

Gateway Fellowship Church

Marathon Faith

Part Seven- Know who you are

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I was sitting there in front of the gym at student camp when a group of students ran up to me and started yelling, Fight, Fight—there's a fight! I ran inside of the gym to see what was going on. When I walked in, I saw two students facing each other. One student I knew very well, his name was Javier. I had been mentoring him for quite some time. The other student, I did not know. He was from a different group. What I saw, angered me. What I saw, frustrated me. The other student whom I did not know was tearing apart Javier with his words. Everybody around was laughing. As this young man started pointing out the flaws in Javier; making fun of the way he walked and talked and the clothes he was wearing. I saw Javier standing there and I could see the anger and the brokenness, and his fists were clenched tight and he was shaking. I could see tears building up in his eyes. Something in me, snapped. I yelled, Hey! What are you doing? I went to the other student and yelled for him to stop. You cannot do what you are doing. You can't talk to somebody that way. I got in his face and I wasn't very pastoral like in that moment. Then I turned away from him and looked at Javier and said, "Javi look at me! Look at me in the eyes! You are not the words that have been spoken to you right now. You are a child of God. God loves you and He has a plan and a purpose for your life. You have value." We need to listen to who God says that we are. Not the voices. Not the words. Not the names that other people have labeled us as. Not what culture tells us we must be. See, we know who we are, when we know Jesus as Lord.

Today we are continuing our Marathon Faith series, and we are going to be talking about Moses. I want to let you know today that whatever insecurities you have, whatever things that you have that may be wrong with you, whatever identity issues you have—they can get in the way of your race. If you let them, they will stop you in your tracks from moving forward to where God wants you to be. In Hebrews 11 it describes Moses. When I think of Moses I think of an amazing Bible figure because when I think of Moses I think of him as he is portrayed in the movie The Ten Commandments starring Charlton Heston. It's a movie that comes on every Easter. It's a movie that I have seen over and over again. To be completely honest, I was a nerdy church kid growing up and so my brothers and I would play and pretend I am going to be Moses. I would go get a stick from the backyard and raise it up and yell "Let my people go!" I wanted to be the super hero, Moses. When I read in the Bible about Moses, I see a guy that actually had a lot of issues with who he was with his identity. Moses was born during a time when the Israelites were hated. Last week we learned of the bravery of Moses' mother. Who despite there

being a law that every Hebrew boy had to be killed, she was brave enough to say, "I am going to protect him. I am going to keep him alive." For three months she kept him hidden, and then she couldn't hide him anymore. So, she placed him in a waterproof basket and sent him down a river. The awesome thing is that Pharaoh's daughter finds Moses and wants to adopt him. I think God has a sense of humor because if you read in Exodus about the account of this, Pharaoh's daughter actually hires Moses' mother to nurse him until he is old enough to be adopted.

She trusts God and then God let's her, at least for a short amount of time, raise her son. I believe it was all part of God's plan because I believe in that small amount of time that he was in his mother's house, he learned what his true identity was. Even if it was a brief moment in time, he knew that he was an Israelite. He was a child of God. But I believe he had an identity issue because yes, he was in his mother's home, but that was only when he was an infant. He got adopted and literally his whole life got turned upside down. He went from being the bottom as an Israelite to the very top of society when he became royalty in the house of Pharaoh. Imagine that. He went from having nothing, to having the very best of everything. The best clothes. The best food. The best education. Everybody knew who he was. They would say things like, "Move out of the way, Moses is coming through." Because he was part of the royal family. As a member of the royal family, he had power. I believe there was always this constant wrestling in his mind because he also knew that he was an Israelite. He knows as he is going through town he is seeing his same people, the Israelites, in slavery. Being beaten and hurt. I am pretty sure that he came to a place where he asked the question, Who am I? It's a question that all of us have had at times. God, Who am I? Moses had to choose his identity.

We are going to be reading out of Hebrews 11 today, verses 24-27. "By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. He considered the reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king., for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible." Moses chose to be an Israelite rather than an Egyptian. Moses chose God. The same account is given in Exodus 2:11, "Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren." When he was grown up. It says in Acts 7:23 that Moses was actually 40 years old when he made this decision. By that time Moses had made a name for himself in Egypt. He had made a name for himself in the military. People knew who he was. He was in line to possibly be the next Pharaoh. Then he makes this decision, and it says here that he looked at their burdens. He identified with them. He literally took up their burden and said, "I choose God. I choose to be called a child of God." We know who we are when we know Jesus as Lord. We are all like Moses. We have been dropped into a culture, into a world, that tells us it's all about me. It's about getting rich and having pleasure. It's about having everything that is going to make me look good. I need to make a name for myself. People need to know who I am. I need to have power and prestige. Culture tells us that it matters how many likes you get on Facebook. It matters how many followers you have on Twitter. People have this idea that it is about me, me, me. I have to be known by people. The deeper we get into culture, the truth is, you will feel an emptiness. As you try to fit in as you say I am going to be part of this culture, you feel an emptiness. You will have that same question come

