

I. Introduction

- A. Welcome to week seven in our series called Bite Me! We've been talking about sins of the tongue. Last week, we talked about Labeling. How we tag people: stupid, ugly, fat, worthless, unwanted. And how those tags play with our minds, and can even wreck our lives.
- B. There are two labels in your life that impact you more than any other:
 - 1. How you label God
 - 2. How you label yourself
- C. How you label God and how you label yourself create a circuit. You label God as a bully; you label yourself as a failure. You label yourself as guilty; you label God as a remorseless judge.
- D. These two go hand in hand. Your labels create a circuit. And once that circuit spins fast enough, you shoot out the third category of labels.
 - 1. How you label other people
- E. Let's focus on that today—the labels you put on others. And we have a couple of great case studies from the Bible.

II. Jesse, David's Father

- A. Back-story: This part of God's big story happens about 1,000 years before Christ. Samuel is God's prophet. God sends him to identify the second king of Israel. He sends Samuel to a little town called Bethlehem, to a family headed by Jesse, and says, "One of Jesse's sons will be Israel's next king. You'll know him when you see him, because I'll tell you." That's what God tells Samuel.
- B. So Jesse parades his strapping sons in front of Samuel:
 - 1. *"When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, 'Surely this is the LORD's anointed!' But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn't make decisions the way you do! People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at a person's thoughts and intentions.' Then Jesse told his son Abinadab to step forward and walk in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, 'This is not the one the LORD has chosen.' Next Jesse summoned Shammah, but Samuel said, 'Neither is this the one the LORD has chosen.' In the same way all seven of Jesse's sons were presented to Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, 'The LORD has not chosen any of these.'" 1 Samuel 16:6-10, NLT.*
- C. Wait a minute! God told Samuel that Israel's next king would be one of Jesse's sons, but Jesse paraded all seven (!) of his sons in front of Samuel, and the Lord didn't choose any of them.
- D. Samuel scratches his head, and looks a little sideways at Jesse.
 - 1. *"Then Samuel asked, 'Are these all the sons you have?'" "There is still the youngest," Jesse replied. "But he's out in the fields watching the sheep." "Send for him at once," Samuel said. "We will not sit down to eat until he arrives.'" 1 Samuel 16:11, NLT.*
- E. Good going, Jesse! The prophet says "Show me your all your sons" and you skip one. Nice job.
- F. And even when Samuel's standing there, scratching his head, and saying no seven times—even in the awkward silence when everybody's confused, you still don't pipe up and say—hey guys, there's still number 8, out in the pastures, little David. No, you have to wait for Samuel to ask if you're sure these are all your sons. Very, very nice dad. Wow.
- G. So, we're talking about labels, and there are a million of them: stupid, fat, ugly, worthless, evil, bad, short, tall, skinny, geek, nerd, loner, four-eyes, useless, geek, nerd, slut. These labels stick to the deep places in our souls. They can mess us up for a long time. David didn't get a label like that here.
- H. David's label is hard to pinpoint. It's not that Jesse called David any bad names, or cursed him out, or shouted he was a worthless piece of humanity. No. Jesse said nothing. He simply ignored him.
- I. David's own father labeled him with one of the most painful labels of all: NOBODY. You don't exist to me. I don't think about you. I don't spend time with you. I don't listen to you. To me, you are nobody. Ouch.
- J. That was David and his father, Jesse. But thank God, to God, David was somebody.
 - 1. *"So Jesse sent for him. He was ruddy and handsome, with pleasant eyes. And the LORD said, 'This is the one; anoint him.' So as David stood there among his brothers, Samuel took the olive oil he had brought and poured it on David's head. And the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him from that day on..." 1 Samuel 16:12, 13, NLT.*
- K. Listen. How do you label the people God has woven into your life? What do you call them? What do you expect from them? What do you say about them when they are not listening?

