

Introduction

Review relationships involving indicative & imperatives (it's really one dynamic - imperative is always based on the indicative. This provides the basis for proper motives, etc. But an additional relationship to this dynamic is that our "experience" is based on proper outworking of that dynamic). It is important that we see in both relationships the indicatives are unconditionally given to us by God. But the "experience" is a different aspect—it is the benefit that God often offers to us as affirmation of the truth of the indicatives and the reality of him in our life.

"Who are you?" We all have a sense of identity, of "who we are". Much of it was developed in our upbringing, much also contributed to by our education, but also much from our deciding "who we wanted to be." Commonly, this is defined in functional terms, "I want to be an attorney." "I want to be a father." "I want to be a wife." Naturally we have taken on a sense of identity that is usually multifaceted. The point is, our actions come from that sense of identity, not the other way around. As an attorney, we do certain things, etc. The connection between our identity and our actions is an aspect of how we are designed.

Read 2 Cor. 5:17. Tonight we want to explore the importance of our new identity in some detail. Understanding this is the foundation for growth. What Jesus did in John 13 when he washed the disciples' feet flowed from his affirmation of his identity before God.

John 13:1,3 Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come... knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God, and was going back to God.

See also 1 John 4:16-19 And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. 17 By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. 19 We love, because He first loved us.

- Warning: This is "meat"—it is difficult to digest, but also yields tremendous benefits in your spiritual life. We're going to start with abstract stuff, and get more practical as we go.

Union with Christ

Our new identity is one part of the foundational indicative truth concerning sanctification: our union with Christ.

Read 1 Cor. 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

This union consists of two aspects:

| | |
|---|---|
| " . . . we were all made to drink of one Spirit" | "By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" |
| Indwelling of Holy Spirit | Baptism by Holy Spirit |
| Christ In You | You In Christ |
| Basis of new power for change Rom. 5:5; 2 Tim 1:7; Col. 1:29; 1 Thess 1:5; Gal 5; Rom 8 | Basis of new identity |

The left-hand side is equally important to sanctification. We will cover it in detail a little later in the unit (pneumatology).

Our new identity in Christ is a *major emphasis* in the New Testament on sanctification. Whatever the Bible emphasizes is very important. In Paul's letters, he refers to this truth at least 126 times (in the identity sense):

"in Christ" occurs 82 times; "in him" occurs 20 times; "with Christ" occurs 12 times; "with him" occurs 12 times

There are many other passages in the New Testament that remind us of our new position before God now that we are Christians.

[Teacher: BRIEFLY familiarize students with the various aspects of new identity so they are able to understand the significance of the next section. go through the table under key aspects of new identity and show the first 4 from eph 1 and the last two from col. 2. only cover the first two columns in the table.]

Why is understanding our new identity so important? BECAUSE IDENTITY PRECEDES AND AFFECTS BEHAVIOR (also attitudes, emotions, values, etc.). *What I do will tend to flow from who I perceive myself to be.*

Illustration: While visiting downtown Manaus (Brazil) one evening, I noticed a pack of young boys picking pockets, stealing from shops, etc. When I asked a native about these boys, he replied "Oh, those are the 'throw-away' kids." These children were abandoned downtown by their parents, and left to survive on their own. They (correctly) viewed themselves as throwaway children, so they stole to survive. Suppose I adopted one of those children and took him home with me. If I took him with me to the grocery store the next day, I wouldn't be surprised if he stole food and stuffed it under his shirt. *Until* he really understood and believed that his identity had changed (from a throwaway kid to my son), he would probably continue to act as if he didn't have two parents to care for him; once he understood his new identity as a child of loving, caring parents, he would look to us for his provision and his action of stealing would cease.

Examples: If I take my identity from my *profession*, my behavior will reflect this by the hours I spend at work, by where I spend time outside work (to promote my professional skills and image), etc. If I take my identity from what I own, then having nice things becomes paramount. (IF TIME: Ask students to write an answer to the question, "Who are you? How do you *really* define yourself?")

