

The Mustard Seed

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Who Am I

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I struggle with my identity. It isn't a new struggle for me. It is one of the weeds in my life that several times I thought I had gotten the entire thing pulled out of my life, to later discover that there had been enough of a root left behind that it grew back once again . . . seemingly even stronger than before. I just can't get myself to fully believe that I fit in somewhere. . . that there is a place I belong. In this age of self-help books, seminars, counselors and endless opportunities you would think that there would be no reason for anyone to have difficulty discovering exactly who they are and what they are meant to become . . . and yet . . .

And yet, as you look around you see so many people struggling to feel comfortable in their own skin, comfortable being who they are meant to be, comfortable being different from others . . . just being okay with themselves. We see people striving to succeed over and over and over again because each success doesn't satisfy and they are driven to succeed more. We see people who just plain give up because they don't believe they have any capacity to measure up. So why try? Many are depressed. Some lash out at other people because of their insecurities with themselves. And some just keep doing what they think they are supposed to do, keeping their heads down, plugging away . . . not knowing it isn't meant to be that way. And there are many other ways people struggle with their identity, too many to count. What is the solution?

Obviously, since I struggle with my identity, I don't have the complete answer, but I've come across a couple things recently that I see as pieces to the puzzle I need to solve. The first piece I've collected is that I need to stop telling myself that I don't fit in and don't have a role to fill. Sam Storms stomped soundly on my toes when I was reading his book *Understanding Spiritual Gifts*. He states, "When you say, 'I'm useless. I'm of no help to anyone. The church would probably be better off without me,' you aren't defying other members of the body. You are defying God." (OUCH!) "You may not feel helpful, but you are indispensable. You may not be acknowledged or praised, but your value to the body is immeasurable, and God will reward you in the age to come." This is based upon 1 Corinthians 12. Basically, when God says there is a place and purpose for us that is truth. We best not argue with God. That never ends well. The point is I need to watch how I think and speak about myself.

The other piece God showed me is a picture I could visualize as I was reading *Truth on Fire: Gazing at God Until Your Heart Sings* by Adam Ramsey. He has a chapter on experiencing courage. In it he discusses how God the Father is Omnipresent. God the Father is everywhere, all the time. Think about it. When you are in a deserted place, God the Father is there. In the crowded elevator, God the Father is there. In the scary, joyful, boring, exciting, claustrophobic, exhilarating, tedious, etc places, God the Father is there. There are no exceptions. Acts 14:27 says "that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward Him and find Him. Yet, He is actually not far from each one of us." So hold on to the picture of God the Father being all around us.

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Now add to it God the Son being with us. In Matthew 28:19-20 Jesus says “Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” This sounds similar, but it really isn’t. For example, Curt and I can go to a movie and a large group of people are in the same theater watching the same movie, but we are only with each other. It’s a subtle difference but a meaningful one. Being with someone is more intimate than being around someone. With God we have the privilege of getting to experience both at the same time. But the picture isn’t done yet.

Next we add God the Spirit. Remind yourself of your visualization. God the Father everywhere around you no matter what and no matter where. Also, God the Son is there intimately with you. So where does God the Spirit fit into this picture? I Corinthians 3:16 “Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?” God the Holy Spirit is living within you. When you accepted Christ as your Savior, God the Spirit took up residence in you, sealing you with the promise of God’s inheritance because you became God’s child, an heir. Plus, God the Holy Spirit plants His fruit inside us, encouraging us to allow Him to do what needs to be done in order for His fruit to grow. It’s rather amazing to take in. At this point the full power of God the Spirit is living inside us. Mind boggling!!

As if that isn’t enough, there is another dimension to add to your picture. Don’t ask me how to draw it. Just allow God to hold the pencil in your mind as you add this part in. We are also in Christ. Adam Ramsey states that the words ‘in Christ’ are in the New Testament 216 times. That is a lot of times. In Romans 8 we are told that those in Christ have no condemnation, that even though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. We now have God the Father everywhere, God the Son with us, God the Spirit in us and to top it off we are in Christ. How can we look at how God surrounds us, fills us, protects us, empowers us, etc and not believe we have immense value? This picture of who God is, helps us to see how much God also values us.

Adam Ramsey illustrates it like this. “Here’s what we need to remember: the experience of courage has much more to do with our eyes than our wills. There’s a reason we use the expression “Take courage!” rather than “Make courage!” Courage is not something generated, it is received. It comes from being in the presence of someone stronger than us, who is for us. That’s why when children get scared at night, a good father doesn’t yell, “Knock it off, just be brave!” Instead, they walk into the room and remind them, “You don’t need to be afraid. I’m right here.” Have you noticed in Scripture, that this is exactly what God does when His people are afraid?”

So when I am struggling with who I am these are two tools I have to combat the struggle. One, I need to watch how I speak and think about myself. God is the only one who gets to decide who I am. And two, I need to pull out my picture of God the Father all around, God the Son near. God the Spirit in me and me being in Christ. This is who my God is and this picture shows how much He values me. I need to look to Him to discover who I am. He is where the truth is.

I pray this helps someone. God has great plans for each one of us . . . a uniquely different one for each of us. Each of these plans are meticulously and perfectly made. May we each step into whatever plan God had for us with boldness and great anticipation. As always, in pursuit.