

Greetings:

The study that Pastor Pat brings on Sunday mornings is a reflection of the study for that week. It represents a lot of research. Not all of what he has prepared is communicated. In an attempt to continue the learning process, he is making available his study notes to the congregation.

They are edited, but not “book” ready. To the critical eye mistakes can be found. So he asks that you take the material with humility, teach-ability, and charity.

Enjoy and if you should have any questions or corrections, please do not hesitate to email him at pastorpat@waukeshabile.org.

Date: September 19, 2004

Title: Now the Deeds of the Flesh are Evident

Text: Colossians 3:5-9; Galatians 5:19-21

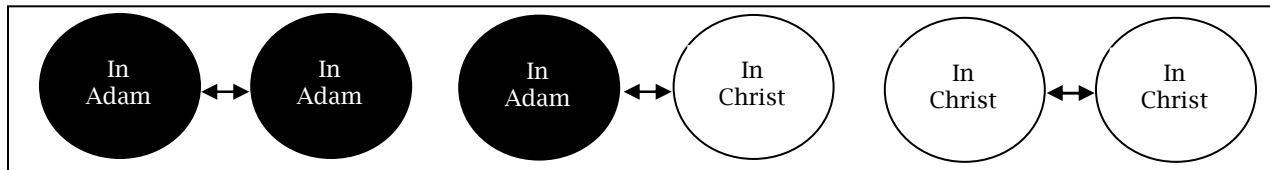
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Waukesha Bible Church is a family of families seeking to live in the Storyline of the Bible. She is determined by design to have a God-centered, Christ-exalting worship; a Word-centered teaching focused on personal discipleship through intentional and systematic instruction; a Global-impacting mission that resolves to be a church planting church; and a Grace-based fellowship where disciples are invited to live under a reigning grace characterized by a Gospel-driven sanctification that celebrates a divine monergism to the Christian life.

NOW THE DEEDS OF THE FLESH ARE EVIDENT

(COLOSSIANS 3:5-9; GALATIANS 5:19-21)

Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry (Colossians 3:5)



Every relationship has a combination of natures. You might have two unsaved people married, you might have one saved and one unsaved person married, or you might have two saved people married. This “nature” forms one’s identity. From our previous study we have learned how those who believe are located, positioned, or placed in Christ. And those who are without Jesus Christ are still located, positioned, or existing in Adam. This “position” creates one’s identity. This identity is who we are before God. If we are still in Adam, then all of who he is, is who we are before God. If we are now in Christ, then all of who He is, is who we are before God.

The nature of man is that which animates the individual. Our nature is what “colors, shapes, controls, governs, influences” the immaterial elements within each of us. As an image bearer, we have intellect, volition, and emotion. It is the immaterial part of each individual that makes us who we are. As such, we are personable beings. Jesus Christ has intellect, volition, and emotion. He is a personable being. As the God-Man, He has two natures. His human nature, however, is not fallen. He was not born with Adam’s sin. The governing nature in the God-Man is His divine nature.

Over the last several years, I have had medical procedures that required I be put into a state called conscious sedation. Conscious sedation means you are not completely out, but you cannot remember anything when you recover from it. Whatever they gave you makes you incoherent and should someone talk to you, they would hear answers of complete nonsense. The drug colors your intellect, volition, and

emotion. That drug is, in a sense, functioning like your nature.

With the fall of Adam, every one of his descendants has been imputed with his fallen nature. **Imputation means** that what debt or resources were Adam's are now yours. This fallen (i.e., Adamic) nature controls our intellect, volition, and emotion. This is what Genesis 6:5, Psalm 51:5, and Romans 5:12 state.

Then the LORD saw that **the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually** (Gen. 6:5).

Behold, **I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me** (Ps. 51:5).

Therefore, **just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned** (Rom. 5:12).

This old nature is non-redeemable. The nature does not change. The only way anyone can break free of their fallen nature is to receive a new nature. When a person receives the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, they receive a new nature, a nature that is holy, perfect, and blameless (Eph. 4:24). This new nature becomes the governing principle in the life of the believer. In addition, this new nature becomes the believer's new identity before God. The old nature still exists, but it no longer has any authority over them (Rom. 6:14) and no longer represents one's identity before God. The New Testament speaks of humanity being **in Adam**. What exactly does this statement mean? As we have already noted you have an identity. Your identity is either **in Adam** or **in Christ**, but it is not both. An unbeliever's identity is in Adam and a believer's identity is in Christ. This lesson will accent what we once were in Adam. And although our identity is no longer in Adam, we still possess this old, sinful, fleshly nature. The next lesson will accent what we, as believers, now have in Christ.

