

BFF420 Knowing Whose We are and Who We are in Christ

**Scott Moore:** Welcome to the "Building Faith Families podcast with Steve Demme." I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning, Steve. How are you today?

**Steve:** I'm well. It's August, and I just celebrated my birthday with my wife.

**Scott:** Happy birthday.

**Steve:** I think you know that my wife and I have the same birthday.

**Scott:** I did not remember that, but then I'm lousy at remembering anything like that.

**Steve:** That's OK. We don't celebrate very much. I don't even think we had a party. It's nice because we can just get up in the morning, and I sing happy birthday, and she sings happy birthday. We just change the names.

Johnny was there when we were singing, and he was happy, and he was singing. He's the one that gives us cards and buys us stuff, so it's pretty cool.

**Scott:** Nice. We're celebrating our 30th anniversary today.

**Steve:** Today. Congratulations.

**Scott:** Thank you.

**Steve:** Happy anniversary to you. Happy anniversary to you.

**Scott:** Thank you.

**Steve:** We've talked about God loving us, God adopting us, God filling us with His spirit and making us sons of God who are led by the spirit, and what it means to be led by the spirit. I had another issue that God addressed, especially in 2012. I didn't see it that clearly at the time, but it's been there.

It was revealed in my very difficult year, and a very wonderful year. That was an issue of my identity, which I think is a problem for all of us. I know that men, when they get together, they usually say, "Where are you from? What do you do?" That's one of the first questions that you ask another man when you meet him because we're very cognizant about defining ourselves by what we do.

I was at a conference once, and I said, "We're going to have a communication time. Let's break up into groups." I said, "But we're not going to talk about our spouse, our children, or our family, or education." [laughs]

One of the ladies, later, she said, "When you said that, you took away my identity." She realized, as soon as she said that sentence, that that was a dangerous place to be, and then we later talked about that. This is something for all of us to deal with. I think it's important that we know who we are and whose we are. That's our introduction.

Let's pray. Father, thank you that you're our dad. We say it quickly, our father, who art in heaven, but it's an incredible privilege. It's this priceless privilege to know that you're our adopted dad, and we belong to you. You not only love us, but you like us. You created us in your image, and you formed us in our mother's wombs, and you've known us since before the foundation of the world. Credible truths, but I pray that

you'll take this understanding a little deeper today and help us to revel and be rooted in this knowledge. In Jesus' name, amen.

**Scott:** Amen.

**Steve:** In Luke 10, the first two verses. "After this, the Lord appointed 72 others and sent them on ahead of Him. Two by two into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And He said to them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'"

Verses 17 through 20, "The 72 returned with joy saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name.' And He said to them, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.

"Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." That's a powerful exhortation. These devoted servants of God were doing the work of God. They were healing the sick, they were praying for people, demons were being cast out. It was amazing.

They came back, and He said, "OK, this is good, but this is not why you want to be rejoicing. Don't rejoice in what you've done. Rejoice that your names are written in heaven." It was a teaching moment. Instead of reveling in what they had accomplished, He pointed them to who they were, and the fact that their names were written in heaven.

Another instance of where I see somebody who would fit into our culture today was the book of Jonah. I'm going to read chapter one, verses five through eight. "Jonah had gone down into the inner part of the ship and had laid down and was fast asleep. "The captain came and said to him, 'What do you mean, you sleeper? Arise, call out to your God. Perhaps the God will give a thought to us that we may not perish.' And they said to one another, 'Come, let us cast lots that we may know on whose account this evil has come upon us.'

"They cast lots, and the lot fell on Jonah. Then they said to him, 'Tell us on whose account this evil has come upon us. What is your occupation, and where do you come from? What is your country, and of what people are you?'" [laughs]

There's so much packed into this little couple paragraphs, but the first one is only a man could sleep through a storm. [laughs] The whole ship is in distress. The sailors know this is more than just a normal storm. They're casting lots and they're trying to figure out what's happening, and Jonah's downstairs sleeping. He's in the bottom of the ship.

Then they introduce themselves, [laughs] and they say, "Hey. What do you do? What's your occupation? Hey, where do you come from? What's your country? What people are you? What's your genealogy?" [laughs] This is what men do. Where are you from? What do you do?

Jesus is trying to teach them some perspective. Rejoice not on who you are, and what you do, and where you're from, but that your names are written in heaven. You're my

adopted son. It's the same thing as when he was telling his disciples when they were arguing who's the best apostle.

