



Nice to Meet Me

A BIBLE STUDY WITH

NELSON PAINTER

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CULTIVATE REVIVAL BIBLE STUDY SERIES

A Bible study series.
Designed to cultivate revival
and to grow stronger, together.



A photograph of a dense forest with many tall, thin trees. The ground is covered in brown leaves and some green plants. A light beige banner is at the top of the image.

WEEK 1

THE BLUEPRINT

So God created mankind in His own image,
in the image of God He created them;
male and female He created them.

GENESIS 1:27

I never thought I would have found myself in that situation, but there I was. My hands were sweaty; butterflies in my stomach; I was nervous. Half of me knew that I needed it; half of me was desperate for something real. Following the advice of a close friend, I opened the door to the restaurant and walked in. The hostess greeted me with a question, “How many?” My response, “Just one.” That’s right. It was a date with myself, or so I thought. I sat there staring at the empty seat across from me as the waitress took my order. Sure, I had been on dates before. “I’m married to the most amazing woman and we have a wonderful son! I know how this is supposed to go” I told myself; but this was very different. I can count on one hand the number of times that I had taken time for introspection, and this was long overdue; but I remember what my close friend had told me, “Discovering who you are is not about you as much as it is Him.” I began to think to myself, “Is it possible that I had lost who I was, because I had stopped seeking who He is?” It didn’t take long before I began asking other questions, and the room seemed to fill up with water as tears ran down my face.

Why did it feel like nothing that I tried came easy? Why did I feel like I was always grasping at straws? It felt like I was aiming at a target that I couldn’t see. Then, as if the waitress had just refilled my water and knocked some sense into me at the same time, it hit me.

I wasn’t on a date to discover who I was, although that was the motivating question. I was here to rediscover who He is. I had lost focus of Him, and in doing so, lost focus of myself.

You see, it is impossible to discover who you are, until you see the blueprint of who you were made to be like. Genesis 1:27 says, “So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.” Discovering who you are can be incredibly difficult if you do not know who you are to be like. When God decided to make you, He made you in His likeness. So if I am to discover who I am, I should look at who He is.

Ephesians 4:24 says, “and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” The new self is created in the likeness of God. **It is impos-**

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to have an
encounter with God
and walk away the
same person.

sible to have an encounter with God and walk away the

same person. The most primary example of this is salvation; the first step to knowing who you were created to be is to accept Christ as the one who can save you, but this is not the end; there is so much more of you to discover. If you were to talk to Him, read His word, and spend time together; you would know more of who He is, and therefore more of who you are. **The moment that you stop discovering**

who He is, is the moment that you stop discovering who you are, because the more of Him that you see, the more of “you” you can become.

It has been some years ago that my dad and I played a game. We each had two small puzzles, and the objective was to see who could finish the puzzle first. A race! I was good at racing and more than that, I was determined to beat my dad; but right as we were about to start, he pulled out the box that his puzzle had come in. It had a picture of his finished puzzle on the top of the box, and the race was on! As you can imagine, my father had no problem beating me in the race to finish our puzzles, but it was after winning that he explained why he won. He won the race because he could see the end result. There was a

major advantage to putting the puzzle pieces in place when you could look at the final picture. Now, there are plenty of times in life that we do not see the “big picture;” but without a doubt, God is the finished puzzle that we can see throughout history. His character is unwavering, His Word is true, and His promises are real. Putting together the puzzle pieces of who you are can be difficult; but if you take the time to study His identity on the cover of the box, it begins to make sense. **It is near impossible to see who you were made to be, without first clearly seeing the one who you were tailored after.**

The first step to knowing who you were created to be is to accept Christ as the one who can save you.

Since that first date, I have had many others. Some are longer than others. Sometimes I read something in His word that is revelatory; sometimes I am just inviting Him into my current situation. No matter how big or small those moments may feel, I cannot get enough of Him; and the more I know about Him, the more I become the “me” I was meant to be.

THE MOMENT THAT YOU STOP DISCOVERING WHO HE IS, IS THE MOMENT THAT YOU STOP DISCOVERING WHO YOU ARE, BECAUSE THE MORE OF HIM THAT YOU SEE, THE MORE OF “YOU”, YOU CAN BECOME.

THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate your relationship with God?

