

**Life Principles Center**  
**Course: Your Identity in Christ**  
**T2\_CA\_L1: How We View the Cross (AX052)**

**Introduction:**

When was the last time you saw the image of the cross? Most likely, you've seen one in the past day or two. Even in this age in which the world openly assaults the church, the cross remains one of the most recognizable symbols on earth. We see the cross everywhere—on steeples, t-shirts, bumper stickers, art, and jewelry, for example. But, even though we see it so often, do we really know what the image of the cross represents?

You'll see in this course, *Your Identity in Christ*, that the Cross of Jesus is the key to living the Christian life. You'll also discover how God views our relationship with Him and helps us understand that Jesus Christ is sufficient to meet our every need. I pray that as you work through these lessons, you'll come to view Jesus Christ—and the cross he bore—in a new, exciting, and intimate way. And now, let's begin.

**Lesson 1, Section 1**

**Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 1, you should be able to:**

- A. Recognize the misconceptions you have about a person's value and be able to apply accurate beliefs to your own life.
- B. Recognize the "common ground" that Christians and non-Christians share in their misunderstanding of the cross' meaning.

**Scripture**

*Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25*

*For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside." Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling*

*block and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

## Lesson 1

In the course entitled, "Christ and the Cross," a few lessons are devoted to the Person and saving work of Jesus Christ. Here, we will take that understanding and turn it inward a bit as we explore the changes that occur in each of us as a result of our personal relationship with Jesus.

We see the image of the cross everywhere these days. We find it on church steeples, T-shirts, bumper stickers, billboards, and jewelry. You may even be wearing a cross in some form right now. There is certainly nothing wrong with this, as long as you are able to give a reason if someone asks you what that cross means.

The cross is much more than a simple religious symbol; actually, it is the central doctrine of the whole Christian faith. Without this vital aspect, the entire system crumbles. Yes, the cross was necessary because of our sin. Through the cross, our sins have been forgiven and we have been given atonement for our unrighteousness. However, this is only one side of the issue. The problem with many Christians is that they only see the side of the cross that deals with their sins; many Christians, unfortunately, never understand the aspect of the cross that deals with the transformation of their lives.

The apostle Paul recognized the dramatic changes that had taken place in his life as a result of the cross. In Galatians 6:14, Paul declares that he has absolutely no reason to boast about anything in his life except the cross of Christ. In summary, Paul says that if everything about him was stripped away, the only thing of any lasting value or worth would be the cross. This is a message that changed his life to the very core, not only because it saved him from sin and death, but because it radically altered his day-to-day living.

Think about the roles in your life that you've allowed to define you. Are you a mother, father, sister, brother, son, daughter, wife, or husband? If your roles were stripped away, to what would you cling? Has your career or appearance defined you? Has a special talent God has given you become something that tells the world, perhaps even yourself, who you are? Evaluate what the cross means to you in terms of defining your value.

*J1: Ask the Lord to show you any false beliefs you have about your true worth. Record in your journal those misconceptions and confess any wrong belief you've held.*

As we go about our lives, we generally discover that people hold one of three views of the cross. These are the same three views that the early church encountered 2,000 years ago, which Paul details in 1 Corinthians 1:18-25. The first of these, according to Paul, is that the cross is a scandal, or as Scripture records, “a stumbling block.”

You see, in Jesus' day, the religious leaders had already formed a little theological box. They had their minds set on who God was and how He operated, and if something came along that did not fit inside their little God-box, they just cast it out. This is exactly what they did to Jesus.

People still do that today. They force God into a preconceived mold based on their own personalities, wants, and desires. So, when they read something in Scripture that contradicts their lifestyles, such as God's judgment, they simply dismiss it by saying that a loving God wouldn't really judge anyone.

The cross is also a stumbling block to believers who accept Jesus as Lord and yet still strive to earn God's blessings through hard works. Friend, anytime you try to *earn* what God has already freely given you, you will trip and fall over the cross. The cross is a shining testimony to the fact that we cannot be successful in the Christian life until we find ourselves utterly unable to accomplish it on our own. The cross shows victory through humility and brokenness. You will never know what God can do in your life until you come to the foot of the cross completely broken and allow Him to reshape the shattered pieces of your life into something brand new.

