

# chase

study.

chasing after the heart of **God**

WOMEN **& GOD**

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# identity :: 1



*The identity we are all chasing has already been  
given to us by God.*

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## What Is Identity?

Identity is found in the distinct characteristics that set us apart or give us worth.

We want to matter and to make a mark on the world. It feels selfish, even arrogant, to admit it. But every one of us has this need for a significant identity. This need possibly lies at the root of every human interaction and achievement. We all need to know why our life counts and what sets us apart, since life is short and there are a lot of us on this planet.

In the space below describe yourself. Who are you? What do you do? What is your personality like?

## Feet Down

I was innocently sitting in science class my sophomore year of high school, waiting for class to start, when two guys known for bullying turned around and decided it was the day to make me their target. I don't remember what they said, but I still can picture where I was sitting and what I was feeling. I felt like I was spinning and could not put my feet down. I could not land on what was true. As they laughed about who they perceived me to be, all I could think was,

**“Who am I?”**

I knew they did not know me and what they were saying was careless and untrue, but I did not know me and I did not know what was true. It wasn't long after that experience that I met God. And it wasn't until He began to undo me and define me that I finally could put my feet down and stop spinning. But even now, there are still plenty of days I spin, even with God in me.

No matter our age, we often find ourselves with feelings like those I had in high school. We have an identity crisis because we build our identity on things that move—things that aren't dependable or constant.

The list of what we build our identity on goes on and on:

family / bank accounts / friends / personality  
comfort / house / marriage / leadership / job  
vacations / children's success / relationships  
future / abilities / clothes / acceptance / love  
respect / morals / church / behavior / purpose

David lived a life unconcerned with appearances and image, rooted in a secure identity. Yet those of us who have put our faith in Christ live with the same identity; we just forget.

Let's begin this journey to discover where David's confidence and worth was rooted.



study ::

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read 1 samuel 16:1-13

# study

Even though very little is said about David's life directly in these verses, note some of the things we learn

about his life . . .

about his relationship to his father and brothers . . .

about where and how he likely spends his time . . .

about his heart . . .

about his new identity . . .

**“And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward”** (1 Samuel 16:13, emphasis added). This single fact would go on to define every moment of the rest of this man's life, every psalm he would write and every obstacle he would overcome. What did it mean for David that the Spirit of God was on him?



Read these verses and consider how those of us who know Christ have a calling similar to David's.

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*In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.*

## ephesians 1:11-14

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**What does He say you are?**

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**What does that mean to you?**

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*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

## 1 peter 2:9-10

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What does He say you are?

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What does that mean to you?



## Defining Myself

As long as we try to find our significance and worth in ourselves, we will feel disappointed. Self-esteem only works if we have a self worth esteeming. I am so sinful and selfish that I don't want to put my hope in myself.

Understanding these two truths keeps me from building my hope in myself:

1. We are all lost and pretty messed up, and
2. God in His grace rescued us.

As long as I am looking into myself for my identity, I will either be self-righteous about how great I am, which would be inaccurate, or distraught by the reality of the wreck I actually am.

The gospel steals all self-esteem:

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*For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.*

romans 7:18

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## Defined by God

“Nothing good” dwells in us. This statement in Romans is depressing if you don’t hear the rest of the gospel. The whole story, the truth of the gospel, is we get something infinitely more sturdy and fulfilling than self-esteem. For those of us who know Christ, we stand on the unchanging reality that we have been so loved by our God that He purchased us with the blood of His Son. See, we have worth, but it doesn’t come from within us—it comes to us from the One who made us. We share in a destiny and the calling David received that day. We have been rushed by the Spirit of God too. We will rule as sons and daughters of God someday. We have an insane calling, an insane identity.

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*How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!*

**1 john 3:1 NIV**

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If our true worth and significance and identity come from something so solid and eternal as God Himself, we don’t have to pretend when we are imperfect. We don’t stand on our accomplishments and personality and performance. We stand securely on the nature of an infinite, loving God. We don’t have



to manage our image or pretend we are okay, when we are really broken and imperfect. The grace God gives us in defining who we are changes everything.

