

# As God's Man or Woman

Joining God's Team – part 5

February 4, 2024

“...step forward AS God's man or woman...”

## DAY 1: A God-Given Identity

1. “Who am I?”, asked a friend of mine. It is the frantic call of our culture. On one hand, from his earliest years, he remembers his father sucking the life out of him. As if that wasn't enough his father lived through his son's achievements. Even when he excelled in sports, the message he told himself was a mixed one. The “best” he could do was bask for a short time in his excellence, but that was always short-lived and didn't impact him deep enough.

2. Neither his father's message of validation nor my friend's message of self-validation was effective. All his life, this gnawing question raises its confusing head.

3. Any answer that has a human origin or scope will be insufficient. It will leave you with not enough. It is not enough to validate yourself, nor will it be enough to have others validate you.

- The folly of **self**-validation

4. Human validation and self-validation are like a drug. In the immediate it feels so good, so validating, so life-affirming. But as the self-validation drug wears off, it leaves you just a little emptier than before. The craving to have it again slowly builds. You will find yourself on a relentless treadmill to validate yourself, to prove yourself, again and again and again.

*2 Corinthians 10:18 For it is **not** the one **who commends himself** who is approved, but the one **whom the Lord commends**.*

- The folly of **human** validation

*Prov 29:25 **Fear of man** will prove to be a **snare**, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.*

“Fear of man” does not being afraid for your safety, or of being robbed. The kind of fear described here is different. In the extreme, it is seen in the fear of public speaking. It is not the speaking that we fear. It is the *effects* of our speaking we fear. “What if I look stupid? What if I forget where I am in my notes? What if I embarrass myself?” The fear we feel has little to do with our manuscript. The fear because we are trusting those who listen to us to **validate** us.

6. What is it or who is it you are really trusting for your validation? Yourself? Your gifts? Others' approval? Or God?

## **DAY 2: We represent God, not ourselves.**

*Prov 29:25 Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.*

1. As we saw yesterday, trusting your identity to someone else or others is an idea that “sounds good,” but eventually come back to bite us!

2. The metaphor used is a snare.

a. I recently have been a sucker on Facebook for simple traps that jungle people around the world use to catch their food, whether it be a bird, a snake, or a pig. There are three parts to these simple traps. First, it is baited with food that lures the animal to the trap. The animal starts to eat the baited food, making it virtually oblivious to anything else going on. Second, the animal takes the fateful step “forward” that springs the trap, trapping the animal from fleeing. It is caught. Third, there is no getaway. The hunter comes for his prey to take it home to eat.

b. All the while, all the animal knows is it was innocently eating food. It was lulled into letting down its guard, and becoming completely unaware of danger.

c. In our western world, our culture has doubled down, and doubled down again on both self-affirming validation, and other-affirming validation. It is a drug, a hamster wheel, and a trap.

d. But this is hard for people to see. The reason is the immediate good feel we get in uplifting moments. We seek to sew these feel good moments together. But notice carefully how the writer describes the trap

*Prov 29:25 Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD is kept safe.*

e. The effects of placing our validation in the hands of people is not immediate, but the day **is coming** when we will see the inadequacy of what people offer us.

f. The effects will **prove** to be true. It’s just a matter of time.

3. Paul recognizes these options.

*Galatians 1:10 Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.*

4. You may be asking why all this identity stuff is important. Let’s take another look at our mission statement.

By God’s grace, to step forward AS GOD’S MAN OR WOMAN...

5. We do **not** step forward as ourselves, with our knowledge, our strengths, our virtues, etc. We are not representing ourselves! We are representing God! We are not manufacturing our message. We are sharing His message!

6. What strikes you from today’s writing?

### DAY 3: We are ambassadors

1. The interplay between the ministry God gives us, the ministry we do, and the ministry God does through us is interwoven in this passage!

*2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*

2. This verse is one of the staples for Christians. When Christ comes into our lives, our nature begins to change! Hallelujah!

3. But, it is easy for the Christian to sit back and coast, but notice what else God does!

*2 Corinthians 5:18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ **and gave us the ministry of reconciliation...***

4. We are given a ministry! Every Christian!

5. The nature of the ministry is **God** reconciling people to Himself. Paul continues...

*2 Corinthians 5:19 ...that **God** was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them.*

6. While we are given a ministry, it is God who is doing the reconciling!

7. This takes a LOAD of pressure off of us. It is not up to us to change people's beliefs or point of view. Only God can do that!

*2 Corinthians 5:19b ...and **he has committed to us the message** of reconciliation.*

8. While God does the reconciling of people, changing their hearts, He uses us to communicate His message. We are His mouthpieces!

*2 Corinthians 5:20 **We are therefore Christ's ambassadors**, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*

9. United States ambassadors are sent to most countries around the world. They do not speak for themselves. They speak for the president! They speak as if the president was present and speaking to foreign dignitaries.

10. This is the metaphor Paul uses to describe the interplay between God's role and our role in the ministry of reconciliation.

11. THIS IS WHAT IT MEANS TO STEP FORWARD AS GOD'S MAN OR WOMAN...

11. What strikes you from today's writing?

**DAY 4: Ambassadors, and more!**

1. Here is one of Paul’s versions of our Life Vision Statement:

*Ephesians 6:19 Pray also for me, that whenever I speak, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, <sup>20</sup> **for which I am an ambassador in chains.** Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.*

a. Here is another example of seeing ourselves as ambassadors.

b. Even while Paul was in prison(!), he still saw himself as God’s ambassador!

2. Here are two more metaphors which define us as “God’s man or woman”.

*Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timothy, **servants of Christ** Jesus, to all God’s holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:*

a. We are servants of Christ!

Unlike being an ambassador, a servant has no “status” with him, as the world sees it. But Paul sees it as a privilege to serve Christ!

b. We are **God’s** holy **people**.

*1 Corinthians 6:19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? **You are not your own;** <sup>20</sup> **you were bought at a price.** Therefore, **honor God** with your bodies.*

3. Jot down at least three observations that identify us by God, and not by ourselves or others.

\* \_\_\_\_\_

\* \_\_\_\_\_

\* \_\_\_\_\_

4. What strikes you from today’s writing?

## **DAY 5: We have a God-sized purpose!**

1. There are two things that last forever:
  - God's word, (Psalm 119:89), and
  - People.
  
2. Our ministry to people is not just something that affects people for a short time!
  
3. There is nothing more important than people being reconciled to God, redeemed from the empty way of life, and also given the ministry of reconciliation!
  
4. Our natural bent was to think and live, "It's all about me. I'm captain of my destiny, (or the victim), etc.
5. Our old life was primarily self-absorbed.
  
6. We are not stepping forward with *our* agenda, *our* intentions, *our* hope for validation... We step forward His ambitions, His goals, His values, His purposes. (Not my own).
  
7. What strikes you from today's writing?
  
8. What is one thing you will take away from this week about...  
...As God's Man or Woman