to you as Moses did—Who am I? Who am I, God? Does my identity come from what I do? Does my identity come from my achievements? Does my identity come from my failures? Does my identity come from what other people have said about me? Can I tell you today that it is not what you do, but who you are in Christ Jesus? It's not your achievements, but who you are in Christ Jesus. It's not your failures and mistakes, but who you are in Christ Jesus. It's not the words that have been spoken over you. It's not the labels that people have put on you. It's who you are in Christ Jesus. If we believe that our identity comes from what we achieve or what we do, then we are constantly going to have to do more and more and more so that we can feel valued. If we get our identity because of our failures or because of what other people have labeled us as, then we are going to go through life trying to please people and our world will revolve around making sure that we don't disappoint people.

We know who we are when we know Jesus as Lord. To live in the identity that Jesus has given us, we need to stop listening to certain voices. The first voice you need to stop listening to is the **voice of yourself**. I know that sounds strange, but here is my question for you: What words are you speaking over yourself? In Proverbs 18 it talks about how the tongue can bring either life or death. We all know that we have shortcomings. We all know that we have failures. But what words do you speak over yourself? Are they words of life or are they words of death? We are our worst critic. We put ourselves down more than anybody else. This was true for Moses as well. In Exodus 4 we have the burning bush experience for Moses. He literally is in the presence of God and God reveals this amazing plan He has for his life. That Moses is going to be the rescuer of God's people. All he has to do is trust Him and do what God tells him to do. Here is Moses' response in Exodus 4:10-14; Then Moses said to the Lord, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither before nor since You have spoken to Your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." He is putting himself down. He is speaking words of death over himself. I am slow, I can't talk in front of people. I can't do what you're telling me to do. How many of us are guilty of that? There are opportunities that come our way—and we are the ones that are hurting ourselves. We are the ones telling ourselves we can't do that. So, the Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or what makes the mute, the deaf, the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, the Lord? Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say."

God's got it under control. We are beating ourselves up doing all these things, but God has it under control. He is the One who made you. Moses still didn't get it. He goes on to say, "O my Lord, please send by the hand of whomever else You may send." He has such low self-esteem, beating himself up so many times that he is saying Lord send somebody smarter than me. Lord send somebody who is a better speaker than I am. He says Lord send ANYBODY, because anybody can do it better than me. The next verse is so key. "So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses." (Ex 4:14). I believe we anger God sometimes because we are the ones tearing ourselves down. We don't trust God enough when He asks us to do something. Instead we give him excuse after excuse and we tear ourselves down saying why we can't do stuff.

We must be careful what words we are speaking over our own life. I will be the first to admit that I have bad self-talk sometimes. When I make a mistake or when people laugh because I have embarrassed

myself. I say things to myself that I would never say to anybody else. I get mad at myself. We are all guilty of that. I will tell you today that we cannot listen to the voice of ourselves. We know who we are when we know Jesus as Lord.

The second voice that we cannot listen to is the **voice of culture**. As I pointed out earlier, Moses was in a culture where he had become successful and had made a name for himself. He had power and riches. It was all there for him. But he chose to live in God's identity for him. You have the same opportunity. Culture says at an early age that I have to fit in. I need to make sure that I am successful in school. I need to get a good job once I graduate from college. I am doing all these things to make sure that I am fitting into culture. But at what cost are you willing to fit into culture? What compromises are you willing to make sure you fit into culture around you? We have to silence that voice of culture, because that voice of culture wants us to stay quiet about Jesus. That we shouldn't be bold in our faith. We shouldn't step out and proclaim the name of Jesus. We need to keep it to ourselves. We need to be politically correct. We shouldn't anger other people around us. That voice of culture cannot dictate who we are. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. That you may prove that which is good and acceptable and the perfect will of God."

We cannot be something we are not, just to fit into culture. We know who we are when we know Jesus as Lord. The third voice I believe we cannot listen to is the **outside voices**. See Moses made this decision when he was 40 years old. Think about that. 40 years old when he made this choice to leave where he was at right then and identified as an Israelite. Imagine the anger and frustration from his adopted family. I can only imagine the words that were spoken to him when he made that choice. Things like "I can't believe we brought you to this house. It was a mistake to ever bring you here and now you're leaving us." I know for sure his adopted grandfather Pharaoh wanted to kill him because of his decision. Words were spoken over Moses from the outside that got inside of him. We saw that in Exodus 4 how he shrunk back and gave excuses when given an opportunity. Somewhere along the line people had told him that he wasn't good enough. Someone had told him that he couldn't speak very well. Somebody had told him that he was slow.

