



Identity in Christ

A BIBLE STUDY WITH

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and to grow stronger, together.



WEEK 1

GOD'S OWN HEART



Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-7

One of my favorite biblical characters in the Old Testament is King David. The lowly shepherd boy who was anointed as king in front of his older brothers. The boy who killed a bear and a lion when they came to take away one of the lambs from his flock that he was watching over. The one who was called from the pasture to the palace because an evil spirit was tormenting King Saul. David was known by one of the servants as, “a skilled musician, a brave man, a warrior, one who speaks well and is fine-looking. And the LORD is with him.” David, this mighty man of war was placed over King Saul’s army and when they returned from battle, the women said to each other, “Saul has slain thousands and David his ten thousands.”

Most of us would know David for his mighty defeat when he killed Goliath with just a slingshot and a stone. From all appearances this young man has everything going for him. He was chosen and anointed king over all of his brothers, the king’s servants hand picked him to go play the harp for the king when he was tormented. Clearly God was with him. But there’s more to this story.

The same David who was such a valiant warrior and a skilled musician, is the same David who committed adultery and then tried to cover up his sin. He sent Bathsheba’s husband, Uriah, home (after he had been gone on a journey) hoping that he would sleep with Bathsheba. But Uriah went and slept at the king’s door that night. The next day David invited Uriah to come and eat and drink at his house, and he made him drink to the point that

he got drunk, hoping that Uriah would go to his own house and sleep with his wife. Once again David's plan failed. In a final attempt to cover up his sin, David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it with Uriah. In it he wrote, "Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die." Little did Uriah know that he was delivering his own death sentence to Joab that day.

How can someone who was such a valiant man, someone who was honored by the people, someone whom God was clearly with, turn around and commit so much sin? After all of those victories and to be anointed as king, David still had a wounded heart. You see, when Samuel came to Jesse looking for a king to anoint, Jesse brought out all of his sons except

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for David. He didn't even mention that he had one more son until Samuel asked him, "Are these all of your sons?" Here is where you see how David was looked at by his own family. He was a "Hakkatan" (the young one/insignificant.) He was left to tend the sheep which was a lowly job for anyone in those days. Out of that need of affirmation from his father, he began to seek out validation in places that he shouldn't have.

In this study we will discover how our identity and self-worth can have a huge impact on our lives, even if we don't fully recognize the way they're affecting us. We will also take a close look at negative mindsets and how when we see ourselves through the eyes of man, our identity becomes more important than intimacy with Jesus. Lies are believed about ourselves and can then they become strongholds in our lives.

For many years when I heard conversations about self-worth and identity my mind would quickly go to Philippians 2:5-7. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made

himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men.”

Although I believe my desire was pure, being immature in the faith I began to believe that, “being of no reputation,” meant that I wasn’t really worth anything. It is wise to be very cautious against allowing pride to enter our hearts and minds lest we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. But at the same time I see a lack of knowledge among Christians today, including my own life, who really understand their identity as sons and daughters, kings and priests, seated in heavenly places, IN Christ Jesus! When we don’t understand our identity, we begin to search for things to fill us that are not in alignment with the righteousness of Christ.

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Living life for several years with a broken mindset regarding my position in Christ led to choices which created a lifestyle of acceptance based on performance. When my performance was lacking, my perception once again became, “I’m not good enough.” But let me remind you, we have been made as righteous as Christ because of who He is in you, the hope of Glory!

So as we go through this series, ask God to reveal any mindsets that are not in alignment with His heart. Whether that may be pride in our hearts, low or no healthy self esteem, or maybe you’ve been in a healthy environment where identity isn’t an issue for you. My prayer is that God would speak to each individual and shine His light on areas in our lives that He wants to change.

THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

For reflection, David said in Psalms 18:20-24: “The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; According to the cleanness of my hands, He has recompensed me. For I have kept the ways of the LORD, And have not wickedly departed from my God. For all His judgments were before me, And I did not put away His statutes from me. I was also blameless before Him, And I kept myself from my iniquity. Therefore the LORD has recompensed me according to my righteousness, According to the cleanness of my hands in His sight.”

