

Session 2

Influence With Love

*Deuteronomy 7:6-11;
I Peter 2:9-10; I John 4:19*

Memory Verse

“For you are a holy people belonging to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be his own possession out of all the peoples on the face of the earth.”

– DEUTERONOMY 7:6, CSB



Influence With Love

THEOLOGICAL THEME: While people struggle to know who they are and live in identity confusion, God's people should be strong in our identity because of who we are in Him. Because of God's great love for us, we are set apart for His plans and purposes.

Most people are aware of the threat of identity theft. In 2021 there were around 42 million victims of identity theft totaling about 52 billion dollars in fraudulent purchasing.¹ There are increasing numbers of companies you can hire to protect you and keep your identity safe. Most people are on the lookout for ways to protect who we are from being stolen by thieves.

While none of us are immune to the threat, we do typically put practices into place to help us avoid becoming another statistic. We know not to share our personal information in the wrong places and to be cautious in certain ways. Your identity is a precious thing that should be guarded and protected. If your identity has ever been breached or stolen, then you know the feeling of violation and sense of outrage that follows.

Our physical and material identity is worth guarding. Yet, many of us fail to give our spiritual identity the same treatment. We wander through life in confusion, allowing the enemy to steal and destroy our God-given identity and then wonder why we live in defeat, missing out on the abundant life He has for us. When you know who you are, you can know how to live, and your life will have Kingdom impact. It's time to stop spiritual identity confusion and theft so you can stand firm on what God says about you.

? Have you ever been a victim identity theft? How did it make you feel?

? Why do many of us protect our physical identity yet overlook our spiritual identity?

? Why is valuable to protect not just your physical identity but also your spiritual identity?

Session Summary

Though the world continually attempts to create confusion and even crisis over identity, God's people are unique and set apart. Because we have a faithful and loving God, we can live in freedom and victory as we live out our God given purpose here on earth. We must be intentional in leading the next generation to know who they are, to recognize God's love for them and to respond by striving to be holy and set apart. Being involved in the local church is one of the ways we continue to grow in our own faith.

1. Who are we? (Deuteronomy 7:6; 1 Peter 2:9)

Knowing who you are is vital in standing firm and living out your call. The world is aggressively attacking the identity of Christ followers and attempting to create confusion and crisis around the issue of identity. When you are not strong in your conviction of who you are, you are vulnerable to the trends and teachings of the world. People today look to base their identity on many things other than God's Word. Whether material possessions, education, power, influence, peer status, athletic ability, or something else, it is dangerous to base your identity on anything other than truth from God because it can be gone in an instant.

This is not a new problem. People in biblical days struggled to find their identity and were prey to the false teachings and customs of the time, too. Moses wrote the words in Deuteronomy 7 to address this issue. Though he was speaking directly to and about the Israelites, 1 Peter 2:9 uses the same type of language to reinforce that these truths apply to God's people today as well. Moses addressed the children of Israel who were God's chosen people and verses in the New Testament use the same language to apply to the church, which includes all Christ followers today.

What words did Moses use to describe the people's identity?

The specific word that Moses chose in Deuteronomy 7:6 in Hebrew is *segullah* and it describes an unusually precious treasure. If something is considered a precious treasure, then you treat it differently. You protect it and guard it from harm. Think about the impact it could have on someone who is struggling to know who they are and what they are supposed to do with their life. Moses wanted the people to understand how valuable they were. By using words like holy, set apart, and precious treasure, he sought to change their narrative and helping them see the bigger picture.

Why does it matter what words you or others use to describe yourself?

Until you see the reality of who you are and the value you have, you will be easily taken in by whatever someone else says about you. God is our Creator; therefore, He alone gets to dictate what is true about us. His Word is full of truths that specify just how valuable He thinks you are. The world seeks to tear you down and keep you wrapped up in shame or insecurity while God seeks to set you free just as He set free the children of Israel. The Lord sees the big picture while we are limited by our human eyesight. This is yet another reason to trust Him and believe Him over anything or anyone else.

Sometimes God calls us by names or labels that we have yet to live up to. Moses described the people as holy before they chose holy living. We are valuable and set apart by God because He loved us and sent Jesus to die for our sins. This is not based on our actions but on His love. It is the kind of love that should inspire and motivate us to act in a way that lives up to how He describes us. God sees what is possible in our lives and calls us to right living that aligns with that reality.

 **Application: How would seeing yourself as holy, set apart, or treasured affect the way you live daily? When was a time you were called by something that motivated you to live up to it?**

2. Why are we special? (Deuteronomy 7:7-8; 1 Peter 2:10)

In order to truly understand who we are and what God wants for us, we need to know the “why.” It usually takes more to change the way we think, feel, or act than just declaring that we are holy or treasured. It is natural to respond to the words in Deuteronomy 7:6 and 1 Peter with questions. Why are we special? Why are we set apart? How could God love us as a precious treasure? The people of Moses’s day likely had similar questions, so he immediately began explaining how it was even possible that they could be viewed as such a special people.

It was not about what they had done. It was not about the size of their nation. They were special and set apart because of God. He is a God who always keeps His promises. Back in Genesis, the Lord made a covenant with their ancestors (see Genesis 15) and made promises that were now being fulfilled. Think about how freeing it must have been for these people who had been enslaved for hundreds of years to be told that they were special and set apart. Then to top it off, they were informed that it wasn’t about their performance or efforts but about their God. These were a people who had been judged and found wanting again and again during their days of slavery. They were used to being evaluated and rewarded or punished according to their actions each day, so this was a completely new concept for them.

