

The Who Behind The What

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[0 : 0 0] Well, good morning. It's been a fun service, hasn't it? How many of y'all enjoyed the young people leading us in worship today?

Wasn't that awesome? Yeah. Jessica Longley does an outstanding job with them, and we are grateful to every one of them who has a heart to serve the Lord and lead us in worship.

We have been in a series about new life, calling that a fresh beginning with Jesus. So much of this series, kind of a framework for it, I got from a pastor called Craig Groeschel up in Life Church in the Oklahoma City area.

And last week, well, we've been focusing on this passage for the last two weeks, 2 Corinthians 5, 17. Let's read it together off the screen, can we?

If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away, and see, the new has come.

[1 : 0 6] What an exciting, exciting thing. There are certain passages in the Bible that just are like a vitamin B12 shot for you. Sometimes the Bible is an accurate mirror that shows us a reflection of ourselves, our sinful selves.

Sometimes it reveals us and how weak we are in our sin. Then sometimes God just reminds us how great he is in spite of that, and says, listen, in me, you can get a fresh start.

You can get a fresh beginning. The new has come. So that's an encouraging word for our church for this season. Two weeks ago, we were in Isaiah 43 and 44, and we talked about this topic, God is doing a new thing.

God is doing what? A new thing. That's right. Just seeing if y'all were with me. Do you see it? That's the question. Do we see what God is doing? Well, we see it on Sunday mornings.

We see it with the young people up here leading us in worship. We see God doing something new, and oftentimes it begins with the younger generations, and we see that happening here with this just parade of young people coming through, giving their lives to Jesus, testimony in baptism.

[2 : 1 3] What an exciting season for our church. And then last week, we were in 1 Corinthians 9, and we talked about this. We need to stop trying and start what?

Training. What does that mean? We can try, try, try to change ourselves for the better. We can try, try, try to stop doing something that has been holding us back, some self-destructive habit, and yet oftentimes we fail, fail, fail continually.

And God wants us to stop trying in our own strength and start understanding that we are in training to be who he saved and called us to be.

So that's a little recap. And then this morning, we're going to talk about the who behind the what. The who behind the what. It's not a Dr. Seuss sermon, okay?

We're not in Whoville all of a sudden. The who behind the what. Would you take the word of God with me and go move forward to Proverbs.

[3 : 18] Proverbs 23. Proverbs 23. We've been in the New Testament a good bit. Today, we're going to touch into the Old Testament and begin in Proverbs chapter 23.

We'll bounce around a little bit in the scriptures, but we're going to read verse 7. While you're turning there, I want to leave this truth with you. Identity determines behavior.

That's what we mean when we say the who behind the what. Identity determines behavior. What do we mean by that? Let's break it down a little bit further.

Kind of our tagline for today. Ready? You do what you do because of what you think of you. When I heard this sermon, and this sermon series from Craig Urshel up in Life Church became a book that I'm in the process of reading.

And when I heard this phrase, it stuck with me. You do what you do because of what you think of you. It's true, isn't it? What we think of ourselves usually determines how we behave.

[4 : 31] If we think of ourselves as somebody important, then what do we act like? Y'all can talk. It's okay.

Somebody important. It wasn't a trick question. If we are down in the dumps about ourselves and we are depressed, what do we normally behave like? Somebody who's depressed, right?

Yeah, we're having a hard time. Sometimes we'll continue on in the very things that led us into that depression. We do what we do because of what we think of ourselves.

So that's kind of a principle that I hope we can take away today. Here comes Ella. I'm not trying to embarrass her, but let's give her a little clap. She just came back in.

Yeah. What a special day. I want to go a little bit into the nerd side of this.

[5 : 29] How many of y'all love science? Anybody? We got a few. All right. How many of y'all love philosophy? How many of y'all love the study of human behavior?

Okay, awesome. Then you're going to enjoy this next part. For the rest of y'all, just grin and bear it. Here we go. Dr. James March, a primer on decision making. James March taught at Stanford University for many years.

He kind of wrote the book, literally, not just this one, but several others, on making decisions. He was an expert in studying human behavior. Still alive today, but I don't think he's actively teaching anymore.

But he said this. He created this identity model of decision making. Three questions we ask ourselves, usually subconsciously. We say, who am I?

What kind of situation is this? And what would someone like me do in this situation? And usually that's how we arrive at doing the things that we end up doing.

[6 : 31] Is because in real time, hyper speed, we have calculated, our brains have calculated these three questions. Who am I?

What kind of situation am I in? What would someone like me do in this situation? And then we behave according to that. So it's really identity determines our behavior.

