

FPDS Graduation 2022  
*What is my name? and Who am I becoming?*  
Rev. David Felker, FPC

WELL, HERE YOU ARE//STUDENTS SO MANY OF THE PEOPLE IN YOUR STORIES – *WHO KNOW YOU BEST/ LOVE YOU MOST* –IN THE SAME ROOM – AT THE SAME TIME – FOR THE SAME PURPOSE – AND THAT IS TO SURROUND AND SUPPORT YOU – AS YOU OPEN THIS NEW CHAPTER IN YOUR LIFE/// SO MANY OF THE PEOPLE IN YOUR STORY – WHO KNOW YOU BEST – AND LOVE YOU MOST (**ALONG WITH** THOSE WHO HAVE REACHED THAT *HEALTHFUL SHORE* AND GONE ON TO BE WITH JESUS) – *BESIDE YOU – AND BEHIND YOU* – CHEERING FOR YOU – AND CARRYING YOU – *JUST AS THEY ALWAYS HAVE BEEN – AND ALWAYS WILL BE*/// TODAY IS AN EBENEZER STONE DAY – TODAY IS A DAY WHERE YOU CAN SAY – “*THUS FAR THE LORD HAS BEEN FAITHFUL TO ME*” (SAMUEL)– TODAY IS A DAY WHERE SOME OF THE TANGLED THREADS OF THE TAPESTRY OF YOUR LIFE MAKE SENSE –TODAY IS A DAY WHERE YOU CAN SAY – “HIS GOODNESS AND MERCY HAVE FOLLOWED AFTER ME” (PS. 23)///AND HERE \*YOU ARE – AT THE COMPLETION OF YOUR TIME AT FPDS –AND WE CELEBRATE \*YOU TODAY – WHAT \*YOU HAVE LEARNED AND THE WAYS YOU HAVE BEEN SHAPED AND FORMED HERE IN THESE YEARS///AND SO IT IS A *HIGH PRIVILEGE* TO BE BEFORE YOU ON THIS WONDERFUL DAY, SO THANK YOU TO MR. SMITH FOR THIS OPPORTUNITY.

AND WHAT I WANT TO CHARGE YOU WITH TODAY – *STUDENTS* – IS TO ASK YOURSELF – AND REALLY TO HOLD ONTO TWO QUESTIONS AND ONE PROMISE X 2 – *AS YOU GO FROM HERE*///

**SO, FIRST QUESTION– WHAT IS YOUR NAME? ASK YOURSELF** WHAT IS MY NAME? X 2 IN OTHER WORDS, WHO AM I? YOU SEE, THE OLDER YOU GET – THE EASIER IT IS TO TRY TO MAKE A NAME – TO TRY TO PROVE YOURSELF – TO TRY TO ESTABLISH YOUR WORTH –TO TRY TO ACHIEVE A SENSE OF SIGNIFICANCE *THROUGH A THOUSAND DIFFERENT THINGS* ///YOU WILL BE TEMPTED MORE AND MORE AS YOU GO FROM HERE – TO THINK THAT SOMETHING ELSE –OUT THERE – WILL GIVE YOU AN IDENTITY AND A NAME///

- YOU WILL BE TEMPTED TO LOOK TO ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE – AND THINK \*THAT YOUR GRADES WILL GIVE YOU A NAME/IDENTITY – \*YOUR GPA WILL MAKE YOU SOMEBODY! *AND THAT WILL BE EXHAUSTING...*
- OR YOU WILL BE TEMPTED TO MAKE A NAME BY BUILDING YOUR POPULARITY/YOUR BRAND – *BY TRYING TO PLEASE EVERYBODY – BY NOT SAYING NO -- THAT AS LONG AS PEOPLE LIKE ME – AS LONG AS THEY LOOK AT ME AND SMILE AND ACCEPT ME – THEN I'M SOMEBODY!/// AND THAT WILL BE EXHAUSTING, AS WELL*
- OR YOU WILL BE TEMPTED TO LOOK AT SPORTS PERFORMANCE – THAT IF I PLAY WELL ENOUGH, I WILL GET THE PRAISE THAT I LONG FOR – AND THAT WILL MAKE ME SOMEBODY///

**ILLUSTRATION:** SOME OF YOU MAY KNOW – THAT MY CLAIM TO FAME IS MY DAD///MY DAD WAS NAMED THE HEAD FOOTBALL COACH AT MISSISSIPPI STATE IN 1985 – AT THE AGE OF 33 YEARS OLD///CONSIDERING THAT I TURN 39 NEXT MONTH – that's a LITTLE BIT DISCOURAGING TO ME PROFESSIONALLY!/// MY DAD WAS A THREE YEAR STARTER AT QUARTERBACK AT MISSISSIPPI STATE, and HE IS ONE OF THE MOST BELOVED MISS. STATE FOOTBALL PLAYERS OF ALL TIME ///IN 1974 HE WON THE SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARD where he is in the company of – TIM TEBOW – PEYTON MANNING – BO JACKSON – AND HERSHEL WALKER/// IN THE LAST 50 YEARS – ONLY THREE PLAYERS FROM THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI WON THIS AWARD – MY DAD, AND TWO GUYS NAMED ARCHIE AND ELI///