How could he say that after all the sin he committed? _____

How can we renew our mind? _____

What does God's word say about you? _____



WEEK 2

SAUL'S DISOBEDIENCE

A scenic landscape with a valley filled with fog or mist, surrounded by trees and hills, under a soft, golden light. The text is overlaid on the image.

Have mercy upon me, O God, According to Your lovingkindness;
According to the multitude of Your tender mercies, Blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin.

PSALM 51:1-2

Have you ever wondered why King David had to run for his life and hide in the wilderness and in a cave for so many years? What was the purpose for this season in his life? After all, he had been anointed as king by Samuel many years before because God had rejected Saul as king. Then why did Saul hate him so much?

1 Samuel 19:4-6, “Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, “Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly. He took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine. The LORD won a great victory for all Israel, and you saw it and were glad. Why then would you do wrong to an innocent man like David by killing him for no reason?” Saul listened to Jonathan and took this oath: “As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be put to death.”

Even though Saul made an oath and said that he would not kill David, we can see from that point forward an evil spirit from the Lord came on Saul at times, and he would try his best to kill David. There was even a time when Jonathan, Saul’s own son, was at a feast with him and Saul became so angry with Jonathan for, “siding with David”, that he threw a spear at him and tried to kill him too.

Through many years of running, hiding and fearing for his life, God was working in David’s heart and molding him into a man He could use. The difference between Saul and

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David's heart posture I believe, is a result from God breaking David during those years while he ran for his life!

So you may ask the question, what does this have to do with identity and how does it apply to me? Let's take a closer look at Saul's life. He was the first King of Israel. Before the prophet Samuel appointed Saul as king over Israel, judges served as the leaders over the Israelites. Samuel anointed Saul with oil and told him several events that were to take place in the near future. He told Saul after all these things take place to wait for him for seven days because Samuel was coming to sacrifice offerings. As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed his heart and shortly after that Saul came to Gilead and began to prophesy with the other prophets. Clearly the Spirit of God was on Saul's life at that time.

At Jabesh Gilead, Nahash the Ammonite surrounded the men of Jabesh. The men of Jabesh told the Ammonite, "Let's make a treaty and we will be subject to you." 1 Samuel 11:2 "But Nahash the Ammonite replied, "I will make a treaty with you only on the condition that I gouge out the right eye of every one of you and so bring disgrace on all Israel." "When Saul heard their words, the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him, and he burned with anger." Saul called 330,000 men together and that night they destroyed the Ammonites who held the people of Jabesh captive. Through all of that Saul gave glory to God for rescuing the people in Jabesh, but the story is about to change.

Remember how Samuel had told Saul to wait for him for seven days and he would come and prepare a sacrifice? During the waiting period Jonathan attacked a Philistine outpost (a place of refuge.) When the Philistines heard about this they assembled their army to fight Israel. Saul waited for seven days and when Samuel didn't come, the troops began to scatter. So Saul took matters into his own hands and sacrificed the offerings himself. As

soon as he finished, Samuel arrived and asked him what he had done. Saul replied, “When I saw that the men were scattering, and that you did not come at the set time, and that the Philistines were assembling at Mikmash, I thought, ‘Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the LORD’s favor.’ So I felt compelled to offer the burnt offering.”

As soon as Saul disobeyed the command from the Lord, Samuel told him that his kingdom would not endure. The the Lord had found a man after His own heart and had appointed him ruler of His people, all because Saul did not keep the Lord’s command. Pride had entered Saul’s heart, because he hadn’t been broken and surrendered to God he was rejected as king over Israel. From that day forward, when God gave Saul instructions and he would disobey them, and do what seemed best in his own eyes. When Saul was confronted with the truth, he always made excuses and blamed others.

Because Saul hadn’t been broken and surrendered to God he was rejected as king over Israel.

David made many mistakes in his life, yet he was called, “A man after God’s own heart.” How could that be true after all the wrong he had done? I believe that in those years of running for his life and hiding in caves, David learned that his life was not his own. He learned that everything he had in life came from God. David had been broken. When he was confronted with his sin, his reply was, “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.” Psalms 51:1-2

So whatever you’re walking through or facing, remember that God may be breaking pride, arrogance and anything that displeases Him off of you to purify you like gold is purified in fire.

THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

What fire are you/or have you walked through recently? _____

Can you share what areas in your life have been purified? _____

Has your identity in Christ changed recently? If so, how? _____



WEEK 3

BELONGING

An aerial photograph of a coastal town, likely Antibes in France, featuring a dense cluster of buildings with terracotta roofs, a harbor with a breakwater, and a large forested hillside in the foreground. The word 'BELONGING' is overlaid in large white letters across the center of the image.

Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:5-6

Many years ago while traveling to Salt Lake City with my Dad, we stopped at a Walmart for a few things. While walking into the store I was approached by a very talkative person who thought I would be perfect as a quarterback on their football team. As a young pre-teen I had zero desire to participate in sports but that didn't seem to deter this gentlemen from strongly suggesting that I would make the perfect quarterback. He then went on to say that I will probably grow up to be fairly tall. He then asked this question, "How tall is your Dad?" Little did this guy know, I was standing next to my Dad, who is, anything but tall. I had no idea how to answer because you see, I was adopted. To this day I've never met my biological father. My Dad came to my rescue and said something that he has said many, many times since. He put his hand on my head he said, "He's my son." I will never forget the feeling that went through me at that young age when my Dad said those words. It didn't matter that we didn't look alike or have the same build that would make a perfect football player, in that moment all that mattered was that I was his son.

Over the years that memory has replayed itself in my mind and I've often wondered why I struggled so much with my identity in Christ. I knew my calling as a believer but why should I pursue it? Someone better than I am should do it. I've learned very quickly that as a Christian, if we don't believe what Christ says about who we are in Him, the devil will gleefully feed us lies about who we're not. I don't want this to sound like a self help study, or, "You need to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps," because all of that just results in walking in the flesh.

So how do we combat these negative thoughts/lies that the enemy tries to feed us? When a thought enters our mind, we need to immediately ask ourselves this one very important

We then make an intentional choice to not believe the lie, and replace it with the truth from God's word.

question: Does this thought align with Christ, or is it from the enemy? We need to train our minds to detect negative thought patterns. When they enter our minds, we then need to make an intentional choice to not believe the lie, and replace it with the truth from God's Word.

2 Corinthians 10:3-6, "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete."

I would like to invite you to do this exercise with me. As soon as you read these few questions, don't think about your answer too much but either verbalize or write down the first thing that comes to your mind.

Where does your mind go to when you hear the word finances?

Where does your mind go to when you hear the word health?

And lastly, where does your mind go to when you hear the word family?

Your answers are most likely based on your experiences whether good or bad. Every thought that you have, good or bad, carries weight. It is actually scientifically proven that these thoughts literally make paths through your mind, and negative thoughts are seven

times the weight of a positive thought.

Romans 12:2, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” The renewing of our minds is an actual spiritual and physical renewal. But once an old pattern is broken it’s very important to establish solid thought patterns that are aligned with Christ and His Word! If we continue to listen to the voice of the enemy, he will continue to rob us of our potential in Christ!

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One last thing, be patient. In this day and age we like to have things done immediately and for change to come instantly. If it doesn’t happen right away, clearly it’s not working! Go to your local gym and ask someone there who is fit if they got in shape overnight, or if it takes years of discipline and intentional decisions to get the results they were looking for. I have seen people touched by Jesus and be radically changed in a moment, but for many of us the transformation takes time. So don’t grow weary as you walk in faith towards being conformed into the Image of Christ.

I want you all to do this as an exercise. During this next week, take 5 minutes, find a quiet place and ask God what lie you have believed about yourself. Then ask Him to give you a truth to replace that lie. Meditate and pray about this and come back the next time and share your answers with the group.

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THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

What lie have I believed about myself? _____

What truth can I replace this lie with? _____

WEEK 4

30,000
FEET



O Lord, open my lips,
And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.