Understanding our new identity is also important because looking at Christian brothers and sisters through God's eyes will have an amazing impact on *their* spiritual life as well! This issue of our new identity is not just for you, it is also for others around you.

Illustration: Bruce Wilkinson, when teaching at a new college for the first time, was told by an older faculty member that one of his three sections of Bible Study Methods was designated for the top incoming freshmen - Section 2. The faculty member said, "I can't believe they gave you section 2. You're the rookie teacher. They are incredible to teach. They are so motivated and sharp." Sure enough, while he thought sections 1 & 3 were good, section 2 was electric. The lecture was the same but the difference was night and day. He looked forward to this class every time he taught it. The grades and the quality of their work in and out of class was remarkably different. There was just one wrinkle. That year, they didn't put the sharpest students in section 2. Section 2 was the same composition as the other two sections. This phenomenon is well known to educators and controlled studies have shown the very same effect. How we perceive others has a remarkable affect on how they behave.

Note: It is important to qualify that lacking such a friend with this kind of view of you is no excuse for you not growing nor is failure of your friend to grow your fault. The point is simply that thinking God's thoughts towards them influences them for good.

Let's consider an important passage that demonstrates the principle that our behavior (thoughts, attitudes, etc.) flow out from who we perceive ourselves to be.

Col. 3:1-3* - If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Note how this passages fits into the context of Paul's teaching on sanctification.

2:10-15: First, he explains their new identity.

2:16-23: Next, he warns against inadequate/false religious methods of sanctification (ritualism, legalism, mysticism). See especially vs 23: "they are of no value against fleshly indulgence." Verse 18 could mean they "worshipped angels" or that they had seen a vision of angels worshipping God. Regardless, Paul states these visions have "no value."

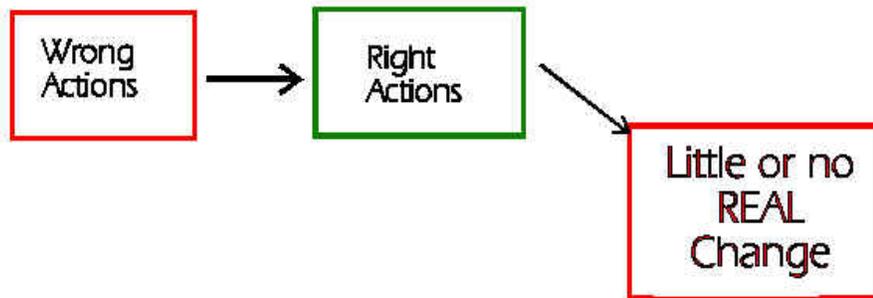
3:1-4: Next, he emphasizes the necessity of maintaining a mental focus on this new identity.

Because we have received a new identity in Christ (Vs 1a,3), we need to set our mental focus on this new identity (Vs 1b,2).

3:5ff. Then, he begins to sketch out what it looks like to behave consistently with this new identity—interspersing it with reminders of their new identity (see Vs 8-10; Vs 12,13). Therefore, there are two approaches to change of character:

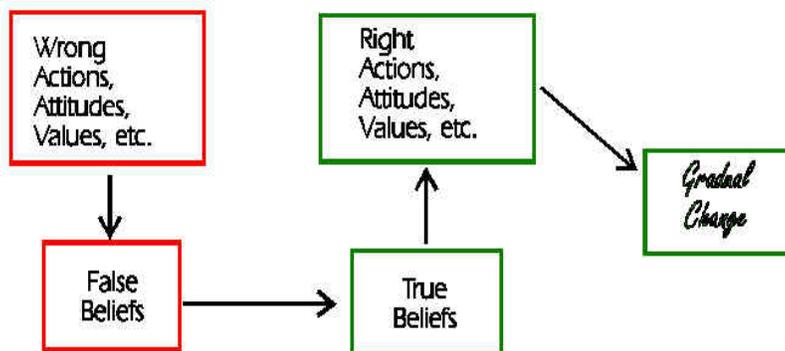
1. Legalistic approach

The problem with many Christians (fundamentalist background; natural default) is that they emphasize ethics and behavior without laying the proper foundation of identity and emphasizing choosing to believe this. Cover "[ACTIONS/BELIEFS](#)" OVERHEAD (apply "throw away kid" example to this): The legalist simply tries to replace wrong actions with right actions. See Matt. 23:25,26 Jesus confronts the legalistic approach. The motivation is more fear/threat and a legalistic person has a drive to look good before others.