BUT FOR ME – a CLASSIC EXAMPLE of my DAD'S HEART – is when my brother and I – AS CHILDREN – FOUND HIS TROPHY – WE FOUND HIS SEC PLAYER OF THE YEAR TROPHY – and GET THIS – WE DREW ALL OVER IT WITH MARKERS!///AND MY MOM CAUGHT US and said those FAMOUS WORDS: –“*WAIT, UNTIL YOUR DAD COMES HOME.*” ///AND WHEN HE DID COME HOME and he saw the TROPHY – and GUESS WHAT HE DID?? HE LAUGHED! – and HE TOOK THE TROPHY UPSTAIRS TO OUR

ATTICK WHERE IT HAS BEEN SINCE THAT DAY. \*\*\*You see, we live in a SPORTS-ADDICTED CULTURE. BUT THAT TROPHY WASN'T WEIGHTY TO HIM. Those things on MY DAD'S RESUME – they DIDN'T GIVE HIM A NAME – THEY DON'T DEFINE HIM, or MAKE HIM SOMEBODY, they AREN'T HIS JUSTIFICATION, or his RIGHTEOUSNESS. BUT HE is HIDDEN IN CHRIST, *“FOUND IN JESUS, not having a righteousness of his own.”*

YOU SEE, I'M CHARGING YOU – STUDENTS – TO ASK THIS QUESTION WHAT IS MY NAME? WHO AM I? AND YOU SEE, WHAT I'M CHARGING YOU TO DO IS TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION – AND REALLY TO ANCHOR YOUR LIFE – IN WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT YOU – NOT IN WHAT **OTHERS** MAY SAY ABOUT YOU – NOT IN WHAT YOUR **BEST OR WORST** MOMENTS - *YOUR TROPHYS OR YOUR TRIALS* – MAY SAY ABOUT YOU – NOT IN WHAT **\*YOU** MAY SAY ABOUT YOURSELF, OR WHAT **YOUR FEELINGS** MAY SAY ON ANY GIVEN DAY///**BUT I'M CHARGING YOU TO ANCHOR YOUR LIFE – IN WHAT \*GOD SAYS ABOUT YOU: THAT YOU ARE BELOVED BY HIM**///HE LOVES YOU WITH A LOVE THAT WILL NEVER LET YOU GO – A LOVE THAT YOU CAN'T LOSE OR FUMBLE – A LOVE THAT WILL NEVER END... THAT'S YOUR NAME!/// THAT YOU are ENGRAVED ON HIS HEART, & UNSNATCHABLE FROM HIS HAND. THE APPLE OF HIS EYE, THE ONE HE REJOICES OVER WITH SINGING /// & HIS LOVE – FOR \*YOU IS IN NO WAY TIED – (1) TO WHAT YOU DO – (2) TO WHAT YOU HAVE –OR (3) TO YOUR BEST MOMENTS or YOUR WORST MOMENTS... BUT REMIND YOURSELF THAT YOUR IDENTITY IS IN CHRIST

SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO PROVE YOURSELF – BUT THE LORD GIVES YOU A NAME/// YOUR PRIMARY JOB – IS TO RECEIVE HIS LOVE///YOUR IDENTITY/NAME IS NOT ACHIEVED –BUT IT IS RECEIVED... BUT YOU CAN ONLY RECEIVE IT WITH EMPTY HANDS – YOU CAN ONLY RECEIVE IT – AS YOU SPREAD YOUR TROPHIES AT HIS FEET –AS YOU DISCOVER WHO YOU ARE IN- GOD'S PRONOUNCEMENT OVER YOU, IN CHRIST. GOD TELLS YOU – THAT YOU ARE THE BELOVED. THE BELOVED. THAT'S YOUR NAME, CHRISTIAN! THE FIRST QUESTION – WHAT IS MY NAME?

**BUT SECOND WHO AM I BECOMING? X 2**///I AM 38 YEARS OLD – AND I HAVE THAT QUESTION – WRITTEN AT THE TOP OF A SHEET OF PAPER – THAT I LOOK AT EVERY SINGLE DAY WHO AM I BECOMING X 2 IN MY CHARACTER?///THE NEXT YEARS OF YOUR LIFE – STUDENTS – WILL BE INTENSE YEARS – OF CHARACTER FORMATION///SO THINK CAREFULLY – ABOUT WHO YOU ARE BECOMING///

