

Our Identity in a New Year

Thinking Rightly About Ourselves in 2021

Introduction

For many people, a new year is a time when they rightly desire to introduce some changes into their lives. This is why people often make New Year's resolutions and strategize about how to develop better habits. Interestingly, recent research has shown that there is a reason that things like this often fail to produce lasting changes. Consider the following quotes from the book Atomic Habits by James Clear:

"Many people begin the process of changing their habits by focusing on what they want to achieve. This leads to outcome-based habits. The alternative is to build identity-based habits. With this approach, we start by focusing on who we wish to become."

"The ultimate form of intrinsic motivation is when a habit becomes a part of your identity. It's one thing to say that I am the type of person who wants this. It's something very different to say I am the type of person who is this."

"Your behaviors are usually a reflection of your identity. What you do is an indication of the type of person that you that you believe that you are—either consciously or nonconsciously...when your behavior and your identity are fully aligned, you are no longer pursuing behavioral change. You are simply acting like the person you already believe yourself to be."

Key Point: In order to see real change in our lives in 2021, we do well to reflect first on _____ Scripture says that we are "in Christ" in order that we might reckon these things to be true.

Our Identity "In Christ"

Our Position

Scripture often uses prepositions such as "in" or "into" (spatial language) to demonstrate that radical change that has transpired for believers as a result of our salvation. Position refers to what a believer is in Christ.

- Believers are _____ (declared righteous) and _____ in Christ by faith.

Rom. 3:21-24—²¹But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

Eph. 1:7—In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace

- Salvation is applied to believers by the Holy Spirit's work to _____ us into Christ.

Gal. 3:27—For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Rom. 6:3-4—³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

- Believers are _____ together in Christ.

Eph. 2:19-22—¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

Key Point: Our position in Christ is best understood as the new _____ that we come to inhabit as believers.

Keep in Mind: (1) Our position in Christ is _____!

(2) Our position in Christ is the _____ for our sanctification!

(3) Our position in Christ is the _____ of our glorification!

Our Possessions

Scripture often refers to the things which are ours in Christ. While position refers to what a believer is, possessions refer to what things a believer has in Christ and which are always available for use.

- Believers have been given _____ spiritual blessings which are needed to live godly lives in the world.

Eph. 1:3—Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

⇒ In Jesus we are chosen (1:4), adopted (1:5), have redemption and forgiveness of sins (1:7), have an inheritance (1:11), and are sealed with the Holy Spirit (1:13).

- Believers have been given the Holy Spirit who _____ us and _____ us to live godly lives in Christ.

John 14:26—But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.

Gal. 5:16, 22-24—¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh...²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. ²⁴ And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

- Believers have been given varied spiritual _____ with which to serve others for the glory of God.

1 Pet. 4:10-11—¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Key Point: Because of all that we possess in Christ, what is true of us in our position can be true of us in our _____ of living the Christian life.

Keep in Mind: Although our possessions in Christ never change, we can fail to make _____ of them.

Concluding Thoughts and Questions for a New Year

1. Our understanding of our identity in Christ comes as we grow in our knowledge of Him through His _____.

Col. 2:1-4, 6-7—¹ For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ² that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge...⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

Question # 1:

Question # 2:

2. Jesus Christ exhorts His people to live in accordance with His Word and so _____ ourselves at the beginning of a year is a helpful exercise.

⇒ *Consider the Letters to the Churches in Revelation 2-3*

Eph. 2:1—“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: ‘The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.’”

Question # 3:

Question # 4: