

Striking a Balance When You're Caught in the Middle

By Jessica Bordeleau

Open with prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide your study of the Word.

Who are you?

Have you ever been asked that? It can be a simple question, or it can mean more. How you answer that question depends on the context in which you are asked. If asked that at a party, you might start with sharing your name and where you live. If asked that at a wedding, you might say how you know the bride and groom. If asked that by a police officer, you'd probably hand over your driver's license.

Who are you? We define ourselves by any number of aspects: our job, our family roles, our friends, how we spend our time, sometimes even how we look or how people treat us. Yet all these aspects of who we are don't completely define us. You are more than what you do from 9 to 5; you are more than your role as wife or mother. You are more than how you look or even how good you are.

The relationship that defines you more than anything else in your life is the one between you and God. It is life changing; it is defining; it is eternal.

Answering the deeper implications of the question "Who are you?" molds and shapes your actions, your thoughts, your worldview. It changes how people see you and how you see others. The answer to "Who are you?" begins with your relationship with God.

Read **Isaiah 64:8–9**.

You have been made by God. You are a work of His hand! You are one of God's works of art. That fact alone gives you worth and value, but there's so much more.



Read **Romans 3:22–24**. Our basic identity is summed up in these three short verses. We are sinners. We are forgiven through Christ. Who you are? By virtue of your faith in Christ, you are a forgiven sinner.

Read **1 Peter 2:9–10**. List the words that describe God's people in this passage,

These words apply to you! How does it make you feel to be reminded that God sees you in this way?

Knowing that we are forgiven daughters of God changes everything. All other aspects of who we are come from the gifts He has given us, the ongoing love and care He provides for us, and the meaning and purpose He gives our lives. Understanding who we are in Christ is the beginning of learning to live in the balancing act.

It's no surprise to you that, as Christians, we live in the constant tension of living in the world but not being of the world. Like most dichotomies, going too far either way is dangerous. If we go to the extreme in our attempts at being "not of the world," we may cloister ourselves in the church basement and lose our ability to relate to and influence the world around us.

Read Jesus' prayer for His followers in **John 17:14–18**. Why do you think Jesus wants us to remain in the world?

Read **Matthew 5:14–15**.

From Sunday school days onward we have been taught (as the song says) to “hide it under a bushel? NO! Let it shine!” If you associate only with other Christians, how will the people living in darkness all around you see your light? In what specific ways can you be a reflection of God's light to those in your community this week? List them here.

It can be terribly difficult to reach out to a world that doesn't love us or the message of Christ which we bring. Sometimes it is much easier to point out the sins and problems in the lives of our unbelieving neighbors than it is to show them God's love. The accusing finger of blame is easier to wag than the open hands of service ... and yet an open hand is much more likely to be grasped by another.

Read **1 Peter 3:15–16**. How can your attitude be one of gentleness and respect when you are dealing with someone who disagrees with your worldview as a Christian?

Read **Romans 12:2**. It's clear throughout Scripture that God doesn't want us to be like the world. How can we interact with non-Christians enough to show them God's love and let our light shine without allowing their worldview to change our own?

This balancing act isn't easy, but it is vitally important! God works through us to reach his loved children who are living in darkness. He has sent us into the world to be salt and light. He has sent his people to “all creation” (**Mark 16:15**). That means everyone — even those we don't like, those who have wronged us, and even those who just don't seem to deserve it. Yikes! The balancing act just keeps getting harder!

Read **Colossians 3:12–13**. List the words that describe what our attitude should be.

Wow. That's a tall order. As long as we live in this world, we will struggle with the balancing act of being in the world and not of it. We will totter between our own sinfulness and the works of love we are called to do; our accusing finger will wage war against our open servant's hands. Any dancer can tell you that whenever you are having trouble keeping your balance, it is always good to have a focus point to help steady you. By focusing our eyes at an unmovable point, we are able to prevent ourselves from falling to the ground in a heap. Our focal point is Christ.

Read **Hebrews 12:2**.

When our calling as Christians seems incredibly difficult and impossible to live up to, it's time to go back to our identity

in Christ. When you feel like the balancing act is too much to handle, look in a mirror and ask yourself, “Who are you?” and answer out loud with boldness, “I am God's loved, forgiven daughter!”

While this world has us caught in the middle, there is another lasting world that we are headed to where we will be completely balanced and at peace with who we are and whose we are.

In closing, read **Revelation 21:3–4**. Make this sure hope your focus theme for the week!

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