

## 2. Reversing the Effects of Original Sin

Many times, we do not know exactly where to begin to help new Christians in their spiritual growth. One of the places that I like to begin is by going back to the original sin and Adam in Genesis 3. In Genesis 3:7-13, we see how original sin affected Adam and Eve. That original sin caused the following changes in their relationships:

With God - separation (They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden and they hid themselves - Genesis 3:8)

Within - fear, guilt and shame

- fear (“I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” - Genesis 3:10)
- guilt (“Then the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, ‘Where *are* you?’” - Genesis 3:9)
- shame (“Then the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.” - Genesis 3:7)

With others - blame (“Then the man said, ‘The woman whom you gave *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.’” - Genesis 3:12)

Before people become Christians, these are the five things that motivate them in their lives whether they realize it or not. If a new Christian does not learn how to reverse the effects of original sin, these will still be the same things that motivate them many years later. That is why many people who have been Christians for many years are still spiritual toddlers and their focus in life is: My Needs and MY Problems.

We will see from Scripture that Christ wants to reverse the effects of original sin by helping new Christians learn to move from the five results of original sin and learn to move toward:

1. Separation - moving toward relationship and fellowship
2. Fear - moving toward love - 1 John 4:18
3. Guilt - moving toward forgiveness, cleansing and forgiving others
4. Shame - moving toward a fuller understanding that we are now new creations in Christ - 2 Corinthians 5:17
5. Blame - moving toward accepting responsibility for our choices and the consequences of those choices

In the rest of this topic, we will look at how to reverse the results of separation.

Ever since the original sin of Adam and Eve, all people have been separated from God by sin. That separation from God caused every person to look for one or more substitutes to fill the emptiness in their lives. However, these substitutes could never produce inner peace. As a result, people have continued to search for other substitutes. These substitutes have become the idols in their lives. In many cases these substitutes also lead to various forms of addiction.

The separation caused by sin means that mankind has no relationship with God. Sin also affects human relationships. Most human relationships are based on each person trying to get his or her own needs met rather than trying to meet the needs of others. This selfish attitude causes great human conflict. As a result, mankind experiences:

- Separation from God
- Conflicts with others

We want to help new Christians understand the fact that the moment they placed their trust in Christ they established a relationship with God. We need to help new Christians realize that we become the sons of God - John 1:12. We need to help them understand that the Holy Spirit comes into our human spirit to testify that we are the children of God - Romans 8:14-16. We help the new Christian understand that we have become a part of those who will share the inheritance of God with Christ - Romans 8:17.

We also want to help them understand that when we placed our trust in Christ, we became a part of the family of God. This created a new relationship with all Christians as we were changed from strangers and foreigners to fellow citizens with other Christians - Ephesians 2:19. We need to help all Christians understand that they have become part of the family of God - Romans 8:14-17. This means that in addition to their relationship with God that they are also now related to all other Christians. Other Christians become a part of our family and we become a part of their family. This family relationship means that we start doing things together like having Bible study together, fellowshiping together, eating together and praying together - Acts 2:42, 46.

In addition to now having a relationship with God and with one another, we also need to begin to have fellowship with God and with one another. In order to help a new Christian understand, we have to help them clearly understand the difference between relationship and fellowship:

- \* Relationship: is permanent and cannot be changed (once we are a part of the family of God we will never be removed from that family - Romans 8:35-39)
- \* Fellowship: is what happens day-by-day and moment-by-moment as we relate to God and to other Christians - 1 John 1:3.

Just as we want to help new Christians understand their relationship with God and with other Christians, we also want to help them learn to enjoy the benefits of those relationships through fellowship. True fellowship happens as we yield ourselves to God - Romans 6:13-16. This results in:

- ◆ Fellowship with the Father - Romans 8:15
- ◆ Power from the Holy Spirit - Luke 24:49
- ◆ The love of Christ filling our lives - Ephesians 3:16-19

When we are walking in fellowship with God because we are yielding to God, we are actually walking in the light because God is light - 1 John 1:7. We will also experience fellowship with all other Christians who are yielding to God because they are also walking in the light. We need to help new Christians realize that only at those moments when they are yielding to God will they be walking in the light. One of the key things for new Christians to realize is that fellowship is

something that they can enjoy seven days a week and not just when they are in a church building.

We want to help them realize that we are the church (the body of Christ and each of us are individual parts or members - 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). In addition, we want to help them understand that our bodies are the real temple of Christ because the Holy Spirit now lives in our human spirit - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. During those times when we depend on ourselves, we can do no more than we did before we became Christians - John 15:5. During those times when we are yielding to God - Romans 6:13-16, we have the power of the Holy Spirit working in us so we are able to speak the Word of God with boldness - Acts 4:31 and the love of Christ flowing through us - John 13:34-35; Galatians 5:13-14, and that love becomes what motivates us - 2 Corinthians 5:14-15.

May the Lord richly bless you as you help new Christians understand that their relationship with God and other Christians is permanent - Romans 8:35-39 and that they can enjoy fellowship with God and other Christians at all times when they are yielding themselves to God - Romans 6:13-16.