A second view of the cross that we run up against is that the message of the cross is simply *foolishness*. Paul himself uses that term five times in today's focal passage to describe the Gospel message. Worldly wisdom cannot grasp the fullness of the cross. It just doesn't seem to make sense that the Roman world's greatest symbol of shame can be our symbol of victory.

We ask, *How can death bring about success? How can one man's execution 2,000 years ago affect my life today? Why on earth should I care about an embarrassing legal / religious matter somewhere in ancient history?*

However, Scripture answers, “The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men” (1 Cor. 1:25). God knows what He is doing, even if we don’t see how His plans can work out. Remember, God says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD” (Isaiah 55:8).

*Q1: True or False? The cross is a stumbling block to Christians and non-Christians alike in that all humans are at risk for allowing their performance-oriented need for approval to define them rather than the cross of Christ.*

## **Lesson 1, Section 2**

**Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 1, you should be able to:**

- A. Distinguish between the three views of the cross and understand their application in daily life.
- B. Evaluate the significance of 1 Corinthians 1:18 on your personal struggles.

The third view that people have of the cross is that it is the very *power of God* to those who believe. In every other religion in the world, how is man made acceptable to God? It is through works: do this, don’t do that, go here, say this, starve yourself, work yourself, improve yourself. People are made to work and slave to make themselves “worthy” of God.

Believers in Christ do not have to worry about this, because Jesus has done the work for us. Because we could never be “good enough,” Jesus gave Himself to provide a way—the only way—for man to enter into God’s holy presence.

*Q2: Understanding the three different views of the cross applies to your life in each way EXCEPT:*

- A) *It supports the relief of burdens such as works-centered strife in my life and in the lives of non-Christians.*
- B) *It supports the talisman-like view that society holds of symbols such as the cross.*
- C) *It supports the truth that God has revealed to the world His mystery of strength in weakness through His Son Jesus Christ.*
- D) *It supports the claim that no new evidence is necessary to unravel the truth of the cross and its power to those who believe.*

How we view the cross is a vital, fundamental part of our walk with the Lord. It is a stumbling block and foolishness to many, but it is also clearly the power of God in a sick world. We must be ready to give an account of our understanding of the cross to any who ask. As Paul proclaimed, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).

*J2: Carefully read 1 Corinthians 1:18. Describe the ways in which the cross of Christ is A) a stumbling block, B) foolishness, and C) the power of God in your life.*

### **Prayer**

Lord, I stand amazed at Your ability to take the cross—an ancient symbol of shame and defeat—and transform it into a banner of victory. It may seem like foolishness in today’s society, but I thank You for the message of sacrifice, humility, and all-surpassing love that is proclaimed by the cross. As I respond to what You did for me on the cross, I ask for Your help in completely yielding myself, my wants, and my desires to Jesus Christ. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.

### **Homework**

Scripture Memory:

The Scripture memory assignment for this course is given below. Be sure to commit this passage to memory before moving on to the next lesson. Then, practice reciting it over and over throughout this course.

*John 15:5*

*I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

*Before moving on to Lesson 2, research the following hymns and meditate on the words to “The Old Wooden Cross” and “Blessed Assurance.” (use a bookstore, church, library, online hymn source, etc.) How do these hymns relate to the views of the cross discussed in this lesson? Respond in your journal.*

## Life Principles Center

### Course: Your Identity in Christ

#### T2\_CA\_L2: Christ In You, Your Hope Part 1 (AS178)

**Introduction:** Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." For that reason, we encourage you to complete each assignment before progressing to the next lesson. This lesson is structured with two separate sections to help you maximize your study time.

### Objectives

#### Lesson 2, Section 1

**Objectives:** At the end of this section of Lesson 2, you should be able to:

- C. Recognize the impact of Colossians 1:26-27 on your personal life.
- D. Understand the phrase "Christ in you" and its implications on your daily decisions.

### Scripture

*Read Colossians 1:24-29:*

*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.*

### Lesson 2

There was a time in my early Christian walk that I can best describe as a roller coaster ride. Sometimes I was up, sometimes I was down. Sometimes, I even felt like I was stuck upside down! I'd go up and down, round and round, not really getting anywhere. There was no thrill, no joy,

and plenty of failure. I thought that in order to be a good Christian, I had to do more, work harder, and throw myself into so-called Christian work. I was not enjoying my relationship with Christ.