What areas of your life do you think would improve if you had a better relationship with God?_____

What are some practical habits that will help you grow your relationship with God?



WEEK 2

**WHERE
AM I?**

Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.
Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?
—unless indeed you fail to meet the test!

2 CORINTHIANS 13:5

I can remember when I was about sixteen years old, my family took a vacation to one of the most highly desired vacation destinations in the world...Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the dead of winter. I hope that you can sense the sarcasm in my voice in that statement... but I have to admit, that vacation was one of the most memorable ones of my life. We spent the entire week hanging out in a cabin, playing in the snow, ice fishing, and skiing. All of those activities were amazing, but there was one thing that we did that was probably the most memorable -we visited the Mall of America.

Now for those of you that are not familiar with the Mall of America, rest assured that it does not get its name on a whim or passing fancy. It is the largest mall in the United States. In fact, the mall is so large that it has acquired its own zip code, has 12,250 parking spots, and does not have a heating system because there is so much body heat created by the numerous visitors that shop there every day. This place is so big; how will I ever find the place that I am trying to go to?

Perhaps you can relate to the feeling that I felt walking into this massive building; but if you have ever been to a mall before, it's not long after walking through the doors that you find some sort of map or schematic of the building. If you stop at this map, you will see that there are many stores; and all of them are filled with different products. Everything is for sale; but if I wish to buy a particular item from a particular store, then I have to find it on the map -and that's not the only thing. In fact, it is only half of what you need. I can't simply see where I want to go and just go there.

I have to ask myself this question, “Where am I at?” That is why somewhere on the map there is a red or yellow dot, maybe even a green arrow that points to a place on the map, and there are three words...”You are here”. Not only do I have to find the store that I want to go to, but I have to find the “You are here” marker on the map.

The reality is that you can never get to where you want to go, without first knowing where you are. This is the clear first step to any sort of disciplinary or life improving decision. The first step to becoming drug free is admitting that you have a drug problem. The first step to beating an alcohol addiction is to admit that you can’t control your alcohol consumption. The first step to becoming a follower of Jesus is to admit that you are currently a sinner without a Savior. It’s impossible to know how far you have to go to reach the finish line without a point of reference... a self assessment.

If I ever want to
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If I ever want to meet the new “me,” I have to be willing to see the “me” that I am. 2 Corinthians 13:5 “Examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? - unless indeed you fail to meet the test!” The reality is that too many individuals know who Christ is and want to become more Christ-like, but never take the time to assess where they are currently at.

Last week we talked about the necessity of knowing who Christ is, because we are made in His image. The more of Him that I see, the more of me I can become. This is the destination on the map. Actually, a better way to say it is, He is the destination on the map. If I am to become the “me” that I am created to be, I must become more like Christ; but I can not improve on what I do not see.

Ignorance is not bliss. What you don't know will hurt you, and you don't know what you don't know. That can seem confusing, but it is worth unpacking. If I do not see my need for something, why would I work to acquire it? Why would I diet and exercise, if I don't see that I'm unhealthy? Why would I exercise discipline in my schedule, if I don't see my poor time management? **God can't bless who you pretend to be. He wants to bless the "you" that He has created you to be.** We get to this place by identifying two things. What is the destination? And where am I at?

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THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

What are some of my weaknesses when it comes to following Christ?

What are the obstacles that are keeping me from improving my weaknesses?

What differences do you see between the “you” that you are and the “you” that God has created you to be?_____





WEEK 3

**YOU'RE AN
ORIGINAL**

For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:12

There is a story in the Bible that you have probably heard of: It is about a young man named Joseph. Joseph had many brothers, but he was favored by his father more than his siblings. This becomes clear when his father gives him a coat of many colors that publicly displays his love for Joseph, and this causes the other brothers to become jealous. Their jealousy drove them to sell Joseph into slavery and lie to their father, telling him that Joseph was attacked by wild animals and killed. In the long run, Joseph works his way up the corporate ladder in Egypt to become second in command only behind Pharaoh, and saves his brothers and their families from starvation.

Although there are many truths to be found in this story, I would like to pose a question to reveal just one. What motivated the brothers to sell Joseph into slavery?... Comparison. Comparing themselves to Joseph is what caused them to be dissatisfied with their life and become jealous of his. So the questions then becomes, “How often are our decisions based on comparisons?”