III. Labels

- A. I asked on Facebook for some label stories, and I can't share all I received, but here are some that stood out for me:
- B. Not Enough
 - 1. Not enough—it can feel like a big stamp over every area of my life (not all the time, mainly when I feel those struggling days, it always comes back to these things).
 - 2. Growing up I was not smart enough, not popular, not pretty enough, not in style enough, not attractive or thin or wealthy enough, not worthy enough.
 - 3. Today, people think I've achieved a lot, but my label is still there, hiding in the shadows.
 - 4. My divorce was sort of like that stamp across my face visible to everyone. I was not enough for my former husband to fight for our 15-year marriage. So then to others and myself, I'm not a good enough woman and Christian enough to not have my marriage end.
 - 5. Though people love my children and say I'm a great mom, I know I haven't been enough of the mother I want to be for them. I'm just "not enough."
 - a) I want to say to everybody who's been labeled "not enough"—not good, smart, rich, educated, sexy, funny, interesting, extroverted—whatever not enough.
 - (1) *"And you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." Colossians 2:10, NKJV.*
 - (2) *"And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace." John 1:16, NKJV.*
 - (3) *"And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work." 2 Corinthians 9:8, NKJV.*
 - b) You are enough and you have enough and more than enough because you are in Christ Jesus.
- C. That hurts to read, but we're all there. Here's another one:
 - 1. When I was growing up, I had a somewhat compromised immune system, so I got sick a lot and my mom always bailed me out, but when I became an adult, my body seemed to be able to ward off things fine, but my mother would still say, "Don't try to do so much, because you know you're not very strong." [There's a label, right there.]
 - 2. I look back and see how often I used "sickness" to get out of doing things or to not do things with all my might. I questioned my own "strength" until I was in my mid-forties. Now I hate that label and rebel against it! "I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength."
- D. This one is powerful.
 - 1. "A few years ago I was labeled as "negative" and "one who sees the glass half empty." This label was "graciously" given to me by the training manager at my place of employment in or around 2002 and has followed me since. I wish I would have had the nerve

back then to rebel against it, to say “you don't have the right to put that label on me,” but I was without backbone that early in my career.

2. I've survived childhood sexual abuse, serious health issues (two heart procedures, a 22 pound tumor as a teenager, pre-cancerous ovarian tumor as an adult, along with several other surgeries along the way), single parenthood for several years with two children (one disabled) while working 40-60 or more hours per week at that same job with no help from anyone. I've worked my way out of poverty, overcoming the struggles along the way, and became the person I am today. I'm not perfect, not even close. But, I want to scream from the top of my lungs “I AM NOT NEGATIVE!!! LOOK AT ME! LOOK AT WHAT I HAVE DONE! I HAVE NOT QUIT OR GIVEN UP! I'M A FIGHTER, DARN IT!”

- a) I want to tell this person, “God sees you and He is smiling ear to ear. And the angels see you, and they're giving you a standing ovation. And the demons see you, and they're scrambling to get out of your way. No, you're not negative, but you're one of the most positive people I can imagine. Good job.”

E. One more:

1. In school I was labeled as the ugly, "rat faced" awkward child who could never do anything right, and was always in the way. From elementary school and on into high school, I believed this about myself, and believed that this was how God saw me as well. I felt as though every time I made a mistake, His love/approval meter of me would go down a point. By the time I graduated, I felt worthless, hopeless, unattractive, and most certainly going to hell, because how could God love something as annoying and imperfect as me?

F. This last person who wondered how God could love something as annoying and imperfect as her—I'm going to come back to her story.

G. But let's go back to David for a while.

IV. David and his brothers

- A. You would think after this that the family would show David a little respect, but no. He isn't king yet, so he goes back to his sheep. Enter some bad guys name the Philistines. They draw up an army to attack the Jews. The Philistines send out Goliath to taunt the Jews. He's a really, really big guy. The top of Goliath's head was even with a basketball rim, that's how tall he was.
- B. Every day, Goliath taunted the Jewish soldiers. And guess whose three oldest sons were part of the Jewish army—Jesse's. And, like their fellow soldiers, they all freaked out over Goliath, and nobody wanted to fight him.
- C. Yeah, David's big brothers. So impressive to look at, but when the fight comes, they wimp out. Don't you think God knows what He's doing when He picks David?
- D. One day, Jesse sends David to bring food to his brothers, and to find out how the war is going. David sees Goliath taunting God's people. And he sees God's people scurry like mice back to their little tents. David is bold. He asks,
 1. *“Who is this pagan Philistine anyway, that he is allowed to defy the armies of the living God?”* 1 Samuel 17:26, NLT.
- E. And his oldest brother overhears this—the brother who should have gone out to fight Goliath.
 1. *“But when David's oldest brother, Eliab, heard David talking to the men, he was angry. ‘What are you doing around here anyway?’ he demanded. ‘What about those few sheep you're supposed to be taking care of? I know about your pride and dishonesty. You just want to see the battle!’”* 1 Samuel 17:28, NLT.
- F. Did you notice the labels? Eliab calls David cocky, and dishonest, and reminds him that he's not a warrior, he's “sheep boy.”
- G. You know, if you're somebody's big brother or big sister, your job is to build up, not tear down. How you label your little brothers and sisters is huge. It's always huge. The tongue has the power to tear down, and the tongue has the power to build up.
- H. Check out one more case study from the New Testament, shortly after the time of Jesus.

