

How should we appeal to pastors if they are not teaching the believer's new identity in Christ?

John Woodward

A. Content

We can give a pass to those who still say we are *sinners*. They make a case that we are people who still sin (James 3:2) and James seems to have used the term in a church context (James 4:8). They consider this a way to be humble and take sin seriously; we would agree with those values.

But what we can convey is the importance of clarity, emphasis and dignity.

Clarity: We have a relative identity as people, male or female, Americans, etc. But in Intensive Discipleship we clarify the *essential identity of the believer*...which is based on their regenerated spirit.

Emphasis: The emphasis of the New Testament (especially after Pentecost) is on the believer's new, positive, unshakeable identity. This is grace-based, therefore it glorifies God.

Dignity: If we wallow in a relative identity based on our behavior, our past or our conditioning, it will erode the sense of dignity that is part of a healthy self image. As we gratefully accept our value and dignity as those created in the image of God, redeemed by the blood of Christ, and indwelt by the Holy Spirit, it motivates us to practical holiness, worship and love for others.

So we believe that this clarity, emphasis and dignity actually helps us take the problem of intentional sins *more* seriously by helping us walk in newness of life rather than accepting sin as somewhat normal (if we are just forgiven "sinners.")

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B. On our method of appealing to pastors

Since pastors are more theologically trained and have ministry and leadership experience, it is a sensitive issue as to how to appeal to them about what we perceive as doctrinal concerns. (I served as a pastor for 19 years.) Their defense may push them further way, and we don't want that...

So I suggest:

Using questions. (Such as "I was wondering if New Testament emphasizes our new identity in Christ? and if so, is that important?")

A testimonial posture. (Such as "In our Intensive Discipleship ministry we are seeing the positive impact of people discovering their union with Christ and renewing their mind about their new, positive identity in Him")...

Restrict criticism to face-to-face conversation. It gives a relational context.

Grace Ministries made this video spoof which exaggerates some of these issues:

<https://youtu.be/4ArI91xfqJk>

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John Woodward

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