

Tuesday

Identity of the Heart

Scripture

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine” **Isaiah 43:1**

“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.” **1 John 3:1**

Our identity is anchored in the truth of scripture.

Many of us spend our entire lives just trying to answer one simple question: “Who am I?” We look to our accolades and our strengths and weaknesses to define us. We look to other people to determine who it is we are. We allow circumstances and open or closed doors to tell us who we’re supposed to be. We look everywhere but to the One who actually knows the true answer.

But God says to you and me, *“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine”* (**Isaiah 43:1**). **1 John 3:1** says, *“See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are.”* And in **Ephesians 2:19** Scripture says, *“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”*

We need a renewing of our identity. We need to look at the word of God and choose to believe that we truly are who he says we are entirely. We need to let our Creator define the identity of his creation. You serve a God who has called you his child. Regardless of anything you’ve done well or poorly, regardless of your successes or failures, you are first and foremost the redeemed child of the Most High God. It’s time to anchor your identity to the unshakable truth of Scripture.

You see, it’s not enough just to know what Scripture says. It’s not enough to be able to recite verses like, *“we should be called the children of God; and so we are.”* Until in your heart of hearts you believe the truth of Scripture, you will base your entire life on whatever it is you value most. If you value the opinion of man over God’s word, your identity will be founded on the fleeting and fickle opinions of others. If you look to your circumstances to define you, then your identity will change with the passing of seasons. But if the identity you believe in your heart is founded on God’s truth, then your self-worth, perspectives, decisions, and beliefs will be unshakable and yield abundant life.

It’s absolutely critical to take an honest assessment of your heart when it comes to your identity. Don’t let going to church, talking about Scripture, or even spending time reading God’s word be enough. Take a look at what is actually sinking into your heart and changing your life. Don’t rest until your life—your emotions, actions, and

beliefs—align with God’s truth. May you be energized and renewed to seek out the fullness of life God has in store for you.

“I have called you by name, you are mine.”

Application

Take time today to assess your own heart. Look honestly at your beliefs. Where are you looking for your identity? Place your trust in the truth of God’s word that the identity of your heart would come from your loving Creator. May your time in guided prayer be marked by a powerful revelation of truth.

Prayer

Father, I thank you that you have cleared the way to call me your own. Show me where the identity of my heart lies. Teach me the value of your word. Spirit guide me deeper in relationship with you.

[Offer your personal prayers here]

In the loving name of Christ, Amen.

Adapted from <https://www.first15.org/04/04/identity-of-the-heart/>

Wednesday

Tempted? So was Jesus.

Scripture

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has ascended into heaven,[f] Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. **15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.** **16** Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:14-16

Tempted in Every Way

When some people read that Jesus "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," some eyebrows raise. You may not say anything out loud, but you think, "Was He *really* tempted in every way? Has He ever been tempted to run a red light? Or smoke pot? Or watch pornography? Yet the Bible is clear that He was tempted in all points.

When you boil it down, all temptations fall into 3 types, and Jesus was tempted in all three. 1 John 2:16 lists them:

1. The lust of the flesh (temptation for us to *do* something—our passions)
2. The lust of the eyes (temptation for us to *have* something—our possessions)
3. The pride of life (temptation for us to *be* something—our pride)

If you doubt it, then read about the temptation He faced in Luke 4:1-13.

Can you identify which of these 3 types of temptations are bothering you the most today? It could be all three.

If you are a child of God, submit yourself to your heavenly Father, who wants to have all your needs met in a legitimate way. Then say, "Lord, show me the fulfillment of this desire. Father, satisfy this desire legitimately." A wonderful thing will happen: you'll begin to have your needs met. "And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace."

You are His, He is enough to sustain you.

Application

- Where are you trying to control things on your own right now? Have you invited God into this need / desire?
- He knows exactly what you are going through. He longs to be your confidence. Your greatest provider is also your greatest companion in all joys and sorrows. Take a moment to reflect on what that means for you.

Prayer

Lord, I thank you that I am never alone in my struggles. My temptations can be trusted and satisfied through you. Forgive me for trying to control it all on my own. Remind me that I am yours. Sustain my heart.

