



Shiloh Messenger

Identity, How We View Ourselves (pt.4)

May 2017

Behavior flows from Identity: *(This is the fourth installment of Putty Putman's teaching on Identity)* Jesus teaches that “the treasure of our heart” determines what we produce in this life. As we grow into our identity, we will see corresponding changes in our behavior as well. Just as God’s plan for bringing quality of life to us works from the inside out, so does God’s plan for making us holy. So when we face a sin issue, we need to resist doing the sin, but we also need to ask ourselves the following question: What aspect of my identity needs to grow for this to lose control over me? Sin is often tied to a lack in our own person and that is part of why it carries leverage over us and is so difficult to break free from. People who are “conformed to the image of His Son” don’t see sin as an attractive thing; they see it as repulsive. Any time sin attracts us, it is pulling on a hole in our identity that God wants to fill.

We often tend to think of our behavior existing along a spectrum: On one end of the spectrum, we have carnality—being given over to fleshly desires. Carnality is the result of following the flesh to its conclusion. These sins are always characterized by excess and are destructive: “*Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these,*” **Galatians 5:19-21**. “*Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul,*” **1 Peter 2:11**.

On the other side of the spectrum is religion. By this I mean that we try to earn something with God. We believe that our behavior actually gets us more favor with God. This results in a rules-based spirituality that prioritizes doing the right thing at the cost of relationship with God. The Pharisees were the consistent example of religion in the scriptures: “*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness. So, you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness,*” **Matt. 23:27-28**. Jesus refers to these using a metaphor of leaven: *And he cautioned them, saying, “Watch out; beware of leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod,”* **Mk. 8:15**.

Clearly the Pharisees are representative of religion, but Herod we know less about. The Forerunner Bible Commentary says this in an entry about the leaven of Herod: “*Herod was involved in a great deal of lying in his political wheeling and dealing, abusing the power of his office, adultery, and general all-around worldliness.*” The power of religion and carnality is that they are self-reinforcing behaviors. They start to permeate the way we think and become part of our worldview.

Have you ever had a conversation with someone who is in agreement with either religion or carnality? It is frustrating because they don’t see things clearly; they run all their reasoning through their tainted mindset. This is the result of the leaven of religion or carnality. Paul informs us that because of Jesus’ sacrifice, we can become unleavened bread—uninfluenced by our former traps of “malice and evil.” Between the middle of these two extremes is “unleavened” bread—a balance of behavior that we strive for. Here is the trick, though: if we think of holiness as a behavioral issue, we’ll always be swinging back and forth along the spectrum, overshooting the middle and trying to head back towards what we missed. If we start out as carnal, we finally get ahold of ourselves and swing over into being incredibly religious and having no mercy on others. When we realize the monster, we’ve become, we try and loosen up and we become carnal again. Because we’re always moving away from something that’s not our goal, we never wind up where we’d like to be.

God looks less at our behavior and more at our heart: *But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as a man sees: man, looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart,”* **1 Samuel 16:7**. What God is interested in is the inside of us: who we are. What we should do then is draw something that includes both aspects: the outward appearance (or the behavior) and the heart (or the identity).

When we first become a Christian, we are totally unaware of our identity as royal sons of the living God. As a result, we have a wide range of behavior that is consistent with our current self-perception. As we grow upwards in the identity that God has set before us and orchestrated our lives to grow us into, we find that the behavior that is consistent with how we see ourselves shrinks. We find things that used to be attractive or tolerable to be repulsive, and our behavior conforms to that of God’s law. This is what it means when Jeremiah says that God will write his law on our hearts—that holiness isn’t something we have to try and get to, but rather something that radiates out of who we really are.

This is what Paul is talking about Romans 8 and in other passages. Paul commends us to set our minds on the Spirit and walk according to the Spirit. Out of that identity our behavior flows. This is why Paul refers to putting off the old self (your old identity) and putting on your new self (your new identity): “*But that is not the way you learned Christ!... to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness,*” **Ephesians 4:20, 22-24**. Note that to put on the new self requires being renewed in the spirit of our minds—our perception and our worldview. These two fit together. You can probably see now that a major message of the New Testament is that of identity, realizing who we are in Christ and learning to think and act like who we are. “*And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on the character of Christ, like putting on new clothes,*” **Galatians 3:27**.

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 Dormitory 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)

Graduates Testimony

Hello, my name is Aaron Dupuis. I am 23 years old. I was born and raised in southern Louisiana. I grew up in a loving family and I was raised Catholic. All of the religious rules and strictness caused me to view God as an angry old man who set this standard that I could never reach. At the age of 15, I denounced God. This was also when I began using drugs. It started with marijuana, but by the time I was 20, I was using heroin and pain pills as well as alcohol and other opioids. I began stealing from my family and eventually others. 2015 saw me in three in-patient rehabs and three out-patient rehab groups. Then in December that year, I was arrested on multiple felony theft charges. I was approved for rehab and found out about Shiloh Ministries. I arrived at Shiloh on January 27, 2016. While at Shiloh, I experienced God's love, discovered He is real, and that He loves me passionately. I found that I can stand on the Word of God, like my favorite verse, "We are afflicted on all sides, but not crushed. Perplexed, but not driven to despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed," 2 Corinthians 4:8. It is amazing to me how The Lord can transform a life that had rejected everything He died for. Despite my ignorance and stupidity He came and encountered me so that I might know Him intimately. My year at Shiloh has changed my eternal destiny. I am no longer a slave to sin, but now a son of the most High God. Since graduating from Shiloh I have entered a new phase in my life by becoming an Intern at Shiloh. I want to thank everyone who supports this ministry. It is because of your love for us that we are living a life of freedom so we can be involved in freeing others bound in sin. Thank you for your love and generosity!



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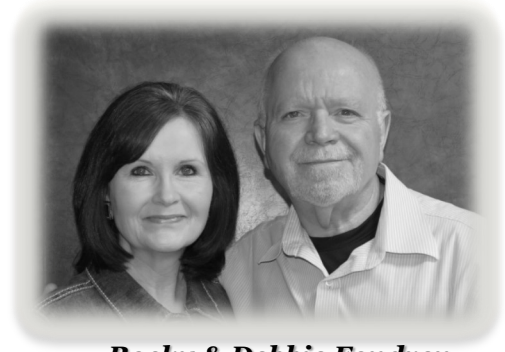
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**Rocky & Debbie Fondren
Founders & Sr. Leaders, Shiloh Ministries**