When you compare yourself to someone else, you lose focus of who God is creating you to be. Instead, you try your best to become a copy. We say things like, “If I had her job, my life would be perfect” or “I wish I could have the house that he has.” These questions can rob us of the joy of experiencing God’s transformational plan in our life. Another doorway to comparisons that we must be careful of is what others say about us. We begin to place a high value on what others think and say about us and thus, move our focus off of the “me” I’m supposed to be. Sometimes we can allow what others say about me to cloud what He

says about me, and the more and more that I allow comparison to take precedence in my life, the less I see who He has made me to be. **God has made you to be an original, so don't spend your life trying to be a copy of someone else. God wants to bless you, not who you pretend to be.**

2 Corinthians 10:12 says, "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."

If I allow comparison to dictate my life, my focus will be on my physical appearance and how others see me, rather than the motive of my heart and how He sees me. This be-

When you compare yourself to someone else, you lose focus of who God is creating you to be.

comes very evident when we talk about our "spiritual life". If

I believe God has created me to be a rule follower, then

I will always believe spiritual growth is an obligation

rather than something to desire. When we make spiritual

growth a perspective of following a list of rules, we begin

to measure our effectiveness in it. This causes us to become

frightened by the question, "How's your spiritual life going?"

It's measured by external things like how early you get up

or how often you are at church, but that is not spiritual formation; rather, it is achieved

through an acceptance that you are a son or daughter of the King of Kings. **Your identity**

is not derived by what you do, but who you are. When I am fully satisfied to be a son or daughter then what I do or how I look does not influence how I perceive who I am.

In my last year of undergrad, I spent a semester serving my residency at a long-term counseling center, where I was responsible for a young man named Josh. Josh was in a very unique situation in that he needed extensive counseling for mental illness while at

the same time having a form of autism. Josh was always outgoing and spoke his mind. He was an encouragement and loved to be joyful in a big group. One day we were having a birthday party for the CEO of this company, and Josh did something that I will never forget. Everyone at the counseling center was invited to the birthday lunch-party in the dining room. As all of the staff and residents filled the room, you could tell that there were many high profile employees that were doing their best to make a good impression on the CEO. Doctors, nurses, psychologists, and psychiatrists alike, each one of them took their turn trying to impress him, putting on their best front to win his attention. After some time had passed for everyone to take their turn, it was time to sit down and eat the meal. As we sat down, Josh stood to his feet and tapped a fork against his plastic cup to get everyone's attention. He cleared his throat and began singing, "For he's a jolly good fellow, for he's a jolly good fellow, for he's a jolly good fellow which nobody can deny." People were hesitant to engage at first, but the CEO's smile told everyone that it was acceptable. Before you knew it, all of these proficient, educated individuals were singing along as Josh directed them. It was the ultimate trump card for the event. Everyone spent their time trying to appear as something that they were not, while Josh was just himself; and being the "me" that he was created to be. In doing so, he was more accepted by the CEO of this prestigious company than anyone's attempt to be something they were not.

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When you can believe that God has created you uniquely, and that He has a plan for your life, then you no longer feel the need to compare your journey to someone else's. Joseph's brothers would have never felt threatened by him, if they would have been confident in God's plan for their life. Joseph's brother Dan would have never sold Joseph if he would

have known that the judges of the Bible would come from his descendants. Levi would have never sold Joseph if he would have known that the Priesthood would come from his descendants. Reuben would have never sold Joseph if he would have known that two thousand years later we would still be eating a sandwich named after him... OK, that last one was a joke, but you understand the truth right? When you fail to see who God is forming you to be, you will become jealous of who He is making someone else to be. When you are confident in who God has created you to be, there is no need for you to feel threatened by how God created someone else. **Comparison will either inflate you or deflate you and neither is from the Lord.**

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UNIQUELY, AND THAT HE HAS A PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE,
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THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

This week I want to encourage you to make a self assessment. Perhaps this is something you do as a group or something you do in your personal time.

