

WHAT DEFINES YOU?



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I'm sure you've seen those memes about doubting if God can use you. It's the images that list people in the Bible and why God shouldn't have used them: Noah was a drunk, Jacob was a liar, Rahab was a prostitute, Jonah ran from God, Elijah was suicidal, and so on.

- Why were these people being labeled for the sinful acts in their lives, when we know the great ones they have done?
- Why were these people being labeled by what they went through instead of what they did in spite of their life circumstances... their trauma.

Obviously, the reason for these images is to show that no one is perfect and that no matter what we go through God can use us, but I want to bring a new perspective to this message.

Many have experienced hurt in their lives: brokenness, depression, and rejection. But we must ponder the question: Why does it have to identify me?

In Genesis chapter 6, we read that God decided to destroy every living thing on the earth, but Noah found favor with the Lord.

The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord.

Genesis 6:5-8

- We know that Noah and his family were spared from the flood because Noah chose to trust in God and follow His commands.
- Then in chapter 9, we read that Noah became drunk and there were consequences of that action.



In Genesis, we read about how Jacob constantly lied and deceived to get what he wanted in life.

One of those deceptions was when Jacob deceived his father Isaac to get his brother Esau's blessing. But then later on in Jacob's life we read about how Jacob wrestled with God and obtained a blessing and a new name: Israel. We read about Jacob and Esau making peace with each other and about all the great things the descendants of Jacob accomplished.

In Joshua chapter 2 we are introduced to Rahab.

Rahab was a prostitute who hid Israelite spies in Jericho. When Jericho was overtaken by the Israelites, Rahab and her family were saved because of Rahab's choice to hide the spies and trust in a God she had only heard of. Rahab the prostitute ended up becoming the mother of Boaz and a part of the bloodline of Jesus.

In the book of Jonah, we read about a man that was chosen to go to the city Nineveh and warn the people of God's upcoming judgment.

We read that Jonah ran away from this calling and tried to hide from God. But in the end, we read that Jonah fulfilled this calling and the people of Nineveh responded to the warnings and were saved from destruction.

In 1 Kings chapter 19 we read about the great prophet Elijah asking God to take his life because he was afraid that Jezebel would murder him.

Elijah, the prophet that had seen miracles and wonders.

- The prophet that literally called down fire from heaven in the previous chapter was now alone, afraid, and wanting to die.
- After asking God to take his life, God answered Elijah and called him out of the wilderness and out of that place of fear with a still small voice.
- Elijah left that wilderness and place of fear with faith and trust in the God that he served.



So why did God call these people? What does it mean to these people with these experiences?

- What does it mean to Noah that he became drunk?
- What does it mean to Jacob that he lied and deceived others?
- What does it mean to Rahab that she was a prostitute?
- What does it mean to Jonah that he ran from God's calling?
- What does it mean to Elijah that he was afraid and wanted to die?
- What does it mean that we have been hurt?
- What does it mean that we have made mistakes and sinned?

As you examine your life and your experiences, what does it mean to be the girl or the guy that was hurt, broken, betrayed? What does it mean to be the person that sinned, hurt others, or ran from God?

These are huge, heavy questions and thankfully, God answers these questions for us in John chapters 15-16.

- Before Jesus is taken from the disciples and crucified on the cross, he tells them what they need to expect.
- Jesus explains that because we serve the Lord and we live for Him, the world will hate us. He explains that we do not belong to this world, but we belong to God.

We learn in these scriptures that we will be persecuted by this world.

- We will be treated badly, we will be hurt, we will be deceived, we will be abused, we will be abandoned, we will go through hard times just like we saw in the stories of the people we discussed earlier.
- But in John chapter 16, Jesus ends this chapter with one simple statement that changes the entire narrative.
- Information that once felt heavy, scary, and overwhelming is now presented with hope. when Jesus says in John 16:33: "

I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.

John 16:33



In this scripture, we get the answer to our question: What does it mean that we are these people with these hard life experiences?

- It means that in this world we will have trials and sorrows.
- We will be hurt and we will make mistakes because we live in a broken and fallen world, but no matter what we face in this world: we have peace in Jesus.
- We can take heart or have courage because Jesus has overcome the world.

So now, I bring up the last question my therapist asked me: Why does what we go through have to identify us? Simply put, the answer is: it doesn't.

My identity is found here:

But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God.

John 1:12

My identity is not what I have gone through in this world. Your identity is not what you have experienced in this world. If we have believed in Him and accepted Jesus, our identities are children of God.

And because we are children of God, God wants to use us. Period. Even before you were born and even before you had any life experiences, good or bad, God chose you, He created you, and He had plans for you.

So now, as a see those memes and images of people in the Bible and what they've gone through, I know that those experiences, although they are a part of those people's stories, have nothing to do with why God used them.

- Because these people believed in God and accepted Him:
- God used Noah because he was a child of God.
- God used Jacob because he was a child of God.
- God used Rahab because she was a child of God.
- God used Jonah because he was a child of God.
- God used Elijah because he was a child of God.
- God uses me because I am a child of God.
- God uses you because you are a child of God.



Sometimes I hear people say, in spite of what we go through God still uses us and I believe that is true.

God does want to use us and He does have plans for us regardless of what we go through in this life, but your life experiences have no factor in the simple fact that God wants to use you and that He has always had plans for you.

- Our stories are important and God definitely uses our stories and testimonies when He uses us. Revelations 12:11 even says that we overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimonies.
- Regardless of your life experiences, God simply wants to use you because He loves you and because you are His child.

Psalms 139 is a beautiful passage about the fact that God knows everything about you, that He created you, and that you can never escape His presence.

You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed. How precious are your thoughts about me, O God. They cannot be numbered! I can't even count them; they outnumber the grains of sand! And when I wake up, you are still with me!

Psalms 139:16-18

These verses show us that God saw each one of us before we were even born. He knew every moment of our lives before one single day had passed and He has an innumerable amount of precious thoughts toward each and every one of us.

I ask you to give God your story. Believe in Him, accept Him, and know that your identity is child of God. Know that He had a plan for you before you were even born and that He still has a plan for you today.

Maybe we know what some of the plans are, but we are unsure if we can fulfill them because of what we have gone through in life.

- We all have plans or aspirations of how God can use us, but maybe we have used our life experiences as a reason to not fulfill those plans.
- I want you to take a moment and think about those plans or aspirations that you have. Instead of using life experiences as a reason to give up on those, I want you to think, "Because I am a child of God, I can..."