We do what we do because of what we think of us. You do what you do because of what you think of you. Proverbs 23, 7.

Let's read it together. Would you mind standing with me just this one time in honor of the reading of God's word? I'm reading this one from the New American Standard. I'll kind of jump back into the Christian Standard Bible for the remainder of the sermon today.

But I loved this particular translation and how it lays this out for us. So let's read it together on the screen if we can. Here we go. Ready? As he thinks within himself, so he is.

[7 : 36] Remain standing if you would. God, I pray that you would teach us from your word today. God, there's all kinds of psychology and self-help and self-help and all kinds of people out there that will try to worm their way inside our mind and show us the path that they think we should walk.

But God, we want to walk the path that you have laid out for us individually, in our homes, and in our church. So I pray that we would see ourselves as you see us.

That we would do what we do because of what you think of us, not because of what we think of ourselves. We'll give you all the glory in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated.

Thank you for standing. If you'll keep your Bible open there, we'll go back to this passage for a reminder. So if you'll keep a kind of keep a thumb note there, or if you have these little bookmarks, kind of stick one in there, Proverbs 23.

We'll jump back there throughout the sermon today. But we're going to bounce around to a couple of other scriptures. And we're looking, reminding ourselves of this new truth that many of us are kind of wrapping our heads around, like I was for the first time.

[8 : 46] You do what you do because of what you think of you. Trust me, there have been things I've been trying to shake my entire life. There have been bad habits I've been trying to shake my entire life.

There have been things that I'm not satisfied with about myself my entire life. And sometimes those things change over time. And then I unlock a new disappointment in myself.

Anybody else ever been there? Like I achieved a new level in this game. And here's, oh wow, you're bad at this too. Marriage is a wonderful thing.

And sometimes as you grow together and you enter into new circumstances or stages of life, all of a sudden you unlock new things. Like, oh wow, I didn't know that about you. And I'm not crazy about it, you know.

But we do what we do because of what we think of us. Now, what does the Bible have to say about this? We read in Proverbs 23, as we think within ourself, so we are.

[9 : 48] That is who we are. It's how we think within ourself. And that determines our actions. Let's look at 1 John. 1 John 3 and verse 1.

This is the key here. Ready? See what great love the Father has given us that we should be called God's children. Sometimes we stop right there.

But the next three words are so crucially important. And we are. God is telling us that there's a pivot. There's a mind shift.

We talked about that a little bit last week when we said we're training, not trying. There has to be a mental shift. It's right here in the scriptures. God says we are called God's children, but we're called God's children because we really are.

He says this is your new identity. This is now how you should view yourself, that you are God's children.

[10 : 47] God's children. So, when we go back to that identity model, right? Who am I? God's child. What kind of situation is this?

Doesn't matter. Three, what would someone like God's child do in this situation? That's got to be a mental shift that we get to.

So, we do what we do because of what we think of us, and we are the children of God. He doesn't just leave us that one verse. Colossians 3 and verse 12 is another reminder of who we are.

As God's, what does that say? Chosen ones. Wow. Wow. We're not just his children. He chose us to be his children.

He handpicked us. He said, I want you, and I want you, and I want you to be my child. So, as God's chosen ones, holy and dearly loved, put on compassion, kindness, humility.

[11 : 53] He starts getting into this long list of behavior, of things that we should do. But why should we do those things? It's because he's telling us this is your new identity.

How you think about yourself is going to determine your behavior. So, if you start behaving how I think of you, then you'll start looking like a child of God, like my chosen one.

You do what you do because of what you think of you. Let's say this together, can we? Ready? You do what you do because of what you think of you.

There you go. Sometimes it helps us to remember those things. Number one, you'll run out of motivation. Anybody ever run out of motivation before?

Thank you. We got an honest one real quick. She was just like, yep, me, right here. You and me both. I think just about everybody in this room has undertaken a task that at some point you ran out of motivation for.

[13 : 01] Whether you just realized it really wasn't worth doing or it just got too hard. Whatever it was, you ran out of motivation at some point. I'm telling you. I'm telling you that will continue to happen in your life unless you change the way you think about yourself.

I will continue to run out of motivation when I continue to see myself the way I've always seen me. What's the definition of insanity?

Thank you. All I could think was idiocy. And I'm like, I'm not trying to be that mean. I'm not calling us all idiots. Just to whoever it applies. But anyway, what's the definition of insanity?

Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results, right? But we do that, don't we? And so time and time again, we try often the same things over and over again.

And our motivation tank, I think, shrinks a little bit each time. And each time we try it, maybe for the 12th time, that motivation is pretty low.

