
GETTING MY ATTENTION

“G.I. Joe” The origin of this popular nickname is murky.

A popular theory links the term to the early 20th century, when “G.I.” was stamped on military trash cans and buckets. The two-letter abbreviation stood for the material from which these items were made: galvanized iron. Later, the definition of GI broadened and during World War I it was used to refer to all things Army-related, according to “Origins of the Specious: Myths and Misconceptions of the English Language” by Patricia T. O’Conner and Stewart Kellerman. When this happened, GI was reinterpreted as “Government Issue” or “General Issue.”

The prevalence of the term led soldiers in World War II to start referring to themselves as GIs. Some servicemen used it as a sarcastic reference symbolizing their belief that they were just mass-produced products of the government. During the war, GI Joe also became a term for U.S. soldiers. Cartoonist Dave Breger, who was drafted into the Army in 1941, is credited with coining the name with his comic strip titled “G.I. Joe,” which he published in a weekly military magazine called Yank, beginning in 1942. In 1964, U.S. toy company Hasbro, after taking note of competitor Mattel’s huge success with the Barbie doll (1959), debuted “G.I. Joe,” a military-themed line of action figures for boys.
<http://www.history.com/news/ask-history/why-are-american-soldiers-called-gis>

FOCUSING MY THOUGHTS

The letters “G” and “I” also have a meaning found in the Scripture readings for this Second Sunday after the Epiphany. The abbreviation “GI” relates to both the “Son of God”, the Savior, and the “sons of God”, those chosen and called by God to be His children!

“GOD ISSUED, [GOD] GIVEN IDENTITY” – GOD’S SON

Isaiah chapter 49 is a prophecy about God’s Servant, the Savior. God planned to send His Son into the world, into the flesh, to redeem and reclaim a people for Himself out of all the lost nations in the world.

In the opening verses of Isaiah chapter 49, God’ Servant is speaking. God’s Servant says of Himself:

¹The LORD called Me from the womb, from the body of My mother He named My Name.
– Isaiah 49:1

Nothing about God’s Servant was by chance or happenstance. Everything about Him was by God’s Design and Plan. When God revealed parts of His Plan to His people in the Old Testament era, God did so to comfort them and assure them that He was working to deliver them from evil, from the pain and suffering in their lives and in the world.

When God’s Servant would arrive in the world, He would know “Who” He was and “What” His Father sent Him to do!

When God sent the angel Gabriel to the virgin Mary, God revealed to Mary she was the one chosen by God to bear the Savior. And God revealed to Mary the name to be given to His Son:

³⁰And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.
³¹And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call His name Jesus.
³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. – Luke 1:30-32

Yes, through the prophet Isaiah, God the Father revealed that He would name His Son. And, through the prophet Isaiah, God revealed that His Son would be well aware of Who He was, and of His “calling” as God’s Servant.

Jesus testified about Himself: (John 6:38)

³⁸For I have come down from heaven, not to do My Own Will but the Will of Him Who sent Me.

Jesus knew He was sent by His Father to do His Father’s Will as the Savior!

In the Upper Room with His disciples, as He celebrated the Passover with them, knowing He faced His imminent betrayal by Judas, Jesus said:

²²For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed! – Luke 22:22

Jesus knew His Father’s Plan for His life.

Later, in the Garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus faced His upcoming arrest, He remained devoted to doing the Will of His Father in heaven, as He prayed:

⁴²Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done. – Luke 22:42

**Jesus knew His “Identity” given Him by His Father!
He was faithful and true to what His Father had Planned, had “Issued” for Him!**

The Father’s Plan was not only for the sufferings and death of His Son, as the Savior, but for the Exaltation of His Son, as Lord over heaven and earth. God also revealed the exaltation of His Son through the prophet Isaiah:

⁷Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and His Holy One, to One deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the LORD Who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, Who has chosen You.
– Isaiah 49:7

Yes, God the Father named His Son, conceived and born through the virgin Mary, with the name “Jesus”.

That name, “Jesus”, was written on the inscription over His head on the cross, as He was despised by His Own people and condemned under Pilate:

⁴⁹Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews” – John 19:19

And it is before Jesus, that everyone, kings and princes, – all on earth, and all in the spiritual realm, in heaven, will bow in submission and reverence:

⁹Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
– Philippians 2:9-11

God’s Plan for His Son, was that the way to Glory was through the cross! The way to Reigning over a Kingdom of Holy People, a Kingdom of Saints, was to take their sin upon Himself, and suffer and die under the condemnation of their sin. Or, another way of saying it, is that, the way to Coronation was through Condemnation!

**As God had a Plan and an Identity for His Son as He came into the world,
so God has a Plan and an Identity for those redeemed by His Son!**

The apostle Paul writes about that Identity as he begins his letter to the Corinthians.
Paul starts with his own “God Issued”, “Given Identity”, in Christ:

¹*Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus,...*

Earlier in his life, he was known as Saul, a Pharisee, who in his zeal for God,
persecuted the followers of Christ, having them arrested and imprisoned.
Saul believed he was serving God by opposing those early Christians
as apostate Jews, who abandoned the Jewish faith.

