long-time believers to feel like a failure, to question who they are in Christ, and sometimes even to question God.
  - b. To overcome such trials, we can start by refocusing on being in an on-going spiritual war realizing it is normal to have to work to transform Satan’s attacks on our deeper sense of identity in Christ. The more the trial is challenging, the greater is the reward for transformation of the heart in the trial.
3. The deeper level of our identity deals with the following (we’ll look at the Scriptural basis for these beginning on page 9 and following):
  - a. Our sense of worth (sense of being or feeling good enough or not).
  - b. Our sense of connection (sense of being or feeling alone or connected).
  - c. Our sense of having what we need to exist (sense of having enough or not).
  - d. Our ability to be at peace (ability to be at peace in either desirable or undesirable situations – trials).
4. At least one of those four fundamental parts of our identity is influenced by Satan in a trial. The Holy Spirit also seeks to influence them too, but we have to wield or submit our free will to God’s Spirit in order to overcome, or transform, Satan’s influence in a trial. Often times it helps to be able to recognize which of those four are being influenced in a trial.
  - a. For example: if you desperately need your tax refund and it hasn’t arrived in your bank, Satan may use that situation to affect your sense of “having enough” (2.a. above – any of the others could be used as well depending on the person). Initially you may feel concerned, worried, or whatever. Of course your concern may seem normal, and you’ll feel better once the money is deposited in your bank. But, the point is to recognize which of the four aspects of your identity Satan is attacking, and then to re-center on experiencing it in the Lord *during* the trial. When properly transformed, a sense of having enough in Christ would be felt, and you would feel peaceful, trusting and confident that all will be as God would have it to be for you. You would know what the Lord wants you to do or not do in order to handle the trial as He would have you to handle it.
  - b. As another example: Jesus and the Disciples were often accused of many things without losing their sense of peace in Christ. However, we may rationalize that it is normal to feel uncomfortable when someone accuses us, so in a given trial we may not recognize how Satan is using the accusation to influence our deeper sense of identity. As a result, we might feel defensive, maybe even angry. This is because the deeper sense of identity is influenced by Satan to focus on being a

*Each discomfoting  
trial deals with a  
false sense of  
identity which must  
be transformed, as it  
arises...*

- failure or not good enough in Christ. A similar attack could influence other believers’ sense of feeling connected in Christ such that deep down there is a sense of being alone or disconnected. *Every trial presents a spiritual identity crisis!* Each discomforting trial deals with a false sense of identity which must be transformed, as it arises, in order to feel the truth about who we are in Christ during the trial.
5. The deeper level of our identity is affected in spiritual battles, whether we recognize the spiritual importance of some issue or not. When we don’t recognize the spiritual dynamics of identity issues behind a trial, our deeper sense of identity can be influenced by Satan without our knowing it. This leads to claiming association with God without acting like it.
  6. As long as Satan’s influence on our deeper sense of identity is untransformed during a trial, one of the four aspects (see 2 above) will continue to be influenced by the external aspect of our trial in an ungodly way.
  7. Our deepest sense of identity can be influenced by the Holy Spirit, so that it is centered on who we are in Christ, but this only happens when we actively submit to the Spirit’s counsel in our hearts.
    - a. We all have partnered with the Spirit in this way; perhaps even without recognizing exactly how we did our part. We also may not even recognize some of the trials in which we connected with God. Satan can use that to his advantage in future trials.
    - b. So, we may know we’ve heard the guidance of God’s Spirit in our hearts in various trials, but when we don’t actually know what the inner dynamics of the heart and mind were, we may struggle to connect with God and hear Him in other trials.
  8. Again, the Spirit offers to make us aware of the deeper level of our identity. While this sounds good (and it is good), transforming our hearts to experience our identity in Christ involves being open to the corrective nature of the Holy Spirit’s counsel and being corrected. Often times we don’t like to think of *needing* to be corrected in a trial, especially when we see the wrong someone else is doing (Matthew 7:3-5).

If you are in a trial and the acts of prayer and recalling your association with God are not helping you to transform Satan’s attack within you, try partnering with the Spirit to seek out how Satan is attacking your deeper sense of identity in Christ in the trial. If you can discover that, you can work to refocus your heart on experiencing the truth of who you are in Christ. The next part can help you to recall some truths are about your spiritual sense of identity in Christ, i.e., who you are in Christ!

