GALATIANS

Identity Roots

Day 1: Who are you?

Read : Galatians 1 - 2:14

Many of us go to great lengths to protect our identities. We shred documents, encrypt messages, and even have strict laws about protecting our identities. Even with all these precautions, our true identities might get stolen more than we think?!

If someone asked you today, "who are you?", what you would say? Would you talk about being a parent, your profession or talents, share your political preferences, or your favorite hobby? When you think about how you would describe yourself, where is it rooted? Is it rooted in what other's would say about you? Is it rooted in your performance, talents, or gifts? Is it rooted in the role you play in your family? What if your identity was rooted in something that could never be stolen or taken away by your performance, opportunities, or other's opinions? What if it was rooted in Christ?

The book of Galatians is a letter written by Paul to the church in Galatia. During this time, a group of Judaizers had spread false teaching to the area and they were struggling with stolen identities. The church was allowing their past religious laws, personal preferences, and fears about their reputation to steal their identity in Christ. They had added Jewish laws back into their faith practices, excluded the Gentiles, and it was dividing the early church. In this first chapter, Paul reaffirms that the Gospel is a gift of grace for everyone, including the Gentiles. Paul rebukes Peter in chapter 2 for allowing this false teaching and losing his identity in Christ, due to fears about his reputation. When our identities are rooted in anything but Christ, even if it seems like a "good" thing, it can be easily stolen along with the freedom we have in Christ.

Take a moment to think about that question: "Who are you?":

- Ask yourself and honestly assess: What do your actions, daily routines, and the way you treat others say about who you are?
- Does your daily life reflect an identity that is rooted in freedom that comes with the Gospel of grace, or is it reflecting an identity rooted in something else?

Day 2: Is your identity rooted in what other's think of you?

Read : Galatians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2: 1-6; Acts 5:29-32

When we ask ourselves what our identity is rooted in, we are actually asking ourselves where we receive our worth, validation, security, belonging, or approval from. Just as we spoke about yesterday, sometimes our true identity gets stolen more than we realize. *Ask yourself if there are any of these areas that you can relate to:*

User Guide:

How to use this study guide:

- **Pray** : Ask God to reveal Himself to you.
- **Read :** Read the daily scripture, take notes, and write down anything the Spirit reveals to you.
- **Study :** Read the daily study section and prayerfully answer the discussion questions.
- **Act** : Take a step, even if it's small, to put what you are learning into action.
- **Gather & Share** : Gather with your GUMC small group and use the discussion section to share what you have learned, ask the hard questions, and receive prayer for anything you are struggling with.

- NOTE: If you need help finding a group - Reach out to our Discipleship Director, Melonie at: meloniep@gumchurch.com

- Saying "yes" when you are exhausted, or when you should say "no" because you don't want to disappoint or "hurt" someone.
- Changing your plans because someone is unhappy with your decision.
- Not asking for help because you don't want to burden anyone.
- Allowing others poor planning or lack of responsibility to become your responsibility, instead of holding them accountable & allowing consequences.
- Needing others to be okay with your decisions, or owning their response.
- Apologizing when you haven't actually done anything wrong just to restore peace.
- Feeling threatened, defensive, or worthless because of someone's criticism.
- Having a deep desire to correct or control other's perceptions of you or your choices.

If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

- GALATIANS 1:10

Asking ourselves whose approval is shaping our lives, and controlling our daily decisions will help us as we examine the roots of our identity. Many times we confuse kindness, trying to do the right thing, or even being a "good Christian" with people pleasing. Without realizing it, we may be avoiding conflict to keep the peace, or changing our decisions because we don't want to upset or disappoint someone. Just as Paul writes in Galatians 1:10, as followers of Christ, Jesus never asks us to please people. He also never tells us that following Him means that everyone will like us and agree with our decisions. In fact, not everyone liked Jesus or agreed with Him (1 Peter 2:4). Ultimately He was sent to the cross by those who didn't agree with Him, even one of His closest friends.

