

Pastor Jim Jackson, 9/4/16
IDENTITY, pt. 1—I am Loved
1 John 4:7-11

“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” 1 Pet. 2:9

God LOVES

Everyone knows love exists, but few no how to define it. The Bible speaks of God as love (Gr. *ah ga pay*, ‘have affection or benevolence for—often sacrificial’; John 3:16). Like energy, love has a source. God has love intrinsically as part of His nature. God doesn’t just know *about* love or *feel* love, God actually *is* love. Unlike physical energy sources however, God’s love can be accessed at anytime, anywhere, as God is its ever-present Source. Every experience of real love mirrors God’s love—even for those who don’t believe in God! People don’t have to search for God’s love, it already exists for them. God’s love existed before there were people to love and a creation to connect with. God created people to love them, provide for them, and have a relationship with them. *Humans have no true identity until they find their identity in the love of God!*

God loves you so you can LOVE

Believers must build their lives off of their identity in Christ (Col. 3:3). Nowhere in the Bible are people ever told to ‘love themselves more’ or ‘find themselves’ but the focus is continually to love God, serve others and *die* to self (Rom. 8:12-14). *Christians are saved to serve* (Matt. 20:24-28)! The primary element of love from Christ is the desire to love through Christ. *Serving is the spiritual motivation that fills a person’s time and fuels physical action.* Every waking moment, everyone serves someone—either self, God, or others. The percentage of time a person focuses on Jesus, Others or Yourself (JOY) determines who they live to please. The fact love can be chosen means love isn’t primarily feeling-based but rather action-based. *Love doesn’t just happen, it has to be chosen.* No one can say they just *feel* ‘love’ but not *do* ‘love’. The greatest understanding of a person’s identity and worth happens when the love of God is manifested by those who know His love. Believers are to make the most of every opportunity to serve Jesus and others (Eph. 5:16). *Because sacrificial love is so rare, God is most on display when believers are most deferential to others* (John 13:35).