

## **“A Case of Mistaken I-Deity”**

Galatians 2:20-21

*Series: MORE – Finding Your Personal Calling and Living Life to the Fullest Measure*

*Week 2. My Core Identity: BE*

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It’s an honor I definitely do not deserve. Once, while visiting a family, their three-year-old walked up to me. With a big smile on her face, she said: “Hi God!” Fearing I would suddenly be scorched by a thunderbolt, I quickly corrected her. “Hello honey. My name is *Pastor Doug*.” She persisted. “God, do you want a snack?” She offered me a cracker. “God, do you want to see my pool?” She pointed to a plastic wading pool in the backyard. “God, do you want to play with my doll?” She handed me a doll without a head. Talk about high expectations. I was afraid she wanted me to feed five thousand with the cracker, walk across the surface of her pool and raise Raggedy Ann from the dead. Every time she called me God, I glanced heavenward and said, “My name is Pastor Doug, Doug, Doug.”

This is not the first time I’ve been accorded divine status. Preschool children often call me God or Jesus. It’s a case of mistaken identity. It feels good to be “god-like”...until someone bursts my bubble. That’s what family and friends are for. After an Adventure Club kid called me “God.” Darlene Stevens remarked, “Did you ever notice Doug spelled backwards is God?” “Really?” I replied. “Yeah. But you have to take “U” out of it.” Pop went my bubble.

Take YOU out of it. There lies the core of our problem. How can I be filled with God when I’m full of myself? How can I praise God if I’m playing god? This isn’t just a case of mistaken identity. It’s a case of mistaken I-deity. This is where the trouble all began. The first sin in the Garden of Eden is the desire to play god. The serpent encourages Eve to eat the forbidden fruit saying,

For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil Genesis 3:5

The devil lies to the humans. They don’t become gods. They actually become less than human. They lose the best part of their humanity – their relationship with God. Attempting to play god, they were eternally parted from God.

Last Sunday on Easter, we looked at the curbs which block our relationship with God. Anything – good or bad – which becomes the main focus of life will distract us from the real purpose God created us to be and do. In our series MORE, I want to help each of you find your personal calling and live the full life Jesus came to give you. He says:

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. John 10:10-11

How do you live this full life? Jesus knows we are stuck behind the curb and there is no way we can get over it. So He comes to our side and lays down His life for us. When you receive His gift of salvation by faith, you are saved by His grace.

Yet this is just the beginning. Many Christians miss the abundant life and their personal calling. Why? When it comes to following Jesus they are spectators in the stands, not team players out on the field. They read travel books about adventures but they never go on the journey. They are still stuck behind the curb. The core problem is a case of mistaken I-Deity. We think we are working for the kingdom of God when in fact we are building the kingdom of me.

For example: before he met Jesus, the Apostle Paul thought he was working for God. He was the self-appointed leader of God's squad to bring blaspheming sinners (Christians) to justice. He was playing god. While on a search and destroy mission, God knocked him down on the road to Damascus. During the next three days of darkness, he discovered he was actually working for the kingdom of me. He also found his real identity as a child of God and a disciple of Jesus.

In the MORE series, we will explore two callings from God: a primary or common calling which applies to all Christians and a secondary or unique calling individually designed for each follower of Jesus. Last week I spoke about the sweet spot – how God creates each one of us to BE (identity), to DO (purpose) and to GO (position). When all three come together you are in your sweet spot. Now let me add that your sweet spot applies in two dimensions. You have a primary calling where God wants you to BE, DO, and GO. This primary calling is true for all Christians. This is your relationship with God and you share it with all followers of Jesus. All of us are equally called to be saved by grace and enjoy a relationship with God. Your sweet spot also applies to your secondary calling. This is the calling which is especially for you. God created you to have a unique way to BE, DO, and GO. Like two oars in a rowboat, we need both callings. Each week we'll explore one of these six elements. In the webinar on Wednesdays at 7 pm or in your Growth Group, you'll be able to go deeper and even work on some exercises to help you uncover that element of your calling. You can still sign up for the webinar on your connection card. If you invest some time in this now, by the end you will have a clearer picture of your primary and secondary callings from God – what He created you to BE, DO, and GO.

Today, we explore the first element of your Primary Calling – who God created you to BE, your Core Identity. The Apostle Paul sums up our core identity in one verse.

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Galatians 2:20

Let's take this verse apart so we can unlock our true identity – who we are created to BE.

**I** – This is where the trouble begins. Where sin begins. The problem is not out there. The problem is not her or him or them. The problem is the not the government, the economy, unemployment, CoVid19 or even the devil. If you focus on the wrongs of others, you'll miss your mistakes. Yes I know: people can be evil, abusive, unfair, unjust, destructive. But as long as I point my finger out there I don't have to look at what's going on in here. If I point the finger out there I don't have to admit my selfishness, my faults, my sins. If I point my finger at the way my parents raised me, my spouse mistreats me, my family rejects me, my boss fired me, I don't have to deal with whatever I do. If I point the finger out there I don't have to change my ways or surrender my pride. I save myself – I save myself from admitting where I'm wrong and making

changings. I am blind to I. I am in denial about I. I don't have to change I. I is in the driver's seat.