2. Biblical approach

The biblical starting point for changed behavior, attitudes, thought-life, and a focus on loving others is not "try harder", but to grasp more firmly our new identity we have as a Christian. (Again, refer to the overhead)



The New Testament order is *not* "Do in order to be" *but* "Act consistently with who you actually are."

In our own life, and in working with others, we need to look deeper than the behavioral symptoms and see the connection between the behaviors and the identity issues. This is necessary for deep, lasting change. Instead, we should realize that wrong actions often signify that we are believing lies about our identity. We should prayerfully identify what those lies are and choose to

replace those lies with the truth about our identity. Then, we should ask God to show us what it would look like to act on our new identity in this situation.

Illustrate this with the "throw away kid." Why does he steal and fight? Could you just tell him to stop? No he needs to realize that as your son he is a new person who has adequate provision, so that real change occurs. Instructor should illustrate with another personal example.

Appropriating our New Identity (Romans 6:6,11,13*): **Know, Consider, Present**

This is the key biblical passage that teaches the above scenario of spiritual growth.

Appropriation is *our* role in applying our new identity in an ongoing and practical way.

Appropriation consists of three sequential steps, which Paul outlines in ROM 6.

1st — "Know"

Read Vs 6*. "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin;"

This means learning what the Bible teaches about our new identity, and regularly remembering/reflecting on it (2 Pet. 1:12,13,15).

Explain the terminology (refer to footnote in student notes instead of covering in class)

"Your old self was crucified with Christ . . ." Our old identity (in Adam) has been completely obliterated; it no longer exists. See also Jn. 3:3,5; Col. 3:3; 2 Cor. 5:17.

". . . so that your body of sin may be done away with . . ." "Body of sin" refers not to your old identity, but to your *sin-nature*. "Done away with" (*katargeo*) can mean this, but other passages clearly teach that Christians still have a sin-nature (ROM 7:17). It should therefore be translated here "made powerless" (NASB margin) or (better) "put out of authority" (see ROM 7:2 - ". . . she is *released from* the law . . .")

Summary: Our old identity has been destroyed, so that our sin nature has been put out of authority over us.

". . . so that you may no longer be slaves of sin." This is the desired behavioral result. God has struck at the root of the problem rather than leaving us to deal with it by our own willpower.

Illustration: The Emancipation Proclamation became law of the land on Dec. 18, 1865. The legal identity of all slaves instantly changed. Their old identity as property/slaves was "killed." They received a new legal identity as citizens. Why was this important? Because this changed their relationship to their previous owners. Their previous owners continued to exist, but their authority over them was now removed, so that they were no longer legally obliged to live as slaves.

How important was this knowledge? Do you know that thousands of them continued to live out their lives as slaves because their ex-masters successfully kept this information from them?

Many Christians (perhaps you) assume that though they are forgiven for their sins, there is no basis for deep-seated change in their lives. If we don't know that we have been freed from the authority of our sin-nature, we will try to sanctify ourselves by the flesh, leading either to self-righteous self-deception, or fatalistic honesty about our sins.

Therefore, we need to study this truth until we understand it, ask God to illuminate it so we see its significance in our lives, meditate on it, remind ourselves of it, etc. Read and reread books about it. Remember Romans 12:2- "...transformed by the renewing of your minds."

We must also ground young Christians in this truth as soon as possible so that they can begin to challenge their view of their identity and replace it with God's. This needs to be a key and ongoing aspect to our discipling relationships. We also need to pray that God will give us his view on the people around us.

2nd — "Consider"

Read ROM 6:11* Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Choosing to affirm what God says about your identity in spite of all the contrary feelings, thoughts, past behavioral evidence, other people, etc. say about you, in the specific identity area that fuels the expressed sin.