[14 : 15] We think at that moment there's that initial spike. This time it's different, man. I heard an inspiring speech, and so this time it's going to be. I heard a song that really broke through to me.

Any of y'all ever heard this song? It came out, I don't know, 10 years ago. This is my fight song. Take back my life song. Yeah, so it's energized so many people to jump in and take their life back and say, I got this this time.

And then what happens when that buzz wears off? You run out of motivation again, right? What was that song that really got me fired up? I got to go listen to it again. And it doesn't quite work as effectively the next time.

We run out of motivation. Secondly, we run out of willpower. We run out of willpower. Y'all, I can preach to you about this stuff because I know this in my own life, okay?

I'm telling you, I run out of willpower, and y'all do too. Now, the thing that you struggle with might be different than the thing that I struggle with, but we all have our struggles.

[15 : 19] We're all imperfect people, and we all run out of motivation, and we all run out of willpower. Sometimes you get tired. You get physically tired. And your willpower is the strongest when you're tired, right?

No, it's not. Sometimes you're just tired of fighting. Sometimes you're emotionally drained. Because maybe there's toxic presences in your life that are draining you, whether it's a person or a habit.

Maybe you stay up too late. Maybe you get up too early. Maybe you burn the candle at both ends. And God talks all throughout the Bible about rest.

And maybe you need to rearrange your schedule to get more rest so you can think more clearly. You can have more time to dedicate to diving into the Lord of God and prayer, and you can re-energize your soul.

Whatever it is for you that's making you run out of willpower, that's not helping you. That's driving you to an early grave.

[16 : 26] Whether it's physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, death will be the result. But you do those things because of what you think of yourself.

Like, I'm the kind of person that stays up late. I'm the kind of person that's on my phone for an hour as I fall asleep. I'm the kind of person that sneaks around and looks at things on the Internet that I wouldn't want anybody else to know about.

I'm the kind of person that is short with my family. You've developed these habits over time, and so now that has become the way you think about yourself.

You don't like it. Trust me. The things that I know are my weaknesses, I don't like those about myself. I wish those were different. Say, well, Pastor, you're the pastor, so you must not have any weaknesses.

You must not have any flaws. You've got great hair, as Mr. Bachman said earlier. I do believe that's the first time I've ever been told that in my life. So, you are the man.

[17 : 31] Anyway. By the way, my wife gave me my haircut, so there you go. All props to her. But the things that y'all don't see about me, you wouldn't like those either.

My wife doesn't like them. I don't like them. Y'all wouldn't like them either. And if we put a magnifying glass on any of your lives, there'd be all sorts of unattractive things about us that come to the service, wouldn't there?

And we've tried to fix them. We've gone for years trying to get better, and maybe you get better in one area, and then, like we said, another fault pops up.

Because we are wrapped in sinful flesh, and there's a battle going on between the flesh and the spirit, our sin pulling us down that we're still faced with. We're still carrying, even though Jesus gave us the freedom, but we're still wrapped in this body.

And so, we don't always exercise that freedom. We don't always walk in that freedom that we have in Christ. And we run out of willpower sometimes. We get tired in the fight. What does the Bible say? Don't grow weary in doing good.

[18 : 43] Don't grow weary in well-doing. Don't get tired in doing good. Well, how? How do you not get tired? You run out of motivation.

You run out of willpower. How do you ever change? Mark 10, 27. Gives us the answer. With man and woman, it is impossible.

You can't. But not with God. Because all things are possible with God. What does all mean? Everything.

Everybody, right? My dad had a very distinctive definition of all. I heard this growing up. My dad's right over here.

My mom and dad. Can y'all wave? Everybody looking. There's my parents. There you go. My dad would say, all means there ain't nothing left. There ain't nothing left.

[19 : 50] All things are possible with God. Now, y'all, we're not going to get up here and preach health and wealth, gospel, and prosperity, and God's going to give you everything you ever ask for.

Because that is absolutely not in the book. But all things are possible. There's nothing that's too hard for God.

If God wants to give you something, you can, you will. If God thinks you should have something, you will have it. If God wants to help you break through something, you can do it through Him.

With man, this is impossible. But not with God. Because all things are possible with God. Number three. God will complete His work in you.

God will complete His work in me someday. He's taken me a long ways, y'all. From when I was 15, to when I was 18, to 21, to 25, to 30, to 33, to 37, to now 39, and I'm about to hit 40.

[20 : 56] Except I'm just 39 and holding for a while. That journey has been drastic. It has been dramatic change in my life.