In your life you are always going to have people who are going to use words that will either build you up or tear you down. You have to be careful what words you let stick to you, because if you let those words stick, it will change your identity. I know many of you have had friends, family, co-workers, bosses, people around you who have spoken words that have hurt. It's a deep hurt. It's a scar that you carry. What I will tell you today is that you cannot let the outside voices, the words, the labels, the names that people put on you define who you are. You are a child of God. We know who we are when we know Jesus as Lord. I remember accepting Jesus into my heart when I was six years old. Like I told you before, I was a church kid. But this was the first time—I had just started going to church and my parents had just found the Lord. I remember going to Sunday School class and at the end of class the teacher asked if anyone wanted to accept Jesus into their hearts? I didn't know what he meant by that. After class I was talking to him and he looked right at me and said, "Jason, Jesus loves you. He loves you so much that He was willing to die on the cross for you, so you can have eternal life and be in heaven with Him." The

teacher continued, "You are God's creation. God created you special. He has a plan and a purpose for your life." I remember tears coming down my face. I had never heard anybody tell me that before. That God thought I was special. That God loved me so much. It changed how I looked at myself. I walked more confidently. I looked at myself differently. I lived in that for a very long time. Then I got to middle school. In middle school and high school, I was a little bit awkward. I had glasses and I had braces—different things going on. I got bullied. I remember getting called names every single day. Names that I can't even say from the stage. My mom even came to have lunch with me one time and they still had the audacity to call me these names with my mom there. That is when I started to have questions like "Ok God, you said I am special, but am I really?" "God, I know you said that I am your creation, but why is everybody making fun of me?" "God, why don't I fit in?" "Who am I?" It was this wrestling, this battle that I had to face. We know who we are when we know Jesus as Lord.

Can I tell you today some facts about how Jesus sees you? You are God's creation. Let me say it again, You are God's creation. Genesis 1:27—So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them. You were created by God. It is not by happenstance or mistake. God created you. You are God's masterpiece. Psalm 139:14 "I will praise You for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well." Ephesians 2:10— "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them." You are unique! God created you special. There is nobody else like you in the entire world. If God created you as His masterpiece, I want to tell you something today, God does not make junk. You are valuable. You're so valuable that in Romans 5:8 it says, "But God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." You are so valuable that He was willing to give His one and only Son to die on the cross for you. You are chosen by God. Many of us know how it feels to be overlooked. But God looks at you and says, "I choose you to be part of my family and my kingdom." I Peter 2:9 says, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light." You are made new through Christ. Your past does not dictate your future. your failures do not dictate who you are. It says in II Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new." You are a son and daughter of God. John 1:12, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." You have value. You are his masterpiece. He loves you so much. Just like Moses had to choose his identity, you too have to choose your identity.

One of the greatest gifts that God has ever given my wife and I are our two daughters, Joannah and Julianna. Joannah is joining me on stage. Joannah is a miracle. We prayed to have children for a very long time and we were unable to. I remember God speaking to me telling me to go on a fast and to pray and believe. Through that we were able to have Joannah. Joannah has had physical therapy issues since she was a baby. Right now she has some eye issues where when she looks at the board at school it looks like the letters are moving around. There have been some tough times. Today, I wanted to tell you Joannah that I love you! I am so proud of you. God has a plan and a purpose for your life. You are a miracle from God. You are God's princess. No matter what other people might say or do to you, never

forget that God is going to use you to do great things. Never forget that you are His child and that He loves you so much. I believe that you are going to grow up and be a woman of God to do amazing things for His kingdom. Mommy and Daddy love you so much.

Can I tell you today, that is how God sees you? He is looking at you and saying You are my child. I love you. Stop listening to the voices of your past. Stop listening to the names that people have put on you. Stop listening to culture telling you that you have to live a certain way to fit in. Stop tearing yourself down with the words that I never even spoke over you. Start living in the identity that I have put upon you. You are my child. You are a child of the Living God. I created you with a plan and a purpose. You are not what you do. You are not your achievements. You are not the failures. You are a son and a daughter of Jesus Christ. We have to choose that identity. We have to be willing to say God it's not about me, but about you Lord. Jesus you are Lord of my life. Everything I do is for you alone. We have to make that choice. Sometimes it's a choice we have to make every single day. Because culture is pulling at us. Our past is trying to come back and get us. But God is in control. You say Lord, have it all. My ups, my downs, my failures, everything I have. That's when you are going to truly know who you are in Jesus Christ.

Today can you truly say, I know who I am in Christ Jesus? He is Lord of my life. That's where it begins.

Prayer

KDD

10/10/18