

“The Sweet Spot”

Upgrade Pt. 3

May 15, 2011

We are many times strangers to ourselves. We know other people and their identity better than we know our own.

We have a lot of junk piled on us that makes it difficult to clearly understand ourselves: past mistakes, insecurities, lies. In Ephesians, God comes in with a front-loader to scrape it all off so we can realize who we really are. God wants us to understand our identity so we can understand our purposes.

God wants us to know two things:

1. *The joy of who we are, as in happiness.*

There’s nothing wrong with being a happy Christian. As we know who we are, we should be happy.

2. *A freedom in who we are NOT.*

So many of us live bound up trying to be someone we are not and we were never meant to be.

**The big idea:** It’s in fulfilling God’s purposes, that you will find the upgraded life that He wants for you.

Two questions to test if you are fulfilling your purposes: *Do you feel free?*

*Do you feel authentic?*

John 10:8-10

*“All who came before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”*

Jesus is saying that He’s the way to real life. When we know our identity in Him, we go in and out. We have an ability to function from the place of identity and move into anywhere doing anything He has for us. He says the life he has for us is one of abundance. Abundance in the sense of fulfillment.

Ephesians 2:8-10

*“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”*

That tells us that we are not saved BY works, but we are saved FOR works. For good works, ordained by God. He has good things for us to do, and he wants them done well.

One cliché we need to get around: “No one at the end of their life will wish they spent more time at work.” That’s not in the Bible! While we’re not to be work-aholics, everyone in the Bible works. Most of the Bible heroes had vocations:

Isaiah: real estate developer

Joseph: government official

Moses: shepherd

Daniel: Prime Minister

Jesus: 3/4 of his life was a carpenter.

The Bible was written by workers for workers.

We hear a lot about the fourth commandment: remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. The second part of that command says “Six days you shall labor and do all your work.” How many sermons have you heard on working 6 days? The point is God wants us to love and honor the sabbath AND honor the concept that we are saved for good works.

We aren't talking about being consumed with work in an unhealthy way. We are talking about understanding our identity, discovering our purposes, and pouring our lives into those purposes with joy and freedom.

Ephesians 2:10 says we are His “workmanship” or “masterpiece”. The Greek word used there refers to any form of art. You are not God's refrigerator. You're not a mass-produced appliance. You are a uniquely created work of art. We need to believe that's true.

There is a huge cosmic plan with a beginning and an end, and a lot of stuff to do in between. He has purposeful work for us to do to see His perfect plan come to completion.

“When purpose is not known, abuse is inevitable.” - *Miles Monroe*

We were created by God with gifts and talents that enable us to worship God in ways that no one else can. When we don't understand our identity, we tend to abuse the gifts He's given us. There are a couple guys in this church who used to be very successful drug dealers and are now very successful entrepreneurs. They were abusing their natural gifts. We need to help each other move into the reformed uses of what God has put in us.

*How do we reach the potential that God has for us?*

### **1. Stretching beyond our comfort zones.**

We have to be willing to move beyond what's familiar and beyond what we think we are capable of doing. We each have our own unique “sweet spot”. Get beyond the familiar, but don't move outside of your “sweet spot”. It takes trial and error to figure it out the tension that is there.

This comes with a hard truth: you cannot really be anything you want to be, no matter what your parents told you growing up. You CAN be anything and everything God wants you to be. That's better than being anything you want to be. It's about having confidence in God, not having confidence in ourselves.

Ephesians 4:11-12

*“And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”*

### **2. We are to fit in, but not conform.**

We are supposed to fit together. But don't try to be just like other people operating with a similar gifting as you. It will just lead to despair if you do.

A big part of becoming secure in our identities, discovering our purposes and fulfilling them is surrounding yourself with people who will encourage you. We want to be a church where we are full of faith for each other's purposes. That is the part of a “culture of faith” we want to create.

*How do you start?* You start like Shamgar in the book of Judges 7. He was in a field when the Philistines attacked. He had nothing in his hands but an ox-goad and killed 600 Philistines with it. He used what he had, started where he was, and did what he could. That's how we start with God's purposes for us. And the conclusion's going to be good, because God is behind it.

Revelation 2:17

*“To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.”*

Your name. Only your name. As you look at that name, your life is going to make sense. You're going to understand how everything has worked together for good. You're going to say “Yeah! That's who I am!” It is your name for this life, and for eternity. You will have been through trials and fights in this life, but as you look at that stone, you will realize that the fight was fixed all the way along.