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**VCL International**  
**VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING CONFERENCE**

***ACCEPTING YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS***

**Lesson Transcript by Ted Sellers**

I'd like to tell you a little bit about myself. A couple of years ago, I had the privilege of pastoring a small church, and I was very pleased to be able to do that, to be serving the Lord as a pastor. I went to Moody Bible Institute and graduated from the Pastor's Course and wanted to study God's Word and teach it to people and see them set free. I found out very quickly that one of the reasons I liked being a pastor was that I liked to study the Word of God and then teach the Word of God. I even counted . . . I like to count things . . . so I counted up that it would normally take me about ten to fourteen hours to prepare for a Sunday morning message. That's a lot of time! And, I put a lot of work into it because I wanted to teach the Word of God.

But there was another underlying motive that I, looking back, didn't even realize that I had learned. That motive was that I wanted peoples' acceptance. I wanted to be accepted by people, and so I would preach the Word. Then, at least in the church where I was pastoring, we had the little routine every Sunday where I would go back to the door and greet people as they left. A lot of churches today don't do that anymore, but this one did; and I was so glad they did because I would be standing there at the door when people would be coming out and leaving. I would be saying things like: "Hi, Mrs. Johnson, it's good to see you today. How was your trip to Michigan?"

But, I had an ulterior motive because I had a little cup that I was holding out. No one ever saw it, of course, but I had my little cup of acceptance . . . had it kind of tucked away . . . so I'd ask her about how her trip to Michigan

was, and then I'd stick out my cup. And she would put something in it. And what she would say was: "That was really a good sermon today, Pastor. I learned something that I had never seen before."

"Thank you. Thank you."

And someone else would come up. "Say, Mr. Jones, how you doin'? Oh, you're walkin' really good on that knee. Been prayin' for that knee, that it would recover." And he would say, "Oh, thank you, Pastor. And, by the way . . ."

"Uh huh?"

"I sure liked that sermon today."

"Did you really? Good! Put somethin' in the cup . . . thank you."

Then someone else would come up, and I would make a comment. "Hey! I heard your son isn't feeling well. I'll be over later this afternoon, and I'll be praying for your son."

"Oh, really? Oh, I'd appreciate it if you'd do that. And besides that, Pastor, what a good sermon today."

"Thank you. Put something in the cup."

We even had one lady who was from England, and I loved to see her come in the line because she always said the same thing. As I approached her, I would say, "Hi! How are you doing?" She said, "Oh, I'm doing so well today, and I just want you to know—Good sermon, Vicar!"

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**ACCEPTING YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS TRANSCRIPT, Page 1**

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“Oohh, I was a vicar!”

I didn't know what that was, but it sounded good and more acceptance than just pastor. I was a vicar! That filled my cup up . . . oh, maybe up to here . . . and I just loved holding my cup out every Sunday. By the end of the line, when the last person left, my cup was pretty full of acceptance. The only trouble was, during the week it drained out and was empty. By next Sunday, I had to start the process all over again: hold it out and hope somebody would put something in my cup.

“Accepting Your Righteousness.” Accepting what God says about you. I think we as Christians need to do that because we live in a world that really rewards performance.

Many people that work in industry or even in schools experience a yearly performance evaluation. And those are very serious. They can be very scary. Because if you don't measure up, if you've not performed with the goals that perhaps were set for you, you could lose your job. Even children growing up learn how important it is to perform. A little child comes home, maybe first or second grade, with all A's on his report card. Dad is so impressed. He says: “That's a good job, Son. Here. Here you go. Here's a twenty-dollar bill. Way to go!” What does the boy learn?

“I know. I need to get good grades, and Dad'll like me, and he'll even give me money. I think I understand how this thing works!”

Then we become Christians and we think: “Well, God's probably the same as everybody else. If you do a good job, you get rewarded, and He'll like me.” As it says on the introduction page, paragraph 3: “Many sincere people try very hard to gain acceptance from God and others through performance. A believer may say, ‘I have made some very poor choices, and I know God will love me if I \_\_\_\_\_.’” You

could fill in the blank with “get involved with Christian service” or if you “sacrifice for Him” or “self-effort.” If I just try a little harder, I know that that will mean something to God.

