

Forget You

Getting to Know the New You

January 2, 2022



Today, we're talking about the new year, and the new you. So let's take it from the top: **Who do you think you are?** As of right now, *what's your deal?* Y'know, your role and purpose; the very meaning of your life? Do you want to find out?



Imagine yourself living in the time of Jesus. You've heard the rumors and stories about Him and one day, He passes through *your* town! So, you join the crowd, watch and listen, and are totally blown away! This IS the Messiah! You decide to pack up and follow Him like hundreds of others, and as you journey, you begin to understand, "Holy moly... He's the Son of God!" Wow. This is *the* turning point in history! And you're part of it! But what part? I mean, you really connect with what He's saying... what if you became one of His disciples? And just then, the crowd stops. Without warning, Jesus turns around, looks you straight in the eyes, and says, "It's time. Follow Me!" Your heart races, you start pushing through the crowd, even running toward Him. And then He says "Oh, not you ... sorry, I meant the guy behind you."



How do you feel? Are you: **A) Relieved**, knowing the job was way above your pay grade *or* **B) Bummed**, because you believed you could've risen to the occasion? Even though the thought is exciting, **I think most of us feel more relief because the big role is scary to us normal people!**

Even though we love Jesus, and we know He loves us, **we often feel like we don't measure up to the kind of people He really uses.** I mean, they're like saints or superheroes, right? Think of Samson and his temple-toppling superhuman strength! And Noah... can you imagine having that faith and obedience with *your* neighbors?! But then again, were they *really* that great?

One day Samson went to Gaza, where he saw a prostitute. He went in to spend the night with her. – Judges 16:1 NIV

One day [Noah] became drunk on some wine he had made and lay naked in his tent. – Genesis 9:21 NLT

Turns out, almost all "Bible heroes" were far from perfect – we just forget what we know about them. And it's part of the many brain disorders we all share called *cognitive biases*. This one, called **'the halo effect'**, **occurs when one specific trait influences our general judgment of a person or thing.** And it works in the positive or the negative; if someone is a good dancer, we tend to believe they're also a good person – but bad dancers, let's face it, they probably cheat on their taxes! And **we don't even realize how shallow and judgmental we are. It's instinctual!**

But if you check your Bible again, **you'll find none of the OT heroes or NT disciples "measure up" the way we think:** We overlook David's adultery; Jonah's rebellion; Gideon's idolatry; Jacob's deception; Solomon's depression; Peter's denial; John-Mark's desertion; Thomas's doubt; and on and on.

And be honest, **isn't it a little reassuring to know every disciple was imperfect, incomplete, and inexperienced?** I mean, you must be doing better than Judas and *he* was one of the twelve! But because we intimately know every one of our own personal imperfections, the halo effect leads us to judge and disqualify *ourselves* from more important, godly roles.

So before we think we know anybody, including ourselves, **we need to know that our biased brains are keeping us from seeing the whole truth.**



It's like the father who was pushing a cart through a grocery store with his screaming baby in it. He tried to keep calm and speak slowly as he reassured, *"We're almost done, Albert; Don't scream, Albert; I know you hate this Albert, but please, try not to throw a fit."* And as he's checking out, a woman in line says, *"You should be commended for your compassion with your son."* And the man looks at her and says, *"Lady, I'm Albert!"*

The point is, in the Bible or in the supermarket, whenever people do seem to "measure up" you can bet – you're only seeing part of the picture. But because we've heard edited bits of Bible stories over and over, and spectacular slices of testimonies on TV, radio, in books and at events, it's easy to conclude that: **If God isn't doing something spectacular through us, we're just ordinary extras in a story starring extra-ordinary others.** Well we're wrong:

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for *us*, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. – 1 Corinthians 10:11 NIV

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach *us*, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. – Romans 15:4 NIV



We're supposed to see ourselves in the people who populate God's Word. We're designed to relate to their pain, sorrow, joy, fear, courage, confusion, disobedience, and trust. Jesus asks about 173 questions throughout the Gospels, the *exact questions* God wants *you* to answer.

