

Summary of

Resolving Misunderstandings of the Exchanged Life¹

by John E. Best, ThD.

What is the exchanged life?

“The exchanged life is the exchange (with Christ at the cross) of self-centered life lived out of the Christian’s own resources as if he were still in Adam, for a Christ-centered life lived out of Christ’s resources because he is in Christ.”²

1. Are we to be passive?

1. Scripture has many commands to the believer. This assumes that we are to be active.
2. Jesus in His earthly life was active. We are joined to His active life.

2. Will letting Christ live His life in us cause us to lose our own personality?

1. Christ, Who lives in our spirit, does not take over the function of our soul, our personality.
2. Letting Christ deal with the flesh patterns in our personality actually frees it up so that we are free to be our unique selves.
3. Much of this misunderstanding comes from confusion over the various meanings of the word “self.” Because of this it is not wise or biblical to speak of “dying to self.”

3. Does spiritual union mean we become gods? That is, have we been so joined with Christ that there is no distinction between Him and us?

1. We have “become partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). However, partaking does not mean that we have become divine ourselves.
2. Note the distinction in Romans 8:14: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”

¹ This is only intended to be a summary for those who have read the book by the same title. It has much more explanations, Scripture and illustrations. By John E. Best (Garland, TX: Abundant Living Resources, 1996) www.abundantlivingresources.org

² Adapted from Richard F. Hall, *Foundations of Exchanged Life Counseling* (Aurora, CO: Cross-Life Expressions, 1993), p.57.

3. There is no separation between us and God, but there is distinction: we are unique individuals; God is a unique individual.

4. Can believers be sinless?

1. Our sinful identity in Adam was crucified with Christ (Romans 6:6). This has to do with our identity, not our potential to sin.
2. If it is impossible for us to sin, why would so many Scriptures command us not to sin?
3. It is not that we no longer can sin, but the power of sin is broken so that we do not have to sin.
4. Although flesh is not who we now truly are, it remains with us as an avenue through which the power of sin can tempt us.

5. Are we responsible for sin?

1. By embracing Christ as our life we acknowledge the seriousness of sin by depending upon Him to enable us to overcome it.
2. We are not responsible for being tempted to sin, but we are responsible for our reaction to the temptation.
3. Understanding our true identity in Christ is key to avoiding sin and not engaging in it.
4. God's desire is not for us to focus on rules or even on avoiding sin, but on Christ Himself.

6. Should we die to our emotions?

1. King David, a man after God's own heart, expresses a wide array of emotions in the Psalms.
2. Jesus Christ is the only example of perfect human emotional health. He expressed many types of emotions.
3. The denying or stuffing of the emotions is a coping device of the flesh.
4. If we really consider ourselves crucified and risen with Christ, He becomes the foundation of our emotional well-being. Our emotions were not crucified, but because Christ is our life and power we no longer need to be controlled by them.

7. Are we helpless to experience Christ's life? That is, must we do nothing until we have a special revelation from God?

1. The term “revelation” is used to explain that although all believers are “in Christ,” not all come to a personal realization and understanding of their life in Christ at the same time or in the same way.
2. God's heart is for everyone to experience his inheritance in the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. We can choose to trust God and to yield to Him. Then God will respond to us with ever increasing illuminations of His Word and Himself.

8. Is positional truth real?

1. “Positional truth” is a theological concept intended to help us understand biblical truths. The term is used to ways:
 - a. There are certain things that God accomplished in our spirits at our salvation that are in actuality true whether we understand or knowingly experience them in our souls or not. Examples include our crucifixion, burial, resurrection, and ascension with Christ and our identity as righteous saints rather than sinners.
 - b. There are certain things that God declares about us after we have become believers. They are not actually true here on earth, but God counts them as true because He only sees us “in Christ.” For example God counts us righteous in Christ, even though our real nature is still sinful.

The a. view is biblical; the b. view is not. The things God says about us as believers are actually true.