In the unsaved, the old nature is their identity. In the saved, the old nature is not their identity. Their new nature is their identity. Though this is true, it is important to remember that **“What you once were, you no longer are, but still have.”** I would like to further explain and clarify this idea with the following picture.

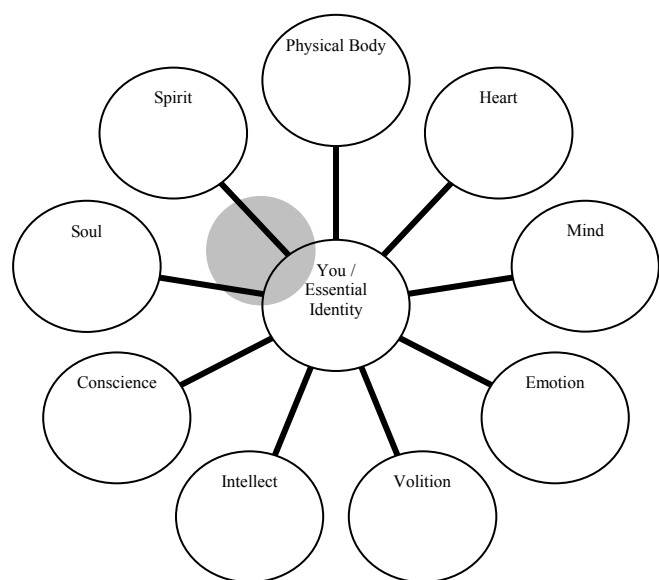
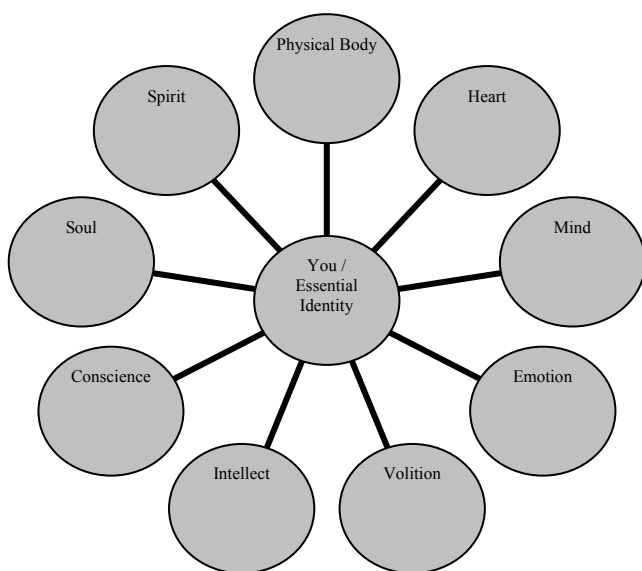
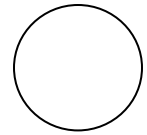
WHAT YOU ONCE WERE, YOU NO LONGER ARE, BUT STILL HAVE.



Our old self in Adam influences every aspect of our existence. Prior to our faith in Christ this is what controlled our identity. This is what we were. When by faith we

received the work of Jesus Christ at the cross in our behalf our old self was crucified and was **judicially** killed. The authority of sin over us has been forever broken. Although our old self is judicially dead and is rendered powerless it still exists and can express itself. But what it is and what it does is no longer controlling how God views us and how He deals with us. Our relationship with God is sourced in and maintained by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Our new self in Christ influences every aspect of our existence. Our old self still exists but is no longer in a place of authority. Our new self was received when by faith we received the work of Jesus Christ at the cross in our behalf. Jesus Christ received my old self and I received His righteousness which becomes for us our new self or identity. There is nothing I can do to undo what He has done. Although the old self still exists, its ability to control me and make me something I no longer am has been forever broken. The Father no longer knows me after the old self. His relationship with me is firmly and forever rooted in who Christ is, what He has done, and who I now am in Him. Even when the old self expresses itself through my immaterial or material self, I am no longer identified by it. Does God see our old self? Yes, but the actions of the old self are never counted against us. An ongoing struggle believers have is two-fold: either they define themselves by their personal behavior and thus are driven by a performance based acceptance before their Father or they separate too sharply theologically their position before the Father and their practice before people. The two are inseparably linked. The one is a reflection of the other.