Then, I began to understand a simple truth that completely changed my Christian life. All those good works I had been trying so hard to accomplish just began to pour out of me, honestly through no effort of my own. This will be true for you, as well, if you can take this life-changing truth to heart: Jesus Christ is alive and active inside of you.

Most people who go to church week after week have the idea that the Christian life is simply something that we do and that God, who is up in heaven, will hear us when we pray and get us out of trouble when we get off track. That's it: I do my job down here, God does His job up there, and someday we'll come together. My friend, this is not the teaching of the Word of God.

*Q1: Carefully read Colossians 1:26-27. Complete the following with the BEST answer:*

*God's \_\_\_\_\_ is implied in the fact that He \_\_\_\_\_ an important truth to His \_\_\_\_\_: your only \_\_\_\_\_ in living the successful Christian life, or in fulfilling God's \_\_\_\_\_, is the fact that \_\_\_\_\_ Himself lives inside you.*

- A. glory, revealed, children, enjoyment, plans, Christ*
- B. mercy, revealed, children, hope, purposes, Christ*
- C. judgment, showed, Gentiles, hope, glory, Christ*
- D. kindness, revealed, children, frustration, expectations, Christ*

Today's focal passage (Colossians 1:24-29) contains some interesting concepts that we may have never really noticed before. For example, the apostle Paul calls the *Christ in you* principle a "mystery." What does he mean by this? He certainly is not saying that God has hidden the saving message of Jesus from all but a select few. Rather, he means by "mystery" that there is something that was once misunderstood but has now been revealed.

This mystery is simply *Christ in you*. It was misunderstood in the past because the religious teachers of Jesus' day were not expecting the type of Messiah that Jesus was. They anticipated a military leader who would raise up a mighty army to save them from the persecution of their

oppressive Roman rulers. Jesus, however, came to offer a different kind of salvation.

He spoke of dwelling *within* those who followed Him. Over and over again throughout Scripture, Jesus refers to this special relationship whereby He enters into the hearts of those who accept Him. (John 6:55-56; 15:4-5; 17:23-26)

Now, some people have a hard time with this concept, because Scripture also says that when He ascended, Jesus took His position seated at the right hand of God. (Colossians 3:1) If this is true, how can Jesus also be living within each of us at the same time?

A crucial verse in understanding the work of the Holy Spirit is John 14:16-17, in which Jesus promises His disciples that He will send “another Helper.” We know this “Helper” is the Holy Spirit, and the primary ministry of the Spirit is to live the life of Christ in and through us.

*J1: When you know the Holy Spirit is leading you to a specific action, do you think about His indwelling power? If so, how does that understanding aid you? If not, how would your decisions in daily life be different upon remembering the significance of the phrase "Christ in you"?*

## Objectives

### Lesson 2, Section 2

**At the end of this section of Lesson 2, you should be able to:**

- A. Recognize weaknesses in your personal decision-making process as you evaluate Colossians 1:24-29.
- B. Recall scriptural evidence to support Jesus' reasoning for living inside you.

An obvious question is *why is it that Jesus Christ has chosen to come and live inside of us?* First, Jesus chose to live within us because He knew that we were inadequate to live the Christian life ourselves. We simply cannot consistently live the life of Christ under our own strength, wisdom, and power. Only Christ Himself can live the life of Christ; so, Jesus acts to enable us to live His life by living it *through* us.

A second reason Jesus chose to live inside of us is to glorify Himself through us. This means that by our conversation, conduct, and character, Jesus is able to exhibit and demonstrate who and what He is, here on earth, now. You see, if God did not intend to glorify Himself through you, why wouldn't He just call you home to heaven? He leaves us here for a

purpose, and that purpose is to direct other people toward God by living lives that point to Christ. We can only do that if Jesus Himself is abiding in our hearts, living that life for us.

Third, Jesus lives within us in order to carry out the work of the kingdom. Colossians 1:28 states that the job of the Church is to proclaim Jesus and teach others about Him. Simply put, we have a job to do! Even though it is Jesus within us doing the work, we must carefully examine the decisions we make about how to spend our time and resources.