### **How Does God’s Own Nature Relate to a Godly Sense of Identity?<sup>2</sup>**

As Genesis 1:27 indicates (page 4), our ability to have and create our deeper sense of identity comes from God. If you have studied the names of God, you may recall that the name which expresses the most fundamental nature of God’s identity is **Yahweh**, which means, “I Am” (Exodus 3:14).

Let’s look at four other Old Testament (Hebrew) names of God which, in particular, reflect some of how He wove attributes of Himself into us when He designed us to be able to create our own deepest sense of identity. We’ll also look at what Jesus had to say about who we are or can be “in Him.”

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Remember, while we may be consciously aware of some of this next part, we cannot consistently change or alter our deeper *UNconscious* sense of identity in a trial, except by partnering with the Spirit of God, The Counselor, in our hearts during the trial.

1. **Jehovah-Tsidkenu – The Lord IS Righteous.** (God is the essence of righteousness.) Jeremiah 23:5, 6. This part of God’s image is woven into us such that an aspect of our UNconscious, deeper sense of identity deals with our sense of worth. In general, this part of our identity drives what we do or want to do to get approval or to feel worthy. Often we seek approval from others and ourselves in ungodly ways. Sometimes we seek God’s approval by trying to serve Him in ways that are not what He wants, and which actually pull us away from Him. The Scriptures indicate that embracing a godly sense of worth involves being at peace with whatever is required to conduct ourselves in the new self during a trial.

Jesus says this about our sense of worth: **in Him, we are good enough:**

**Matthew 5:14-16** You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Underline added by author)

**For example:** when Satan’s attack in a trial is affecting our deeper sense of identity we may feel like a failure or that we don’t “measure up” if someone criticizes us or our work, whether rightly or wrongly. When we center in God’s Truth about us, that we *are* good enough in Christ, we will peacefully accept or reject someone’s criticism based on the Spirit’s corrective instruction to our own hearts.

2. **Elohim – One God, Three Persons.** (God is relational and is fundamentally Self-connected.) Genesis 1:1. This part of God’s image is woven into us such that an aspect of our UNconscious, deeper sense of identity deals with our sense of being connected as opposed to a sense of being alone. It drives the things we do in an effort to feel connected, or in response to being rejected. The challenge (that Satan’s deception may work with) is that sometimes we may actually be alone in the sense that others may not “be there for us,” or in the sense that we may not be rich in terms of friends, family or a partner.

Jesus says this about our sense of worth: **in Him we are connected (not alone):**

**John 14:23** Jesus said, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.”

**For example:** when Satan’s attack in a trial is affecting our deeper sense of identity we may feel like we are alone if someone doesn’t agree with us. When we center in God’s Truth about us, that we *are* not alone in Christ, we will feel peaceful even though someone may reject our view, and we can respond in love based on how God would have us to respond.

3. **El Shaddai – All Sufficient One.** (God is Self-sufficient.) Genesis 17:1. This part of God’s image is woven into us such that an aspect of our UNconscious, deeper sense of identity deals with having what we believe we need to survive, live, and/or act. It drives the things we do in an effort to prevent experiencing loss, or to feel secure, to feel prepared and to feel safe in terms of our readiness to get through a challenging life situation. This portion of our deeper sense of identity also tends to deal with our wants, not just our needs. When Satan attacks, we may often view the things we long for and want, as if those things are actual needs as opposed to wants.

Jesus says this about our sense of worth: **in Him we have enough:**

**Matthew 6:19** Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

**Matthew 6:31-34** Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble\* of its own.

\* The trouble Jesus refers to does NOT come from issues which are outside the realm of spiritual warfare. In fact, the trouble itself comes from the fact that behind each day’s difficulties are spiritual challenges that arise within the context of spiritual warfare: Satan attacking and trying to drive us; God desiring to lead us.

**For example:** when Satan’s attack in a trial is affecting our deeper sense of identity we may feel a strong sense of sadness, loss, or a fear of loss when we don’t get what we want or believe that we need. When we center in God’s Truth about us, that *all* our needs are fulfilled in Christ, we will experience a complete sense of fulfillment whether we experience loss or are concerned that we might experience some kind of loss in life, no matter how great or small. (Losses can be experienced in terms of finances, relationships, physical abilities, etc.)