**ILLUSTRATION:** I RECENTLY LISTENED TO A PODCAST – ABOUT A BASKETBALL PLAYER – NAMED SHANE BATTIER///SHANE PLAYED COLLEGE BASKETBALL AT DUKE – BUT WHEN HE GOT TO THE NBA/THE PROS – HE QUICKLY DISCOVERED THAT EVERYONE AROUND HIM WAS WAY MORE TALENTED – AND HE WAS NO LONGER A STAR///BUT IF YOU ARE A BASKETBALL FAN – YOU MAY REMEMBER IN 2010 – THE MIAMI HEAT BECAME A TEAM OF ALL STARS – WITH LEBRON JAMES AND DWAYNE WADE AND CHRIS BOSH – BUT THEY WEREN'T VERY GOOD – ALL OF THESE ALL-STARS COULDN'T WIN ANY GAMES!///AND SO AFTER THE SEASON – THEY DIDN'T SIGN ANOTHER ALL STAR – THEY SIGNED A PLAYER WITH CHARACTER – WHO HAD JOY – WHO MADE HIS TEAMMATES BETTER – WHO WORKED HARD – WHO WAS KIND – AND HIS NAME WAS SHANE BATTIER///SHANE HELPED THEM WIN MULTIPLE NBA CHAMPIONSHIPS – HE MADE THEM BETTER – AND HIS HIDDEN INGREDIENT, THEY SAID – WAS HIS HUMILITY AND HIS CHARACTER///

**MY PRAYER FOR YOU – JUST LIKE MY PRAYER FOR MY OWN CHILDREN – IS THAT THE LORD WILL GIVE YOU \*GREAT GIFTS – BUT THAT HE WOULD GIVE YOU CHARACTER THAT EXCEEDS YOUR GIFTS**///DREAM BIG – YES – GO AFTER EXCELLENCE WITH EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT – YES – DO GREAT THINGS IN YOUR CREATIVE – ATHLETIC – AND ACADEMIC PURSUITS – YES///”**BUT REMEMBER THAT GOD IS \*FAR MORE INTERESTED IN THE PERSON YOU ARE BECOMING – THAN IN WHAT YOU DO OR ACCOMPLISH” (DILLARD)**/// *“BUT MAN LOOKS AT THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE – THE LORD LOOKS ON THE HEART.”* (SAMUEL)/// IN OTHER WORDS, PURSUE EXCELLENCE WITH EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT – BUT WHO ARE YOU – BECOMING IN THAT PURSUIT?

**WHO ARE YOU BECOMING? AND WHERE DOES YOUR DEEPER AMBITION LIE – AS YOU GO FROM HERE – ON WHAT YOU ACCOMPLISH or ON WHO YOU ARE BECOMING?**

**SO THOSE ARE THE TWO QUESTIONS – WHAT IS MY NAME? – AND WHO AM I BECOMING? BUT THIRD – AND LAST – AND VERY BRIEFLY – THE PROMISE**///BUT NO MATTER WHERE YOU GO FROM HERE – GOD WILL BE THERE – BECAUSE HE PROMISES NEVER TO LEAVE YOU OR FORSAKE YOU – YOU CAN'T GET AWAY FROM HIS LOVE – YOU CAN'T GET \*OUTSIDE OF IT –YOU CAN'T OUTFRAN IT///*PSALM 139 SAYS “WHERE SHALL I GO FROM YOUR SPIRIT? WHERE SHALL I FLEE FROM YOUR PRESENCE?... IF I TAKE THE WINGS OF THE MORNING AND DWELL IN THE UTTERMOST PART OF THE SEA, EVEN THERE YOUR HAND SHALL LEAD ME, AND YOUR RIGHT HAND SHALL HOLD ME”*///

**ILLUSTRATION:** LET ME CLOSE WITH THIS. A FEW YEARS AGO I REMEMBER TEACHING GOT MY SON, MARSHALL, TO RIDE A BICYCLE///AND AT THE TIME WE LIVED ACROSS FROM THE LAUREL STREET PARK HERE IN BELHAVEN – AND I'D TAKE HIM OUT ON THAT GRASS –AND I HELD ON TO THE BACK OF HIS BICYCLE///AND HE WOULDN'T RIDE – UNLESS HE KNEW I WAS WITH HIM – HOLDING ONTO HIM///AND I'D WHISPER TO HIM FROM BEHIND: *“DAD'S GOT YOU – DAD'S WITH YOU – I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU GO – JUST KEEP PEDDLING”*///AND THEN HE COULD MOVE FORWARD///AND SOMETIMES I'D HEAR HIS LITTLE VOICE – *“DAD'S WITH ME, DAD'S GOT ME...”*///

AND AS YOU GO FROM HERE – YOU ARE ON A JOURNEY – AND YOU ARE PEDDLING/// AND WHILE YOU ARE PEDDLING – HIS PROMISE SAYS TO YOU *“I'VE GOT YOU. I'M WITH YOU. I'M NOT GOING TO FORSAKE YOU OR FAIL YOU OR LOSE YOU OR LEAVE YOU OR LET YOU GO”* – NO MATTER WHAT YOU ARE GOING THROUGH – NO MATTER THE TWISTS AND TURNS – NO MATTER THE TANGLED THREADS – *“ I'VE GOT YOU – I'M WITH YOU...”* – YOU KEEP PEDDLING – ALL THE WAY HOME – ROOTED IN THE GOD OF GRACE. LET ME PRAY...