

Making Christ the Center of My Identity

1 Peter 2:9-12

Introduction

- I'll never forget the day Jackson met his sister for the first time.
 - My kids are 15 months apart; some people even think they are twins, but they are as different as night and day.
 - I could tell as Jackson approached the crib that he was reluctant. I thought maybe he was nervous.
 - He took one look at his sister, then folded his arms, and turned away in disgust.
 - Jackson wanted nothing to do with Avery! For 15 months he had enjoyed the privileges of being an only child. The world revolved around him, and now his sister had taken that away from him. He still has not forgiven her for it, and I'm not sure he never will!
 - In fact, when we came home from the hospital, I decided to turn my attention to Jackson. He was playing with some cars in the floor. I walked over and asked to play with him. He picked up his cars, gave me a look of disgust, and played in the other room!
 - And now you understand the relationship between Jackson and Avery!
- New Sermon Series "Making Christ the Center"
 - Everyone's life revolves around something. Our lives may revolve around our family, job, hobbies, activities, etc. Whatever our lives revolve around, it usually defines who we are.
 - As a Christian, Christ should define our lives. While our good intentions are to live in obedience to Christ, there are competing priorities that often get in the way: finances, time, needs, relationships, responsibilities, even guilt and shame.
 - Like the cornerstone of a building, if Christ is not the center of our life, we will stumble and fall.
- Making Christ the Center of My Identity
 - Our identity is something we usually associate with teenagers. It's the awkward moments of zits, dating, friends, and figuring out what we will do in life.
 - And while you may feel as though you are past that phase in your life, your identity is a key part of who you are as a Christian; especially as we consider making Christ the center of our identity.
 - I hope to challenge you to do something that might be a little scary. Throughout this series, I want you to step out of your skin, so to speak, and look at your life through the lens of Christ.
 - Is Christ really at the center of your life?
- All are One in Christ
 - Here is something I find interesting about how Jesus identifies with people
 - Rich Young Ruler or Zacchaeus the Tax Collector
 - Woman at the Well or Living Room with Mary and Martha
 - Nicodemus the Pharisee or Simple Fishermen who became Jesus' disciples

- Jesus identified with all of them in the same way. The call was the same. The message was the same. The love and the grace were the same. One was not worse than the other. They all needed the love Jesus had to offer.
 - The Church as the Body of Christ
 - Various gifts
 - The Apostle Paul went to great lengths to explain that no gift was greater than another.
 - While we might identify with one gift rather than another, our identity is not in the gift, but in the unifying purpose of each gift.
 - We are all one in Christ.
- Making Christ the Center of our identity is key to us finding meaning and purpose.

Find Your Identity in Something Bigger Than Yourself

- **1 Peter 2:9**
 - What a calling?
 - Chosen Race
 - Wars have been started- Nazi's
 - Segregation/Civil Rights Movement
 - Royal Priesthood
 - Catholic Church Abuse
 - Only a select few; associated with a profession/occupation
 - Holy Nation
 - Crusades
 - Terrorism
 - All examples of a lost identity
 - How Israel lost its identity
 - Idol worship
 - Stopped Reading the Word
 - Power Struggle
 - Mission/calling lost
 - **Matthew 21:43-44, "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him."**
- Find your identity in something bigger than yourself
 - **1 Peter 2:9b, "that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."**
 - In order for Israel to regain their identity, they needed to be reminded what God had called them to in the beginning. The promise to Abraham was that God would not only bless them as a nation, but more importantly, use them to bless the nations (Genesis 12:1-3). The calling was always bigger than them!
 - What does this greater calling include for us?

- Grace to Forgive
 - Surrender to Gain
 - Love without Conditions
 - A Mission with the End already Determined
 - What a Great Calling!
- Feeling of being stuck
 - The statistics are overwhelming as to the lack of enthusiasm people have for their current job. People begin looking for a new job almost as soon as they get one.
 - Marriage: as soon as things aren't favorable, people give up on each other.
 - Reality TV: trying to find ways to escape our lives and find life through someone else's eyes.
 - Finding our true identity is a real issue!
 - We need to find our identity in something bigger than ourselves!