I really believe that everyone is either performing and functioning **for** acceptance or **from** acceptance. I'm trying to get you to accept me by holding out my cup and saying: “Would you put something in my cup? Oh, thank you. Would you put something in my cup? You didn't put anything in my cup. OK, I'll go to someone else. How about you? Would you put something in my cup? Thank you very much.” We become like Christian beggars. Then we realize that it doesn't really satisfy, but we don't know any other way.

One man has said this: “Victory, as a Christian [and we call this the Victorious Christian Living Conference] is not a reward. It's a gift.” And the gift is a person. That person, Jesus, totally accepts you and me. Bob George, the author of *Classic Christianity* and *Growing in Grace*, said this: “It is my opinion that the average Christian's flimsy understanding of his acceptance and identity in Christ is the major cause of the superficial Christianity that is all around us.”

### **WRONG CHOICES (Diagram 180-A)**

Let's go to your first diagram and see how this idea of identity and accepting your righteousness can affect choices. Let me read to you Romans 8:12-13, “So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh [or after the flesh]—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” If I'm living according to the flesh, I need to die to that kind of living. That's wrong living.

Let me read to you the way *The Message* translates this. *The Message* is a fairly new paraphrased translation by Eugene Peterson. I really like the way he translates.

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(I just want to say a little footnote here in regard to using other kinds of versions and translations, especially those that are paraphrased. Those of you men that watch sporting events: there are usually two people broadcasting the event. There's the play-by-play guy. He gives you the plays. He calls them out. Then there's the color commentator. The color commentator fills in the blanks, and he tells you a little bit about what's been happening in this player's life and in the past week, or if his wife is expecting a baby. It has nothing to do with the play on the court or on the field. He's just a color commentator. Well, that's the way I think when I think about these other kinds of translations—*The Living Bible*, *The Message*, Phillips, Good News for Modern Man. They might not be word-for-word translations like the King James or the NIV or the *New American Standard Bible*, but they're color commentators. They bring color and life to it.)

Listen to Romans 8:12-13 from *The Message*: “When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus) you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ's. So don't you see that we don't owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent.” I always like the way that says, “You don't owe this old do-it-yourself life one red cent.” What is that? That's the self-effort kind of life. “There's nothing in it for us, nothing at all. The best thing to do is give it a decent burial and get on with your life. God's Spirit beckons.”

So that's what you see as you look at this diagram on this page. The diagram is a person, a Christian going along in the course of daily relationships, and then an incident happens. The person reacts after the flesh. The attitudes are basically unchanged, unaware of the person's true identity in Christ. Identity in Christ has nothing to do with this person.

Let me tell you three words that I'd like you to write on your diagram. Three words: “Depen-

dependency determines control.” Let me explain that. Whatever I depend on controls me. Let's say, I depend on my job. You'll hear people say: “Well, my job, that's my life. My job is my life.” What does that mean? The job controls that person because dependency determines control. Let's say I'm dependent on a person. It could be a spouse, a child, a friend, whoever it is. I'm really dependent on that person. That person has the power to control me because identity determines meaning and purpose in life. Or, meaning and purpose in life flow from identity. If I know who I am, then I know what makes sense in life. You that are listening to this tape are doing so because of your identity. You know who you are, and because you know who you are, you want to find out more about this Christian life. You want to find out about accepting your righteousness. Identity is very important because meaning and purpose in life flow from identity. Whatever I depend on, that thing has the power to control me.

So, let's take a particular incident. We've got a man at work who's got some problems. He's hearing some rumblings through the grapevine. He reacts after the flesh, attitudes unchanged. What he could do is just say, “Eh, that's just the way they are!” and just blow it off. Or he could say, “Management around here—they're so picky, picky!” and become griping or complaining. But, let's say that there's conviction from the Lord. Instead of turning to the Lord, he turns to himself and becomes performance-driven. By self-effort, he tries harder. He realizes: “This job is very important. I'd better hold out my cup. I'd better make sure they like me around here. I'm gonna come in early. I'm gonna take no lunch break. I'm gonna stay late. I'm gonna walk on eggshells. I'm gonna make sure that I'm accepted around here in order to keep this job because this job is my life. I'm depending on it.”