There's been... My mom's down here. She says, that's right. Trust me, I know. It sure has. Y'all, there have been sometimes seasons where that change happens fast. And sometimes that season where it slows down over time.

But God will complete His work in you. How do we know this? Because Philippians 1, 6 tells us. I am sure of this. I'm sure of this.

That He who started the good work in you... Remember, it was God who started this whole thing. He will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

That's the day we all get to go home to heaven. But until that day, God started this good work and God will finish it. He will carry it on in your life. So don't get discouraged.

[21 : 53] Don't get depressed that you feel like you've run out of willpower. You feel like you've run out of motivation. But God hasn't. Amen? Amen. Thank you, guys.

That was good. And girl, we're talking about new life. A fresh beginning with Jesus. Y'all, there's no reason for a Christian to lose hope.

When we feel like we've lost hope, in reality, it's because we're starving. In reality, it's because we're thirsty. And we haven't been drinking from the Jesus well.

We haven't been walking on the Jesus path. Because every day, His mercies are new. Every day, His love is fresh.

Every day, there's hope for a new beginning with Jesus. So I want to leave you with this. We've been going over it, man, since, what, December? We kind of started reminding all of this truth.

[22 : 54] Romans 12 and verse 2. Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you what? Think. That's what it's about.

God has to change our minds. He's got to change the way we think about us. Change the way we think about who we are.

We see ourselves in a false way. We see an inaccurate view of who we are.

We think we know ourselves the best. But the reality is, I'm 39 years in of deceiving myself. Some of you are significantly more than that.

But we deceive ourselves every day. We lie to ourselves every day. We try to make ourselves feel better. Sometimes, we try to make ourselves feel worse.

[23 : 59] God must transform us by changing the way we think. So let's all try to do that, okay? It's a trick question. It's a trick question.

We're not trying. We're training. Here we go. We are training to be who God says we are. We're not going to change this overnight. All of a sudden, we're not going to wake up tomorrow morning at 6 a.m.

or whenever you get up and say, Man, it's going to be a great day today because I am who God says I am. Now, if you do that, I want to hear about it. I want a text message from you tomorrow morning at 6 a.m.

if you do that, okay? Y'all are going to be blowing up my phone. Here we go. We are not trying to all of a sudden dramatically become this new person. We are in training.

There's going to be ups. There's going to be downs. But over time, God is training us to be who he says we are. And then we will do what we think we should do.

[25 : 01] Why? Because we think of ourselves how he thinks of us. You do what you do because of what you think of you. Let's look at that again.

Let's say it together. Can we? Ready? You do what you do because of what you think of you. There's a song that says this very effectively.

June, would you mind coming up and you can go ahead and start playing the introduction to it while I talk about it to the folks. This song says, I am who you say I am. That's a wonderful reminder.

Y'all, you might have somebody in your life who wears you down. Might be yourself. Might be your spouse. Might be your kids. Might be a parent.

Might be a neighbor. Might be an employee. Might be somebody who you just crossed paths with. In today's world, they might call it negative energy or something like that.

[26 : 02] But whatever it is, it just brings you down. Sometimes it might just ruin the rest of our day. God says, listen, you have got to stop letting everyone else determine who you are.

You have got to stop listening to all these voices that are teaching you something that's contrary. It's opposite to what I'm trying to teach you. You are who I say you are.

Because if you're not, then you're lost in your sins and you're going to hell. But if you are my child, then you're saved.

Then you're rescued. Then you're free. Then you have hope. And you are who now I say you are. You are valued. You are important. You are worthy.

You are holy. You are righteous. And so now you do what you do because of who I'm teaching you that you now are.

[27 : 08] It's going to be a lifelong walk. We're training. We're trending for this. But it's a mind shift that we all individually and together as a church must experience.

What does that look like for our church? We do what we do because this is who we've always been. What about who God wants us to be now? What are the things that God wants our church to do now?

Are we going to be the church that did the things, that does the things now that God wanted us to do in 1975? Are we going to do the things now that God wants us to do in 2024 and 2025?

What does God want us to be now? We do what we do as a church because of what we think of us. Imagine what could be if first package church of Henrietta, Texas.

And that's not this building, is it? We don't just go to church. We are the church. Going back to the fall, okay? Some of you who have been around a little while. What would it be?

[28 : 13] What would it be like if our church said, I am a child of God? I am chosen, not forsaken. I am who he says I am.

What kind of impact could be made on your family? What kind of impact could be made on the school district? What kind of impact could be made at the community center? What kind of impact could be made in the neighborhoods?

Through the internet, as we call loved ones, we message each other, as we live our lives outside and online, what kind of impact, what kind of difference would be made if we see ourselves as God sees us?

