

Substitute Identities: Free//Servant

SUBSTITUTE IDENTITIES: FREE AND SERVANT

Story of me at Glorietta. "Johnny."

The power of having a group as a teenager. Jocks. Geeks. Popular kids. Punks. Artists. Hipsters. Danger of latching onto anyone who will accept you.

How will you ever be happy? Content in your own skin?

The world tells us we will be happy once we and others accept who we are. And who are we? Our sexuality, our profession, being a dad or mom, being a spouse. We are free to choose who we are, and our identity can then be anchored on that choice.

We will only find happiness and peace when we set the true north of our life in our identity with Christ. Who you are in Christ is unchangeable and nonnegotiable.

Sermon series: 8 substitute identities that masquerade as true identities.

2 Corinthians 5:16-17: you are a new creation!

The first substitute identity: freedom. Our world tells us that a core part of our identity is that we are free. We are free to choose who we are. As children, we are told that we can be whatever we want to be.

Story of first day of high school. The goodness of freedom.

There is something beautiful in that encouragement. Many of us had our identities formed with this sense of unbounded possibilities. There is nothing we couldn't do if we put our minds to it. As Americans, we value our autonomy and push back against those who deign to try to restrict our freedom.

In Christ, though, we learn that our freedom comes through our relationship to Christ: specifically, our enslavement to Christ. We are called by the Servant to be his servants.

John 8:31-36: The Pharisees: "We already have freedom! We don't need your freedom!" Jesus: "You aren't free." Jesus ignores the cultural farce (Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Rome!) and goes straight for the spiritual. You aren't free, you are slaves. Who are you? Disciples. Sons. The house is freedom.

The danger with freedom is what it is used for. Freedom for freedom's sake is a master. Freedom for my own sake is a problem because I'm a sinner.

In becoming Christ's we sacrifice our freedom. We squirm when God calls us to be his servants, but being slaves of the King gives us purpose and value. The freedom we have in Christ is for the sake of others. When we understand who we are serving and why we are serving him, our service is transformed. We have a role in the grandest enterprise in the history of the universe: the Kingdom of God!

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Follower after follower of Jesus, when naming their credentials mentions their servanthood as part of their identity. Paul does so in Romans 1:1: “Paul, a servant^[a] of Christ Jesus,” and Phil 1:1 “Paul, a servant^[a] of Christ Jesus,” and Titus 1:1: “Paul, a servant^[a] of God...”. James does so in James 1:1: “James, a servant^[a] of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Peter does so in 2 Peter 1:1: “Simeon^[a] Peter, a servant^[a] and apostle of Jesus Christ.” Jude does so in Jude 1:1: “Jude, a servant^[a] of Jesus Christ...”

We introduce with honorifics: NY Times best seller! CEO! President! Influencer!

We demand our freedoms and then we demand others cater to us. Jesus transforms his disciples into those who give up their freedoms. They do so because of Jesus. Jesus gave up his freedoms for our sake. Phil 2:7. Jesus is a servant.

The question, then, is, what are we servants for?

John 13:14-17: wash feet because I wash feet. Servant of the servant. Matthew 23:11: *The greatest among you shall be your servant.*

When Paul writes the church at Corinth, he is struggling with a church that doesn't trust him. There are those who trust him, but they trust him as a figurehead. Their eyes are set on the flesh.

1 Cor 3:4-9: God's work matters, not ours. 1 Cor 4:1.

Paul takes it a step further. He makes himself a servant to those he serves. 1 Cor 9:19.

Ps 84:10: *For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.*

I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

When you become a slave you experience Christ's freedom. True freedom.

John 8:31-32

Those in jail who had lived free until they were confined to a 6'x 8' cell and then they experienced true freedom.

We experience true freedom in Christ and as we step into our identity as servants of Christ.

How do we step into this?

1) Give yourself to Christ.

Jesus gave himself as a lamb to the slaughter.

2) Release your demands.

Release what you demand. Delight in losing an argument.

3) Serve: we are contributors, not consumers.

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- a. Serving siblings, serving kids, foster care, Gospel Rescue. Day Camp service.