Take another incident. How about parents and children, and the children are not obeying.

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What could the parents, unaware of identity in Christ, do? They could either blow up or they could even beat the children. That would be one way. Or they could say: “Well, what are you gonna do? Kids today . . . ha, ha, ha . . . they just never seem to listen, do they?” But then they may feel convicted and say: “Well, I gotta do something about this. I can’t just blow up; I can’t beat them up, that’s probably wrong. I know what I need to do. I need to live in a relationship with these children so that they will accept me. I really see how important they are. I need to hold up my cup of acceptance and say: ‘Let’s be friends. Let’s all be buddies. Let’s be pals.’” And what they’re really saying is, “Let’s be peers.” That’s not a parent-child relationship—the parents don’t want to be rejected, so they give up control for acceptance.

“We don’t want to do anything to make you mad. We don’t want to upset you because we have to live with you, and we want you to like us.”

Take another incident. Someone criticizes a person or tells the person how horrible he or she is. The person starts getting the identity, “I’m a bad person,” and could feel hurt or feel angry and just believe the lies. But if the Spirit convicts and instead of turning to the Lord, the person turns to self-effort, and the person says: “I know what I need to do. I need to try harder to get you to accept me, and I will bend over backwards. I’ll do whatever it takes because I want you to like me.” If it’s a woman, she may be involved in seductive clothing. She may even be involved in sexual promiscuity. Why?

“I need someone to accept me. Would you accept me? Because I have a bad identity I think I’m a bad person, and I want someone to like me.” A man, in that kind of an incident, given a title of being a bad person could become mean or hard or even turn to violence and say: “This is the way I am. I’m a bad person, and I’m gonna live that way, and you’re gonna like

me because if you don’t like me I’ll beat you up.” It’s a different kind of acceptance cup. It’s, “You’d better put something in or I’m gonna hit you!” It’s that kind of a thing: “Because I know who I am. I’m a bad person.”

### **THE WILL IS THE KEY—WRONG CHOICES (Diagram 180-B)**

Let’s look at what this looks like when we consider “walking after the flesh.” This little teetertotter here is an illustration of the body, soul, and spirit. The body is the block all the way to the left; the soul is the three blocks in the middle (your emotion, your will, your mind; that could be your feeler, chooser, and thinker), and then the spirit is the block farthest to the right. This is a teetertotter on the fulcrum of the will. As a person listens to Satan and the world and the world’s values, they are energized to choose from a false identity. What the false identity could be is: “Hey, I’m only human!” or “My identity is ‘worker.’ I’ve gotta really work to gain their acceptance.” Or identity: “Parent—I know who I am, I’m a parent. So I’ve got to make sure that child accepts me.” Acceptance is so important! I begin to make decisions based on my identity—my view of who I am.

I heard a story several years ago by Lieutenant Bob Vernon with the Los Angeles Police Department. (Just to show you the power and the need to be accepted.) He said he investigated this incident that had happened with some teenage boys. One boy saw another boy out with his girlfriend. He and a bunch of other guys confronted him about this, and he said, “Yeah, so what?” They got in a scuffle, and they got in a fight. He knocked the boy down who had dated his girlfriend. Out of somewhere came a knife, and he stabbed the boy. Then he handed the knife to one of the other boys.

Lieutenant Vernon said as he interviewed each one of these other boys, they all said the same thing.



“Hey, he handed me the knife, man, and everybody was lookin’ at me!”

“Yeah?”

“Well, I didn’t want to stab him; but, hey, I gotta live in this project, man, and they’re lookin’ at me. I need to be accepted by these guys; I need to fit in; I need to hang with these guys. I didn’t want to do it . . . the guy was bleeding and crying and . . .”

They eventually stabbed him to death. That’s how powerful it is that I must be accepted. That’s a wrong choice. Why?

“I want to be accepted; I want to fit in. Would someone please put something in my cup?”