*J2: Have you ever dismissed an offer to serve in a particular ministry because of lack of time, disinterest, or self-confidence? How does your understanding of God's purpose to use you to reveal Himself to the world transform the way you approach ministry involvement?*

Sometimes, God does things that we simply do not understand. Just like the religious leaders in Jesus' day, maybe we expect our Lord and Savior to act in some other way, through some other means. However, Scripture is clear that Jesus chooses to work through us. Holding tightly to this truth will change your life.

*Q2: Match the following reasons Jesus chose to live in His children with the appropriate Scripture reference:*

- 1. to glorify Himself*
- 2. to accomplish Kingdom purposes*
- 3. because we are incapable*

- A. Colossians 1:29*
- B. Colossians 1:28*
- C. John 15:4-5*
- D. John 17:23:26*

## **Prayer**

Lord, we don't know why You chose to use us as your instruments to reach a dark and fallen world. Forgive us when we fall short of this task, and help us to stop trying to do it on our own. Open us up to the work You desire to do in us and through us, and thank You for making my heart Your home. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## **Homework**

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

**John 15:5**

*I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

**Life Principles Center**  
**Course A: Your Identity in Christ**  
**T2\_CA\_L3: Christ In You, Your Hope Part 2 (AS178)**

**Introduction:** Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." For that reason, we encourage you to complete each assignment before progressing to the next lesson. This lesson is structured with two separate sections to help you maximize your study time.

**Lesson 3, Section 1**

**Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 3, you should be able to:**

- E. Memorize John 15:5 and understand its relevance to your relationship with Christ.
- B. Reevaluate your understanding of who Jesus Christ is.

**Scripture**

*Read John 15:1-5*

*I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

**Lesson 3**

At the beginning of the previous lesson of this course, I told you that the material we are studying has the potential to radically change your life. The concept of Jesus Christ, God's perfect and holy Son, living inside of each of us who have accepted Jesus as Lord is mind-boggling. We spent some time looking at three reasons why Jesus chose to reside within us. You'll recall that we said:

- Jesus knew that we were inadequate to live the Christian life for ourselves, so He entered into our hearts and lives with the purpose of living it for us.

- Jesus works within us to bring glory to Himself. He demonstrates His character through us, so that the world may see Him clearly.
- Jesus uses us to carry out the work of the kingdom. He has chosen to use us as His instruments to carry on with His work here on earth.

In this lesson, we'll spend some time exploring the implications that the indwelling Christ has on our lives.

Before we can understand what *Christ in us* implies, we must understand one important point. Today's passage (John 15:1-5) refers not only to Jesus abiding in us, but also to us abiding in Him. Is this just repetitive, or could Jesus be making two separate points?

I believe that it is significant that Jesus said it both ways. Jesus was perfect in speech; He never misspoke. That means that there must be some reason why He made both statements. Think of it this way: *I in Christ* prepares me for heaven. My soul rests safely in the arms of Christ, and I know—if I have accepted Jesus as Lord—that I will live with Him forever in heaven. However, *Christ in me* has a different job. This prepares me for life on earth. *Christ in me* allows me to go about my daily life on earth in the power of the Holy Spirit, shining the light of Christ into a dark world.

Now, as we have seen, this powerful union of Christ and us has a deep impact on our lives. First, Colossians 1:27 makes it clear that Jesus Christ within us is our “hope of glory.” It is Christ who makes it possible for us to become the people God intended us to be. Without Jesus within us, we would never come close to reaching our full potential.

Second, *Christ in us* is our hope for receiving the honor and glory that God has for us once we reach heaven. Romans 8:16-17 beautifully portrays each of us as the very children of God. And, if we are His children, we are the heirs of His kingdom. What a huge inheritance this is! In Christ, we have the hope—the assurance—that we will share in the glory of God in heaven forever.

Third, and most important, *Christ in us* means that we have the privilege of living moment by moment in an intimate, personal relationship with God. Do you realize what this means? It means that at any time of day or night, we can personally have a private, intimate, personal conversation with almighty God. He will never be distracted. He will not be caught answering the telephone while you are talking. He won't get sidetracked by a knock at the door. He is there, at any time, every time. Because He calls us into such a warm relationship, we have the amazing

privilege of having Him all to ourselves in a private conversation. Now, can you tell me who else in the world can provide that other than Jesus Christ? Nobody.