Let's sing this song together, can we? I think we've got the words on the screen. If y'all can jump ahead to that one. Who am I that the highest king would welcome me?

I was lost, but he brought me in. Oh, his love for me. Would y'all mind joining me in standing if you can? Let's look up together. Let's sing this song together.

[29 : 17] If you need to take a moment to come pray at this altar, if you want to sit back down and just pray by yourself, whatever you need to do at this moment, or if you just want to lift your voice and join us in singing, let's sing this together.

Who am I that the highest king would welcome me? I was lost. I was lost.

And he brought me in. He is unworthy. He is unworthy. Sing it out. Think about these words.

I'm a child of God. Yes, I am. Free at last, he has ransomed his grace.

This is what I want. My heart is a saint. Jesus, I am. I am. Yes, I am.

[30 : 22] I am. Yes, I am. The sun sets me. Oh, I see. I am. I am.

I am. I am. I am. I am. I am. I am. I am. I am. In my pocket. Yes, I am. There's a place for me.

Yes, I am. Yes, I am. Wait for me. I am. I am. I am. Yes, I am. Yes, I am. Watch this.

I am chosen, not forsaken. I am. I am. I am. I am. I am. You are for me.

Not against me. I am. I am. I am. Sing that again, church. I am chosen, not forsaken. I am.

[31 : 19] I am. I am. I am. I am. I am. I am. I am. I am. I am. I am. I am.

I am. I am. I am. You say I am. Now, think about these words as we sing this story. It's one last time together. Ready? Do the sun set screen.

Holy spring in me. I'm a child of God. Yes, I am.

There's a place for me. In my Father's house, there's a place for me. I'm a child of God.

Yes, I am. Now, we believe that. Proclaim that. Sometimes we just have to speak that out there because you have spoken that over us through your word.

[32 : 26] That resonates with what your Holy Spirit inside of us is teaching us. Training us every day. That is the truth. That we've got to embrace.

I'm not the old man. I'm not the old woman. I'm not the old guy. I'm not the old girl. I am new. I am a new creation. I get a fresh beginning with you.

So I will do what I do because of what you think I do. Teach us what that means for us.

For our church. What that means about tomorrow morning. About lunchtime. About the evening. About when we go to bed. When we wake up. Teach us what it looks like.

To be a chosen, free, forgiven child of God. Child of God. We'll give you all the glory for you.

[33 : 24] God, if there's somebody here that doesn't know you as their savior. I pray that you would give them the strength. Give them the courage. To come back when this service closes. Grab me by the arm and just say, hey, I'd like to know more about becoming a child of God.

Let them not walk out these doors without settling that most important thing. Church, I'm going to talk to you right now. If that's you. If that's what I just said. If that's somebody. If there's somebody in this house who doesn't know.

100% certain that God is your father. That you are a child of God. Would you slip your hand up now? And I'd like to talk to you after the service. I'd like to pray for you. Thank you.

Let me ask this follow up question. How many of you would say God's working on my heart? Maybe I've been seeing myself through my deceitful eyes instead of how God sees me.

Would you slip your hand up and I'll pray for you as well. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. You can put them down. Thank you. Thank you. God, you know every situation. You know every heart.

[34 : 26] You know what's going on. You know the burdens we've been carrying. You know the struggles we've been carrying with us. God, lift those burdens. Train us in your steps.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Y'all, thank you so much for being here this morning. Were you blessed by the service today? I know I was.

I know I was. We've got more baptisms coming up next week for those of you, those who couldn't be here today. And we'll see a little recap video of Ella's baptism. But we've got more lined up.

So don't miss a Sunday. You're going to miss something awesome. Okay. But if you do have to miss, be sure and go back and watch online to see what God's doing in our church. Any announcements for tonight?

We've got Bible study at 6 p.m. for those who attend that Sunday night Bible study. But be sure to go out and this week, if you could, go out and try to find somebody, maybe who used to come and hasn't in a while.

[35 : 26] And just let them know God's doing some cool things in our church. And maybe come back and see it. And somebody who maybe hasn't come before, but you think maybe should, go out and just give them a warm invitation. And it'll take some time, but we want to see God continue to bring people in to see what he's doing here.

I love y'all. Love being your pastor. Let's pray together. God, thank you so much for bringing us to this morning. Pray that you would go with us as we go out these doors. Let us be your hands and feet, your voice, your eyes, your ears in this community.

And show the kind of love and grace and mercy and truth that this community needs. We'll give you the glory for it in Jesus name. Amen. See y'all next week.