

My Identity is in Christ

“James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings.” – James 1:1

Jesus’ brother, James, starts his epistle to us in utmost humility. He does not give himself the title of Jesus’ brother, even though that would be factual. He instead assumes the mantle of servant. He could have written to the churches from a position of authority and power, but instead exalts the full authority of God. I am a slave, who says, goes, and does only what my Master (the Lord Jesus) commands me to do. Very clearly he makes it known that when we think about James, we should be thinking about him only in regards to the relation that he had with his Lord. James’ identity was found solely in Jesus Christ.

This past week has been a real challenge for me, and it has shown me how much I find my identity, not in Christ, but in what I do. For the first time in years I didn’t prepare a sermon or teach a Bible study or Sunday School class, and it made me feel a little weak to be honest. Instead of being at preparing for Sunday Morning, I have been home taking care of kids. My wife works in health care, so she is obviously required to work right now, and it left me with the job of caring for my 3-, 5-, and 7-year-old girls.

A doctor friend of mine once told me that he goes to work to relax and has to pump himself up to go home and feed his kids and put them to bed. Having children, I knew exactly what he meant. Work is controlled in a lot of ways. There is a normal rhythm, an ebb and flow to the week that is organized and brings real comfort. Home is chaos. There is always someone crying in my house. The girls argue and bicker. They complain about dinner and pout when they are forced to eat it. Putting them to bed, as comedian Jim Gaffigan once said, is like a hostage situation in reverse, “I will give you anything if you just stay in there.” I love my girls and would do anything for them, but meal times and bed times...

This week I wanted to be at work, but my Master, who directs and commands, had something different for me. This week, and for the next who knows how long, He has called me to be at home and make lunches, teach math, do crafts, blow bubbles, and draw on the front steps with pink sidewalk chalk. It’s not what I chose, but it’s what He chose, and He is King. My real job this week is to submit to His will and to do it the best of my ability to the glory of His Name.

I should say that there have been some incredibly sweet moments this week. As a family we have been doing devotions every day. My daughters have blessed me immensely with their insight and understanding. After devotions, every day my daughters have prayed together, even praying about the specific things we were learning in our devotion time. In the evenings we have been doing family worship. I have pulled out my guitar and we have sung songs that we play in Sunday School, hymns, and worship songs that we sing in the sanctuary. It has been incredible to

watch my girls grow in grace and the knowledge of Jesus. It has also been a blessing to serve my wife. She has come home tired and emotional most days. I have been able to serve her by cooking, doing the dishes, and keeping the house clean (a bit...). MY problem has not been the work, it's been my attitude.

Some thoughts on how we as a family have "survived" the week:

1. Elementary teachers all should make a million dollars a year.
2. We have tried to get on a schedule and keep it. Having some predictable and regularly changing activities has been incredibly helpful to pass the hours of the day without resorting to endlessly watching TV. Check out the daily schedule we made on the family resources page.
3. Being outside has been wonderful. Even though we had a couple of days that were a little rainy, going on walks to buy produce at the farmers market or just playing in the front yard has been great for both the girls and me. We have been trying to get outside (while still observing social distancing) at least twice a day.
4. Read, Pray, Sing. The Lord has been wonderfully present in both my personal quiet time and our family devotions.
5. Do what I can, when I can. Even though I haven't been in the church building, I have still been trying to do as much for the congregation as possible. The Children's Ministry staff and I have been writing devotionals, calling folks from the Church, emailing, etc. As Pastor Gil said at one of our meetings, "The building is closed, but the Church is open." This might be the same for you with your work. When I get those moments to text, email, or write, I take full advantage of them. (For instance, I am writing this at 8 o'clock at night - oh sweet, sweet silence). DO the same for your work in whatever capacity you can.
6. You might have been completely shut down from your regular work. Ok, what has God given you to do this coming week instead? Do it to the best of your ability to the glory of His Name.

I am a bondservant of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. My identity is found in Him. Even though I was surprised by the events of the world right now, He was not! He has called us to be about His work, whatever that might be.

Please know that I am praying for all of the families of Calvary Philly, and the Children's Ministry is doing our best to serve you during this time.

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