V. Paul and Ananias

- A. *“Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem”* Acts 9:1, 2, NKJV.
 1. So here we have this guy named Saul, and he is a Christian killer. He is a rising star in Judaism. He has the best training in religion, and his personal mentor was the Jewish equivalent of Yoda.
 2. And to Saul, this little group called Christians represents a dangerous cult within Judaism. He plans to wipe them out. And now, he is on the road to Damascus to round up some Christians and arrest them.
- B. *“As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ And he said, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ Then the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting...’ So he, trembling and astonished, said, ‘Lord, what do You want me to do?’ Then the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’ And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. Then Saul arose from the ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank”* Acts 9:3-9, NKJV.
 1. God does an intervention on Saul, and now, this fierce religious warrior sits blind in a room in Damascus, and he's so miserable he can't eat anything and he can't drink anything for three whole days.
 2. At this point in his life, how would you label Saul? Christian killer. Religious tyrant. Bad guy. Nothing really flattering to say about the guy.
- C. *“Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, ‘Ananias.’ And he said, ‘Here I am, Lord.’ So the Lord said to him, ‘Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight.”* Acts 9:10-12, NKJV.
 1. How would you like to be Ananias? Really? A tale of two men: A good man, Ananias; A bad man, Saul. God sends the good man to the bad man—a risky proposition.
- D. *“Then Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name’”* Acts 9:13, 14, NKJV.
 1. Labels, true labels, accurate labels: a notorious man, a persecutor, a prosecutor. Lord, are You sure you want me to go to this man?
 2. Look at God's answer:
- E. *“But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake’”* Acts 9:15, 16, NKJV.
 1. Did you know that God labels you according to your identity and not your behavior? God labels you according to your destination, not your starting point? God sees the complete picture of you standing in His heavenly throne room, wrapped in robes of Christ's righteousness. Do you know God sees the future you today?
 2. And furthermore, do you know that your future is wrapped up in Jesus Christ?

3. God saw the finished product in Paul. To God, He is no longer Christian killer. Paul is now Chosen Vessel. He is no longer Persecutor of the church. He is now Martyr for the cause of Christ.
 4. We have to get to a point where the labels we put on other people match the labels God puts on them in Christ.
 5. And that's what Ananias does right now:
- F. *"And Ananias went his way and entered the house; and laying his hands on him he said, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' Immediately there fell from his eyes something like scales and he received his sight at once; and he arose and was baptized"* Acts 9:17, 18, NKJV.
1. Ananias calls him Brother. Brother Saul. Wow. I would have gone in there, "Listen you jerk, you're lucky I even bothered to show up."
 2. Brother—part of the family, part of my family. Part of God's family
 3. Ananias says ONE SENTENCE TO PAUL, and it changes his life. Now it's your turn.
 4. God called David a king, even when everybody else called him a nothing.
 5. God called Saul His chosen vessel, even when everybody else called him his generation's Osama bin Laden.
 6. And the people around you need to hear from your lips not your label, but God's label on their deepest, truest identity in Christ.
 7. You've got no business putting any label on anybody else that diminishes their birthright as a child of God. Your tongue should be a fountain of blessing, not an eruption of cursing. Your tongue should build up, not tear down. We want to be a tribe of encouragers, not discouragers.
 8. The amazing thing is that God sees you through the lenses of Jesus Christ. Wanna know what that looks like? Buckle in; because there is an avalanche of awesome labels that God sticks onto you the moment you are saved.
 9. Wanna hear some of them? Buckle in.

