



FINDING IDENTITY IN CHRIST

WEEK FIVE - PEACE

CHECK-IN

How are you? Where have you seen Christ working in your life in the last week? And... how badly does your team's performance affect your emotional state? Do you brush it off and move on, or does a bad loss or season ruin your day... and subsequently the day of everyone else?

OPENING PRAYER

Prince of Peace, help us to set aside our worry and anxiety and simply rest in you.

INTRODUCTION

Today, we wrap up our series on the elements of our faith, those things that make up our identity in Christ. We started 5 weeks ago with a question, "what are the benefits, what do we get from our

relationship with God?” And since then, we’ve covered a lot of ground. Our faith gives us *strength* that leads to hope, *connections* that mean we are not alone, *meaning* that gives our lives purpose and richness, and *satisfaction* knowing that we are children of God. (Go back and watch those reflections and work through those reflection guides if you missed any.) But all of those things contribute to one final, overarching element of our identity in Christ, one that sums it all up. But we’ll get to that. First...

Setup Question: Where are you most *still*? When in your life do things get quiet or calm or restful? What’s the situation where you are able to distance yourself from the noise and craziness of life? Where do you find stillness?

SCRIPTURE

All those answers are great. But the problem with them is... you can’t always be there. You can’t always be on a walk through the woods or laying in bed before sleep. (Well, you can... but that could create a whole list of other problems.) So, what do we do? Well, for that, we look to one final element of our identity in Christ. And for that, we turn to the words of Jesus. Here’s your setup. The night before Jesus was going to give his life for us, he spends the evening telling his followers all the things he wants them to remember most. In fact, he touches on everything we’ve talked about to this point, strength and connection and meaning and satisfaction in life. And then he ties them all together when he says this...

Read John, chapter 14, verse 27.

This was so important, it was one of the last things Jesus said to his followers. And it sums up everything we've talked about to this point in this series.

Question 1: What stands out to you about this scripture? If you were in the room listening to some of Jesus's last words, how would you have felt hearing about this gift of peace?

REFLECTION

Each week, we've identified an issue universal to our human experience and an element of our identity in Christ that addresses that issue. Strength countered struggle. Connection countered loneliness. Meaning countered nihilism. Satisfaction countered discontentment. All of these issues lead to one major issue... *anxiety*. Now, we aren't talking about the medical definition of anxiety. Clinical anxiety is something else to be addressed with your physician and therapist. The anxiety we're talking about comes from all the things that keep us up at night... the things that cause us worry. Will you be able to pay rent on the next paycheck? How will you address the fight you and your significant other had? Can you put up with your boss one more day? How will you raise your kids into contributing members of society? What is the plan for your life? Will the Cardinals ever get a decent pitching staff? You know, the important stuff. In spiritual terms, it's all

the things in life that cause our hearts and minds and souls to be disquieted.

Question 2: What do you worry about the most? What causes you sleepless nights and anxious days? Work? Relationships? The remaining schedule of the Chicago Bears? Discuss.

We said that our identity in Christ counters the issue at hand. So, what counters this anxiety? Jesus said it in the scripture, and phrases it in a beautiful way. He said he's leaving us with a gift, the gift of...

 PEACE

What counters the anxiety and worry and stress and disquietude in our lives? *Peace*. And where does this peace come from? Well, first, Jesus reminds us that “this is a gift that the world cannot give.” (v27) That’s why this relationship with Christ, our identity in Christ, is so important, and why we should never hesitate to share our faith with someone. The peace we receive from Christ can’t be found anywhere else in our world, and is therefore a gift the world is desperate for. We as individuals, the people around us who are struggling, the world as a whole, need this peace found in an identity in Christ. And what specifically about our relationship with Christ brings this peace? That’s the good news... it’s everything that we’ve talked about to this point. The peace of mind we receive from Christ comes from the *strength* in the struggle that leads to hope, because through Christ we know that we have a God who holds our future in the palm of His hand. It

comes from the *connections* we find in our faith communities and a God who will walk with us through everything we endure. The peace of heart we receive from Christ comes from the depth of *meaning* we see in our lives through the beautiful richness and worth we find in a life to the full, as Jesus said. It comes from the *satisfaction* we feel in knowing that we are loved because we are children of God, and nothing can ever take that away. All these things put together allow us to sit back, look at our lives, and go, “with all those things going for me, maybe I don’t have to worry quite so much.” Our identity in Christ brings us peace.

Question 3: Which of the 4 elements of our identity we’ve discussed to this point do you identify with? Which come easiest and with which do you struggle most? Which would you *like* to have more of, that would contribute to greater peace in your life?

CLOSING

Jesus closes this scripture by giving us the result of his gift of peace. That is, when we have the peace of mind and heart we find in our identity in Christ, he says you won’t be “troubled or afraid.” (v27, NLT) So, whatever you’re struggling with, whatever is keeping you up at night, whatever is causing you worry and anxiety, give it over to God, and pray for the peace of Christ to wash over you. Because when you lean into your identity in Christ, when you hold high that relationship through faith, the more this peace soaks into your soul, and the less and less you are troubled and afraid.

So, to wrap up our series, our endzone celebration, as it were... the elements of our identity in Christ, the benefits we receive through our faith, are gifts. Strength that leads to hope. Connections that mean we're not alone. Meaning that offers us direction. And satisfaction in knowing we are God's children. All these come together to offer us a gift. That is, through our identity in Christ, we have been given a gift... the gift of peace.

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