Have an Identity Crisis

- **1 Peter 2:10-11**
 - Middle-Age Adults (Mid-Life Crisis)
 - Not really old, but not as young as they used to be
 - Dad buys a sports car
 - Mom gets a new hairdo
 - Join a gym- Dad wants to get buff; Mom wants to lose a few pounds
 - Empty nest; sense of freedom
 - I go through this experience every time my kids stay with their grandparents!
 - **1 Peter 2:11b, "to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against the soul."**
 - We are experiencing a war against the very essence of who we were created to be
 - Lack of peace
 - Broken relationships
 - Desire to escape from reality
 - It is the cry of the soul for something bigger than ourselves
 - The Book of Genesis describes our identity as "being formed in the image of God (Genesis 1;27)." In essence, God's grand design was for us to "be holy as, God is holy (Leviticus 11:44)." It would appear as though God's grand design has become a grand disaster! If our identity is supposed to be rooted in God, how do we return to God's grand design? Is it even possible?
 - What often keeps God from the center of our lives are the competing priorities that shape our lives. The powerful message that Jesus offers is that our lives can take on an identity that is

bigger than the world around us. God's grand design is still possible if we can think beyond ourselves!

- Have an Identity Crisis
 - Instead of responding in the usual ways (the desires of the flesh), make Christ the center of your identity
 - **Romans 6:6-10**
 - Old Self-Paul describes as the part of us that lived for self desires, the kind of desires that Peter described as waging war against our soul.
 - What is one thing in your life that you know you should not be doing?
 - What is one thing in you life that you should do?
 - If you wrestle with those two questions, and are honest in how you answer those questions, then your identity will change.
 - You will begin to move Christ more to the center of your life.
 - Slave-Paul describes a life that is controlled by personal desires.
 - We all have them, some we may not even consider sin, because they seem good to us.
 - Maybe some are worthwhile endeavors, but are they competing with Christ?
 - Do you run your life, or does life run you? You have become a slave!
 - With Christ at the Center, you have the opportunity to make different choices.
 - Have an identity crisis
 - Get to the heart of what controls you
 - Don't respond in the typical ways of material possessions, or relationships, or momentary fixes.
 - What have you become a slave to? And, how can you make Christ more of a priority in your life?

Set Yourself Apart

- Story of Avery's Outfit
 - Wild attire
 - Red T-shirt with multicolored Christmas pants
 - Immediately her attire caught my eye, and I wrestled with whether to discourage her: Should I warn her, or Should I allow her to be herself?
- Jackson's Two Different Colored Shoes
 - Same shoe just in two different colors
 - Different but clever
 - We encourage our kids to "Be yourself: Don't do something just because everybody else does it. Find You and Be You!"
- 1 Peter 2 is an entire chapter about setting yourself apart
 - **1 Peter 2:1-3, 12**

- The purpose of a spiritual identity crisis is to set yourself apart with Christ at your center
- You cannot change without the core of what motivates you being different
- Growth in your life comes from a hunger for something different
- “Taste and See that the Lord is good”
- Important to understand that we are not different so as to draw attention to ourselves.
 - There’s too much of that in the world
 - It’s not authentic, and it promotes self
 - **Vs. 12**, “honorable conduct among the Gentiles”
 - When they speak evil against you, you don’t give it back, but you keep your conduct honorable.
 - Result: They see your good deeds and glorify God
- What kind of different are we talking about?
 - A greater calling
 - Grace to Forgive
 - Surrender to Gain
 - Love without Conditions
 - A Mission with the End already Determined
 - This will go completely against your personal desires, but it’s what your soul is craving!
 - This is what you were created for; a calling bigger than yourself!

Conclusion

- Whatever your life revolves around, is what will shape you.
- Find your identity in something bigger than yourself
- Have an identity crisis and ask:
 - What have I become a slave to?
 - How can I make Christ more of a priority in my life?
- Set yourself apart
 - Taste and see that the Lord is good
 - Conduct yourself honorably so as not to draw attention to yourself, but to bring glory to your Father in Heaven.