## Uniquely Broken

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*But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.*

2 corinthians 4:7

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Christ's Spirit is this treasure inside of our broken lives, in us, moving and working in powerful and unique ways. Imperfect jars of clay each shaped uniquely to hold the Spirit of God for different purposes, each with unique marks and cracks and broken places. And through those spaces God shines out. The shameful places are torn down and become the places that are most useful to God.

The gospel strips us down to nothing but builds our hope in a secure, reckless, passionate God who loves us and saved us in spite of our messed-up selves. And then He uses those wrecked places to show His glory.

He is that good and, yes, we are that bad. All of us . . . especially those of us who think we aren't.

# study

Our value comes from God; it can never be found in how we measure up. So whether you feel worthy or ashamed, this news should probably undo you. It is the character of God that gives us worth, not anything we have done or will do.

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*For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.*

## ephesians 2:8–9

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There is freedom in accepting our unworthiness and receiving God's worth. But self-esteem dies hard, especially for those of us who stand on a great performance.

The work of Christ steals all shame but it also steals all of our pride.

## Respond

The years David spent in the hills tending sheep birthed a familiar psalm that has comforted every generation since. As you read the psalm, respond to the Lord through the two questions on the next page.

### psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters.

He restores my soul.

He leads me in paths of righteousness

for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,

I will fear no evil,

for you are with me;

your rod and your staff,

they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me

in the presence of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil;

my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

# study



Who are you, Lord?

What do you want for me?

God desires for you to know His heart. He wants to lead you beside still waters and to restore your soul. He wants you to embrace your identity as His child. These are my hopes and prayers for you this week as you take time to reflect on His Word through these projects.

be.

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*Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!*

psalm 46:10

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It is hard to make the time and the space and to make our worlds quiet. We have to fight for it. It was in the quiet of the hills that an intimate relationship between David and God was born. It was when David was alone.

Get alone with God, with no agenda. Go outside and sit; turn off your phone. Pray and be with God. Confess your dependence. Thank Him. And listen.

I lift up my eyes to the hills.

From where does my help come?

My help comes from the LORD,  
who made heaven and earth.

psalm 121:1–2

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*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.*

ephesians 2:19–20

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# consider.

These blocks represent the things you have used to construct your identity. What have you built your identity around? On each block write something you have used to define yourself. (For example: kids, job, appearance, abilities, friends.)



We all know these things are inadequate. But we are still building our lives and our worth on them.

How do you feel if the things you listed are threatened?

Who are you if you lose all of this?



# risk.

How much are you trying to control your image or what others think of you? Answer these questions:

Do you freely confess your current struggles to close friends?

When someone accuses you of something, do you immediately get defensive?

Are you quick to condemn when you hear about someone else screwing up? And do you feel like you are above making massive mistakes?

Do you get frantic when you feel misunderstood?

Do people think you have it all together?

There is freedom in understanding we are all equally and completely messed up, selfish, and prideful. We belittle the God of the universe whether we have an affair or we just worry He won't provide. None of us is above messing up, even in what some might consider small ways. We all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. There is no way anyone can live as though they are better than someone else. God is our only hope, our Defender, our Definition, our Righteousness. Apart from Him there is no good thing.

# wrestle.

As we begin this journey, chasing the heart of God together, wrestle with what you know about God. Write a letter to Him—describe how you feel about Him right now. How do you feel when you approach Him to pray? How do you think He views you? Is His definition of you hard to believe?

Be honest. Put words to how you view Him and how you think He views you.

Dear God,

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## Conclusion

The right answer is to rest our identity in the God who created us and defines us. He gives us our identity. The right answer sounds amazing and even potentially fulfilling. But most days it feels impossible to believe in an invisible kingdom, in an invisible God who actually loves us. So we attach ourselves and our worth to things we can see. We try to control our image, since what is inside feels impossible to fix.

This is the war that often consumes our lives; here lies the root of insecurity. But also on a good day when we feel our image is intact, there lies the root of pride. And neither insecurity nor pride serves as a fulfilling basis for our identity.

These questions matter, since they lie at the core of our hearts and navigate our lives.

Who am I?

How am I finding my identity in things outside of God? Is it working?

How do I align my identity around God's character?

Do you want to know why David lived so confidently, so boldly? He actually believed this stuff. David believed God is who He says He is and what God said about him was true. David's God was real. David was God's and David knew it.