2. Using the term in the second way pushes things into the future that are intended for the present and becomes a way for people not to face the reality of what God actually did in crucifying our old Adamic nature (spirit) with Christ and making us brand new creations in our spirit.
3. Because some exchanged life teachers have encountered people using the term the second way as a dodge, they dismiss the term altogether.
4. Yet the term “positional,” used the first way (to mean the actual truth), is a good term.

9. Can there be diversity of parts within man's unity?

1. Throughout Scripture God deals with the whole man, but He also speaks of the distinct areas of humans – spirit, soul (mind will and emotions), and body.

2. Diversity within unity is a common occurrence throughout the universe. This includes the Creator Who is one unified God with the diversity of three persons.
3. The death of Adam and Eve the very day they sinned demands a spirit part in them that died to God immediately since their soul and body did not die “that very day.”
4. Our death with Christ at the cross demands a spirit part of us that died, since our soul and body did not die then.
5. We will find the Bible's description of us and how God deals with us clearer when we know the difference between spirit, soul and body and see what part is referred to.

10. Do all problems disappear?

1. The freedom that the Bible speaks of is not a freedom from all problems but freedom from the obligation to sin.
2. Union with Christ does not bring freedom *from* trials and suffering. It is freedom *in* and *through* the trials and suffering in our lives.
3. We were never promised a trouble free life; instead the Bible teaches us the value of suffering. (Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4).
4. God intends for us to experience a victory in the midst of our troubles, for our highest reality is Who He is and what He has already done, not the circumstances of the world, the flesh or the devil.

11. Has psychological influence crept into exchanged life counseling?

1. When we use the phrase “self-image” we are referring to who we are spiritually, not to the self-image of psychology which is based in the soul.
2. Psychology focuses on man with the assumption that he has the answer within himself. Exchanged life teaching focuses on Jesus Christ because only He has what we need: His truth and His life.
3. Some psychological tests might be helpful to show people their flesh patterns, strongholds, sin or other problems, but psychology does not have the solution.

12. Is there adequate counselor training?

1. We do not claim to train or to be professional counselors in the general understanding of this term.

2. Since we believe our essential identity is our spiritual identity our focus in training is on who God is, who we are in Christ and how to relate to others and the world based upon God and our relationship to Him.
3. *Discipling*, rather than *counseling*, would be a more appropriate description of what we do both in training and in working with people who come to us.

Additional topic: How many natures does a Christian have?

1. The term “nature” has many meanings. The two that apply here are:
 - a. Characteristics of something
In this sense, believers could be said to have two natures because sometimes we exhibit the character of Christ and sometimes the character of the flesh. A few exchanged life teachers use *old nature* or *sinful nature* this way.
 - b. Identity or essential makeup of something
In this second sense, Christians have only one nature.
2. Reasons for seeing our essential makeup and identity as one.
 - a. The deepest essence of us is who we are in the spirit, not the soul. We are one spirit. If we had 2 spiritual natures we would be both a child of Satan and a child of God, both in Christ and in Adam at the same time.
 - b. The new spirit (new man) is joined to the Lord (1 Cor. 6:17). The Lord would not have union with a second spirit within that was corrupt and unregenerate.
 - c. The old man was crucified with Christ (Rom. 6:6) and *replaced* by the new man (Col. 3:9).

So the warfare is not the old man versus the new, but the flesh versus the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16-17). Romans 7:20 describes the conflict between the power of sin and the believer himself. The warfare is not the Christian against himself or herself.

3. Results in practical experience of seeing ourselves as one new person.
 - a. When we see who we really are, new creations in Christ, we will want to live according to this.
 - b. When we sin we are going against our true identity. We will take sin seriously and won't excuse ourselves by saying, "I'm just an old sinner at heart."
 - c. We won't be at war with the wrong enemy. (See last statement in 2 above.)
 - d. When we stand on the truth that we are a new man in Christ whose life is united with Christ's life, assurance of victory over the power of sin is ours.

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