He said, "OK. OK. We got new rules in my kingdom. We have a new approach. Instead of focusing on how to be the best disciple, focus on how to be the best servant. Channel your energies in this direction." I think what God is telling us is we need to channel some energy into who we are and whose we are.

Now, back to my situation. In 2012, we're going through this difficult season in our family. At one point, I asked my wife, I said, "Why do I have to learn so much so quickly? [laughs] Why, after all these years of living with me, do I have to learn all of this information, so much so fast?"

She told me some things, but the main thing was what I realized in searching my own heart and discerning what God was doing is that my value as a person was based on what I did. I did. I valued myself by my work.

If I felt like I was a good husband, a good father, a good worker in the church, a good businessman, speaker at conferences, if I was doing well on those fronts, then I was in good shape.

But because I define myself by my husbanding, and my fathering, and my serving, and my businessing, and my speaking, if you were to criticize any one of those things that I did, you criticized me because they were one and the same. I took pretty much all input personally.

It's really hard for people that love you and know you to give you feedback when they know you're going to take it personally. When you take it personally, two things happen. Number one, it hurts. It wounds you to hear things.

Number two, you generally don't respond well. Normally, you react, and you become defensive, and you try to explain yourself. You don't have to do that very many times before the message is clear. I don't want to have these things pointed out. Do not attack my person. When you attack my husbanding, fathering, businessing, serving, speaking, you're really attacking me.

I'm going to go a little further. I know it sounds a little bit harsh, but just to help us get a handle on this and not just say, "Oh, well." I look at myself, and I was a fireman. I was always putting out fires. I put out the fire that was the biggest.

I was a juggler. I was juggling my responsibilities, but I was keeping five balls in the air at all time. My relationship with my wife, my relationship with my kids, my work in the church, my business, and my ministry. I had these five balls in the air at all times, and I was trying to take care of the one at the time that needed the most attention.

I was desperately trying to keep everybody happy. I'm going to add to fireman and juggler, clown. Looking back, it meant the world to me when my wife would say, "Well, you're really a fine husband," or my sons would say, on my birthday or Father's Day, "What a great dad you are."

The people in the church would say, "Oh, man. He's really doing everything he can for the church. We appreciate all your efforts." People would say, "Oh, what a wonderful

Christian businessman you are, and how you apply the Bible to your business, and how you interact with your employees."

People would hear me at a conference and say, "Man, I really got a lot out of your talk." I needed to hear those things because that was where I was looking for affirmation. I needed to be affirmed because I defined myself by those things. If people were all being affirming to me, then I could survive, and I needed to hear that. I don't know if you see the little warning signs going off. What happened was, though, I'm at that conference, and somebody asked me, "When you quote Deuteronomy 6, 7, why don't you read verses 5 and 6?" Verses 5 and 6 were, "His word shall be in your heart, and you shall love Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, might, and everything."

I began praying and asking God to help me to love Him. All I wanted to do was be a better lover of God. God said, "You've got deeper issues, pal." He didn't say that, but He knew me, and He knew that I defined myself by all these things.

What came to me was there was a time when I felt like I lost all of those things. It happened quickly and it was painful. I was devastated because that was my lifeline. I needed to be affirmed by all these sources.

I didn't know that at the time, but I also knew that when I was reading Deuteronomy 6 about loving God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might, the first thought that went through my head was the church in Ephesus, which I'm going to read.

Revelation chapter 2, first three verses. "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write, the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. I know your works." [laughs]

See, this church in Ephesus was similar to me. It was similar to Jonah. It was similar to these disciples who wanted to be known for their works. This church in Ephesus said...Well, God said to this church, "I know your works. I'm the one that walks among the seven golden lampstands, the seven churches." By the way, nice reference to the tabernacle.

He says, "I know your works, your toil, and your patient endurance." Then He begins to list them, "And how you cannot bear with those who are evil but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

" I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary." If he has stopped right there, I would have said, "This is an amazing church. Wow. They're toiling. They're patiently enduring. They're not growing weary. They're discerning those who are also apostles. Boy, good stuff. "

Then He says, "But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first." When I read that passage, I thought, "Wow. I wonder if I've lost my first love. I'm so busy doing things for God. I'm trying to be a good husband, and I'm trying to..." All these things I was trying to do, which I thought were just seeking first the kingdom.

Probably these Ephesians, when they heard the first part of the letter, they were sitting there starting to sit up a little straighter, and, "Oh, this is nice." Then He says, and the spirit quickened their hearts when they heard this, "You've abandoned the love you had at first."

