



**LIKE
HIM**
A 90 DAY STUDY OF MARK

A Gospel Centered Identity

January 7-13, 2024

90 DAY MEMORY STATEMENT

I am His child, deeply loved, totally forgiven and fully pleasing and complete in Christ.

MAIN POINT

Everything God reveals about Himself is so that we have a right understanding of who we are in relationship to Him.

INTRODUCTION

What kinds of things have you attempted using in order to crystallize a sense of self, in order to secure positive identity thoughts for yourself (e.g. athletics, careers, dating, etc.)?

What are some ways in which others attempt to secure their identities outside of God?

To be understood is one of the foremost human pursuits. We want to be understood by others, but we also wish to understand ourselves. This desire often leaves people grasping for a sense of identity, whether in their careers, their hobbies, or their relationships. The trouble with this is that God created us with a greater identity in mind than what can be contained in a job title or in a list of hobbies. James MacDonald, pastor and author, explains, “identity leads to attitude,” meaning what you think about yourself determines the actions you take and even the path of your life. Our actions and the lives we lead should be reflections of our identities in God—anything short of this and we will not have lived a life gripped by the greatness of God.

UNDERSTANDING

READ [MARK 1:9-11](#).

In your own words, how would you describe the importance of Jesus’ being both fully God and fully man? In what ways is Jesus a bridge between God and us?

Jesus showed that He is fully man by obeying God and identifying with sinners. In His baptism, we see that Jesus is also fully God by the presence of the Father and the Holy Spirit. In His baptism, Jesus, both man and God, proved to be a bridge between God and man, who would make us at peace with God. God’s plan of salvation was centered on Jesus, and John the Baptist’s message proclaimed Jesus’ greatness. The Father’s words, as well as the Holy Spirit’s coming down in the form of a dove, showed His true identity as God in the form of man.

READ [ISAIAH 43:1](#).

What changes might we see in our culture if people understood that they were formed by God?

In what ways might our fears inhibit us from enjoying our identities in Christ?

God created all things, but He formed us. He took special care to create you perfectly according to His plans and purposes for you. This truth flies in the face of the idea of being “self-made” people. Whether it’s in business or in family or wherever else, there is no sense in thinking that we are or will become successes by our own efforts. The “success” or “failure” of our lives does not hinge on our annual salary or on raising a perfect family. When we live this way, we live in fear of losing what we have lest we lose our sense of identities. However, God has formed us, chosen us, and redeemed us! James MacDonald says, “everything God reveals about Himself is so that we have a right understanding of who we are in relationship to Him.”

READ [ISAIAH 43:2](#).

**What “waters” and “fires” have you recently passed through?
In what ways does God’s presence strengthen you in times of trial?**

God is with us: this is one of the most impactful promises in all of Scripture. God is with us, and because He is, we are strong and we will persevere. Oftentimes people tie their sense of identity to the feeling of success, so that when they go through fiery trials their sense of self begins to burn up and disappear. James MacDonald explains, “human strength is an illusion. God lovingly uses hardship and painful circumstances to teach us how badly we need Him.” God is managing the trials, the tests, and the difficulties; we can rest assured that none of this will be more than we can handle. When we understand this truth, our identities in God begin solidifying in the fires of adversity and hardship.

READ [ISAIAH 43:3-7](#).

Why are we precious in God’s sight? Why does He value us?

In what ways do we see God’s faithfulness in these verses?

In this passage we see that God is faithful in securing our freedom, even at the cost of exchanging others for us. No greater example of this exists than in the sacrifice of Christ. God could not make it any clearer: He loves and values His people. Notice we are “valued” and not “valuable.” James MacDonald says, something valuable can lose value, but not so with something valued. We are valued not because of who we are but because of whose we are, and that will never change. Many of us have difficulty allowing this truth to penetrate our hearts. Let the truth from God’s word today change your identity, the way you view yourself, and the way you live your life. God loves you. He values you.

APPLICATION

In what ways does your life currently reflect the greatness of God?

What needs to change in your life in order for you to be more fully gripped by your identity in God?

Who in your life desperately needs to be gripped by the greatness of God?

How can you use the message from these sessions to encourage them toward understanding their identity in the Lord?

PRAYER

Take a moment to reflect on the steep price Christ paid in order to secure your identity. Thank God for forming you and for then securing your freedom in Christ.

COMMENTARY

MARK 1:9-11

1:9-11 Nazareth is mentioned only here in Mark (cp. 6:1). Three things occurred as soon as Jesus came up out of the water. The heavens were torn open...the Spirit descended, and God's voice came from heaven. "As soon as" or "immediately" (Gk euthus) occurs over 40 times in Mark. My beloved Son indicates the Son's uniqueness and recalls Abraham's love for Isaac (Genesis 22:2,12,16). Only Israel (Exodus 4:23) and Israel's king (Psalm 2:7) were called God's son in the OT. The divine declaration in Mark 1:11 announced Jesus' eternal relationship to God. All three persons of the Trinity were represented at Jesus' baptism.

ISAIAH 43:1-7

43:1 Calling a person by his name indicates a high level of familiarity. The phrase might even hint at the fact that God gave them their names, an act to indicate superiority and perhaps even ownership. God gave Israel its name when He changed the name of the patriarch Jacob to Israel (Genesis 32:28). The intention of this oracle is expressed clearly at the start (Do not fear; see also Isaiah 43:5). God informed His people about their coming deliverance to keep them from caving in to fear.

43:2 The waters can be naturally dangerous just like the fire mentioned in the second half of the verse. However, the waters in particular can stand for the forces of chaos and evil (Daniel 7:1-9) or some kind of personal duress (Psalms 69:1-3). The background for this symbolic use of water comes from ancient Near Eastern creation stories where there was a conflict between the creator god and the god or goddess of water. The promise that God will be with His people is a covenant formula that indicates the close relationship between God and His people.

43:3-4 God's people are so precious that He is willing to save them at the price (ransom) of Egypt...Cush, and Seba. The land of Cush was south of Egypt, on the upper (southern) portion of the Nile River, roughly identical to modern Ethiopia. Seba's location is unknown. Some scholars take this as a reference to the fact that while King Cyrus of Persia decreed the restoration of Judah, his successors went on to attack Egypt and Cush. Indeed, God is willing to give much more than these three countries in place of His people.

43:5-6 God will gather His people from all over the world, east and west... north and south. The reference is to the restoration from the exile. The returns under Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel as well as the later returns under Ezra and Nehemiah show that the Lord kept His promise.

43:7 The exile will not result in the eradication of God's special people. After all, He created them. They will preserve their distinct identity and not be merged into foreign populations.