VI. Labels

A. United (to Jesus)

1. I am united to Jesus: In Christ, one with Him. Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 1:30
2. I am chosen in Him.
3. I am elect in Him, predestined to be like Him. Rom 8:29; Eph 1:4. This is called Union with Christ. On the day that you were saved, you were joined to Christ. You became one with Him. You were permanently attached to Jesus Christ, and are now in permanent union with Him. That means that everything that Jesus has, you have. Forever, you can say, I am united to Jesus. This means that you share the:
 - a) Possessions of Jesus
 - b) Nature of Jesus
 - c) Status of Jesus
 - d) Privileges of Jesus
 - e) History of Jesus
 - f) Destiny of Jesus
4. I am Reconciled to God. The barrier between me and God has been permanently demolished. 2 Cor 5:20; Col 1:20; Eph 2:14-17.
5. I have Peace with God. Rom 5:1.
6. I am precious to Him. Ps 139:17;
7. I have been brought near to God. Eph 2:13.
8. I am baptized into Christ. Rom 6:3; Gal 6:27.
9. My life is hidden with Christ in God. Col 3:3.
10. I am God's workmanship. Phil 1:6; Eph 2:10.
11. I am the Temple of God. 1 Cor 3:16.

B. Pardoned (from sin)

1. I am Forgiven. My sins are washed away forever. Col 2:13; Eph 1:7; Col 1:14; 3:13; Ps 103; Rom 8:33, 34.
2. I am Redeemed. Purchased and set free from the slave market of sin. Gal 5:1; Rom 3:24; Col 1:14; 1 Pe 1; 18.
3. I am bought with a price; I belong to God. 1 Cor 6:19,20.
4. I am free from Condemnation. Rom 8:1,2,31-34.
5. I am free from bondage to Sin. Rom 6:18,22; Rom 8:2.
6. I am free from bondage to my Flesh. I am dead to my Old Life. The Old Me is crucified with Christ, dead with Christ, and buried with Christ. I am not who I used to be before I was saved. Rom 6:4-8; Gal 2:20; Col 3:3; 2:12.
7. I am free from bondage to the Law. John 1:17; Rom 6:14; Rom 7:2-6; 2 Cor 3:6-13.
8. I am free from bondage to Death. Rom 8:2.
9. I am free from bondage to the Devil. I am Delivered from the Domain of Darkness. Col 1:13; 2; 15. The devil has no legal authority over me. Ac 26:18; Heb 2:14.
10. I am spotless, faultless, blameless, and clean before my God. 1 Cor 1:8; Jude 24; 2 Peter 1:9; Isa 1:18.
11. I am Accepted—totally, forever, acceptable to God. I am as acceptable to God as Jesus is. I am acceptable to God in the Beloved One (Jesus). Eph 1:6.
12. I am Secure forever. Once I am saved, I am always saved. God Himself bears the burden for me to stay secure. John 10:27-29; Rom 8:38-39; Jude 24.

C. Exalted (to the highest rank)

1. God is satisfied with me—Propitiation: All that satisfies God when He looks at Jesus has been forever applied to me. 1 John 2:2; Rom 3:10; 1 John 4:10.
2. I am Adopted. I am a child of God—Born Again. John 3:3, 6; 1 Peter 1:23; Titus 3:5. Made alive. Eph 2:1; Col 2:13. Sons/Daughters of God. 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 3:26. A new creation. 2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15; Eph 2:10.
3. I am Justified/Declared Righteous. Rom 3:22; 1 Cor 1:30; 2 Cor 5:21; Phil 3:9. I am robed in the righteousness of Christ, and when God looks at me, He sees Christ's righteousness. God is as committed to defend my right standing with him now that I am saved as much as He was committed to condemning me before I was saved.
4. I am Sanctified—perfected forever. Heb 10:14.
5. I am Sealed by the Holy Spirit. John 7:39; 2 Cor 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30.
6. I am a member of the body of Christ. 1 Cor 12:27.
7. I am going to heaven. I have everlasting life. John 17:3; Rom 6:23; Titus 1:2; 3:7; 1 John 5:11-13.
8. I share the destiny of Christ. 2 Tim 2:12; Re 20:6.
9. I am Glorified. John 17:22; Col 4:1-4; Rom 8:30.
10. I am a citizen of God's heavenly kingdom. Col 1:13; 1 Thes 2:12; Phil 3:20; Eph 2:19; Luke 10:20; Heb 12:22.