PSALMS 51:15

It was a rainy day as I climbed aboard a small aircraft with my Co-pilot, JJ. We had a short flight scheduled that day. The potential bad weather made our passengers nervous which brought added stress to me as the pilot. The clouds were low and the rain made it difficult to see out the window. I started the engines and looked down at my checklist for what felt like a brief moment, yet in those few seconds of distraction we began rolling forward very slowly towards a jet that was parked directly in front of us. “WATCH IT!” JJ hollered as he stepped on the brakes. My heart began to race I soon realized we were so close to the other aircraft that we would need to shut down and have a tug push us back. This mishap did not help the case with a nervous passengers in the back. I began to shake almost uncontrollably at the thought of what almost took place, a mistake that almost cost us a lot of money.

As we left the airport that day my mind began spiraling, “I’m better than that,” I thought. Losing focus is never a good thing but especially in that situation, “What’s my boss going to say when he finds out,” and, “I wonder what JJ thinks of me for making such a foolish mistake?”

People tend to self destruct when things go wrong. At times, they become the victim and blame others for their own problems. All of this lies in a false identity, I’m not trying to imply that when things go wrong we should instantly take all of the blame, yet a healthy individual will asses the situation and take responsibility for where they have failed.

If we all understood our position and identity in Christ, the attempt of the enemy to derail us would be futile.

I believe if we all understood our position and identity in Christ, the attempts of the enemy to derail us would be futile.

King Saul, was a driven and successful king in many ways until he became mighty in his own eyes. He chose to disobey the Word of the Lord. When Samuel questioned him, he blamed the people for the wrong he committed. 1 Samuel 15:10-30.

Do you find yourself being extremely critical of yourself? Do you hold yourself to a higher standard than those around you? When you make a mistake, even a minor one, do you quickly self destruct? Let's hear from one of our own life group leaders who shares his experience on this subject.

“The desire to never give up has helped me be self-motivated and hard-working, however, I am often extremely self-critical. When I fail, I feel the need to pay for what I have done and tear myself apart. In pursuit of accomplishment, I allow nothing but success and in pursuit of perfection, I analyze every weakness. Because of this belief it is very difficult for me to see that I even have strengths. I am realizing that it has led me to not be OK with who God made me to be. I am slowly learning how to view myself both positively and accurately.

How do you view yourself? When you succeed what do you think and how do you feel? Alternatively, what do you tell yourself when you fail? If you make a mistake, what do you believe about who you are? If you start tearing yourself apart you probably aren't trusting God's grace to cover your shortcomings. It is true that sin always requires payment, but when we behave as if we can redeem ourselves by belittling our worth and destroying our joy, what we are really doing is believing that grace isn't sufficient. Everything we do should be in response to grace, not in pursuit of it. It is like picking up and carrying the chains that he just broke off of our backs. In Him is freedom and life, not bondage.

The fact that my weakness is required for God to transform me is something that I cannot seem to wrap my heart around. While every weakness is an opportunity for His strength, every strength is evidence of His life. He doesn't struggle with figuring out how to fix our failures but perfectly uses them for His good. We serve a God of, "pressed down, shaken together, and running over," who does not hesitate in covering us with joy.

In 2 Corinthians 12:9, Paul says that he is glad to brag about his weakness. The Spirit told Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Another translation says, "My power works best in weakness." When you are torn apart in the wilderness you are going through, God has a better opportunity to work through you. When you submit your failures to Him he can highlight just how good He is by showing His grace. It is mind-blowing to me that God wants us to come to Him with our weaknesses and specifically uses them as a platform for His work. Living as if you are a failure will not bring freedom but trusting God to work through your failure can. They are an opportunity for His grace to shine in you." -Jordan Stoltzfus

As Jordan said so beautifully, "If you immediately start tearing yourself apart you probably aren't trusting God's grace to cover your shortcomings." We all fall short of the Glory of God on our own. But if we could only grasp that when the Father looks at us, He sees Christ because we are hidden in Him.

Things could've turned out much worse on that rainy day yet, I was my own worst critic. I was afraid of what others would think about me. When your identity is secure in Christ you will learn to praise Him even when you make a mistake, like King David did. Psalms 51:15, "O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise."

THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

Identify the reasons why you react the way you do to your own failures. _____

When have you experienced God's power in your weakness? _____

How has society influenced your identity? _____

How do you feel towards yourself when you make a mistake? _____



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