



Shiloh Messenger

Identity, How We View Ourselves (pt.3)

April 2017

We all live our lives on the boundary between our *internals* and our *externals*. The internals are things that come from us: our self-perception, thoughts, feelings, personality, our will, the way we respond to others, and so forth. Scripture is clear that we are accountable for and thus have control over our internals. The externals are things that come from outside of us: the circumstances we find ourselves in, the things people say to us, the events at our jobs, etc.... We don't have control over the externals. Our relationships happen at the border of these two worlds—where our internals and our externals meet. This is the ground on which we practice our relationships. Our internal world is meant to draw off of something. Before we're saved the only place our internals can draw off of is our externals. Our feelings are the result of a situation we have, or our thoughts are because of a conversation we had, and so forth. Because of this, our internal space learns to draw off of the external space we live in. The lessons we learn in life and our worldview are shaped by the belief that *the environment I'm in determines the quality of life I experience*. When we become Christians, something significant happens to our internal space. God brings new life to our spirit and the Holy Spirit moves in, our internal space now has access to rooms that were locked up before. Within that expanded internal space is a new power source that our internals can run off of. The problem, though, is that we've spent our life learning that we need to draw from our externals. As long as we continue to look to our externals to determine our internal space, we will always be under the control of the environment around us to some extent. If the enemy chooses, he has the ability to set a situation up and change the quality of life we experience; thus, we give him control of our internals through the externals he has the ability to influence. Naïve Christianity expects the point of Christianity to be that God will now start controlling our externals and as a result our internal environment will be guaranteed to be enjoyable. This, as any Christian for more than a month or two will tell you, isn't the reality of the situation. The truth is that God moves to start working in the internal space, not the external space. The enemy works from the outside in; he controls the external space and uses that to manipulate our internal space. God works from the inside out; He wants to renovate the internal space and use that space to change the external space through us.

Scripture is clear that God sets forth a destiny for us: *“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers,” Romans 8:28-29.* *“He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved,” Ephesians 1:5-6.* The subject of predestination is a large and complex discussion on which there are many points of view. I don't want to enter into that discussion other than to observe a point most often not discussed: what we are predestined to is a process of growth. God sets in front of us a destiny to become someone new. That person is conformed to the image of Jesus and adopted as a son of God. We often don't recognize the invitation to learn to draw from the Holy Spirit instead of situations around us because that invitation is always *relational* in nature. Everything in God is relational in nature. God brings us into situations where He can *be* something for us, and in that situation, is an invitation to experience relationship with Him in a way we haven't yet. This means being exposed to a situation where the current way we're living life is drawing off the externals. God brings us to a situation where we clearly aren't experiencing the quality of life He has for us and lets us lose control. Every loss of control in our life is an invitation to upgrade our experience of God.

Any place where our peace is under constant onslaught then is an opportunity for God to establish peace in us. We feel out of control because as soon as we fix one external problem, another one arises that steals our peace. All of this is exposing where we've yet to learn to access our peace from God. If we find ourselves in situations where we are always feeling right on the brink of bankruptcy, there is implicit in that situation, an invitation to know God as provider. If you are frustrated a lot, perhaps that is the very place God wants to establish gentleness in you. Lying within each of these situations is an upgrade if we have the eyes to see it. If we have the faith to believe that God has predestined an identity for us to become and that all things work together for our good, we start to see how we become more than conquerors in every situation. In every situation, we find ourselves, God is working to become more to us, to establish us in our identity, and to strengthen our ability to draw off our internal space. This is the power of being predestined to *be* something. Let's consider one of the more famous passages about the victory of Christianity: *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ [an internal reality]? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword [external reality]? As it is written, “for your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loves us” [drawing from the internal reality], Romans 8:35-37.* Paul is commending us to focus on the internal reality of God's love and let that be what we draw from and focus on. Now this doesn't mean that we'll never have negative emotions or thoughts, but what it does mean is that those emotions or thought won't have leverage over us. We may feel frustrated, sad, or lonely, but we'll be okay feeling those emotions. We won't feel out of control as a result of those feelings, because we know even the negative is an opportunity to do life with God. Paul writes of this in *Philippians 4:11-13*: *“Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”* Paul says that he knows how to exist in the mountaintops and the valleys of life and to be content in both and that the secret is to do it through God. As we learn to live our life through the lens of our relationship with God, we gain the ability to be content in every situation. We are more than conquerors because God will only bring us into places in life where our relationship with Him can grow and mature.