### **RIGHT CHOICES (Diagram 180-C)**

Let’s look at the other side of this—the right choices. I think of Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:1-4. This is such a fresh look at the life of Paul. Listen and see if this is a guy who knows who he is. He says this: “Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ, stewards of the mysteries of God.” Did he know who he was? He was a servant of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God. “In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy. But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you, or by any human court.” See, it’s a small thing that I should be examined by you. “In fact,” he said, “I don’t even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord.”

The Phillips paraphrase puts it this way: “As a matter of fact, it matters very little to me what you, or any man, thinks of me. I don’t even value my own opinion of myself. For I might be quite ignorant of any fault in myself, but that doesn’t justify me before God. My only true judge is the Lord.” Do you see where he was

looking? Just to the Lord. He said: “I don’t care what you people think! I don’t even spend all day evaluating myself.”

Do you know of people that do that? Always checking: “I wonder if I did that correctly? I wonder if I had faith when I was doing that? Was I really doing that in the right way?” It would just get very tiresome. Or, I’m wondering if everybody likes what I’ve just done.

“Oh, boy. I bet someone was offended. I’ve got to find out if anybody was offended and go seek their forgiveness.”

Paul says, “I don’t really care.” It’s not that he’s being rude. He’s just not living **for** acceptance; he’s living **from** acceptance.

Let’s look at the two different tracks on Diagram 180-C. Here we have an incident just like before, reacting after the flesh, but now, an awareness of identity and choosing the truth. Eventually, as the incident occurs, I don’t react after the flesh; I respond after the Spirit and grow in grace. Think about the guy who’s working. He’s got his job, and he hears about some troubles, and now he’s been trying hard, remember, walking on eggshells, coming early, staying late? He says this: “I know that God totally accepts me. He loves me. My identity is not just ‘worker,’ my identity is ‘child of God.’ I’m accepted by God. And so, I’m going to work not for the boss, not for the pay, I’m going to work for God. He’s the one I’m going to work for. There are things that I’m going to do that my boss won’t even see, and it doesn’t matter because I’m not doing it for him anymore. I’m working as unto the Lord, and I’m doing a better job than when I was walking on eggshells and being fearful of losing my job, because I’m not working for these people. If I even do lose my job, God’ll find me another one because I’m gonna be working just for Him. I don’t have to work scared. I can work confident in the Lord.”

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Look up Ephesians 6:5-7. Let me just read those to you. I've shared these verses with many men who found a whole new way of getting up in the morning because they got up in the morning getting ready to do the will of God. Let me ask you something, "Am I doing the will of God sharing the Bible, teaching in a conference like this?" You say, "Oh, yeah."

"Well, how about you, when you get up tomorrow morning to go to work, and you're making widgets or whatever it is you do. Are you doing the will of God?"

"Oh, no, no. I'm not in Christian service."

Well, let's read Ephesians 6:5-7: "Bondservant [slaves]," (maybe that's how you feel) "be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice . . ." (NKJV). That's the way the guy was working before. What is eyeservice? That's being busy when the boss is watching. I remember when I was in the Navy, they said, "You don't have to be busy, just look busy." So you always had a rag nearby, and when the captain or one of the chiefs walked by, "How you doing, Chief?"

"Yeah, how you doing?"

Just look busy. That's eyeservice. That's from the teeth out. "Not by way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." Doing what? "The will of God from the heart." What is that? "With goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men." As I work unto the Lord and not unto men, I'm doing the will of God, no matter what the job is.

Let's say there's trouble at home. You remember that one? What's my identity? What's my identity as "parent"? Meaning and purpose in life flow from identity. Then I've got to get this child to like me. Or I've got to get this child to

obey. If he disobeys, my day is ruined. But I have to realize that I've got a deeper identity than "parent." I have an identity as "child of God." "Christian." Because of that, I can correct my child in love. Not overcorrect, not undercorrect—correct. But I do it in love because I know who I am. That child cannot change my identity no matter how he or she may act. Because my identity isn't determined by how good a job I do, even as a parent.

What about verbal rejection? Someone who calls me names. You know, I remember, growing up, they used to say, "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me." Well, they do hurt sometimes. But what do you do when you hear attacks verbally? It's exciting to know that no human being can change my identity. I know who I am, and you can't change me, no matter what you call me. Because my identity is in Christ, I'm secure in God's love and acceptance.