"Why are you troubled?" (Lk 24:38) **"Why are you so afraid?"** (Mt 8:26) **"Do you want to get well?"** (Jn 5:6) **"Why do you entertain evil thoughts?"** (Mt 9:4) **"What do you want Me to do for you?"** (Mt 20:32) **"Who do you say I am?"** (Mk 8:29) **"Do you understand what I have done for you?"** (Jn 13:12) **"Why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"** (Lk 6:46) **"Do you still have no faith?"** (Mk 4:40) **"Why did you doubt?"** (Mt 14:31) **"Do you truly love Me?"** (Jn 21:16) **"Will you really lay down your life for Me?"** (Jn 13:38)

And as we work out the answers with the help of these “Bible heroes”, an unbiased, unspectacular, and undesirable truth begins to surface:

No one is good—except God alone. – Mark 10:18 NIV

Not Noah. Not Samson. Not your neighbor. And definitely not you...*yet!* And that’s fine because **He knew it would take time because all of us are a work in progress**, following His lead:

For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. – Ephesians 2:10

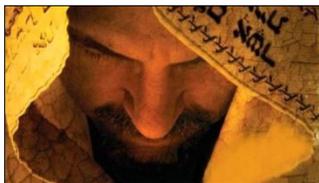
God’s the Director and none of us are ordinary extras; we’ve *each* been cast in a starring role!

You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit
– John 15:16 NIV

And we *all* find this hard to believe! Even “Writer/Producer/Star of the OT” Moses:

I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring My people the Israelites out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh?" [and tries to prove his unspectacular-ness, saying] "O Lord, I have never been eloquent ... I am slow of speech and tongue." ... [yet patient God says] I will help you speak and will teach you what to say." But Moses [still trying to weasel out] said, "O Lord, please send someone else to do it. Then the LORD's anger burned against Moses" – Exodus 3:10-11; 4:10-14 NIV

Let’s learn this lesson right now: **one thing that really makes the Lord angry is the false humility that we aren’t good enough to be used... by Him.** It comes from an arrogant notion that it’s *our* skills and abilities that accomplish *His* purposes, but God chooses us because He knows us *better* than we do. Don’t forget it’s *His* breath in *our* lungs, and therefore, **when we give Him the wheel, we better give Him the credit, too.**



Our biggest job – is just getting out of the driver’s seat! God’s got the know-how and there’s no room for our “no thanks.” Everybody involved already knows how bad we’ve been and unrighteous we remain but – in the story of “How Jesus Saved the World”, He wants you in the car as His co-star. **He doesn’t need your competence, just your compliance!**



He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. – John 1:11-13 NIV

That’s the role of a lifetime! *God, Jr.!* Jesus’ *sibling*. And He sees it in you... you just gotta let go of the role you’ve been playing and commit to His character.

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the *renewing of your mind*. – Romans 12:2 NIV

And *THIS* is the key! It's always been mind over matter. Who you are is a state of mind. *Your* mind. **And what you REALLY THINK transforms who you REALLY ARE.** So when you truly accept the role God wrote for you, voila; you ARE that person. Which means ditching the *old* you, too:

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the *attitude of your minds*; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

– Ephesians 4:22-24 NIV



But have you ever tried to change your mind? Not so easy. Takes practice and perseverance. So, **He challenges us to take up our cross daily, and follow Him in obedience**, so that we can shed our old selves and be stretched into His image. **The spiritual life is mostly a life of determined faithfulness:** little decisions; tiny steps; and unimpressive contributions. Remember *this*:

Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling His disciples to Him, Jesus said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything — all she had to live on.” – Mark 12:41-44 NIV



EXTRA, EXTRA: Insignificant woman makes insignificant donation! Not really front-page stuff, yet she gets singled out and commended by Jesus Himself! Because **Jesus sees something spectacular in her insignificance** ... and it has nothing to do with size and success, but everything to do with faith, fortitude, and the mindset that drove her little decision. **She put God first and He saw the sum of all those tiny steps transforming someone into something familiar; a heavenly sibling! Because loving God as Dad is all it takes to accept the role of beloved child.**

If anyone loves God, this one is known by Him. – 1Corinthians 8:3 NKJ

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God – Rom 8:28 NKJ

So each of us are presented with a never-ending stream of opportunities to transform who we are by what we think; to forget our old ways and put a new perspective into practice. Every day, we can respond to the world with the confident mindset of someone who KNOWS their Dad is GOD, or we can slink back and believe the big roles are meant for *others* who do “measure up”.

So **who do you think you are?** His Word is written to you. His plan is built on you. His Son died for you. All so He could live with you. So I guess the real question has always been, **who does God think you are?** It's His question to answer, we just make room to hear Him. So **this New Year, don't resolve to change who you are, that's set. Forget yourself.** Forget your assumptions, judgments, and comparisons, and resolve to change your mind by searching His Word and this world to know the true you that God always knew; the spectacularly insignificant yet infinitely important critical co-star ... His child.