As Saul travel to the city of Damascus, north of Israel, to arrest the Christians there,
the risen and ascended Jesus appeared him, and called Saul to serve Him!
Jesus commissioned him to proclaim the Gospel to the Gentiles,
to all those nations and peoples outside Israel.

In this very direct calling from Christ, Saul took up his Roman name, Paul,
and became the apostle to the Gentiles.

In his opening sentence to the Corinthian Christians,
Paul confesses his “God Issued”, “Given Identity” by Christ Himself!

First, Paul confessed that his new Identity was issued by God’s calling:

Paul, called by the Will of God...

God had a Plan for Paul’s life!

Until the appearance of Jesus to him on the road to Damascus,
he did not know God’s Plan for him.

Paul was called “by the Will of God”, by “God’s Plan”.

Paul’s calling was “God Issued”.

What “Given Identity” was assigned to Paul?

“Called... to be an apostle of Christ Jesus...”

The word “apostle” means “sent one, one who is sent”.

Paul was “sent” to proclaim the Gospel by Christ!

**Paul goes on to address the Corinthian Christians
by their “God Issued”, “Given Identity” in Christ:**

²*To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus,*

A lot is packed into two specific words used by Paul here.

- *To the Church (ekklēssia, from ek “out”, and kaleō “to call”,
meaning “to call out, to call to assembly”).
“To those called out of sin and condemnation by God, into an assembly”*

The word “Church” is a very poor translation of the word *ekklēssia*.

A better translation that would convey the meaning of the word would be:

“To the sacred assembly”, or “to those called out into a sacred assembly”

A congregation is a gathering of

*“those whom God has called out of sin and condemnation
into a sacred, holy assembly as His people”.*

That is the “God Issued”, “Given Identity” of everyone in Christ!

- *... to those sanctified in Christ Jesus,...*

“sanctified” means “to consecrate (wash), and set apart as holy”

In Christ, God “washes” His people of the guilt for their sins,
and God “sets them apart” from the lost and condemned descendants of Adam
as His Own people.

That’s who you are in Christ! That is the “God Issued”, “Given Identity” to you!

As with the Corinthians in Christ, so it is with you,...

*“To those called out of sin and condemnation by God, into a sacred, holy assembly,
washed (in Baptism), cleansed, and set apart as God’s people”.*

Then, the apostle Paul continued... *“called saints”*

The word “saint” means “holy one”!

“God Issues” a new “Given Identity”

to those “called out” and “washed and set apart” in Christ → “holy one”!

After 30 years in the ministry,

I think one of the reasons a number of those baptized and confirmed in the congregation
do not regularly associate or get involved in the congregation
is because they have an “Identity Crisis”.

They do not know “Who” they are in Christ!

They do not see themselves as God sees them in Christ!

They do not see themselves as *“those called out of sin and condemnation by God,
into a sacred, holy assembly, washed, cleansed, and set apart as God’s people,
given a new identity: holy one, saint!”*

I think people hear the message that they are “sinners” all to well,
but when they are told by God in Scripture that
their sins are washed away in Baptism and they are now holy in Christ,
that the message somehow goes over their heads.

APPLICATION FOR MY LIFE

As the apostle Paul began his letter to the Corinthians,

I think he “pounded the table” with the truth
of their “God Issued”, “Given Identity” in Christ!

***You are the assembly of those called out by God from sin and condemnation
into the gathering of those
who have been washed, cleansed and set apart as God’s people,
whom God calls holy ones, saints in Christ!***

One day a little boy was walking on the beach in the hard sand at the water’s edge.

He came upon a set of footprints in the sand left by an adult long out of sight.

The boy tried to walk in the set of those footprints, but his legs were too short,
and try as he did, he could not match them step for step.

As he tried to leap and jump from one foot into the next step,
a man saw him and walked up to him.

“What are you doing?” the man asked.

“Trying to walk into the footsteps on the sand,” the boy answered.

“Those footprints were left by someone older and taller than you,” the man replied.

“I know,” the boy said, “but that doesn’t mean I can’t try!”

Trying to “walk in the steps” of a mature saint, especially in the footsteps of Jesus,
is a bit of a stretch for any of us. We are “young” saints, but saints nonetheless!
But I like the attitude of that boy!

His attitude is our attitude in trying to live out our “God Issued”, “Given Identity” in Christ!

“I might not always walk in the steps of a mature ‘saint’ in what I think, say and do.
But it doesn’t mean I can’t try!”

In His Plan for your life, God has “Issued” you a new “Identity”!

You are His G.I., in His service! A “Saint” in Christ Jesus!

You are G.I. father, mother; G.I. son, daughter; G.I. student, teacher;

G.I. worker, employer; G.I. neighbor, friend.

Yes, it is challenge to live the “God Issued”, “Given Identity”, that is yours in Christ!

You may not always land in Jesus’ footsteps with every attempt,

“But it doesn’t mean you can’t try!”

It just means you’re still growing as a saint!