

# Living Out Our Faith #1

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## *Knowing Who We Are*

Scripture: John 8:12-14 "...even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going."

### **Background**

Jesus, in the middle of His ministry, was seeing what we would call success, as well as a constant challenge to His person and authority. Jesus had just dealt with a specific challenge by the Pharisees, where he was presented with a woman that, according to the law, should have been judged and condemned. Those that were condemning the woman were not doing so out of a concern for the righteousness of the woman or for the reputation of the Law itself, but simply to bring another trap before Jesus to discredit Him. Jesus' response to the Pharisees reveal something very powerful about Him, something that should be the characteristic of every Christian, and help us to know how to both "be" and to "do" in the situations around us.

### **Who Do You Say That I Am?**

*When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets..."*

One of the biggest challenges we face is the definition others have of us. Many times that definition comes, not because of an honest, deep assessment of our person, but simply because of their own filters or thoughts of who we are to be. These filters can cause us to not even see the person we are "defining"... we only see what doesn't fit into our filter.

*For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, **and you will be like God, knowing good and evil** – Genesis 3:5*

The serpent's assessment of Adam and Eve was that they were not like God. Whether this was an outright lie to deceive, a lie to protect his own hurt and failure, or simply a misinterpretation of the truth, it was enough to put Adam and Eve under the definition and expectation of another, as opposed to trusting who they knew they were.



Our response to this is to do one of three things:

- **Require more proof:** The Pharisees knew that “every matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses”, but then took that to the extreme of saying that **I need others to prove who I say I am.**
  - o *The Pharisees challenged him, “Here you are appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid” – John 8:13*
- **Define ourselves by who we are not:** This is the easy way out – rather than really know or see who we are we choose others that we think are worse or less desirable than us, and define ourselves as *not being them*. This makes us feel justified, not that we really know ourselves, but rather that we can exist comfortably in our current state because we have taken the spotlight off of us, and put it on those that should really be judged. It is like the Defense Attorney in a harassment case attacking the plaintiff, as if it were their fault they were harassed
  - o *The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: “God I thank you that I am not like other men – robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector...” Luke 18:11*
- **Acquiesce:** We simply become what the external assessment is.

While this generally happens with external assessments of who we are, we can do the same thing to ourselves. Through our own filters of mistrust, hurt, disappointments, we can place definitions on ourselves that are not true, and cause us to live, not according to our calling or character, but according to the expectations of those filters. With these responses, we still have not gotten to the core of the issue, that being *who I really am*.

## Who I Am: My Heritage

*Even if I testify on my own behalf my testimony is valid for I know where I came from... John 8:14*

Jesus gave us one of the keys to His freedom to be who he was and to respond the way he did. Jesus readily identified with His heritage, and only not with His activity.

*The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under His power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. After that he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples feet... - John 13:2-5*

Jesus could have left that to a “lesser man”, to someone he was training, or could have even told the disciples when they were preparing the Passover to make sure there was a servant to wash their feet as they came in. Jesus, however, was not concerned about his position in doing this, because he already knew that the washing of the feet did not define Him as a person: in fact, **it was his person who defined the act.**

## Active Heritage: Relationship

*To the Jews who had believed Him, Jesus said "if you hold to my teaching, you really are my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." They answered Him, "we are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?" – John 8:31-33*

The Jews that had a problem with Jesus' statement were those that had just put their trust in Him. But His words went crosswise with their own understanding of heritage. Even though they had trusted in Jesus, that trust quickly waned when they had something they couldn't accept. *Could they still be descendants of Abraham, and still need to be free?* They saw their identification with Abraham and Jesus' statement as mutually exclusive. Jesus however demonstrated that law and grace, truth and freedom could live side by side because he didn't have to prove to anyone who He was.

*The One who sent Me is with Me. He has not left Me alone, for I always do what pleases Him – John 8:29*

Jesus heritage, and ours as well, was not simply based in historical fact, but in an active ongoing relationship with the Father. He was never separated from the One he came from which gave power to the identity. Our constant connection with God also gives power to our own identity in Him, and identification of who we are, individually and collectively.