

Who am I? There are different ways that I could describe myself. I could use my name, or my occupation, or where I live, or my stature. But if these things would change, would I still be me? I read this — “Try as we might, by our appearance, by our performance or by our social status, to find validation for a sense of being somebody, we always fall short of measuring up. Whatever pinnacle of identity we achieve soon crumbles under the opposition or criticism we are sure to experience. Fear or anxiety is the byproduct of living in a world where I must perform to be OK.” So I ask myself this question, “Do I matter?”

Scripture reading: **Romans 8:12-17**

You can see the main statement that pertains to our subject for this month in verse 15 — “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear . . .” It’s the language of a dictator who enslaves and causes the mindset that, “I don’t matter unless I do this, or say that, or perform in this way.” The root word comes from our word for phobia, and it can be summarized as the hidden fear of failing. It is associated with the consuming concern of not measuring up.

The introduction in vv. 12 & 13 presents a comparison — sinful nature compared to the Spirit. The result is also a comparison, die or live. These words do not refer to eternity, or even your physical body, but rather to the reality of living now. In this case, dying is the fear of failing. Human effort is the language of trying hard to be accepted . . . to be loved, which can be an unending task. On the other hand, the concept of living is found in verse 14, “. . . those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” Literally, the word means “allowing oneself to be led.” It reminds me of II Timothy 1:7, “For God did not give us a spirit of fear, but a spirit of power, of love and of sound mind.” Living well is knowing . . .

Who are you?

? **Adoption** — “But you received the Spirit of sonship.” (verse 15) The term is used of a child received into a new family. In that day the adopted person lost all rights in his old family, but gained all the rights of a legitimate child in the new family. He became a full heir to his new father’s estate; no longer a cringing or fearful slave, but the Master’s child.
Notes:

? **Abba** — “And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father’” (verse 15) How many times does Jesus use this Aramaic word in addressing the father? 170 The definition is of intimacy and dependence. The assurance of God’s perfect love is the backdrop of this invitation . . . God is love. “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect/complete in love.” (1 John 4:18) Notes:

? **Anointing** — “You received the Spirit.” (verse 15) 1 John 2:27 says — “As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you . . .” The language of this verse and the message of Romans 8 is clearly emphasizing the presence of God’s Spirit within. The New Testament has described the Holy Spirit as a deposit, the One who indwells us. **John 14:26 & 27** are the words of Jesus announcing the One to come . . . the Comforter.
Notes:

? **And** — “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.” (verse 16) Many people misread this verse and think of it as the Spirit testifies “to” my heart. But the Greek word conveys the meaning “with” and means together with. This speaks of two witnesses: the Holy Spirit and your spirit. When you know who you are, the result is no fear.
Notes:

As a co-heir with Christ you can think of yourself as receiving what he has already accomplished . . . straight A’s. It does not mean life will be easy; no in fact, the truth is that life is difficult. But Jesus reigns supreme and what is true about him is also true for you if you are a follower of Christ. Believing the truth of these promises and embracing them as your own will make all the difference. When you live as a child of God you live with less and less fear, because there is no fear in perfect love.

Reflective Questions:

1. How do you define self-image? How is self-image connected to this message? What causes us to question our value and significance? How do you answer the question, "Do I matter?"
2. What stands out to you in Romans 8:12-17 as our key passage for the day? What part of it do you appreciate the most? Why?
3. Why is fear so damaging? How would the elimination of fear in your life affect you day-to-day? Why is knowing who you are so important to eliminating fear?
4. Which point of definition about who you are means the most to you? Why? Which of the four A's is God prompting you to live out more deeply? Why?
5. Living as a co-heir with Christ, how would that affect your life?

Reading Schedule for May 17th – 23rd, 2010

Because of the nature of the Life Application reading selection we will be moving through the final books of the Old Testament very quickly. We will read Isaiah in two days; we will read from the writings of Solomon in just a few days; we will move through Jeremiah and Ezekiel quickly. By June 5, we will start our reading in the New Testament. If you are like me, you feel like we are missing significant parts of God's Word. But the approach to reading through the Bible in one year is to really absorb some of the main principles of God's teaching from his Word. We are to understand some of main events that affect our spiritual lives the most. I think it is encouraging to be reading such a significant portion of God's Word in one year, and yet getting so much instruction from it because we are only focusing on one chapter a day. I am sure you feel the same.