The purpose in spending time looking at this idea of nature, self, identity is to help you approach conflict from a biblical perspective within any relationship because in any relationship, and especially in marriage, problems exist. Most problems become insurmountable issues when viewed from anything less than a biblical reality.

Remember Chicken Little? The story is a childhood classic. It provides a good example of how perception creates reality when in reality what it perceives is wrong. The truth of God protects you from running around like a chicken with your head cut off, somehow believing that the sky is falling and failing to realize the greater truths of your old Adamic nature and your new identity in Christ. Jay Adams in his work entitled, *Christian Living in the Home*, makes the following statements:

The first and most important fact to remember about a truly Christian home is that *sinners live there*. A truly Christian home is a place where sinners live; but it is also a place where the members of that home admit the fact and understand the problem, know what to do about it, and as a result grow in grace.¹

Understanding who you are in Adam helps to understand the platform from which much of life is lived. Sin happens. Sin is inescapable and universal (Rom. 3). Everyone does it, though such an experience is no excuse. You can no more not sin than the sun can cease to shine or the earth stop rotating on its axis.

UNDERSTANDING
WHO YOU ARE IN
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Our union with Adam is so complete that his condemnation becomes ours. The fall of our nature is total. No part of our essence has escaped the affect of Adam's fall. Since this is true, the person you married comes with some "important" and "heavy" baggage. Thus the hard, cold reality is, the person you are married to has a sin nature. He or she will sin . . . count on it. This sin nature stains all relationships. In most relationships you can run away, hide, or avoid completely the other offending party. In marriage, such is not the case. It is therefore important that we come to grips with who we were in Adam. We will examine this old nature, this "Adamic" nature by asking and answering three questions. First, . . .



What does the old nature look like (Col. 3:5-9)?

Therefore consider the members of **your earthly body** as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is because of these things

that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience, and **in them you also once walked**, when you were living in them. But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since **you laid aside the old self with its evil practices** (Col. 3:5-9).

From Colossians 3:5-9 we can see that the old nature can look like . . .

- Sexual immorality, (v.5)
- Impurity (Uncleanness), (v.5)
- Evil desires (Lust, Passion, Sensual appetites), (v.5)
- Greed [Covetousness], (v.5)
- Anger, (v.8)
- Wrath [Rage], (v.8)
- Bad feeling toward others [Malice], (v.8)
- Slander, [and] (v.8)
- Abusive speech from your mouth, [Filthy language from your lips, Filthy communication] (v.8)
- Lies (v.9).

WHEN YOU DESCRIBE
YOUR SPOUSE WITH
SUCH LANGUAGE AS
DEPICTED IN
COLOSSIANS AND
GALATIANS, WHAT YOU
ARE DESCRIBING IS
THEIR OLD NATURE.
IF THEY ARE A BELIEVER,
THIS IS NOT THEIR
IDENTITY.

In addition to the above listing, Galatians 5:19 add the following.

- Sorcery [witchcraft],
- Enmities [hatred],
- Strife [discord],
- Jealousy,
- Outbursts of anger [fits of rage],
- Disputes [selfish ambition, selfishness],
- Dissensions [division],
- Factions [party spirit],
- Envy,
- Drunkenness,
- Carousing [Orgies], and things like these.

You might be sitting back saying this is what my wife or my husband looks like. It is possible for believers to exhibit such sins of the flesh, but no believer is to be identified by these things. **These things are not to be our identity.**

When two people have a certain level of tension, they will begin describing their spouse with certain language. Here is what I want you to see; when you describe your spouse with such language as depicted in Colossians and Galatians, what you are describing is their old nature. If

they are a believer, this is not their identity. When you eat you might be accused of “eating like a pig.” Although you might, in your behavior, “act like a pig,” you are, in fact, **not a pig but a human**. A human is your nature and your identity. The same is true with reference to your spouse. They might act like their old Adam nature, but in truth this is not their identity. Their identity is who they are **in Christ**.

If you are married to an unsaved individual, then their identity is who they are in Adam. They can act morally, and live responsibly, but their core has never been changed. They are still **in Adam**. This leads us to our second question.



What should be my response to my spouse’s old nature (Col. 3:12-14)?

So, **as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on** a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity (Col. 3:12-14).