[Offer your personal prayers here]

In the loving name of Christ, Amen.

Adapted from <https://www.lwf.org/daily-devotions/daily-devotional-tempted-so-was-jesus>

Thursday

Time Well Spent

Scripture

“Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this: He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun. Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.” Psalm 37:4-7 (NIV)

Time with you has been paid for.

There is an old saying “time is money.” That really isn’t true. The real truth is “time is life.” Life comes down to the time we have on this earth and how we spend it.

The older I get, the more I realize the most precious time in life is when I spend it with the people I love the most. Even after 40 years of marriage, I love spending time with my precious Teresa. One-on-one. Just the two of us. I have never gotten over the fact that ... a) she married me, and b) she still loves to spend time with me.

Yet even more amazing to me is that God desires to spend time with me!

In fact, He wants to spend time with you and me so badly that He paid in order to get it. He sent Jesus to remove every barrier, tear down every wall and unlock every door so we could have a personal relationship with Him. In fact, He gave us His Word so we could hear from Him constantly and consistently.

That's why I love to read my Bible. I know God wants me to have unrestricted access to Him, anywhere and anytime I want. God has a personal side and He wants me to know it. God wants you to get to know Him better so you can love Him fully, hear Him clearly and experience His guidance. This comes by spending time with Him in His Word.

A king by the name of David wrote a song about the benefits of spending time with God, showing us why this should be a top priority of our life.

Spending Time with God Causes Me to Reflect God's Character

Just as I enjoy spending precious time with my wife, God is delighted when we are delighted in Him! He loves to be our eyes and ears so He can speak into our heart.

Have you noticed the more time you spend with someone, the more you become like them? As we spend time with God and His Word, He changes us so we become more like Him. God changes us so He can use us to change other people. You simply cannot spend time with God, hear His Word, know Him better, love Him more and be the same person.

Spending Time with God Causes Me to Receive God's Blessings

God promises that when we delight in Him, He will give us the desires of our heart. Now this is not a "your wish is my command!" promise. As we spend time with God, we will delight in Him. His desires become our desires because our hearts are tuned to His. He will grant us what we desire, because we both want the same thing!

Spending Time with God Causes Me to Rest in God's Will

As we spend time with God and His Word, our faith and trust in Him will grow. Fear is replaced by faith, and worry is replaced by worship. Spending quality time with God and consistently studying His Word grows our confidence in His power and our commitment to His plans for our lives.

So today ...
set aside time to spend with the One who is above all time. It will be time well spent.

Application

- Look at the rest of the week ahead, where can you practically set time aside for God?
- Pay attention to your heart when you've created this time as a priority.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank You for wanting to spend time with me and inviting me to spend time with You. Help me prioritize this time with You, knowing it is the path to divine power and meaningful productivity in the time You have given me.

[Offer your personal prayers here]

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Adapted from

<https://www.proverbs31.org/read/devotions/full-post/2017/01/05/time-well-spent>

Friday

It is written

Scripture

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.”

4 Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ” Matthew 4:1-4

Daily Spiritual Nourishment

Have you ever skipped a meal? Maybe your day was too busy or you simply forgot to stop and eat. It really affects you, doesn't it? You start to feel weak, irritable and tired the longer you go without food because you need it for your body to function properly. This is something that happens all the time spiritually. Let's take a look at Matthew 6, and you'll see what I mean.

In Matthew 6:11, in the middle of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray for our daily bread when He says, “Give us this day our daily bread.” Is He referring to our provision? Yes, but I think He's talking about more than just our natural, physical provision. Throughout the Old and New Testament, many Scriptures refer to the Word of God as bread. So, with that in mind, is it possible that Jesus is telling us to pray every day for a word from God—for our daily bread?

I *fully* believe God has a word for you every day and that word will strengthen and nourish you all day long. However, there are a lot of Christians who are weak and tired because they aren't getting their daily bread from His Word. They're going weeks and months without eating what's readily available to them. God cares for us like a shepherd cares for his sheep, and He's provided us with the nourishment we need—but it's up to us to actually eat it.

