

“The Freedom of Identity” 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

INTRODUCTION

From a young age, we learn to connect applause with performance. But when the applause fades and the crowd disappears, a lingering question remains: “Who am I?” Whether you’re a standout athlete or a stay-at-home mom navigating an empty nest, we all reach a point where we ask, “Who am I beyond what I do?”

In 1 Corinthians, Paul addresses the church in Corinth, calling out the division that had taken root because they had become a celebrity driven church. Whenever we reduce our identity in Christ to the temporary labels of this world, division is inevitable. Paul’s prescription to this body of believers is the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul reminds us that we are servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. A steward manages what belongs to someone else, and everything in our lives – our gifts, roles, and resources – belongs to God. When our identity is situated in Christ, there is freedom. If criticism easily shakes us, we are likely bound by what people think. Paul even shows that he is free from his own opinion of himself. That internal voice, our inner lawyer, constantly critiques and condemns, but it’s not the final authority.

If you are in Christ, you are preapproved – not because of anything you’ve done, but because of the finished work of Christ. Instead of being consumed by how people see us today, we should set our eyes on the day we stand before God and receive our true reward.

GETTING STARTED

1. What is one activity or role in your life that has shaped how you see yourself?
2. What are ways society teaches us to find our identity in what we do rather than who we are?

LET’S GET PERSONAL

1. Have you ever struggled with placing your identity in something temporary rather than in Christ?
2. What are some “inner lawyer” thoughts that tend to criticize or condemn you?

3. How do the opinions of others impact the way you see yourself?

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

1. What is one practical way you can shift your focus from worldly approval to God's approval this week?
2. What lies do you need to replace with God's truth? Spend time reading what God says about you this week.
3. Want to dig deeper? Take a look at the following passages: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17, Matthew 3:17, and Galatians 1:10.

RENEW YOUR MIND

"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one's praise will come from God."

1 Corinthians 4:5