May 17: **Psalm 139:1-24** – It is so encouraging to me that we are reading this Psalm right after I preach on this important subject of being wonderfully made by God. "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." (vv. 13 & 14) When you feel worthless, all you have to do is read this truth and believe it. We are called to respect ourselves, even as our maker has a sense of pleasure and respect in how he has made us. As the saying goes, "God doesn't make junk." How does this apply to Sunday's message? Why do you matter to God? What does this Psalm teach you about God's concern for you?

May 18: **Psalm 145:1-21** – "Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts." (vv. 3 & 4) This Psalm is from David and it is a powerful Psalm of worship and praise to God. It highlights many of his attributes and gives us many reasons why the Lord is worthy of our praise. He is great, glorious and abundantly good. These are just a few of the characteristics of God that David highlights in this Psalm. What characteristics would you highlight? Why is God worthy of our praise? How have you worshiped God today?

May 19: **Proverbs 4:1-27** – "Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Esteem her, and she will exalt you; embrace her, and she will honor you." (vv. 7 & 8) We already read that Solomon prayed that God would give him a discerning heart. God was pleased that Solomon had requested such a worthwhile gift. We believe Solomon was one of the wisest men that ever lived. He didn't follow through until the end, so we will read about that truth in Ecclesiastes. Why is wisdom so important? What does this chapter say about wisdom? If you boldly ask God for wisdom today through faith, what will be the result? (James 1:5)

May 20: **Proverbs 5:1-23** – "For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil; but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword." (vv. 3 & 4) This subject is very appropriate for our day. We live in an sexually crazed world. The promise of sexual satisfaction is overrated. This chapter challenges us to guard our hearts from the lure and flattery of sexual sin. So many are caught in the snare of sexual promiscuity and pornography. What does this chapter say about the power of sexual sin? Why should we avoid immorality at all costs? The New Testament tells us to flee sexual immorality. Why is that the best counsel?

May 21: **Ecclesiastes 12:1-14** – Again, this is a book that is hard to skip over and just read the last chapter. Ecclesiastes says so much about the pursuit of happiness. The lure of selfish pleasure has hurt many people. "Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil." (vv. 13 & 14) These verses may be the most important verses of the whole book. We read about the contradictions of life and the vain pursuit of pleasure. Finally we come to the message that brings out the strongest principle in the whole book – fear God. The most significant single purpose of life is to know God. All other things are of lesser value. What do you think Solomon is trying to say to us through the Book of Ecclesiastes? What part of these final verses gets your attention? How do you want to apply its truth to your life?

May 22: **Isaiah 6:1-13** – "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!' He said, 'Go and tell this people . . .'" (vv. 8 & 9) After Isaiah's encounter with the living God, he was given a task. The Lord doesn't stop at inspiration, he also draws us into service. We do need cleansing from sin. But we also are called to go. Jesus even said to his disciples, "Therefore, go." What does this chapter tell you about God's message to Isaiah? How did Isaiah respond? How might you and I respond?

May 23: **Isaiah 53:1-12** – "Surely he took our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed." (vv. 4 & 5) It couldn't be said any clearer than these verses that predict Jesus would die for our sins. The people already knew about the sacrificing of a lamb for the forgiveness of sins. The suffering Messiah would be the ultimate sacrifice for sin. Isaiah wrote these words 700 years before Christ came to earth. The Messiah suffered, bearing our sins to make us acceptable to God. What can we say to such love? How will you respond to him?

Prayer: Pray for the teachers and staff of our schools as this school year begins to come to a close. Pray for our Youth Group and the forty plus people going on our Mexico Mission Trip. Pray for Hannah Braun as she is in her final week in South Asia on a mission trip with her college group.