When we are really, totally loved and accepted by God, then we can love and accept other people. So it doesn't just stop with God and myself. It's not just a vertical thing. It's a horizontal thing, too. Because I know I'm loved and accepted by God, I can love and accept you. We will treat other people the same way we think God treats us. Think about that! If you think that God is always disappointed with you and upset with you, that probably will be the way you treat other people. If you think God is always watching and waiting for you to do it right, then you may be treating people the same way. But if you really believe God loves you, is for you, is on your side, and is encouraging you, then that's probably how you'll treat other people. The way we think we're being treated by God is the way we will treat other people. And we'll make right choices.

### **THE WILL IS THE KEY—RIGHT CHOICES (Diagram 180-D)**

Your next diagram shows this same teeter-totter, but now we've teetered in the other direction.

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Now, what makes the teetertotter teeter? What makes it go from one side to the other?

I don't know about you, but I never really liked teetertotters. The problem with me was I didn't weigh very much, and I always got on the teetertotter with a chunky guy. He would go down on the teetertotter and I would go up in the air at his mercy. Then you know what he'd do, don't you? He'd jump off and . . . POW! I didn't like that! I didn't like teetertotters because the heavy end is where the teetertotter teeters.

Now, how do you get these teetertotters to teeter? You put rocks on one end or the other. On the other one that we looked at all the rocks are on the world's values—listening to what Satan says, spending a lot of time absorbing things from the world. You don't even have to watch a lot of commercials; you just watch a sports event. Sports events should be safe. Oh no! They have all kinds of commercials that give you the values of the world. What you behold, you will reflect. If I'm beholding the values of the world in whatever way they come, I will start to reflect them, and they will change my values. My teetertotter will teeter toward the world system and toward what Satan would want me to do.

Well, how do I get my teetertotter to teeter the other direction, like this diagram shows? I put rocks on the proper side. In other words, I load up one side of the teetertotter. It's like that chunky guy. I get him on the other side, and it tilts down. If I put enough rocks on the teetertotter and it teeters toward the world, that could even be called an addiction. Because I've done something so many times that it seems to be natural.

I remember a man recently who quit smoking. He didn't quit smoking so God would love him. He quit smoking because he knew God loved him. And that was the difference, see? Many

people quit whatever it is, thinking, "Now the Lord will appreciate and like me." No! He already does, so I don't have to do that and He can give me the power not to. But he said he'd been smoking since he was about twelve years old. He was up to three packs a day. That's a serious habit. That's an addiction; that's a way of life. So many times, trying to make that decision, he honestly didn't think he could ever quit. He said, "I could never see myself on the other side of going over the bridge and being over there and not smoking at all." He said, "I just couldn't believe it. It just couldn't happen." Because he had been putting those little cigarette rocks on that one side of the teetertotter, it teetered, and it felt like an addiction. But by God's power he quit. It only took him about a week, and he called me up and said, "I just want you to know, I've quit."

Now, he was a guy who was a serious smoker. He didn't just buy a pack or even a carton of cigarettes. He bought a lot of cigarettes, and he bought them on the Indian Reservation. I understand they're not real happy about taking cigarettes back, but they said they would even take his cigarettes back. He had over \$300 worth of cigarettes that he sold back to the Indians so he could do something else with the money. He thought that was just an added blessing. Because of God's power his teetertotter didn't have to stay stuck.

Well, how do we put rocks on the right side of the teetertotter? What does it say? "God" and "His Word." I need to know what God's Word says about me, and believe it! I need to hang around with people who also understand that truth. Even as Christians, if you hang around with a lot of people who are legalistic, who are into performance, into works, it's going to mess up your teetertotter. You won't know where your rocks are. They'll start rolling back and forth and fall off and you have to find new ones. You want to hang around with people who understand the truth and understand how God

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thinks about them. Good books, listening to good songs, and having fellowship are also good. I will be putting the rocks on the right side of the teetertotter. Because I am accepted by God and I accept my righteousness my true identity will affect my choices.