- How would your life change this week if you asked yourself - *"Am I doing, or changing, this because it is right, true and honest? Or am I doing it because I want others to approve or to avoid their disappointment?"*

Day 3: Is your identity rooted in your past?

Read : Galatians 1:13-24; Acts 9:1-31

Paul talks openly about the sins of his past. He had persecuted those in the church and tried to destroy it. In fact he was literally on his way to murder those from the early church, but Jesus intervened and changed him. Paul doesn't ignore, sugar coat, or pretend that his past didn't happen. He acknowledges it honestly and authentically. However, he doesn't identify himself with it. He distinctly describes himself as "called by grace" instead of "murderer" or "persecutor". Becoming a follower of Christ doesn't mean that we deny our past, instead, it means that our past doesn't define us. We have been given a brand new way of life, and a whole new identity that is rooted in Christ.

- Is there a label(s) from your past that you are still carrying? Take a moment to write it down here:_____
- *Now rewrite it with your identity rooted in God's grace:*
  "I may have been _____, but in Christ I am now _____."
- Where is God calling you to live differently because of who He is transforming you to be with your identity rooted in His image?

GUMC Small Group Discussion

AFTER you complete the weekly study, use these questions (along with anything else the Spirit revealed to you this week) during your small group study time together.

1. Where is your identity rooted right now?

During your time studying this week, did you discover that your identity is rooted in something other than the Gospel? Where?

Is it rooted in (circle one):

- Other's approval or opinions about you - feeling like your worth is based on your reputation, or pleasing others
- Your past failures or feelings of shame & guilt giving you a negative self-image
- Your successes, talents, or gifts - feeling like your identity is based on your performance, success, or achievements
- Or is it in something else?

_____

2. How would your identity change if it was truly rooted in Christ?

What would your identity transform into if you rooted it in the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

_____

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Day 4: Is your identity reflected by your actions?

Read : Galatians 2:11-21; 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

Peter knew that the Gospel was for everyone, however, his actions didn't reflect this new identity in Christ. Our identity in Christ should affect our actions and behavior, even when no one is watching. Paul's rebuke of Peter and the other leaders came because they avoided being in community with the Gentiles out of fear that their reputation in the Jewish community would be damaged.

"for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!"

- GALATIANS 2:21

Ask yourself:

- If I say "my identity is in Christ", then why do I need other's approval, or acceptance?
- If I say "God is my provider", then why does fear control my financial decisions?
- If I say "I am God's child, accepted by grace", then why am I trying to prove my worth, or perform to receive acceptance?
- If I say "I am being transformed by God", then why am I fearful of change, or trying to be in control of the outcome?

Now complete these sentences:

- Because I belong to Christ, I don't have to _____
- Because I belong to Christ, I am free to _____
- Because I belong to Christ, I can say no to _____
- Because I belong to Christ, I need to be more_____

Day 5: Is your identity truly rooted in the Gospel?

Read : Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 3

Who we believe we are - influences what we believe is right
What we believe is right - influences how we behave
How we behave - tells us what we truly believe

- What if your identity was so deeply rooted in Jesus that you didn't need to seek approval, performance, achievement, or to meet other's expectations?
- What would it look like for your life to tell a story about the ONE that you belong to?

Before your next big decision, ask yourself these questions as you begin to root your identity in Jesus Christ:

1. IDENTITY: Who am I in Christ?
2. TRUTH: What does the Gospel say is true?
3. ETHICS: Which of these choices reflects that truth?
4. COURAGE: What makes this choice difficult? What am I afraid of? Is there something I need to surrender to God, and/or ask for support from others?
5. ACTION: Trust HIM & GO do it!

3. How does your identity affect your actions and decisions?

Think about your next big life decision (or small one), going back to the list of questions on Day 5.

- Share with your group the answer to question #4 on Day 5 about having courage.
- As you share the obstacles or struggles you are having with this decision, divide into groups of 2-3 people and spend time specifically praying for each other.
- Commit to interceding for each other in prayer as we seek to have the courage and strength to surrender our identities to Christ.

4. Questions or thoughts:

Take a moment to write down any additional questions or thoughts you want to share with your group this week:

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