4. **Jehovah-Shalom – The Lord IS Peace.** (God is at peace within Himself.) Judges 6:24. This part of God’s image is woven into us such that an aspect of our UNconscious, deeper sense of identity deals with whether we can be content in a given situation, and it drives what we do try to be content and at peace. While each of Satan’s attacks will disturb our sense of peace, this aspect of being at peace is related to an ability to experience peace in Christ during a trial *once we know exactly what He wants us to do*. (Sometimes we can know what He wants us to do in a trial, but we aren’t at peace about it. Satan also works to convince us that because we aren’t at peace with a course of action, then it must not actually be God’s will for us.)

Jesus says this about our sense of worth:

**in Him, we can experience peace with His discipline (Hebrews 12:4-11),  
His direction, and His guidance to us in a trial:**

**John 14:27** Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.

**Matthew 11:28-30** Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOULS. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. (Caps are part of translation)

**For example:** when Satan’s attack in a trial is affecting our deeper sense of identity we may feel quite uncomfortable when God’s guidance to us is undesirable to our old selves. When we center in God’s Truth about us, that we can be at peace in Christ, we will experience the peace that passes understanding (Philippians 4:7). We will be fulfilled, peaceful, trusting and motivated to do what God directs us to change within ourselves and to do (externally) in response to a trial. We will experience that even when the outcome of the trial is unknown to us, and even when according to the world it means we might “lose.”

God wove portions of Himself into us when He created us with the ability to define our deeper sense of identity. Jesus reaffirms that in Him we find our true selves (new selves), and in Him we can conduct ourselves as His followers. How wonderful that is! Remember, when a trial arises in life, Satan attacks and influences one of four aspects of our identity as part of his deceptive plan. Sometimes we correctly hear the Holy Spirit without being aware of which one of those aspects Satan is attacking. **However**, if we do not partner with the Spirit to *consciously* recognize which one Satan is attacking, then our *UNconscious* mind can define our deeper sense of identity out of old-self habit, without our being aware. Again, when trials are harder, it can really help to recognize and then transform Satan’s attack on our identity in Christ.

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The foundational material that *Keys To Understanding Life Series* offers is found in *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace*. It assists believers in recognizing trials, recognizing how Satan is influencing one’s identity, and in partnering with the Spirit to transform spiritual identity issues in trials. This article, particularly pages 8-11, relates to the lessons in *Feelings 101* Chapter 4, *Personal UNtruths*.

While this article is mainly related to an aspect of the first part of the Holy Spirit’s guidance to us in trials, the August 2010 Edition of “Hearts Up” presents a good overview of all three parts of His counsel and guidance in trials. The article to look for is the *Spiritual Warfare Combat Tips* featured article, “Holy Spirit’s Leadership: Recognizing the Old is Part of Hearing God’s Direction.” Recognizing Satan’s attacks on aspects of our deeper identity in Christ is very helpful when it comes to discovering what The Teacher is counseling us to change and transform.

In addition to hardback and paperback, *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace* is available in Barnes & Noble’s NOOK format, as well as Amazon’s Kindle, and Adobe Digital from Books on Board.

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## HEART TO HEART

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### Life's Picture

Oh that I could always see  
The lovely picture the Father paints for me

In every week  
Nay every day

In every trial  
That comes my way.

Perhaps I'd be  
More steadfast when blue,

Perhaps more certain  
And more true;

If I'd open my heart for the Spirit to show  
The parts of the picture Evil wouldn't have me to know.

When I have choices  
That I must make,

Lord lead, and may I follow  
With each step I take,

So in the end, whole-heartedly,  
I can embrace the picture You offer to me.

William J. Clark, Jr.



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If you write poems, psalms, lyrics or prose of faith, and would like to share one of them with others in a “Hearts Up” edition, you may submit it for consideration for the *Heart To Heart* feature. You may also submit a personal story or testimony of your own to share how one of the articles or the *Keys* materials helped you draw closer to God during a trial. You can email your submission through the [Contact Us](#) page or send it to the snail mail address provided on that webpage. Be sure to read the **Contribution Guidelines** before sending us your submission. You can view those guidelines by clicking the link provided on the Contact Us page itself.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, Houghton Mifflin Company, © 1969, 1970, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1976, 1978, 1979, 1980, 1981, 654

<sup>2</sup> portions of “How Does God’s Own Nature Relate to a Godly Sense of Identity” references, with permission: *Feelings 101: Pain to Peace*, William J. Clark, Jr. with CH (COL) William J. Clark, Ret., Innovo Publishing, 2010, 156-160

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