When you start reading the Bible every day, God will speak to you through it. He'll encourage you and prepare you for situations you're going to encounter each day. Sometimes a word you get in your daily reading can provide nourishment for someone else, too. I can't tell you how many times I find myself talking to someone, and when they start to tell me about what they're going through, I'll remember, “That's what I read about this morning!” Then I can use that word to encourage and speak life to them. You never know when God is going to speak a word to you that will change your life or the life of someone around you.

“God cares for us like a shepherd cares for his sheep, and He's provided us with the nourishment we need—but it's up to us to actually eat it.”

What's God's word for *you* today?

Application

- How's your soul? Take a moment to really listen.
- Where does God want to nurture you? Are you starving, or feeling weak? Maybe you're feeling full but need to 'exercise' your soul through serving others.
- Pay attention to where God is calling you and respond accordingly.

Prayer

Lord, thank You that Your Word is bread that feeds and sustains me. I need the daily nourishment that it brings. Please speak to me today. I need a word from You.

[Offer your personal prayers here]

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Adapted from <https://gatewaydevotions.com/itiswritten/1>

Saturday

Scripture

Focus Determines Direction

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:2 (NIV 1984)

Where are you headed?

Focus is an interesting thing. A powerful thing. I believe it makes change possible.

I live in North Carolina - home to NASCAR. I even drove a stock car once in a qualifying race at the Franklin County Speedway. So I've talked to a few race car drivers in my time. Here's what I learned from them: *You have to focus on where you want to go.*

Race cars move so fast that the slightest change in course - the slightest turn of the wheel - quickly produces big changes in your position on that track. Surprisingly, where you look can shift your body enough to turn the wheel just enough to send you in that direction. Even if that wasn't where you intended to go.

In other words, your focus determines your direction.

That's why race car drivers are taught never to look at the wall. Look at the wall and that is where you will end up - crashed.

I think that's also why the Bible spends so much time teaching us to keep our eyes on Christ. Because our focus determines our direction.

Do you recall the story of Peter when he saw Jesus walking on the water in Matthew 14:29? Peter climbed out of the boat and walked on the waves. As long as he focused on Jesus, he walked toward Him on the water. But as soon as Peter looked down at the wind-whipped waves beneath him, that's precisely where he ended up.

I wonder if our typical New Year's Resolutions aren't us looking at the wall, or down at the sea instead of us focusing on Christ. We make promises like "I'm going to lose weight," or "I'm going to get more organized." (I've made both those resolutions before.) Or maybe, "I'm going to stop this affair." And then our focus is on our weight, the mess, or the forbidden fruit.

Next thing we know, although it's not where we intended to go, we're sinking in calories or clutter once again. And we feel defeated. Crashed. Then we give up.

Thankfully, I've found a new way to do New Year's Resolutions that keeps me properly focused. Instead of making my long list of ways I plan to improve, I prayerfully choose just one word to be my focus for the entire year. Just one word that represents what I most hope Christ will do in or through me that year. One word to give me direction.

It's not a regret-based word but a vision-driven word centering on the kind of person I want to become. It keeps me looking forward and upward.

I pray that word, meditate on it, memorize verses with it, and use it to remind me to keep my eyes on Christ, trusting Him for transformation in that area of my life. And I've seen transformation take place!

Reading Hebrews 12:2 reminds us to take our eyes off ourselves and our circumstances - off the problem behaviors or the "walls" in our lives—and fix them squarely on Christ. Because our focus determines our direction.

Ultimately Christ is the perfecter of us and our faith. We can trust Him to turn our resolution into reality as we stay focused with our one word and with our eyes on Him.

Application

- What "walls" in your life have you been looking at?
- What can you do to remind yourself to keep your eyes on Christ? What word would help you maintain focus?

Prayer

Dear Lord, I want to fix my eyes squarely on You today. Help me see You at work in my life and in the forming of my heart.

[Offer your personal prayers here]

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Adapted from

<https://proverbs31.org/read/devotions/full-post/2013/01/08/focus-determines-direction>