Boy, that just went right down into my heart, and I said, "I wonder if I love God with all my heart, soul, and might." Then I thought, "I wonder if the Ephesians that Paul ministered to were the same ones that this letter was being written to." I went back, and I reread the book of Ephesians, and it was.

As far as I'm concerned, this is what Paul saw, the same as Jesus saw. These Ephesians had lost their first love. They did lots of good stuff, but they didn't love me with all their heart, soul, and might. I found a prayer that Paul prays for them in Ephesians 3. This prayer is so meaningful to me. I love it.

Here's what he says. "For this reason, I bow my knees before the father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of His glory, He may grant you to be strengthened with power through His spirit in your inner being."

I want you to know something in your inner being, in your heart of hearts, where the real you is so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. This is what He was praying for them. He wasn't praying that they'd be more fruitful, that they'd be more faithful. He was praying that they would get something right down deep in their heart of hearts.

"That you being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge."

He wanted them to get the love of Christ, and He spelled it out. "I want you to get it to the breadth, and length, and height, and depth. I want you to get this right down in your heart of hearts that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."

Because He knew, like I know now in a new way, until you get that, all the works don't mean anything. The real heart issue is, has God worked in your heart, in your inner being? Is Christ dwelling there? Are you rooted and grounded in love? Because if you have that, everything else will flow from it.

This is paramount. This is first things first. From my experience, I'm asking God to help me to love God and His word. Instead, He starts making me know how much He loves me, and I protest. I said, "This is not what I'm asking for. I want to love you. Why are you showing me how much you love me?"

As soon as I said that, it was almost instantaneous, the scripture went through my mind. "We love because He first loved us." Until we're rooted and grounded in the love of Christ, we won't be able to love Him. That's the way it works. We love because He first loved us.

The scripture that God used to quicken that concept to me was John 15:9, "As the father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. Live here. Dwell here." Meno, Greek. "Live in my love." Boy, it took me some time.

That I had been living for 30–some years -- long as you've been married -- I've been living for decades thinking that God loved me more if I did more stuff for him.

I thought I was just seeking first the kingdom, but, really, in reality, as God was showing me what was inside me, I was hoping that He would love me more because I didn't really believe that He liked me. I thought He would like me more if I did more stuff.

When I read John 15:9, "As the father has loved me, so have I loved you," I got it. It took time to transform 30 years of not accurate thinking. I did studies, and I marinated in the scriptures. Now, when I'm tempted to believe God doesn't love me, I can quote back 1st John, "God is love." Hebrews, "God doesn't change. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever."

Romans 8, "Nothing can separate me from His love." I have the sword of the spirit. I know how to fight these thoughts now.

Now, let's go back to our topic. Our topic is we want to know who we are and whose we are. It starts with being loved by the father and adopted into His family. Because of what Jesus has done for us, He now looks at us and loves us just as much as He loved His son.

Now we, as sons of God, check, adopted sons of God, liked and loved by our father, filled with, led by, anointed by the same spirit that He gave His son. Romans 5:5, "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

Now, the Holy Spirit makes me makes us know that we're loved, we're liked. He fills us. He leads us. He anoints us. We can live vertically.

Let me bring this to home. If my wife gives me some affirmation, if my coworkers say, "Thank you for being a good Christian boss," if my children say, "Thanks for being a godly father," if people at conferences say, "I appreciate," you know what? I smile.

It doesn't mean the same thing now because I know my dad likes me. I know I'm an adopted child of God. I am not defining myself as the math guy, the speaker guy, the Christian husband, and worker, and all that. No. I know who I am now. I am an adopted child of God, and my dad loves me to pieces. He thinks I'm the best thing since sliced manna.

He loves me just as much as He loves Jesus. I got that, and it's changed everything now. I'm not looking to people to supply what God needs to supply. I'm in such a good place now. I used to go to conferences, and I'd lie in bed at night saying, "Oh, I should have done this differently. I should have talked to that one more person."

I was always trying to do more, and always feeling like no matter what I did, it wasn't enough. You know what? Now that I am rooted and grounded in this knowledge that I am an adopted child of God, I go to sleep well. [laughs]

If no one likes what I have to say, I'm sorry. I'll go back to the board, and I'll try to do better the next time. You're not going to wreck my day because my identity is in God himself. I am His kid. That's all I need.

If I was drooling in a cup, if I didn't do podcast, write books, speak, nothing, my dad would still look down and say, "Hey. There's my boy. There's my son, and I love him to pieces." Now that I've got that, I can give it to others because I can't pass on to my kids what I don't possess myself.