*Q1: Memorize John 15:5, and then choose the best answer to complete the following sentence. John 15:5 is paramount to understanding our relationship with Jesus Christ . . .*

- A) Because it explains the fruit we harvest in our work for God's kingdom.
- B) Because it discusses our weakness to do anything on our own initiative.
- C) Because it speaks of our future with Christ in heaven and our present with Him on earth.
- D) Because it explains the nature of an abiding commitment: Christ's and ours.
- E) Both C and D
- F) None of the above

When I think about Jesus, I see Him in all of His many roles. I see Him as the Savior of the world. I see Him as the incarnate Son of almighty God. I see Him broken and beaten on the cross as He took the penalty for my sins. But, do you know how I think about Him most often? When I think about Jesus, I mostly think of Him as my friend. He lives inside of me. He is here around the clock, ready to help, strengthen, listen, and encourage. Simply put, Jesus Christ is my best friend.

*J1: Take a moment to evaluate your relationship with Jesus. Do you consider Him your friend? Is He the first person you run to when you're surprised, excited, sad, or angry? Spend a few minutes listening to the Lord, and record what you discover about your level of intimacy with Him.*

### **Lesson 3, Section 2**

**Objectives:** At the end of this section of Lesson 3, you should be able to:

- A. Understand the correlation between *lordship* and *relationship*.
- F. Reflect on the meaning and purpose behind the Christian life.

The successful Christian life does not happen by accident, and Jesus within you will not force you to go where you refuse. Therefore, we each have responsibilities to Christ in surrendering our lives to His control.

With this in mind, let me leave you with two words that help explain how we go about aligning our lives with a godly lifestyle.

The first word is *commitment*. It is not enough to simply hear the message that Jesus is your life; you must make a commitment by which you prepare your life for Christ's control. You have to believe what the Bible says about *Christ in you* and then you have to choose to begin to live your life on the basis of that truth.

The second word is *confession*. In this case, I am not referring to the act of admitting sin. In this sense, *confession* means "to agree with." If you approach each day with the confession, "Jesus is my life," then you are simply reaffirming everyday that Jesus is alive and active in your life.

***Q2: True or False? The degree to which you know Jesus intimately can be measured by your level of surrender to Him.***

We must get away from the idea that the Christian life is something that we *do*. We work in the name of Jesus Christ, but not for the goal of becoming a better Christian.

***J2: Take a moment to read 1 Corinthians 1:25-31. How does this passage refute the lie that living the Christian life is about becoming a better Christian?***

If we set our hearts and minds to recognize that Jesus is working in and through us, one day we will realize that the work of the Spirit is simply pouring out of us without our having to think about it. The Christian life is not something that we *add to* by works; rather, it is something we *release from within*, as Jesus accomplishes His purposes for us and through us.

## **Prayer**

Father, we thank You for this precious truth. We know that no one can ever be the same again once that truth becomes a daily confession in their life. And so, I pray that the Holy Spirit, here and now, will etch this truth deeply in the hearts of those who are listening to make a commitment to the truth and begin daily confession of the reality of that truth in order that what was once self-effort will become the free flow of the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name I pray, amen.

## **Homework**

## Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

### John 15:5

*I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

Before moving on to the next lesson of this course, I want you to spend an entire day thinking about the concept of *Christ in you*. At least once an hour, repeat the confession, “Jesus is my life.” Explore the areas of your life in which you struggle and strive to do the most “Christian” thing. Ask yourself, “If I ceased this struggle and just let Jesus act, what would He do through me?” Write any thoughts or discoveries in your journal.

## Transcript of Audio/Video Teaching Clip

Let me ask you a question: *Where is Jesus living?* By now in this course, you should be able to answer with some certainty that Christ is alive and active inside of you.

Because Jesus is in you, you have a source of love, power, strength, and wisdom unlike anything else you could possibly imagine. The book of Colossians, Chapter two, verse three reveals in a very strong manner:

Speaking of Christ, the Word says . . . *“in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”*

What that means is that you have 24-hour-a-day access to all of the wisdom and knowledge you will ever need.

Now, that doesn't mean that you will suddenly become a know-it-all. But, it does mean that the Lord, who lives inside you, always knows exactly what you should do next. Now, each of us must learn to depend upon Christ to sort it out for us.

We don't always *feel* like we have the answers within us. I certainly do not.