See, the enemy wants us to listen to him, even as we want to make right choices, and he comes to us with one of his titles. Revelation 12:10 says he's "the accuser of the brethren." So he comes to you and he says: "Now, listen, who do you think you are? Do you see what you just did, what you just said, or what you just thought? Ha! And you think you're righteous? That's a joke! Come on, get real! Look at you. You can't call yourself a child of God. You can't call yourself righteous. Look at what you just did. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" And you might say: "You know . . . phew . . . I think you're right. I feel really crummy. Boy!" It's like Satan comes and leads you in a cheer with his little pompoms, and he says, "You're bad, you're rotten, you're no good, you're a loser!" So you say, "You know, I think I'm getting this. Let me have those pompoms!" So you take them out of his hands and then you, without his help, say, "I'm no good, I'm bad, I'm a loser." And he says: "You got it!" And he says, "This guy is set. Let's go on to someone else. He's got the message!" **And then you make choices based on those identities from the accuser that you just gave yourself.**

Do we give ourselves an identity based on our behavior or based on our birth? Let me just ask you this, "Are you an American citizen?" You say, "Sure." Do you always act like an American citizen? Let me ask you, "Did you vote in the last presidential election?" Some of you are saying, "Yes." Some of you are saying, "When was that?" Do you vote on just the local issues, when it's about 8 or 9 percent turnout? Do you vote on those? You mean, you don't always vote and you call yourself an American citizen? How about as you drive home today? Are you

going to watch your speed—that you don't go over the speed limit? The American citizen doesn't go over the speed limit, but if you do and you call yourself an American citizen . . . Do you recycle? That's important! Gotta recycle. If you don't recycle, I'm not really sure you're an American citizen. You say: "Oh, it doesn't matter. I don't even have to recycle. I can speed like a speed demon. It doesn't matter. I know I'm an American citizen."

"How come?"

"Because I was born here!"

"Oh, you mean it's not behavior?"

"No, it's birth. That's the difference."

**So you may not act righteous or feel righteous, but you are if God says you are.** Here's what the Phillips says in Romans 5:17-19: "One act of perfect righteousness presents all men freely acquitted in the sight of God. One man's disobedience placed all men under the threat of condemnation, but one man's obedience has the power to present all men righteous before God." Before you became a Christian, did God just see you as condemned and a sinner? You really weren't. It was just kind of His idea. Or were you really condemned and a sinner? Were you really that way? After you become a child of God, does He just see you as righteous? It's a play. You aren't really! It's Jesus that's righteous; you're not. Or are you really righteous? Yeah, you're really righteous.

### **FAITH IS (Diagram 180-E)**

Let's look at the next diagram: "Faith Is:" What is faith? It's a choice. We are talking about choices throughout this lesson. "A choice based on God's truth, even though it may not seem to be true, so that what is true about me already may become true in my daily experience." "The assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).



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A choice based on the truth. Well, what's the truth? The truth is I'm righteous.

The key verse for this lesson is 2 Corinthians 5:21. I want us to look at that for just a second. It says, "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf." Now, if you look in your Bible, I want you to notice, is there anything unusual about the two words "to be"? You notice those? They should be in italics. Do you know what it means when you see a word in italics? It means the translators inserted that word. It's not found in the original language, and if you take those out, it sometimes sounds a little clumsy, so they've put them in for the flow. But even though they've put them in, they want you to know that. So they put them in italics. So, what's fun to do sometimes is take those out and see how it sounds. Sometimes it's very powerful—like this time: "He made Him who knew no sin, sin." **"He made Him who knew no sin, sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."**

Let me ask you a couple of questions about Jesus and sin. Now, Jesus had never sinned. So, did He learn about sin by following the Father's instruction? Did the Father say: "Now, you've never sinned. Let me see if I can explain this to you. You see, sin is being disobedient to your parents, or sin is telling a lie." Is that what happened? Or, did He have sin kind of stuck on Him, like goopy, gobby mud, just kind of plop-plop-plop-plop? He had sin kind of flicked all over Him. Is that what happened? Or did He try to understand sin by self-effort? Just try to think: "What is it? I just can't figure it out." But He tried. Of course not. None of those fit.