- 11 . I am a member of the household and family of God. Eph 2:19; Gal 6:20; 2 Tim 2:19.
 - 12 . I am a saint. I am in the Fellowship of the Saints. John 17:21; 11:21-23; Eph 4:1-3.
 - 13 . I am the Bride of Christ. 2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:25-27.
 - 14 . Jesus is my Head (Col 2:10), my Advocate (1 John 2:1), my Brother (Heb 2:11) and my Friend (John 15:15).
 - 15 . I am an Heir of God and Joint-Heir with Jesus. Rom 8:17.
 - 16 . I am Complete in Christ. Col 2:10.
- D. Empowered (to really live)
- 1 . I am set on the Rock, Christ Jesus. Set on a sure foundation. 1 Cor 3:11; 10:4; Eph 2:20.
 - 2 . I am a Royal Priesthood. 1 Pet 2:5,9. I have total access to the throne room of God without limitation.
 - 3 . I have access to Grace. Rom 5:2; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 2:18. I have grace to help in time of need. Heb 4:16.
 - 4 . I have Resurrection Power. Eph 1:19; Phil 2:13; Phil 4:13; 3:10.
 - 5 . I have been given a spirit of power, and love, and a sound mind. 2 Tim 1:7.
 - 6 . I am spiritual royalty, enthroned with Christ in the heavenly realm. Eph 2:6.
 - 7 . I am indwelt by the Spirit. He is greater than the spirit (devil) that is in the world. 1 John 4:4. He will never leave me. Heb 13:5.
 - 8 . I have Christ's authority. Luke 9:1; 10:18.
 - 9 . I am blessed with every spiritual blessing. Eph 1:3; His divine power has granted me all things that pertain to life and godliness. 2 Pet 1:3.
 - 10 . I can rise above my struggles--His grace is sufficient for me. 2 Cor 12:7-9;
 - 11 . Though I may stumble, I shall never fall. Ps 37:24.
- E. Unleashed (to make a difference in the world)
- 1 . I am the salt of the earth. Matt 5:13, 14;
 - 2 . I am the light of the world. Matt 5:13, 14;
 - 3 . I am an ambassador of Christ. 2 Cor 5:20;
 - 4 . I am Christ's witness. Ac 1:8.
 - 5 . I am a Co-worker with God. 1 Cor 6:1; 3:9.
 - 6 . I am a steward (manager of another's possessions) of the mysteries of God. 1 Cor 4:1.
 - 7 . I am a steward of the grace of God. 1 Pet 4:10.
 - 8 . I am gifted--a unique combination of talents, experiences, and strengths that makes me valuable to the body of Christ. Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:1-12;
 - 9 . I am a soldier of the Cross. 2 Tim 2:4.
 - 10 . I am on a mission. John 20:21.
 - 11 . I am MORE than a Conqueror. Rom 8:37.
 - 12 . I can change the world. Ac 17:6.
 - 13 . I can shine like the stars forever. Dan 12:3.
 - 14 . I can do ALL things through Christ. Phil 4:13; Eph 4:15.
- F. That's your identity in Christ. And even if God labels your BEHAVIOR as terrible, He still labels your BEING as wonderful.
- G. Because God knows that if you want to change someone's behavior, you have to change the labels you put on them first. We love God because He first loved us.
- H. You can be like Ananias. You can be like Samuel. I absolutely have no doubt that God has someone in your life this week who needs you to label them as God sees their potential in Christ. Call them by a new name. You might be the first person to give voice to the greatness inside that someone they always thought was too good to be true. No it's not. In Christ, it's all true. It's who we are. It's the real us. It's our new name. Rise up and receive it.
- I. This story gives me hope. That young woman who felt ugly and worthless and guilty became part of our church and you, the people of Neighborhood Church, reached out to her. And this is how her story ends, and I'm giving her the final word (Remember she felt ugly, rat faced, awkward, and worthless):
- 1 . After high school I moved away from my hometown, and was introduced into a community of people [she's talking about Neighborhood Church] who took me under their wings and showed me love, and acceptance. My heart was transformed as I began to learn about Christ's unconditional love, and about my own identity as His beloved child. Today I can stand firm in the knowledge that I am beautiful, valuable, gifted, and truly blessed as the Lord's chosen daughter, loved and cherished by her Heavenly Father.