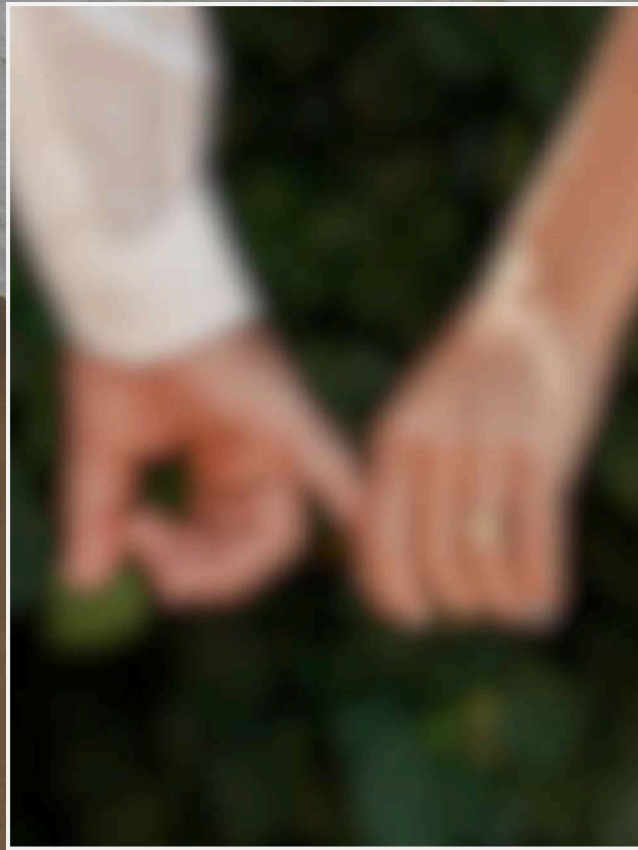


"I AM MY BELOVED'S AND MY BELOVED IS MINE."

SONG OF SONGS 6:3



TAKEN

BENJAMIN JUSTER

One of the most important questions we will ever answer is this: Who am I?

Our answer shapes nearly every aspect of our lives. It influences how we respond to failure, how we navigate relationships, and how we understand our purpose in the world. Yet in a culture filled with competing voices, many people struggle to see themselves clearly.

The Scriptures reveal that our identity is not something we invent. It is something we discover in relationship with the One who created us. God has called each and every one of us, and it is vital that we understand our value to Him.

I love my wife devotedly. We are in an exclusive covenant relationship. One practical expression of our love is our commitment to faithfulness. We belong to one another. We guard each other's trust because our relationship is precious.

When someone approaches a person who is already in a committed relationship, they may receive a simple response: "I'm taken." What if we viewed our relationship with Yeshua in a similar way? What if we understood that we are already spoken for? That we belong to Someone? That our hearts, affections, loyalty, and identity are rooted in an exclusive covenant relationship with the Messiah?

The Apostle Paul wrote that believers have been "**bought with a price**" (1 Corinthians 6:20). We are not our own. We belong to the One who gave Himself for us.

Chosen, Not Trapped

There are two ways to think about being "taken." One meaning suggests being taken against your will—captured, trapped, or forced into something you did not choose. But there is another meaning that is far more beautiful. To be taken can mean to be chosen. It means someone saw you, desired you, and selected you for relationship. This is the language of Scripture.

Yeshua told His disciples, "**You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit**" (John 15:16).



Peter likewise writes, **"You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession"** (1 Peter 2:9).

Before we ever sought Him, He sought us. Before we ever loved Him, He loved us.

The Creator of the universe has His eyes upon you. He has called you by name and invited you into relationship with Himself.

You are not overlooked. You are not merely tolerated. You are His beloved.

Learning to Hear the Voice of the Beloved

Yet many believers struggle to live from this reality. The challenge is not that God has failed to speak. The challenge is that so many other voices compete for our attention.

Some remind us of our failures. Others magnify our shame. Still others insist that our value depends upon our achievements, appearance, status, or success.

In the midst of all these voices, God continues to speak a different message. Henri J.M. Nouwen wrote: *"Every time you listen with great attentiveness to the voice that calls you the Beloved, you will discover within yourself a desire to hear that voice longer and more deeply. It is like discovering a well in the desert. Once you have touched wet ground, you want to dig deeper."*



The voice of God does not deny our weaknesses, but neither does it define us by them. The Father declared over Yeshua, **"This is My Son, whom I love; with Him I am well pleased"** (Matthew 3:17).