And the reason so many Christians have such difficulty is because they believe the emotions they *feel* instead of the truth they *know*. Feelings can be deceptive because they change with our circumstances. The truth of the Word, however, is unchanging. And, that truth assures us that Jesus is living within us, ready to direct our steps in every aspect of our life.

## Life Principles Center

### Course: Your Identity in Christ

#### T2\_CA\_L4: Our Position in Christ (AT288)

**Introduction:** This lesson is divided into two sections to help you complete the entire lesson at your convenience. In order to renew your mind with God's Word and give you an accurate view of Him, it's very important that you take time to complete each assignment before moving on to the next lesson.

#### Lesson 4, Section 1

**Objectives:** At the end of this section of Lesson 4, you should be able to:

G. Understand the message of Colossians 3:3.

H. Recall important scriptural truths from previous lessons.

#### Scripture

*Read Colossians 3:1-4*

*Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.*

#### Lesson 4

By this point, you should realize that the Christian life is not something that we do, nor something that we earn, nor something that we strive for. It is simply *who we are*. Our relationship with Jesus changes us, from the instant we call upon His saving name. What are these changes? How has this relationship with God changed us from the people we once were? This is what we are going to examine today as we look at the issue of our *position* in Christ.

Too many Christians are walking around thinking that the Christian life just doesn't work. They may get thrown off-track because they still struggle with sin or experience hardships in their personal or professional lives. What does the abundant Christian life mean to these hurting people?

An essential key to achieving fulfillment in our walk with God is to have a firm understanding of *who we are in Christ*. I would like to give you

six words that really give us a comprehensive view of our position in Christ. We will examine the first two words in this lesson, and examine the last four words in the next lesson of this course. If you take the time to seriously consider these things and apply them to your life, I believe that you will begin to understand both why God has prepared you to live victoriously and why you may still often feel defeated in your Christian life.

1. *Crucified*. There is simply no way for a believer to reach fulfillment in Christ until he understands this point. We covered this in detail in the lesson entitled, “You Are Crucified,” but let us review it here once again. Simply put, you were personally crucified on the cross along with Jesus. How can this be, since that took place 2,000 years ago? You have to realize that God does not see time the way that we do. He sits *outside* of time; it is something that He created, so He is not bound to it or within it the way that we are. As such, when He looks down on us, He doesn’t see the 2,000-year separation between Jesus’ crucifixion and our lives today. Instead, He sees Jesus on one side of the cross and every one of us nailed to the other side of the cross.

Jesus did not just die *for* us, He died *with* us. Our old, sinful natures were put to death the moment that Jesus died. The apostle Paul makes this point over and over again in his writings:

- Colossians 3:3 – “For you have died . . .”
- Galatians 2:20 – “I have been crucified with Christ . . .”
- Galatians 6:14 – “But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

*Q1: Carefully read Colossians 3:3. Then, choose the best answer to fill in the blanks.*

*Because of what I learned in the last few lessons, I know that it is not \_\_\_\_\_ who does great works but \_\_\_\_\_ in me. Because of what Colossians 3:3 teaches, I understand that I am no longer \_\_\_\_\_ by my desires, my emotions, or the opinions of others. Instead, all of my \_\_\_\_\_ are subject to \_\_\_\_\_.*

*G) me, spiritual gifts, controlled, life's decisions, Christ*

*H) Christ, His Spirit, tempted, emotions, Christ*

*I) me, God, confused, desires, Christ*

*E. me, Christ, held captive, decisions, Christ*

This is only possible because we have become *identified* with Christ. That means that our lives have become so intimately connected to the Person of Jesus that it is impossible for God to look at us without identifying us with His Son. For example, I have two children and they are identified with me. When they were young, people would meet them and say, “Oh, you’re Charles’ children. It is nice to meet you.” When people who knew me saw them, it was natural for those people to associate the children with me. In the same way, God looks upon us and sees us each not only as individuals, but also as people intimately identified with His own Son.

*J1: Reflect on the truth that Jesus did not only die **for you**, but that He also died **with you**. Respond to Him in your journal with prayers of gratitude, questions, emotions, and anything else that comes up during your time of reflection.*

#### **Lesson 4, Section 2**

**Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 4, you should be able to:**

- A. Recognize the truth of your spiritual burial and baptism with Christ.
- F. Understand the practical, day-to-day significance of your burial with Christ.

