

SERMON SERIES: Responses: Rebuilding the Walls

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Key Line/Question

Wouldn't it be great to build my identity on God's love for me?

Introduction

If someone asked you who you were, or to describe yourself, how would you answer? (answers could include physical characteristics, personality traits, various roles you play, etc)

Today we'll be talking about building our identity on what God thinks about us, using the book of Nehemiah.

Seek the Word

Nehemiah is going to lead the Israelites to rebuild Jerusalem's walls, that have been destroyed by their enemies.

Andy listed 4 steps involved in Nehemiah's building project:

- 1) Have a plan : read 2:7-8 for part of that plan
- 2) Inspect the current status: for example, read 2:13
- 3) Expect adversity : eg, read 6:10-13
- 4) Celebrate victories: read 12:27

Today, we're talking about building my identity, "who I am," on the firm foundation of God's love for me. State briefly how the 4 steps above can also apply to that:

- 1) I need a plan. I need to purposefully work at basing my identity on Jesus.
- 2) I need to know where I'm at in this process, including possible lies I believe about myself (eg, I'm a loser, and God could never love someone like me)
- 3) There will likely be people who try to shoot me down, and will be the ones telling me that I am indeed a loser.
- 4) As I learn to firmly root my identity in Christ, I need to celebrate those victories, and celebrate who I am in His eyes.

Read 1:5. Nehemiah's identity was based on his knowledge that God loved him. This enabled him to take on this massive building project.

Talk About It

- Item #3 above might be the most challenging one in the list. As we read in 6:10-13, Shemaiah was trying to mislead Nehemiah.
- In the same way, people will often try to mislead us in who we really are, especially as it relates to our identity in Christ.
- Andy stated: “What God says in the light, do not doubt in the dark.” In other words, when things get tough, we can’t forget the truths we’ve learned about God, and His love for me.

So, some questions to explore this concept deeper:

1) Who is God? How might various people describe Him? (You may wish to record answers on a piece of paper, in two columns, labeled “positive” [eg, creator, faithful, loving, etc] and “negative” [eg, distant, non-existent, judgmental, etc]).

How would you describe Him? (People can highlight answers from the above list, or they can add additional items.)

How would you react to this quote? “What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.” -- A.W. Tozer

2) What does God think about us? *If possible, every answer should have a verse to support it. If someone doesn't know where an idea is found in Scripture, hopefully other group members can help. Some examples: we're loveable and worth Him giving His Son for (John 3:16), we're worth caring for (1 Peter 5:7), He is for us (Romans 8:31), we are His children (Romans 8:16) and heirs (8:17).*

3) Going back to item 3, above: what are some of the lies and hurtful things other people might say about us, and about who or what we are? (eg, you're worthless, you're a loser, etc)

4) We are sometimes tempted to build our identity on temporary things. What are some examples? (eg, physical traits like beauty or athletic ability, popularity, wealth/possessions) What's the obvious danger in that? (eg, they are temporary!)

To revisit our Key Line: we want to build our identity on the only permanent foundation: God's love for me, and who I am to Him.

For any group members who are not yet Christ-followers: obviously we encourage you to keep considering and pursuing this truth, just like you're doing by being part of today's discussion...and to talk with another member of the group about questions you may be wrestling with.

Apply It (try to allow at least 5-7 minutes to discuss as many of these questions as possible)

Who are some of the people I am allowing to build/shape my identity? Are they supporting or hindering my identity in Christ?

If people are hindering me, what steps might I need to take?

On the flip side, how am I contributing to other people's identity? This can either be for fellow Christians (to encourage them in Christ), or non-Christians (to point them toward Christ).

Sometimes we allow past mistakes and sins to define us, to shape our identity in unhealthy ways. How can we resist this tendency? (eg, by focusing on many of the verses we listed above, about who we are in Christ)

(If you have time, you may wish to play or sing the chorus to Chris Tomlin's song "Good, good Father. Just do a Google search for it :-)