EG. "I feel unappreciated." But God's view would contradict this feeling. Which are you going to choose to believe? What your feelings are telling you or what you "know" is true?

The word here (*logizomai*) is an accounting term—often refers to making an accurate ledger entry. You enter an amount into the ledger because it has been deposited, *not* that you enter the amount so that it will be deposited (contra CHRISTIAN SCIENCE & POSTMODERNISM: my beliefs don't create reality; they should conform to reality).

Illustration: Let's assume that you have never had more than \$150 in your checking account. Suddenly, a trusted friend informs you that he has deposited \$100,000 into your account. You check with the bank and ascertain that this is indeed the case. How important is it that you enter that amount in your check ledger, and believe that entry? What if you listened instead to your feelings or your family members who keep telling you that you only have \$150? If you want to reap the benefit of the \$100,000, you have to choose to believe the actual amount! Otherwise, you could go on living as though you were poor!

This means monitoring our thought-lives, becoming aware of lies about ourselves as they present themselves to us—and choosing to replace those lies with what God says is true about us (2 Cor. 10:5). We should ask the Lord to sensitize us to these lies, and help us to see how our new identity applies to us in specific areas. **THIS IS THE MISSING STEP FOR MANY CHRISTIANS!** Often we need other mature Christians to help us discern what these lies may be.

(D. M. Lloyd-Jones) ". . .we must talk to ourselves instead of allowing 'ourselves' to talk to us! Do you realize what that means? I suggest that the main trouble in this whole matter of spiritual depression in a sense is this, that we allow our self to talk to us instead of talking to our self. Am I just trying to be deliberately paradoxical? Far from it. This is the very essence of wisdom in this matter. Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself? Take those thoughts that come to you the moment you wake up in the morning. You have not originated them, but they start talking to you, they bring back the problems of yesterday, etc. Somebody is talking. Who is talking to you? Your self is talking to you. Now this man's treatment was this; instead of allowing this self to talk to him, he starts talking to himself. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' he asks. His soul had been depressing him, crushing him. So he stands up and says: 'Self, listen for moment, I will speak to you'. Do you know what I mean? If you do not, you have had but little experience.

The main art in the matter of spiritual living is to know how to handle yourself. You have to take yourself in hand, you have to address yourself, preach to yourself, question yourself. You must say to your soul: 'Why are you cast down'—what business have you to be disquieted? You must turn on yourself, upbraid yourself, condemn yourself, exhort yourself, and say to yourself; 'Hope you in God'—instead of muttering in this depressed unhappy way. And then you must go on to remind yourself of God, Who God is, and what God is and what God has done and what God has pledged Himself to do. Then having done that, end on this great note: defy yourself, and defy other people, and defy the devil and the whole world, and say with this man: 'I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance, who is also the health of my countenance and my God'. (D. M. Lloyd-Jones, *Spiritual Depression: Its Causes and Cure* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982], pp. 20,21.)

This is contrary to what many Christians suffer from: either mental passivity (not challenging their thoughts) or the therapeutic view of feelings (validating our feelings). Which do you tend toward? The therapeutic view of feelings would insist that actions proceeding from feelings are excusable (no matter how sinful), and therefore the route to better actions is our bad feelings being corrected—often we falsely believe this correction is the responsibility of others to cause. People cannot see how you monitor your thought life, but this is at the heart of long-lasting change in the Christian's life. People will see the behavioral and attitudinal changes occur as you progress in your attention to your thoughts.

Emancipation Proclamation: How important was it for those ex-slaves who knew about the Emancipation Proclamation to choose to "consider" that they actually were free citizens? How difficult was it for them to choose to "consider" this—especially when their own thoughts and feelings, their ex-owners, said "You're nothing but a slave. You always have been a slave, and you always will be a slave."

Here is an even greater tragedy than the suppression of the news: thousands of ex-slaves knew about the Emancipation Proclamation, yet still lived out the rest of their lives because they didn't choose to believe what was true of them and instead chose to go on believing what their ex-owners and own conditioning told them.