In the concept of “rule following,” how has this shaped your relationship with Christ, good or bad?_____

How have the mistakes that you’ve made influenced the way that you think about yourself?_____

What are some of the strengths/gifts that you believe God has given you?_____

What opportunities is God giving me in my realm of influence?_____

WEEK 4

FAILURE TO THRIVE

Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11

When I was studying as an undergrad in the psychology department, I came across an interesting topic that we would study often. This was a condition called “Failure to thrive.” Failure to thrive was the idea that someone is no longer developing, growing, or improving but rather is declining. There are many factors that could contribute to someone having this condition; it could be motivated by something physical like a lack of nutrition, or something emotional like a severe trauma from the past. The other factor that I firmly believe in but was not discussed, is a spiritual motivator. **I am a firm believer that if you do not have a spiritual identity, you will never find spiritual purpose; and if you fail to have a spiritual purpose, then you will be subject to a spiritually motivated failure to thrive.**

I hope that this series has helped you on your journey to discover who God has created you to be, whether you have accepted Christ through this series or you are moving deeper into your spiritual identity, I pray that no one is in the position of “Failure to thrive”.

Unfortunately, this is not the reality for many people in our world. Everywhere you look there are people that are doing their best to find their identity and purpose. In fact, people today are doing their best to find identity in anything whether it is nationality, race, gender, and even political affiliation. People are desperate to be a part of something that they can find purpose in and feel accepted, but God has placed you and me here to help people find their true purpose and true identity. That is the challenge this week. **You see, God has given you an identity that you must discover, but He also gives you the opportunity**

to help others discover their identity.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 says, “Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.” Unfortunately, we can have a very small view of what we have been

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called to do. We can treat our relationship with God like a transactional one. We come to church on Sunday and get what we need to survive our week, and by next Sunday we are dragging ourselves back to church to repent, replenish, and repeat. When we do this we treat God like a spiritual vending machine, but **the reality is that you were created to do so much more than just survive -you were created**

to be a revivalist. As you step into your true identity in Christ, you begin to live under the canopy of God’s protection and blessing. Meaning everywhere that you walk, He walks. Everywhere that you go, He has gone before you. There will never be a time where His faithfulness will not stay with you like a shadow. The world depends on you to be the “you” that God has created you to be and also help others discover who God has created them to be. You owe your community an encounter with God, and the easiest way for that to be accomplished is through calling others into their God-designed identity. You’re not just receiving from a vending machine in heaven; but everywhere you walk, heaven goes with you.

I want to encourage you to help those around you to see what God says about them. Most individuals believe that they have made too many mistakes and as a result, carry so much shame and fear. That is why it is so important to call people up, not call them out. Every-time I attempt to encourage someone to become more of who they have been created to be, I think of this story: There’s this little girl who comes to church every week with her dad, and while she has the potential to become a sweet young lady, she acts as most every

young little girl does. Her dad always wants her to look her Sunday best, and so she always comes to church wearing a little dress with a bow in her hair. The little girl and her father are escorted down to the front row where they are seated. As I said earlier she is a young girl and she is fidgety. It's difficult for her to sit still for church so she is being playful -swinging and kicking her legs, not paying attention to the fact that she is wearing a dress. As you can imagine this does not sit well with dad, as she's wearing a dress to church. Although it may be acceptable now, there will come a time in her life where she will need to sit a certain way while wearing a dress. Now, dad can go about this two ways, the question is which way will he address her. Will he call her out or will he call her up? Calling her out might sound something like this: "Dear, you need to sit down and keep your legs together; stop acting like a little child and be respectful. This is not the time or place for you to be flailing around." Calling her up might sound something like this: "Dear, did you know that you are Daddy's little princess? Daddy loves you so much and you will always be my princess, but did you know that the way that you're sitting is not how a princess sits? A princess will sit facing forward with her knees together and her hands folded in her lap like this. Do you think that you can sit like a princess? I love you and that is exactly who you are, you're Daddy's princess." Encouraging those around you by telling them that they are chosen, loved, valued, and important can be very impactful. If you couple that with a prayer over their life, it can be life altering.

**IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO CALL PEOPLE UP,
NOT TO CALL THEM OUT.**

THIS WEEK'S QUESTIONS

Who are some people that are in your life that you can help by calling out their identity?_____

What are some ways that you can call people up and not out?

Take some time to call out each other's God-given identity and pray for each other.



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828-551-5321 | 844 Georgia Cliff Road Tryon, NC 28782