Boy, if I had one big do over, and I can't, but if I did, I would spend more time on my relationship with God because knowing that I'm an adopted child of God, it just took all the pressure off. I can take naps. I've been watching the Olympics. [laughs]

I've been enjoying things, which I didn't used to be able to do because I was always working, desperately trying to earn my father's love and affection. I wish I had known God the way I do now so I could pass that on to my kids, and tell them, "Hey, your dad loves you to pieces." I would have been a more loving father if I had been a more loved son.

I'd have been a better-loving husband if I had been a better-loved son. This is what the identity factor comes in. I know who I am. I am an adopted child of God. I know whose I am. I belong to the King. I'm a child of His love. He's my dad. He's my heavenly dad.

Now that I'm in a good place like that, now I can ask input from my wife and kids. Now I can receive input from other people differently. It's never fun to have your blind spots revealed.

Your wife and your kids who know the blind spots more than anybody else are not going to show them to you if your identity is tied to these things because you are going to take it personally, you're going to react emotionally, and it's not going to be pretty.

If we're rooted and grounded in Christ that we can be meek and lowly of heart, like Christ is, then we can be humble, safe, teachable, approachable, and we can learn to respond thoughtfully and not react emotionally.

We need each other, but we're not going to be able to communicate with each other if everybody's taking everything personally and reacting. Nobody's going to come up to me and say, "Steve, you got some issues."

I'm 6 foot 5, and I weigh an eighth of a ton. I can be intimidating. If I can put on Christ and be meek and lowly of heart, then I can hear things. I can receive things differently because my identity is not tied to these things anymore. They're arm's length.

I can look out here and say, "OK. I won't be a speaker anymore. I don't need it." All right. There's a whole bunch. What do you think there, brother?

**Scott:** I think this is certainly a central question, if not the central question of the gospel, then of Paul's teaching. He said, "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain. Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." He was always coming back to this issue of it's all about Christ. It's not about me. That's the only scriptural stuff I have to add.

**Steve:** That is an excellent point. Jeremiah 9:23 says, "Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom. Let not the mighty man boast in his might. Let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts, boast in this, that he understands and knows me,

that I am Yahweh who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things, I delight." That's it.

**Scott:** Amen.

**Steve:** Our natural thing is to boast in our wisdom, our might, our car, our riches, [laughs] our accomplishments. He said, "No. The most important thing is that you know me and that I know you, and that we're good."

I really believe that that is the message of the gospel, that Jesus came to restore us to that relationship, just like the father had with Adam and Eve in the garden when they just enjoyed each other. They talked over the day, and nobody was trying to impress each other. They were just content, happy in their own skin.

**Scott:** It really takes the pressure off.

**Steve:** It does.

**Scott:** I was thinking earlier this. One of the things that's really helpful in this is I realized at one point that I don't have to own everything that my wife is struggling with as if it was my problem now too that I've got to deal with.

**Scott:** I give it to the Lord, and I can trust Him with it. It's a subtle shift, but I don't have to worry about it necessarily just because she's worried about it. It isn't necessarily my issue, too.

There are some things that we have shared responsibility for and things that I need to do sometimes, but the burden doesn't have to weigh on me for everything that's between her and God. The same with my kids, and the same with saving...I know people who are like, "Oh, we've got to accomplish the Great Commission. We've got to save the world."

I'm pretty sure that was God's job. We're part of the process. [laughs] You don't have to put that much pressure on yourself.

**Steve:** That's wisdom, brother. Well done. You're right. If I saw these things happening, I would say, "What did I do? How can I fix it?" It's not mine. My wife has issues with God. My kids do. It's not my job to be God. It's my job to be a son. Great point. Well said. Let's pray, and let's ask God to help us.

Father, we just want to be your kids. We want to be rooted and grounded in that knowledge that we are your adopted children. Deliver us from condemnation. Deliver us from false thinking. Deliver us from any of these chains that keep us from identifying ourselves by what we do, and help us to know ourselves according to scripture and according to your spirit.

We are loved, adopted children of God by faith in Jesus. Thank you. In Jesus' name, amen.

**Steve:** Amen.

**Scott:** That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the Building Faith Families Podcast with Steve Demme. If you have a question for the show, email [steve@spdemme@gmail.com](mailto:steve@spdemme@gmail.com). If you have a question for me, you can reach me at [scott@unsocializedmedia.com](mailto:scott@unsocializedmedia.com). Thanks for joining us. Have a great week.