How important is it for you as a Christian to choose to believe that you are no longer a slave to sin? How many of us continue to live as slaves, not because we don't know this truth, but because we don't choose against our feelings and previous experience to believe it? If we passively respond, our "knowing" will not profit us.

This is why every day, we should consciously recall and remind ourselves of what is true about us in this area: "I am free from sin's authority and therefore able to change."

This is why especially when we are confronted by evidence to the contrary through failure, accusation, etc., it is so important to choose to reject that conclusion and instead agree with God that "he has set me free from sin's authority and that his power is progressively changing my life as I continue to believe what he says and cooperate with him."

It is also essential, when helping Christians who are struggling in a sin area, to help them consider how their new identity specifically applies to the area and what lies about their identity they were believing. Not counseling in this manner will lead to a legalistic approach to their change.

3rd—Present

Read ROM 6: 13* and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

(Note: "Walking in Victory" does not differentiate between "consider" and "present" to the extent we will in the notes that follow.)

This means choosing to step out in faith and act in ways that are consistent with your new identity. This is the step that makes what we have learned "living truth."

Emancipation Proclamation: Who were the ex-slaves who actually experienced a life of increasing freedom? They were the ones who knew about the Emancipation Proclamation, who chose to consider it to be true in spite of the contrary input of their ex-masters, their memories, etc.—and what else? Who actually began to refuse the orders of their ex-masters *and* instead walked off the "security" of the plantations and put themselves in places where the power of the government supported their freedom (MOVED TO NORTHERN CITIES; FOUND PAYING EMPLOYERS). It was this scary risk, based on the previous two steps, that resulted in increasing experiential freedom for them.

Who are the Christians who experience a life of increasing freedom from slavery to sin?

The ones who *know* Vs 6, then *consider* it to be the truth about them in spite of what their sin-natures, Satan, previous experiences and others tell them—and finally, who on that basis choose not to submit to moral defeat in their lives and instead *present* themselves to God in ways that allow his power to change their lives.

Other Examples:

You are angry with a person for not paying enough attention to you. The fact is that they ARE being unloving and insensitive. At a teaching, you learn (*Know*) that God will meet all of your love needs and that we should therefore not look to other people to do this. Realizing that this is what you have been doing, you choose to affirm that God will provide for you in this area (*Consider*). Now what would it look like to *present* ourselves based on this identity truth? (choose not to lash out or punish with silence, etc.; instead choose to freely give to that person in some way; address their insensitivity for their good).

You are depressed and resentful because of how much more gifted in a certain area your friend is than you are. As you study 1 Cor. 12, you realize that God has gifted you to play a unique role in his Body (*Know*). You agree that the difference between you and your friend in gifted areas is part of God's design rather than you getting the short end of the stick (*Consider*). Now what would it look like to *Present* ourselves on this identity truth? (thank God for your friend's contribution; compliment, encourage, and promote your friend's accomplishments in that area; thank God for what he has shown that you can do for him, and look for opportunities to serve in that area).

"Presenting" usually involves both a negative and positive step.

It is necessary to choose to *turn away from* immoral habits (Vs 13a: "do not go on presenting yourselves to sin . . . ")

It is also necessary to *turn to* God in ways that expose you to his alternative (Vs 13b: " . . . but present yourselves to God . . . "). Real change involves the willingness to say "No!" (e.g., STAYING OUT OF SEXUALLY TEMPTING SITUATIONS)—but this is ultimately futile unless we also say "Yes!" to the ways that expose us to God's life-changing power. This is the "Resist-Replace" principle.

EXAMPLES:

Sensuality: practically avoiding tempting situations (Resist) + developing Christ-centered love relationships (Replace)—see 1 Thess. 4:3-10; 2 Tim. 2:22

Materialism: practically turning from shopping binges when depressed, etc. (Resist) + developing your ministry role (Replace)—1 Tim. 6:11

I'm depressed so I think I'll just stay home tonight rather than going to home church: I realize that I am a part of the body and should seek fellowship + I go with the prayer that God use my gifts to edify others.