Remarkably, He spoke these words before Yeshua had performed a single public miracle or preached a single sermon. Identity preceded ministry. *Belovedness preceded accomplishment.*

The same principle applies to us. Our value is not established by what we do for God. It is established by whose we are.

Who You Are With Shapes Who You Become

Who we spend time with influences our understanding of who we are. It has often been said, *"Show me the five people you spend the most time with, and I will show you who you will become."*

A pastor friend of mine puts it this way: *"You can't change the people around you, but you can change the people around you."*

The influences we welcome into our lives have tremendous power to shape our identity. This is why David wrote, **"Blessed is the one who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked"** (Psalm 1:1). Likewise, Paul reminds us, **"Bad company corrupts good morals"** (1 Corinthians 15:33).

If we spend most of our time listening to voices that reinforce fear, insecurity, cynicism, and unbelief, those influences will shape our perception of ourselves and God.





But if we spend time in God's presence, immerse ourselves in His Word, and surround ourselves with people who encourage faithfulness, our understanding of our identity will deepen.

Most importantly, the more time we spend with Yeshua, the more we begin to see ourselves as He sees us.

The Ancient Lie

The first temptation in the Garden of Eden was ultimately an identity crisis. The serpent suggested that Adam and Eve were missing something.

"For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God" (Genesis 3:5).

The deception was subtle but powerful. It implied that God's creation was somehow incomplete. It suggested that God Himself was not enough. The lie was that humanity lacked something essential and needed something more in order to become complete.

Yet Adam and Eve had already been created in God's image (Genesis 1:27). The very thing the serpent promised was already part of their design.

The enemy's strategy has not changed. He still whispers that God is not enough for you. He still suggests that we need something more—greater success, greater recognition, greater influence, greater approval—in order to become significant.

But the Gospel tells a different story. In Messiah, we are fully loved, fully known, and fully accepted. Our identity begins not with what we lack, but with what God has already given.

Three Ways to Live as God's Beloved

1. Listen for the Father's Voice

Make space each day to hear God's perspective above every competing voice. Spend time in prayer and Scripture, not merely to gain information, but to encounter the One who calls you His beloved.

2. Evaluate the Voices Shaping Your Identity

Consider who and what most influences your thinking. Are those voices drawing you closer to God's truth or reinforcing fear and insecurity? Surround yourself with people who strengthen your faith and remind you of your calling.

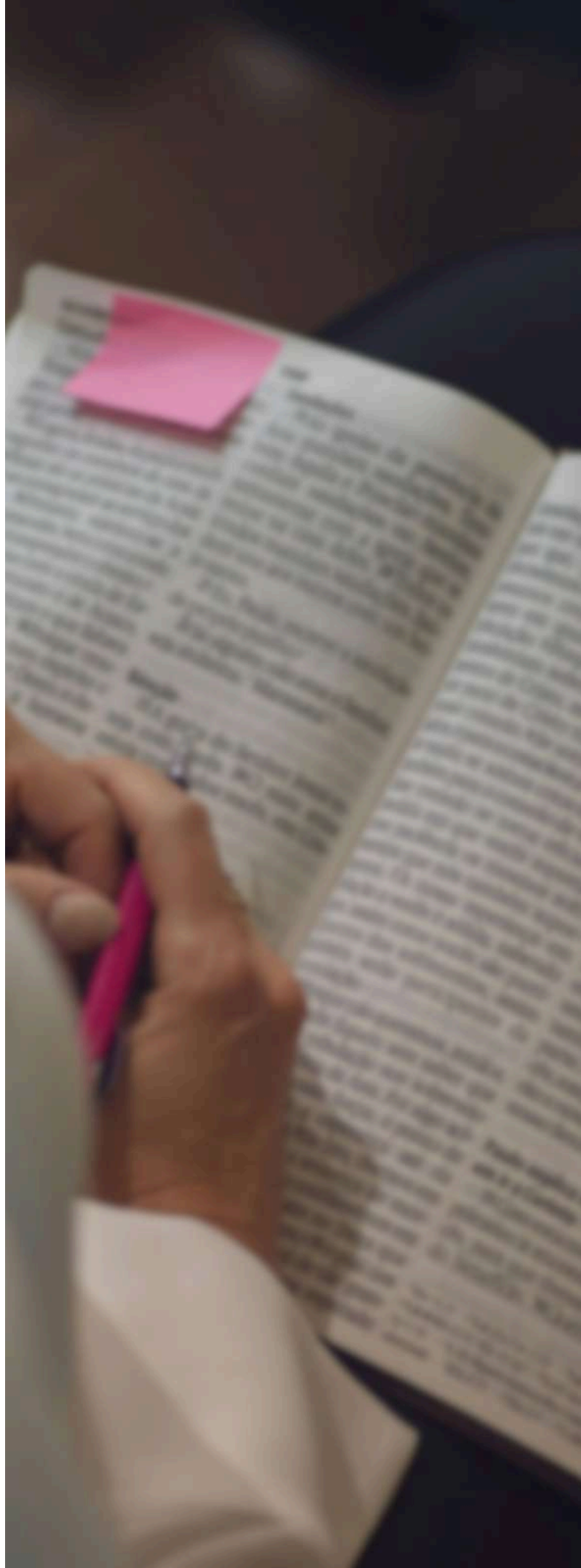
3. Practice Dependence Rather Than Self-Sufficiency