How do we handle failed expectations and disappointment? Sometimes in marriage we expect our spouses to bat 1,000 every time. But no one in baseball bats 1,000. Now, I want to believe that our averages will be better than most baseball players, but we should expect a certain degree of failure. This does not excuse it, but it does put it into perspective. Listen to what the apostle John says in his first letter:

My little children, **I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins,** we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for [those of] the whole world (1 John 2:1, 2).

Winston Churchill said it well: “Success is never final and failure is never fatal.”²

What I always find fascinating about the grace of God is that, “God expects more failure from you than you expect from yourself.”³

EVERYONE FAILS, SO DO NOT GIVE UP ON YOUR SPOUSE WHEN HE/SHE FAILS.
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The New Testament is a story of disciples who failed, but were used mightily by God. Everyone fails, so do not give up on your spouse when

he/she fails. What should be my response to my spouse's old nature? Notice again the following ideas as they are found in Colossians 3:12-14.

- Display a heart of compassion
- Display a heart of kindness
- Display a heart of humility
- Display a heart of gentleness
- Display a heart of patience
- Display a heart of bearing with one another
- Display a heart of forgiveness
- Display a heart of love

Think about this list. What would happen if this were the response to failure within the home? You are not there to be God's tool for chastening your spouse. That is not your role. Where in this list is judgment, a critical spirit, nagging, or a caustic mouth? What God asks of us is not only difficult, it is impossible. Until we see ourselves as hidden with Christ in God, the relationship we have with our spouses will be marked by fatigue and failure. John 15:5 is not simply good advice; it is what is real, "Without me, you can do nothing." Let us not forget our dependency on God and work **from Him**, not **for Him**. The final question in our study is . . .



What should be my response to my own old nature (Col. 3:5, 8, 10, 15-17)?

This makes the study personal and intimate.

First, consider the members of your earthly body as dead (Col. 3:5, 8 [Put it all aside]). Do not allow your mind to think that who you were in Adam forms your identity before God.

Second, do not lie to one another (Col. 3:9). Learn to always speak the truth and live an open and honest life that is seasoned with grace, wisdom, and love.

Third, put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him (Col. 3:10). This is where we will go in the next chapter. We will look at 1 Peter 3:7 which I believe to be one of the most misunderstood verses in the New Testament as it relates to the marriage relationship.

Fourth, let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts for body unity (Col. 3:15). You should stop being at war with your spouse. Remember, **marriage unity is not based on personality conformity, but grace.**

Fifth, be thankful for what you have instead of what you do not have (Col. 3:15, 17). **Comparison kills contentment.** You should never compare who you married to someone else. One thing I have learned is that the grass is never greener on the other side. In every relationship there exist two problems. The first one is you and the second one is the person with whom you have the relationship. You always take with you an old nature and you are always dealing with someone who has an old nature. Because God is in control, be thankful that in all of His wisdom and grace, He believed the person you have is the one He wanted you to have.

COMPARISON KILLS CONTENTMENT.

Sixth, let the Word of Christ richly dwell within you (Col. 3:16). Get into the Word of God and have it percolate inside of you. Attend church, regularly read your Bible, discuss it in fellowship with others. Make the Word of God a vital part of your everyday life.

Seventh, whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus (Col. 3:17, 24). As you serve your spouse know that, "It is the Lord Christ whom you serve." Raise your sights.

Living the Christian life is so different than anything else we can think of. When a child is born, there comes a point where we start to train them for independence. All things being equal, a day will come when we, in a sense, cut them loose. They are now on their own. However, just the opposite is true for the Christian. We start from a position of self-rule, self-willing and declared rebellion and we work toward dependency. Christian maturity is when we see ourselves as helpless infants cradled in the arms of Almighty God.



APPLICATION: (Making the transfer)

What I am asking you to do is to see yourself cradled in the arms of God and to make the kinds of choices that express His fruit, believing He is working His will in you and through you to those around you.

- See yourself as helpless without God.
- See your spouse as person with a fallen nature.
- Treat them according to the text of Scripture and their identity in Christ.
- Know that you are not alone in your journey. God is always with you.
- God is the God of hope, healing, and wholeness. Do not believe the devil's lies. He is a defeated foe and God is at all times winning.

¹ Jay Adams, *Christian Living in the Home* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 10,11

² Brennan Manning, *The Ragamuffin Gospel*, (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 2000), 187.

³ Loc. Cit.