

Acceptance

Previously you learned that your *relationship* with God is secure because, through Christ, you are *forgiven* and *accepted* by God.

You also learned that God has given you a new life: “Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgiven and everything is new.” — 2 Corinthians 5:17 (CEV)

Understanding your new identity in Christ sets you free to be all God created you to be.

1 Truths about the new you

- **A New Family Relationship**

Read Romans 8:15-17.

What does God call us in these verses?

What does that mean to our lives practically?

- **An Inseparable Love**

Read Romans 8:31-32,38-39.

What are some ways God’s love is described for us?

What difference does it make to you to know you can never be separated from God’s love?

- **A New Reason for Living**

“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things He planned for us long ago.” — Ephesians 2:10 (NLT)

How does it make you feel to know that you are “God’s masterpiece”?

What good things might God want you to do?

- **A New Power for Living**

“Our old sinful selves were crucified with Christ so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin. For when we died with Christ we were set free from the power of sin...So you should consider yourselves dead to sin and able to live for the glory of God through Christ Jesus.” — Romans 6:6-11 (NLT)

Now that sin has lost its power in our lives, what are some important implications for daily living?



Now That You Are a New Person

God desires for you to enjoy walking closely with Him and communicating with Him throughout each day. This is called fellowship.

Sometimes we choose to sin, even though its power has been broken in our lives. When this happens, our permanent **relationship** with God as His children is not affected, but our **fellowship** with Him is interrupted.

For example, your relationship with your earthly father is permanent. No matter what you do, you will always be his child. But suppose you rebelled against your father and angrily left home in spite of his efforts to reach out to you.

Would you still be your father's child? What would happen to your fellowship?

This relationship with your imperfect, earthly father is a picture of how you can relate to your perfect heavenly Father.

Your Relationship With God	Your Fellowship With God
Began when you received Christ (John 1:12,13)	Began when you received Christ (Colossians 2:6)
Is everlasting (1 Peter 1:3,4)	Can be hindered (Psalm 32:3-5)
Is maintained totally by God (John 10:27-29)	Is maintained in part by you (1 John 1:9)
Never changes (Hebrews 13:5)	Changes when you sin (Psalm 66:18)

Though all Christians have an eternal **relationship** with God, not all Christians are experiencing daily fellowship with Him. Let's see how we can consistently experience **fellowship** with God.

2

Our need for God's love and forgiveness

Sin keeps both Christians and non-Christians from experiencing God's love, though in different ways. But many people are confused about the nature of sin.

What is sin?

It's more than cheating, lying or behaving in a sexually immoral way. These actions are only the results of an attitude of sin. A simple definition of sin is: doing what we want instead of what God wants—both in actions and attitudes.

What are the results of sin?

For non-Christians, sin prevents a **relationship** with God. "But there is a problem—your sins have cut you off from God. Because of your sin, He has turned away and will not listen..." — Isaiah 59:2 (NLT)

Why does sin prevent a non-Christian from having a relationship with God? What about people who try to reach God through living a good, moral life? Are they separated from God? Why or why not?

For Christians, sin hinders our **fellowship** with God. (See 1 John 1:5-8.)

All of us sin and break our fellowship with God; therefore we need to know how to daily experience God's forgiveness for both our actions and attitudes.

3

The basis for God's love and forgiveness

How has God dealt with our sins?

● **Read 1 Peter 3:18.**

Christ's death on the cross paid for our sins "once for all." His death for us is the basis, or means, by which we are forgiven and brought to God and can thus have a proper relationship with God. His death is also the basis, or means, for experiencing His forgiveness in our daily fellowship with God.

"You were dead in sins, and your sinful desires were not yet cut away. Then He gave you a share in the very life of Christ, for He forgave all your sins, and blotted out the charges proved against you, the list of His commandments which you had not obeyed. He took this list of sins and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross."

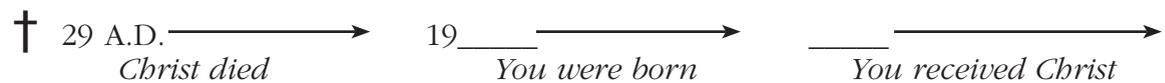
— Colossians 2:13,14 (TLB)

In the day when this was written, "list of sins" meant an itemized bond nailed to the prison door. It listed every crime for which the prisoner had been convicted. When the sentence was served or restitution was paid, the authorities removed the list and wrote on it, "paid in full." The prisoner used this as proof that he could never be tried again for those crimes. The person who trusts Christ's payment for sin can never be tried again. His sins have been paid in full. He has received a full pardon from God.

Based on the above verses, what has God done with your sins?

For how many of your sins did Christ die?

When Christ died on the cross for you, how many of your sins were in the future?



KEY QUESTION

What has Christ done with the sins you will commit tomorrow or next year?

4

Experiencing God's love and forgiveness daily

Remember, your relationship with God is permanent and He has totally forgiven all your sins—past, present and future. However, we still sin and thus need to know how to restore our fellowship with God when that happens. Then we can experience His love and forgiveness moment by moment and have a continuing fellowship with God.

Put yourself in the earlier father-child illustration. What would you do to restore fellowship with your father?

● **Read 1 John 1:9.**

How do you restore your fellowship with God?

Confession is agreeing with God about sin.

When God brings to your attention that something you have done or thought is sin, confess it. This confession involves at least three factors:

1. **Agree** with God that you have sinned.
2. **Thank** God that He has already forgiven you.
3. **Turn away** from sin and trust God to change your wrong attitudes and actions (repentance).

By turning back to God and away from your sin, you will experience His love and forgiveness provided by Christ's death on the cross. Instead of feeling guilty or condemned, you can know that your fellowship with God is restored.

How many times do you need to confess a particular sin to God? When should you confess a sin?

● **Read Psalms 32:5 and 103:12.**

What does God do with our guilt when we confess? What should you do if you still feel guilty after you have confessed your sins?



KEY QUESTION

From what you have learned today, what will happen if you fail to confess your sin when God points it out?

5

Growing in God's love and forgiveness

Take some time tonight to apply the things you have learned about God's love and forgiveness. Tonight, try to do the following:

Putting confession into practice.

- Ask God to reveal any sins in your life. (Ephesians 4:31,32)
- List these on a piece of paper. Be completely honest as this is just between you and God.
- After completing your list, write over it the words of 1 John 1:9.
- Thank God for the forgiveness He provides for you through what Christ did on the cross.
- Tear up the list and throw it away.

This week, try to spend 15 minutes each day alone with God in Bible reading and prayer. Here are some suggestions:

Experiencing the results of confession.

- **Read Luke 15:11-32.** This story was told by Jesus of a young man who ran away from his father and wasted his inheritance. What does this story illustrate about our relationship with God, our forgiveness and our fellowship with Him?
- **Read Galatians 5:16-23.** What changes will take place as you allow God to work in your life? As you become aware of an area of your life that displeases God, deal with it according to 1 John 1:9 and then enjoy your fellowship with Him.
- **Read Psalm 32.** This psalm describes David's experience with confession. How did he feel before he confessed his sin? How did he feel after dealing with his sin?



Summary

Understanding God's great love and forgiveness allows a Christian to enjoy a growing fellowship with Him. An intimate relationship with God is the privilege of every believer who confesses his sin whenever God makes him aware of it.



Next time we will look at how to experience God's power to live an abundant Christian life.



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