Principle is in 2 Tim. 2:22- "Flee youthful lusts and pursue righteousness.

Again, when helping other Christians grow, our counsel should include helping them see clearly what presenting themselves to God (choosing to act) in this area based on their new identity (see above) would look like.

Key aspects of our New Identity (Eph. 1:3-14, 2; Col. 2; ROM 6)**

The New Testament refers to dozens of aspects of our new identity in Christ. See Dennis McCallum, *Walking In Victory*, pp. 24,25—which refers to 16 aspects. See Neil Anderson, *Victory Over The Darkness*, pp. 45-47, 57-59—which refers to 68 aspects. We want you to be familiar with the main passages that distill our new identity, and the key aspects of this new identity. THIS WILL BE ON THE TEST!

The point here is that *God* meets our deepest needs through our *New Identity* in Christ. To the extent that we are ignorant of and/or don't appropriate this, we will go on suffering as needlessly "needy" people, trying to get other people/things to meet our needs, being disappointed by them when they can't, etc. (E.G. an insecure spouse needs to look to God who has filled that need, not to their spouse's actions for their source of security)

New Identity Worksheet

| ASPECTS OF OUR NEW IDENTITY | RESULTING SPIRITUAL PROVISION | SYMPTOMS OF NOT "KNOWING", "CONSIDERING", AND/OR "PRESENTING" | EXAMPLES OF HOW TO "PRESENT" |
|---|--|--|---|
| Adoption as God's Child (Eph. 1:5) | Belonging: security in the this life | Idoltrous human relationships Material anxiety Fear of rejection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loving discipline & witness Financial Giving |
| Forgiveness through Jesus' death for sin (Eph. 1:7; Col. 2:13,14) | Acceptance apart from performance | Destructive reactions to guilt feelings (defensive, preoccupation with your wrongs) Resentment, bitterness toward others Man-pleasing | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forgiving others Honesty with others about our sins |
| Unique role in God's purpose (Eph. 1:9,10; 2:10) | Significance | Unhealthy comparison to others Vulnerability to career identity Reactive to critique of performance or lack | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appreciate & support others in their ministries Focused ministry involvement Evaluate |

| | | | |
|---|------------------------------|---|---|
| | | | performance critique before the Lord - is it true? He loves me nonetheless. |
| Inheritance (Eph. 1:11,14) | Security in the next life | Vulnerability to temporal security Fear of death | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Willingness to take risks and even suffer. • Long-term investment in ministry, including material generosity. |
| Delivered From Sin Nature's Authority (ROM 6:6; Col. 2:11,12) | Freedom from sin's control | No deep seated change or growth in our lives, superficial view of sin, helplessness and fatalism. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Openness about your besetting sins • Faithful, patient persistence as we cooperate with God's strategy for change • Other-centered focus in spite of besetting sins |
| Delivered From Satan's Authority (Eph. 1:20,21; 2:6; Col. 2:10,15;) | Freedom from demonic control | Vulnerable to temptation; accusation; kosmos; oppression Fear & superstition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refusal to cave in & quit • Following God's will • Prayer warfare |

This chart emphasizes the importance of knowing how to appropriate your new identity . . .

Conclusion:

Refer back to "Throwaway" kid. If 5 years later, he is behaving and "feeling" like he really is your son and part of the family, it will be because he took these steps on a more and more consistent basis. Conversely, if 5 years later he has run away and is living on the street (though still legally adopted into your family), it will be because he did not take these steps . . .

When we confront a new sin area for the first time, we often need to go through the "Know, Consider, Present" process in almost a systematic, yet prayerful manner—repeatedly. As God's Spirit changes our character through this process, we will find ourselves going through the same process, but much more quickly with a deeper sense of dependence on God working through us. What once were areas of repetitive failures in our character, are now areas of substantial (though usually not complete) victory. This process of working through deep-seated issues may take years of walking in the Spirit.

Memory Verses

Eph. 1:3-14** - key new Identity passages

Col. 3:1-3* - importance of knowing & setting mental focus on new Identity for sanctification (context)

ROM 6:6,11,13* - Know, Consider, Present