Being chosen by God does not lead to independence from Him. It leads to deeper reliance upon Him. The more we embrace our chosenness, the more we recognize our need for His wisdom, grace, strength, and presence.

Living From Belovedness

God created every human being with a longing that can only be satisfied in relationship with Him. No accomplishment, possession, or human approval can fill the place reserved for God's presence.

The good news is that we do not have to strive to become worthy of His love. We are invited to receive it. We do not have to earn our place in His family. We have been welcomed through Messiah. We do not have to search endlessly for significance. The One who formed us already knows our purpose.



So the next time the world asks who you are, remember this simple truth:

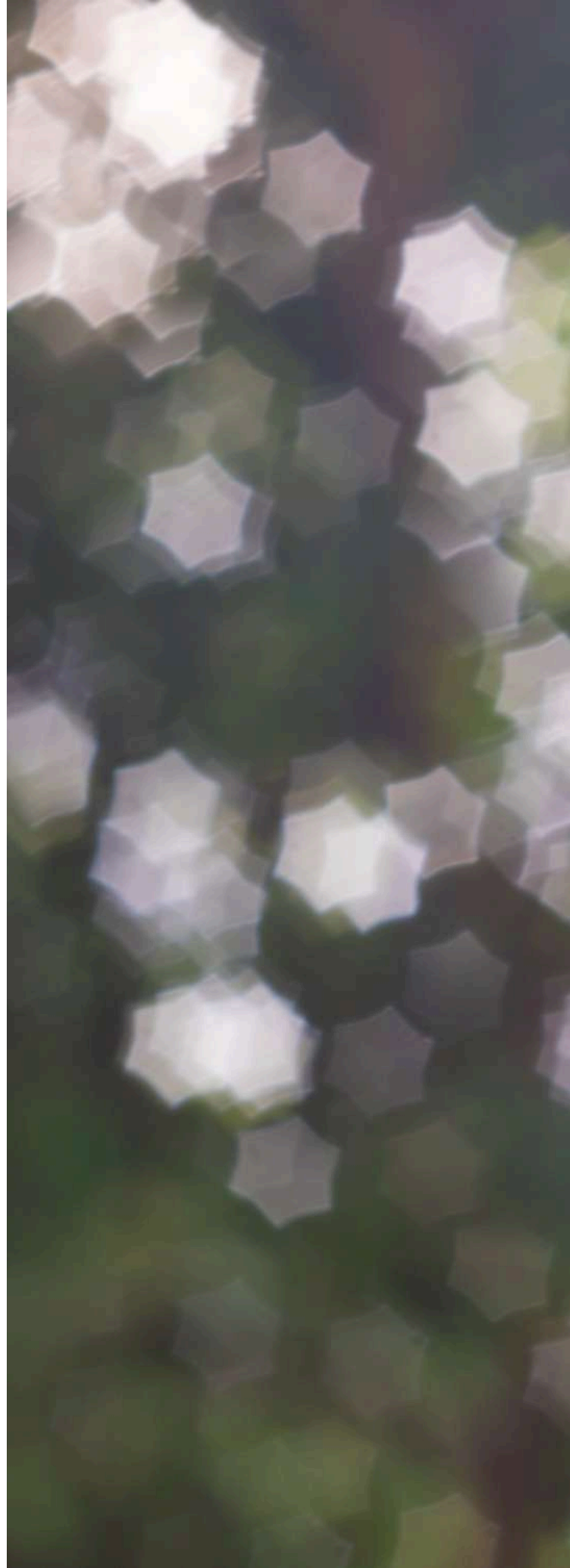
You are taken.

You belong to Yeshua.

You have been chosen, called, and loved by the King of Kings.

And when you learn to live from that reality, everything else begins to come into focus.

 **Benjamin Juster**
Editor in Chief



"Belovedness
preceded
accomplishment."

BENJAMIN JUSTER