? How do you think the people felt to realize that they did not have to produce a certain amount or perform a certain way to be found valuable by God?

The same is true about God's people today. You are set apart, holy, and valuable because of the great love God has for you. It is not about your performance or profitability as the world will try to tell you. It is not about how much money you make or influence you have. It is not about how high up the career ladder you can climb. God loves you and offers His mercy, grace, and forgiveness. We just need to be like the Israelites and accept the beautiful things God freely bestows on His children as we learn to live as a treasured part of the family of God.

A common movie storyline is an unsuspecting person who suddenly finds out that they are actually part of a royal family in some other country. We enjoy seeing these people adapt and adjust to what life is like as part of royalty. They usually struggle with seeing themselves in a new light but finally realize that they can be their own unique selves even as they step into their destiny as a royal. This person did nothing to deserve or even seek out the position but because of their bloodline, they are special and set apart. Being a part of God's family is not about biological bloodlines but about accepting the gift of grace that Jesus offers.

? What is the greatest struggle you experience in seeing yourself as God does?

Imagine these former slaves being told who they really were to God. Moses stressed that they had been redeemed from a place of slavery and set free from the power of Pharaoh. All they had known was bondage and oppression, where Pharaoh had the ultimate power. We are very similar. God loves us and has redeemed us through the blood of Jesus. Yet some of us are still living in bondage to things of the world. We are still subjects to our sin and missing out on the freedom and victory available to

Christ followers. We give power to the wrong people or things and find ourselves conforming to the world's standards instead of God's standards. Then we wonder why we are dealing with an identity crisis.

You may still struggle to believe you are a precious treasure to the Lord because you are believing what the world says about you or the lies of the enemy. You may even be letting shame over your past decisions weigh you down today. As 1 Peter 2 states, God's people receive His mercy and that makes them special, holy, and set apart. To fully accept this truth, you may need to continually remind yourself of what God says about you and why. Believing the truth is the first step, and we must do whatever it takes to engrave it on our hearts and minds until we leave behind the chains of bondage and step into the freedom Christ offers.

 **Application: What has been holding you captive and weighing you down lately? How is God calling you to respond to Jesus today?**

3. What is our response? (Deuteronomy 7:9-11; 1 John 4:19)

God has made it clear what He thinks about His people. God's people are loved, accepted, and special without doing anything to earn that favor. In a culture where we constantly feel pressure to keep up or compare ourselves to everyone else, it is a beautiful thing to know you can be loved and treasured even if you don't feel like you measure up. You can leave behind the pressure to earn God's love and mercy as you recognize it is all about who He is and not about what you do. We do not have to work ourselves to death to gain God's favor— He already loves us.

According to Moses's words, your relationship with the Lord is about more than just right now. The choices you make today about who you will serve and how you will respond to God's love have a long-lasting impact. Moses wrote that God keeps His commands to "a thousand generations." Moses chose this term to denote an immeasurable future and not a specific time period. It is all about leaving a legacy that matters. God's promises are unending and can never fail. That should give us confidence to love and obey Him in the face of any opposition.

? How does it affect the choices you make today to consider that your spiritual identity can have an impact on generations to come?

Moses taught about the love of God for His people and stressed that they were special because of God and not themselves. He used this as motivation to encourage the people to love God in return and then to obey Him with their whole hearts and lives. Though they needed to understand who they were to God, they also needed to understand what their response should be. He declared to the people that God would be faithful but also warned them that there would be consequences for those who hate God or go against Him. Moses wanted the people to be informed about their options. You can love God back and live like He wants you to and reap the rewards of that choice. Or you can hate God and ignore what He tells you to do and reap the consequences of that bad decision. The choice was clear for each person just as it is for us today. The big question now is what will motivate you to make the wise decision?

? Which type of motivation works most effectively on you? Reward or warning? Why?

Scripture makes it clear that because God calls us holy, set apart, and treasured that our lives should look different. These verses in Deuteronomy challenged the people to obey God's commands and statutes fully. Moses wrote that we should obey God and His Word out of love while 1 John 4:19 points out that since God loved us first, we should also love in return.

There is a big difference in wearing a label and living a lifestyle. Anyone can call themselves a Christian, but a true Christ follower seeks to respond to the love God bestows on us by living a life that reflects who Jesus is to the world around us. To be holy and set apart, you must be willing to be different. Sometimes that can

mean you dress or talk differently than people around you. It may mean you show integrity in situations where you may be an outcast or rejected for that choice. You may not get invited to some parties or included in outings because you make different choices than other people. It means attending and being active in the local church will be a priority that you are committed to along with modeling that commitment for your kids.

? Application: How will you be intentional about living differently this week and pouring into the next generation around you?

Conclusion

? If you are a follower of Christ, how will you change the way you talk to or see yourself this week knowing you are holy, set apart, and special in God's eyes? If you are not yet following Jesus, what is God calling you to do in response to this study today?

? Who will you share with that they are loved and accepted by God this week?

? What will you change to make church the priority it needs to be in your life?



FOR NEXT WEEK

Influence with Wisdom

Main Passages

- Deuteronomy 5:1-22

Session Outline

1. God's Word Teaches (Deuteronomy 5:1-6)
2. Love God and Others (Deuteronomy 5:7-21)
3. Our Responsibility (Deuteronomy 5:22,32-33)

Memorize

“For you are a holy people belonging to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be his own possession out of all the peoples on the face of the earth.”

- Deuteronomy 7:6, CSB

References

¹Kenneth Terrell, “Identity Fraud Hit 42 Million People in 2021,” AARP, April 7, 2022, <https://www.aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/info-2022/javelin-report.html>.