



WEEK 3 - BELOVED

CHECK-IN

How are you? Where have you seen God working in your life in the last week? And... today, we'll talk about a verse Pastor Mike claimed he would tattoo on his arm... if he could ever convince himself to commit to it. How about you? If you're comfortable sharing, what's your favorite tattoo? If you don't have one, what would you get?

OPENING PRAYER

God of Creation, thank you for loving us, unconditionally, just as we are...may we be so humble as to love others the same way.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to week 3 of our series, "BE", where we have been exploring four hurdles that prevent us from fully committing to following Christ. We spent the last 3 months learning what it means

to be a follower of Christ, (loving boldly, serving joyfully, and leading courageously,) but it left us with the question, “who will you BE?” Will you take on the role that God has asked you to play? Will you fully commit to following Christ, or will you be lukewarm, letting other things get in the way? Each week, we’ve explored a question that has become a roadblock to our faith, and the corresponding “BE” that is the answer. Today, we’ll look at another issue many of us struggle with, and how it hampers our faith... and the solution? For that, we have to go back to the very beginning of our existence, the spark of Creation. But first...

Setup Question: Last week, we talked about our second “BE”... BElonging. And we were challenged to embrace the “special work” to which God calls us. Part of that challenge was to invite someone to worship or Connect Group, to share this incredible faith community we’ve built. Were you able to do that? Why or why not?

SETUP

Let’s recap. We began week one with the first hurdle to our faith, “Can I trust God?” Simply, if we trusted God with our lives, many of our other struggles would fall in place. And a Scripture from Deuteronomy reminded us that we have a *personal* God who has gone ahead of us to fight our battles. Which gave us our first “BE”...

BELIEVE

Believe that The Almighty Creator of the Universe is going ahead of you to personally fight for you and will never fail. Then last week, we

looked at the second stumbling block to our faith, “are we in this alone?” Even though we have a *God* who fights for us, we still have a built-in need for *human* companionship on the journey. And so, one of the most disheartening hurdles to our faith comes when we think we are in this fight alone. Therefore, God gave us a readymade solution... The Church. And through a community of faith, we can...

BELONG

As we celebrated our 6th Anniversary, we were reminded that we have a group of individuals who love us, support us, and walk with us through our struggles.

Today, we’ll look at one of the most difficult issues facing people today, a question that if left unanswered, can send us down many, many wrong paths, looking for answers in unfulfilling places. That question is this...

AM I ENOUGH?

Foundational to our very being is the yearning to know we have value. And so, we can’t help but ask this question, “Am I enough? Do I have worth?”

Question 1: Without turning this into too much of a therapy session, is this a question you struggle with? How has it impacted your faith? (Disclaimer: This is a sensitive topic for many, so answer only as you feel comfortable. If you deal with this deeply, please talk to Pastor Mike about how a good counselor can help!)

SCRIPTURE

So, how do we as Christians respond to this question? Well, Ephesians tells us that “We are God’s *masterpiece*.” (2:10 NLT, and Pastor Mike’s tattoo candidate.) And a masterpiece has to be created. Now, creation comes in a few steps. First, the creator has to have an idea, a vision. Then, once you have the inspiration, there has to be the execution. The thing’s gotta get made. So, if we are God’s masterpiece, let’s go back to the creation of that work of art.

Read Genesis, chapter 1, verses 26 through 31.

God has the idea for what He wants to make, and then He does it. This Scripture is the “genesis,” or the vision/execution, of God’s masterpiece... us!

Question 2: This is likely a Scripture you’ve come across before. But, does it change if you view it in the context of an artist making a masterpiece? What does this Scripture say to you about your value? Does anything else stand out?

REFLECTION

“Am I enough?” Let’s explore how this story answers that question. Go back to verse 26, “**God said, “Let us make human beings in our image,”** (v.26) Now, we don’t know exactly who God is talking to there. Some theologians have speculated that this was the first recognition of the Trinity, (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit = “us”), or

perhaps God was speaking to the angels. Either way, what we see here is the idea, the inspiration. When you're looking for inspiration to create something, you want to create cool stuff that resembles what you already know, like painting a mountain landscape that moved you or a panoramic sunset that brought you peace. And that's exactly what we see here. When God sat down to make this masterpiece, *this* was the vision, the idea, the spark of inspiration. Whether the "us" here was the Trinity, Godself, or the angels... doesn't matter... God wanted to create something akin to the incredible things He already knew. And thus, we were made in the image of God, a reflection of the incredible thing God wanted to recreate. Every one of us carries this likeness to our Creator within us. And if every one of us carries this reflection of the Divine, every one of us is valuable. You were made in the likeness of something amazing.

Question 3: What makes it difficult to see yourself made in the image of God? What prevents you from recognizing The Divine within you?

So, first, you are made in the image of God and therefore have worth. Now, if that weren't enough on its own, God puts a little exclamation point on the end of the paragraph. Look at verse 31. **"Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!"** (v.31 NLT) If we back up a bit, we find something incredibly powerful in just one word. See, in Genesis, the creation of humans happens on the 6th day. Up to this point, God has made a lot of things, and each

time, the Bible tells us, God saw that it was “good”. But when we get to day 6 and God creates humans, verse 31 says, “he saw that it was *very good*.” This is the first time God calls any of creation *very good*. It’s the first appearance of the Hebrew word “meod,” which means something “extra,” something above and beyond. (Yes, God called us “extra.”) A better translation, though, might be, “exceedingly.” That is, God looked out over our Universe, down to our little blue dot, with all that He had created, saw our little human selves, and called us *exceedingly good*! When God created you in His image, after the likeness of The Divine, He steps back, looks at this work of art and calls you exceedingly good. Not only do you bear the image of God, not only do you carry within you the spark of inspiration of the Divine, but you are a masterpiece of the Creator, one the Creator himself deemed *exceedingly good*.

“But I know me... I see my flaws, I see the errant brushstrokes, I see the mistakes and the letdowns and the failures. If I’m God’s masterpiece, the dude’s a horrible painter,” you might respond. But that’s where you’re wrong. Even with what *you* perceive to be flaws, errors, failures, or sin, you are not junk. You are not valueless. You are not without worth. Even with all the misplaced brushstrokes you think you have, you have been deemed exceedingly good. What this tells us is, not only do you have value... you are *more* than enough... you are...

BELOVED

It goes beyond just having worth. It's more than that. You are beloved. Not only are you a masterpiece, you're a creation that God stood back from and went, "man, I'm good!" You are *more* than enough. You're *more* than worthy. You are BEloved.

Question 4: Do you feel "Beloved"? Why or why not? What would make it possible for you to see yourself that way?

CLOSING

Do not let this be a stumbling block to your faith. Fight against the negative voices that tell you, "you are not enough." It can take a lot. The fight can take years, (and a lot of therapy,) to ever believe you are worthy, that you are beloved. But if you have this question in your mind, if you carry this burden in your heart, go back and reread this story from the Bible, the creation of the masterpiece that is you. Take comfort in knowing that after creating you, God looked down, saw what He created, and despite what you think are flaws and failure and sin and shame, He called you exceedingly good.

**Take some time to share prayer requests or celebrations
and close in prayer.**