

January 3, 2021 James Gallaher Mistaken Identity
Series: Royal Priests. Our Identity. Our Calling.

It's been a difficult year... seek encouragement in **Philippians 4**. Remember this... When in a fix, **Philippians 4:6!**

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Scripture gives us direction on what to do with our difficulties - pray. Prayer is communicating with God and supplication is giving it to Him over and over until the burden is removed. Supplication means to keep taking it to the one who will bear it completely. What is your request to God for this year? Let your request be made known as He hears the cries of His people. Request His movement with thanksgiving. When we bring requests to God with thanksgiving for who He is, His grace, His gifts, His mercy, God promises peace.

What are you asking God for this year? an end to something? a beginning? the restoration of a relationship? the healing of a situation? the establishment of something new? Come with our requests, boldly, to His throne, with thanksgiving.

Do we question what God is saying to us or wonder if it's our own desires? Do we even ask God what He wants us to do? Do we have mistaken identity in the church? Mistaken identities happen and sometimes we lack knowing our identity. It is hard to do what we are called to when we don't know who we are. Identity gives us the confidence to do what we are called to do. Let's discover our identity in the Kingdom of God.

***1 Peter 2:9-10** But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

As the church grew in the first century, the Romans persecuted the church calling them a radical group. Peter told the church they could find identity in their unity and relationships. If we try to build our identity outside the context of relationships, it will create an inadequacy in us that cannot be filled with hard work or good effort.

Our vertical relationship with God is primary but can leave us feeling alone if we are without relationships. When our identity is separated from relationships, it provides inadequacy and insufficiency in our lives. It leaves a longing for more.

Increasing difficulties with families, marriages, children, people, or businesses are not a surprise as we become isolated from each other. This season of limited connection grows an emptiness, an absence of direction, and absences of belonging.

The beginning of identity... **Genesis 1:26-27** Then God said, "Let Us make mankind in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the livestock and over all the earth, and over every crawling thing that crawls on the earth." So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Did you find the oneness of God in those verses? Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – “Let us...”. The very nature of creation was birthed out of a loving relationship within the Godhead.

Adam had a perfect relationship with God but God points to a problem - man was alone. Relationship has to be a part of people since they were created in the image of who God is. **Genesis 2:18** *And the Lord God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.”* Identity is not apart from relationships. When relationships are absent in our lives, it makes us absent of our true identity as we are not being able to reflect our identity as His image.

The number one characteristic of our identity is image-bearer of the King. We are the King's image-bearer! We represent that foremost in relationships. If we are going to have an identity, it has to be based first on relationships. Do we neglect relationships with others? It will create a longing. Being an image-bearer requires relationships around us.

1 Peter 2:9 *But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.*

We can't be those things (a people, a race, a nation) on our own. Community validates who we are.

That we may proclaim the excellencies of Him! When we are together with others, we proclaim the excellence of Christ. **Acts 2** talks about the community of believers...*And all the believers were together and had all things in common; and they would sell their property and possessions and share them with all, to the extent that anyone had need.* This statement might look like a cult without relationships, but this community began with relationships. We were made for community - to reflect the most beautiful relationship ever - Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Then we find identity in community. Community creates belonging, builds up, validates, edifies, gives identity to the lost, gives value to broken places, gives hope to empty days, brings comfort.

We can withhold ourselves from those close to us; we most likely are withholding from others as well. God wants to heal relationships. He wants community for us. What area have you guarded from community? Community takes effort, especially now. Identity begins as we recognize that we were created for relationships. We must be intentional, step out of our comfort, reach out, engage, take a risk. Take the step!

Reflect today:

How do you find encouragement in these difficult days?

How does our identity reflect in relationships?

What area and community does God want to build in our lives?