



DAILY DEVOTIONAL FRIDAY BIBLE STUDY FOR FEBRUARY 3, 2012

WHAT WE'RE KNOWN FOR

"I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get." (Luke 18:12, NIV)

AMONG OUR BUDDIES AT LEAST, we all have a golfing identity. We're known for our specific skills, or our dapper clothes, or our outlook on the game. Others on the Links Players staff kid me about my honesty. If you hit a bad shot, I'll let you know it: "Ooo, that was ugly." (Believe me, I say the same kinds of things about my own shots.)

It's no different in life. People are talking about us. They recognize our weaknesses and our strengths. Most of us are OK with this as long as (a) they are fair in their assessment, and (b) they see in us what we hope they would see in us. For instance, if Jesus said his followers would be known by their love for one another, then we hope we hear others say of us, "They really know how to love."

But now let's get to the nitty-gritty—because most of us don't choose something as important as love when we self-assess our spiritual identity, even before God. The Pharisee in Jesus' parable came to the temple to pray. His words in that prayer revealed what he thought God should see in him: that he fasted and tithed. That is, he was a duly religious man.

Ready for the rub? Jesus dismissed this man.

What the Lord presented in contrast was the picture of another man, a culturally despised tax collector. Righteous before God? No way! And yet, the words he said and the heart they demonstrated captured the very traits Jesus said God honors: contrition and humility.

Look at those words: "God, have mercy on me, a sinner."

How counter to our own culture such a self-description is. What low self-esteem this man displayed! Here's the catch, though. He was not in this humble moment concerned about what he could do. He wanted to know what God would do. Would God supply him the only mercy that could rescue him from his lowly state? No wonder God justifies such a man. His focus—indeed, his identity—is in the right place.

Contrition and humility

Read 2 Samuel 12:1-23. What was David's immediate response to the revelation of his sin, and how did he honor God in the way he met the consequences of his sin?

Read James 4:10. What does God look for in those he would lift up? How did this verse apply in David's life, despite the king's sin? How does it apply in ours?

Renewed in Christ

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. Whom does God choose to be his representatives? Why? (vv. 26-29)

What is Jesus for us (v. 30)? What does this mean in terms of our spiritual identity?