Now, let's try you and I and righteousness. Do we learn about righteousness by studying the Bible? By reading the Bible? Do we learn about righteousness? See what the Bible says about righteousness . . . huh! Or maybe we have right-eousness kind of flicked on us, like

little heavenly sprinkles—little sparkles. Oh, there's a righteous person. See? They, sparkle! Is that what it is? Little sparkles on the outside? Or, maybe we try to be righteous by the way we act and talk.

One of the things that I've heard that can be a little confusing is thinking: "Now, here's what I'm going to do, but I need to think about what would Jesus do? What would Jesus do? And then I'll try to do that." That's living the Christian life by my mind and my will. You know, I don't even always know if Jesus knew what He was going to do ahead of time. He waited for directions from the Father. Yet, you and I try to think, "Now, what would Jesus do?" And then we try to do that in the power of our own self-effort—that's how many people are living the Christian life.

No! The Christian life isn't lived by my body and my soul. It's lived by the Spirit. And there are many times as you even pray about things where you say, "God, do you want me to do this, or this?" As you go to Him and let Him be the authority in your life, He says, "That!"

"Oh, I didn't think of that! Where'd that come from? It must have come from God. I didn't think of it."

Yeah, so let God direct. Now are those the ways we become righteous? Try to learn about it, or have it sprinkled on us or try hard to be righteous? No! **We actually become righteous through salvation.**

Here's a note from the Life Application Version of *The Living Bible*—I really like it. It says: "When we trust in Christ, we make a trade—our sin for His goodness. Our sin was poured into Christ at His crucifixion; His righteousness is poured into us at our conversion." Wow! "His righteousness is poured into us." Justification means to be declared totally righteous by God. It's not an act. It's not a play. It really hap-

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pened. **If you're a child of God, you are absolutely accepted by God and righteous.**

### ***THE TRUEST THINGS ABOUT ME*** **(Diagram 180-F)**

How do I pile the little rocks on the right side of the teetertotter so that it teeters in the right direction and even affects my choices? I do what I do because I know I'm already accepted. I need to know what God says about me because the truest things about me are what God says about me. Not what you say about me or not what I think about myself, not what the accuser says about me . . . **the truest things about me are what God says about me**, and I need to know what He says.

What we have listed here are twenty-one verses. There are more, but we picked twenty-one. So, if you take one of these a day and work through this process, this could be three weeks' worth of spiritual retreat into the truth of what God says about you. We call this is our "refrigerator page" because you can get a photocopy of this or make a copy and put it right on your refrigerator and see it as you walk around in your house. The truest things about me are what God says about me. What does He say about me? All of these things. Well, let's see what this says.

By the way, we need to consider Romans 12:2 because that is talking about the wrong side of the teetertotter: "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect." The Phillips says, "Don't let the world squeeze you into its mold." That's why sometimes you can't tell the players without a program, because the Christians and non-Christians look pretty much alike, because they've all been squeezed into the same mold. And a person who's willing to come out from that mold and be different is a person who knows who he is.

Haven't you even heard that when you see a teenager on TV and he says, "You know, what I'm really concerned about is this particular issue." And you say: "Boy, there's a guy who knows who he is. He's willing to stand up and be different. I like that. There's a guy who can think for himself. He's not just allowing the world to squeeze him into a mold!" And, as Christians, we can do the same thing. We know who we are, so we can act accordingly.

There are seven application steps to use with these verses on 180-F. What do you do to work through these verses? You read a verse listed above in its context and you check the cross references. So we've picked out a single verse or two, but read the verses around them. Get the context. Look up some cross references. Do a little study. And start writing down any ideas or thoughts you have. This is a Bible study. When I assign this to people who come in for ministry, I usually only say, "Do one a day or maybe one every other day, and then bring back your notes and let's talk about it." Sometimes, I've been very surprised. I remember one lady as she did this, she came back and shared her notes. She'd done about the first four. They were totally negative. She had a view of God that He was disappointed with her and He didn't like her. That reflected in how she went through this list. I saw there was a problem. We had her do the thing again according to what the truth is, not the deception that she was believing about God.