Graduate Testimony

Hello, my name is Kyle Heard. At 14 years of age, I began drinking alcohol and smoking pot. By the age of 16, I was fully dependent on marijuana. This progression continued to prescription pills, predominately Xanax. This drug operates as anti-anxiety medication. Did I mention very addictive? As I continued the use of this drug, the chemical make-up of my brain chemistry began to change. I began to do, and say, things way out of character, lying, cheating & stealing were every day activities. My dependence on this drug was my life, without it, life was one big mental disorder (melancholia). Extreme depression, thoughts of suicide began to fill my head, Satan had completely encompassed my thought process. I was in and out of jail, I destroyed anything I came into contact with, relationships, family, jobs, etc. Around 24 I began smoking crack cocaine. I had just thought life was bad before, it would end up costing me \$700-\$1100 a week just to survive. Life had become very lonely at this point, I would shut myself away hiding paranoid, very reclusive. Although my family never gave up on me, there was a necessary separation between us. I cannot imagine having your son on the verge of death. I cannot count the overdoses, countless times waking up handcuffed in jail or to hospital beds. Life had become tiresome and cold. One day I found myself downtown in Harris County jail pleading for someone to come get me. Finally agreeing to come to Shiloh my mother and father who had never given up on me came and bailed me out. It was here at Shiloh that I fell in love with my creator Jesus Christ, and gained victory over the death that surrounded me for so long. The Lord has given me a drive and will to live and to lead a successful life. I now have hope where there was no hope. I owe it all to Jesus! He is my life. Thank you Staff of Shiloh for mentoring me for one year and thank you Shiloh supporters for sowing your love into us. Love you all!!!



New Dorm to House More Men

Over the past couple of years we have had a waiting list for potential students. With a waiting list comes consequences. Many men have to wait for 90 days & we often lose them after that period. We do have a referral list of other ministries, but most of them insist upon being put on our waiting list. They tell us it is our success in ministry to others they know or it is them visiting our website that they choose to wait. The Lord spoke to me last year and told me He wanted another Dorm built. We complied and began construction last fall. We now have a 45 by 75 Ft. exterior building, that needs completion on the inside. This includes, Sheet Rock & mud, Paint, Insulation, Wiring for Lights & AC, Ceiling Tile, 2 five ton Air Conditioning Units, Stained Concrete flooring, Showers and Plumbing (toilets, faucets, shower heads & valves & PVC piping).

The approximate cost for completion of the Dormitory is \$31,000.00. We ask that you pray about what The Lord would have you do to help us in restoring His most valuable and precious asset, "People." With your financial gift, it will make possible for us to quickly finish this Dorm project so we can help to house more desperate men.

Thank you again, to everyone who co-labors with us in reconciling men with God, so restoration can begin.

We love you,

Rocky & Debbie Fondren

(Shiloh Ministries is recognized by the IRS as a 501c3 charitable organization. All financial gifts are tax deductible at the end of the year)

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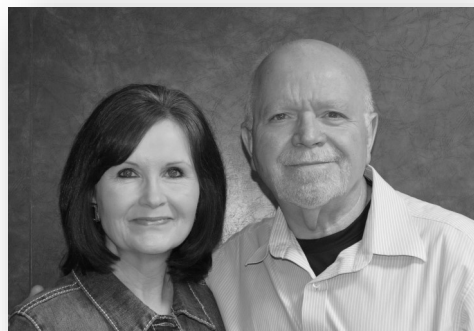
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