Do you know what the Greek word for "I" is? EGO. Get the picture? Paul's problem, our problem starts when my EGO is in control. My EGO is on the throne of my life. I worship my EGO in the temple of my body. I believe in my EGO as my lord and savior. Maybe you've heard some say EGO stands for: Edging God Out.

So what does Paul say happens to the EGO? **I have been crucified**. A crucifixion is a death. Something is put to death. My bad habits, addictions, temptations, weaknesses? No. It's me. My ego is put to death. All those other things are the symptoms. My ego is where the disease is. Scientists are not looking for a way to treat coronavirus symptoms. They search for a vaccine which will kill the disease. If I only treat symptoms I won't get to the heart of the disease. My selfishness, my need to be on the throne, to be my god – that EGO needs to die.

Now I want to point out the verb here. Paul uses what's called a "Passive Perfect" tense. Passive means something was done *to him*. Perfect means it was done perfectly in the recent past like it just happened. Passive Perfect – something that was done to me and currently affecting me. Paul says, I have been crucified – Paul didn't do the crucifying. God did. It just happened to him. God put to death Paul's ego, arrogance, selfishness, anger, hatred, judgment. It happened in the past yet he feels it now every day. Crucifixion is a daily death and resurrection. This is why Jesus says,

Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. (Luke 9:23-24)

Every day I need to surrender my EGO to God so He can crucify it. But I don't do that alone.

**I have been crucified with Christ**. The reason I can live for God is because God came and died for me. He gave His life for me. He took my place on the Cross and suffered my punishment. I can't pretend my sin is small or my ego is not that bad. You know how deadly the disease is by the power of the cure required to stop it. If it took the death of the Son of God to get rid of my sin, I realize how deadly my sin is. I receive the cure when I die to myself and live for Him.

Now if my EGO dies, it will leave a vacuum in my soul and that's dangerous. Something worse can fill that vacuum. This is why Paul says, "**I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.**" If someone is going to move into the house of my life, I want it to be Jesus. If someone is going to sit on the throne of my life and give direction, I want it to be Jesus. He created me, He saved me, He understands me, He knows what's best for me. He is the only one with the power to set me free.

Here is the key – if He is going to live in the house of my life, he has to have all of my life. He can't be in my church life but not my work life. He can't be in my personal life but not my family life. He can't be in my prayer life but not my social life. He can't be in my public life but not my secret private life that nobody sees. This is why my EGO has to die so He can be

Lord of every area. He's not just my Savior for the hereafter – He's my Lord for the here and now.

Paul says, “**The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God.**” This is every day of my life going forward. My life is under new management. I live the way Jesus lives. I forgive instead of hold grudges. I apologize instead of waiting for the other person. I let go of resentments. I stop judging others. I give up pride and practice humility. I work to restore relationships even if the other person is not interested. I live my life by Jesus' prayer: “Not my will but Thine be done.”

Now I'm going to let you in on a little secret. There are two ways to translate this verse. The first is “I live by faith **IN** the Son of God” This means I **TRUST** the Son of God. When you live by faith **IN** the Son of God, you trust Him to lead you the right way, give you the abundant life and save you for eternity. He is trustworthy. He won't let you fall. But Faith also means a **RELATIONSHIP**. That's the meaning of the second one. When Jesus comes to live in you, you have “the faith **OF** the Son of God” or “the relationship **OF** the Son to the Father.” You receive the same relationship Jesus has with His Father. If the Son of God lives in you, you become a beloved child of God the Father. This is your core identity. God created you to **BE** a child of God and a follower of Jesus.

Maybe you feel abandoned, isolated, rejected, unloved, abused. God the Father loves you. He can't stop loving you. He'll do anything to save you. He will never give up on you no matter how many times you fall. How can you be sure? Paul ends the verse: **I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.** You can invest your life in building the kingdom of me and it will take, take, take from you. Or you can open your life to Jesus who unconditionally loves you and gave His life for you. Discover your core identity.

This week we will lay to rest a dear saint and sister of Woodside: Cathy Mack. She will be buried beside her dear husband David. Cancer took so much from Cathy. Almost six years ago it took David from her. Then she was diagnosed with cancer. She fought courageously and persistently against it. She never gave up. When I visited David and then Cathy during their times of treatment, I was in awe of the way they calmly faced this crisis. You might expect, and can't blame, someone to turn away from God in such a storm. But that was not Cathy. The last time I spoke with her, I was in awe of the peace and serenity, the faith and hope she displayed. She said to me, “I feel very close to God. I feel his presence. His love for me. I even feel His joy.” How could she feel this way? Cathy knows she is a child of God and a disciple of Jesus. And nothing, not even cancer, can take that away. May it be so for you.