2. *Burial.* Not only are we identified with the crucifixion of Jesus, but also with His burial. This is seen in Colossians 3:1, “Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ . . .” Well, how can we be raised up with Him if we have not been buried with Him? We can’t! So, we see that we have indeed been buried with Christ.

How do we represent this burial? Through the waters of baptism. We will discuss baptism in great detail in another course, but for now we should see that it is closely related to this notion of burial with Christ. Romans 6:3-4 makes this clear, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.”

Crucifixion and burial are understandably considered horrible events. After all, no one likes to hear that a death sentence has been put on them. However, in the next lesson of this course, we will continue our look at our position in Christ as I give you the remaining four words I want you

to remember. As we go through each one, you will begin to see the absolute beauty that lies in our position of being *crucified* and *buried*.

*J2: As you reflect on your baptism in Christ (Romans 6:3-4), how have your views of personal struggles with temptation and sin changed?*

### **Prayer**

Lord, I may never understand all there is to know about my position in Christ, but I thank You for what You have revealed. Show me more and more what it means to be not only crucified with Christ, but buried in Him as well. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

### **Homework**

Scripture Memory

Be sure to review your Scripture memory assignment for this course!

### **John 15:5**

*I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

## Life Principles Center

### Course: Your Identity in Christ

#### T2\_CA\_L5: Our Position in Christ Part 2 (AT288)

**Introduction:** Second Timothy 2:15 says, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." For that reason, we encourage you to complete each assignment before progressing to the next lesson. This lesson is structured with two separate sections to help you maximize your study time.

### Lesson 5, Section 1

**Objectives:** At the end of this section of Lesson 5, you should be able to:

- I. Distinguish between the meaning and purpose of baptism.
- J. Identify hindrances that conceal your position in Christ.
- K. Support spiritual truth with specific Scripture passages.

### Scripture

*Read Ephesians 2:4-7*

*But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.*

### Lesson 5

In the last lesson of this course, we began to take a serious look at our position in Christ. You'll remember that there are six words I want to share with you that will help you understand what our relationship with Jesus has done in our lives. The first two things we discussed were our *crucifixion* with Jesus and our *burial* with Him. Now, let's get right back to work and continue on with the third concept, as we see the glorious benefits of our standing with the Lord.

3. *Resurrection.* We have seen that we died and were buried along with Christ, but we certainly did not stay in the grave once He rose from the dead. Instead, Scripture is clear that we were raised back to life with Him. (If you are unclear about how we could have been raised along with

Him 2,000 years ago, take a moment to review the last lesson of this course).

Colossians 2:12-13 clearly makes this point, as you were “buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him.” You see, we were crucified with Christ, we were buried with Christ, and then we were resurrected to new life in Christ. This is why baptism is so important to the believer; it represents our spiritual death, burial, and resurrection in Jesus Christ. When we experience baptism, we are proclaiming to the world our identification with Christ through His pain and victory.

*Q1: True or False? In order to be Christians, we must experience spiritual and physical baptism.*

4. *Heavenly places.* Since we have been resurrected with Jesus, a new question arises: Where does God see us? Yes, we are here on earth, walking around, sitting at home, going to work, and so on, but is that all? My friend, when God looks down upon us, He sees beyond where our physical bodies are and sees our *real* selves, seated in heavenly places with Jesus Christ.

Now, what in the world does this mean? This refers to our heavenly citizenship. You see, our real lives are where we will spend eternity. For those of us in Christ, that place is heaven. That is why Scripture admonishes us to get our minds on heavenly things, because that is where our nature is. (Colossians 3:2)

*J1: Stop here, and re-read the previous paragraph. Now, reflect on your state of mind. Ask God to reveal everything that hinders you from keeping your thoughts set on eternal matters. As He reveals each distracting person, pursuit, practice, or attitude, write it in your journal. What is God leading you to do as a result of His revelation? You may want to return to this journal prompt on a daily basis to remember where your real citizenship lies, and to remember where your attention should be focused.*

The moment before His death on the cross, what was it that Jesus said? He said, “It is finished” (John 19:30). That means that His job was done; there was nothing left to do to secure salvation for mankind. And

what did Jesus do when His job was complete? Hebrews 10:12 reveals, “He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God.” So, He *sat down* because His job was complete. Because you and I are identified with His death, His life, and His resurrection, we are also identified with His being seated at the right hand of God.