First, read the verse. So, in other words, you don't just take this and—pfft!—read it all through. Say: "Yep, read that, no big deal. What's the deal? I don't get it!" No. That's like people who say: "The Christian life. You know what? It doesn't work for me. OK? Works for some people; it doesn't work for me." You know why it doesn't work for you? Because it's not a job, it's a relationship. If it were a job, then you have to work it out by your own performance. But it isn't! It's a relationship

with a person, and that person totally accepts you and loves you.

So, number 2. You report to God that you believe what He says about you is true. For example, read the verse. Let's say we're going to do Romans 8:27 which says: "I'm a saint."

"Lord, I report to you, I believe it. You say, I'm a saint, I'm a saint."

Number 3. Respond to God. Thank Him.

"Father, I believe you when your Word says I'm a saint. I don't feel like one, but that's what you called me. I believe it. Thank you."

Number 4. Recognize what this verse teaches me about God and praise Him for who He is. What does it teach me about God? It teaches me about His power, that He can take a person who is a sinner and change the person to a saint. They've got to be diametrically opposed to each other. What a powerful God! He just didn't say, "Turn over a new leaf." He didn't say, "Try harder." He said, "I'm gonna change you from the inside out."

"Thank You, Lord, for what this teaches me about You."

Number 5. I reject my old view of myself. That would be no longer calling myself names like failure, dummy, stupid, idiot. I don't know if you do that. I used to do that. I had a men's Bible study one time and I said, "Hey, do you guys do any of this?" Every man there said, "Oh, of course." One guy said, "I wouldn't get nearly as much done every day if I didn't keep beating myself up and calling myself names all day." Ha! How sad! What is that? That's external motivation, isn't it? It's me calling myself names.

"Come on, get off your duff you stupid, lazy, no-good . . . ."

"OK, OK."

That's instead of the motivation coming from within. It's like working **for** acceptance, even accepting yourself, instead of working **from** acceptance. I am accepted and God does love me, so let's do a good job for Jesus. I'm working as unto Him. So I reject all my old unbiblical views of myself.

Number 6. I rejoice that my mind is being renewed every time I choose the truth. It's moving the rocks from the left side to the right side and pretty soon I can teeter the proper direction.

Number 7. Receive direction for today as a result of this verse.

"Lord, I see what You have done and who You are. Now, what do You want me to do regarding this truth? As a saint, what do You want me to do today, Lord? How do You want me to function? [Pause] Oh, You want me to pray for those three people? OK, as a saint, I believe I can do that. I can come into Your presence because of who You've made me."

## **REVIEW**

Well, in review: "I am totally accepted by Christ. Christ has made me righteous. I need to believe it, regardless of how I feel or how I act. This truth frees me from trying to gain acceptance from others. I don't have to live a performance-based-acceptance lifestyle. Knowing this truth stops the need to compete and makes decision-making easier. I am not trying to prove anything." I already know who I am. This decision, this task, won't change my identity. My identity is secure because I know who I am. I can do whatever it is, by His power and for His glory.

Well, I believe we need to tell God that we believe this truth. Do you know what you and I need to do? We need to take our little cups that

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we've been holding out . . . "Would you put something in my cup? Oh, thank you! Would you put something in my cup?" (And it all drains out the bottom.) We need to hold our cup up to the Lord and say, "Would you fill my cup?" Isn't there a song like that? "Fill my cup, Lord / I lift it up, Lord . . ." We need to lift our cup to Him and say, "Lord, I believe that You have totally accepted me. I've got all that I need in You. Go ahead! Fill it up!" And you know what happens? Pretty soon it's overflowing and you've got so much you say: "Here, you guys take some. I've got so

much. Here, you take some more acceptance! I can accept you, I can love you, because I have all this acceptance. I know where to get more acceptance. You rejected me? That's OK. I know where to get my cup filled. Here, take some. I've got plenty. Because I know where to get more. Thank You, Lord, for filling my cup."

Let's pray. And as we pray, I'd like to challenge you to do that, to just say: "Lord, I thank You that You've accepted me, and I believe that You've made me righteous, and I accept the fact that You accept me. Thank You for this truth, Lord. May it set us free. We praise You. In Jesus' name, Amen."