5. *Hidden.* Colossians 3:3 reveals another interesting part of our union with Christ. It says, “For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” What does it mean to say we are “hidden” in Christ?

First, it refers to our *security*. Carefully look at verse 3 again. It says we have been hidden with whom? With Christ! In whom? In God! Can you beat that?

Let me ask you a question. If you are sitting in heaven, hidden with Christ in God Himself, who can pull you out of that? Who can seek you out, pull you out of that safety, and strip you of the blessings of almighty God? My friend, no one can do that. If you are in Christ, you are sealed and protected in Him forever.

*Q2: True or False? Because Colossians 3:3 reveals each Christian's position in Christ as being hidden in Him, we can use this verse as evidence to support the truth that once a person has received salvation, he is saved forever.*

Second, our position as hidden speaks to our *separation*. When we are hidden in Christ, we are separated from this old world. Do you realize that you are the exclusive possession of Jesus? No one else can own you because He has already bought you with His own blood.

Third, being hidden in Him brings *satisfaction*. If our real lives are not part of this world but above, how can anything in this world satisfy our hearts? The truth is, being securely wrapped in the amazing love of Jesus Christ will bring all the satisfaction you could ever need.

## Lesson 5, Section 2

**Objectives: At the end of this section of Lesson 5, you should be able to:**

- A. Understand the character of God as demonstrated in Ephesians 2:4-5.
- B. Relate your position in Christ to your practices in daily living.

*J2: In your last journal entry, you recorded the things that hindered you from setting your mind on matters that last forever. In this entry, record any pursuits, goals, desires, or dreams that you thought would satisfy you. Write a prayer to the Lord, thanking Him that only His love fulfills your deepest needs.*

6. *Returning.* The last thing we need to discuss regarding our position in Christ is our role in His Second Coming. First Thessalonians 4:13-18 shows in a mighty way how Jesus will return in the future. At that time, we will all be there in the clouds with Him because we were identified in His crucifixion, identified in His burial, identified in His resurrection, identified with His place of honor at the Father's right hand, identified in being hidden away with Him, and finally, identified with His return. When God sees Jesus in each one of the positions, He also sees every single believer with Him, eternally secure as a part of the family of God.

Now, friend, I don't know how God could make it any sweeter, any more reassuring, any more comforting, or any more uplifting than to give us truth like that.

*Q3: Carefully read Ephesians 2:4-5, and choose the best answer. Raising us from the dead with Christ, in spite of our sin, reveals God's character as:*

- A. *loving*
- B. *merciful*
- C. *forgiving*
- D. *all of the above*

### **Prayer**

Father, we love You and Praise You this morning for grace that is beyond our comprehension but we thank You that we understand enough that our love for You just keeps on increasing, greater and greater, day by day. And I want to ask You for somebody to be saved. Many people's life radically changed. That is my petition to You and our petition together. And we will praise You and thank You for it in Jesus' name, amen.

### **Homework**

#### ***Scripture Memory Review***

***Fill in the blanks to complete this course's memory verse.***

I am the \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ are the \_\_\_\_\_; he who  
\_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_ and I in \_\_\_\_\_, he \_\_\_\_\_ much  
\_\_\_\_\_, for \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ you can do \_\_\_\_\_.

John \_\_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_\_

*Take some time to carefully consider your position in Christ by examining your position in your own family. Think about your roles as a father, mother, son, daughter, sibling, uncle, aunt, cousin, or other close friend or relation. How are you identified with your family? In what ways do people relate to you as part of that family, rather than as an individual?*

*Now, how do these realizations relate to your position in Christ? What does it mean to you to be wholly identified with God's perfect Son? When God sees you, He sees His Son; do other people, as well, see Jesus when they look upon you?*

*Write your thoughts in your journal before beginning the next course.*

## **Conclusion**

In this course, *Your Identity in Christ*, we focused on the position, the hope, and the fulfillment Jesus Christ has given you. I encourage you to continually review these important truths. God the Father saved you in a mighty, dramatic way through the work of His Son, Jesus Christ. This is a gift that we should never take for granted, and it is something we must thank God for every day.