

*Hidden in Christ: Living as
God's Beloved*

Available July 2013

\$17, 220 pages, hardcover

978-0-8308-3575-1

From the Bestselling Author of *The Good and Beautiful God*

In this unique introduction to the hidden life in Christ, James Bryan Smith walks readers through a thirty-day immersion in Colossians 3:1-17. Each of the thirty short chapters of this book brings out the main truth of just one word or phrase of this rich passage:

Raised	Clothes
With	Knowledge
Seated	All
Set	Chosen
Hidden	Affections
Life	Bear
Revealed	Forgive
Therefore	Love
Mortify	Peace
Bodies	Word
Desires	Teach
Wrath	Sing
Walk	Gratitude
Once	Whatever
Mouth	Name

Smith writes: "My aim in this book is to take you on this journey with me. I tried, in each of the thirty chapters, to bring out the rich insights each word had provided for me. The goal here was not to excavate some scholarly insights, but to bring forth the main truth of the word or phrase in such a way that you, the reader, will find encouragement, refreshment and enthusiasm. Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians not to give them an academic treatise on Christian theology but to tell his readers a story – the greatest story the world has ever heard."

The only way to tell a story is to use words. May the words of Colossians 3 become a companion to you as God continues to write your story.

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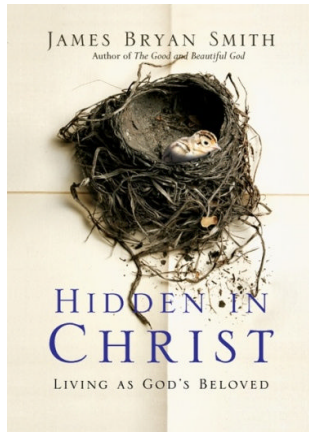
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Hidden

I had a student in several of my classes named Olga who was born and raised in Russia. Just before graduation she came to my office to give me a gift. It was a popular type of doll in Russia, called a matryoshka doll, or babushka doll. It is a nesting doll, made of wood, in which a set of dolls of decreasing size are placed one inside the other. . . .

We are all desperate to find the answers to two important questions: Who am I? and Where am I? The deeper questions behind those questions are, Am I significant? and Am I safe? In my weaker moments, I sometimes wonder if I am valuable, and try to find ways to make myself feel significant. And I get scared now and then – the economy, the wars, the uncertainty of the job market and a host of other crises big and small make me cower at times. Will everything be okay? My prayers are often simply, “Help me make it through this day, God.”

Then the small epiphany came. The phrase “hidden with Christ in God” had been bouncing around my brain, and suddenly I saw a physical illustration of that spiritual reality in that Russian doll. Just as the smaller doll was hidden in the larger doll, so my very life is hidden in Jesus. I am like the smaller doll. I cannot see this life, but I know it is real. I know it each time I experience God with me. But here is what became evident to me: if Christ is in me, and I am in him, I am significant, and I am safe. I found the answer to those two desperate questions, and I did not find it by doing something great or looking great or showing off my skills. I did not find it by having a good insurance policy or retirement plan or a car with five airbags; nor is it found getting great grades at school or promotions at work, fitting in socially or finding the perfect mate. We find significance and safety in the fact my life is hidden with Christ in God.

My identity is something I work hard to establish: teacher, writer, speaker and so on. I assume that people think I am important because of this identity. When people hear that I have published books, I can see on their faces that they are impressed, and to be honest, I feel good when this happens. I smile inwardly but try not to show it lest they think I am prideful (which I am, but I don't want them to see it). But those things are ephemeral, constantly changing and thus precarious. What would happen if I lost my job? Or if no one wanted to publish my writing or hear me speak? Who would I be?

From Colossians 3, and the Russian doll, I got a clear picture: I am one in whom Christ dwells. And if he willingly gave his life for me out of love and has taken my life into his, then he must also be crazy about me. God, I then thought, does not merely love me, he actually likes me. So my identity became even more wonderful: I am Jim in whom Christ dwells and delights. This is a powerful thought. As I said it over and over to myself I felt a kind of energy pulsing through me. This identity is not precarious – it will never change. I

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did not earn it, and I cannot lose it. It is based on what God has done for me, not on what I have done for God. I fret about how committed (or not committed) I am to Jesus. What really matters is that Jesus is fully committed to me. My life is hidden inside of his.

Because my life is hidden in his, I am strong: “I can do all things through [Christ] who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13 NRSV). Jesus said I could do greater things than he did (John 14:12), which is far more than I would attempt without his encouragement. What are you facing this day? You are not alone. Is it a problem at work? Are you wrestling with finding your identity apart from your accomplishments? Are you worried about your children? Do you feel anxious about the future? Remember who you are: you are one in whom Christ dwells and delights. Remember where you are: you are “in Christ,” safe and secure. And remember what you are capable of: you can do all things through Christ.

You are significant.

You are strong.

More significant and stronger than you know.

– Adapted from chapter 5, “Hidden”



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James Bryan Smith, *Hidden in Christ*

James Bryan Smith (M.Div., Yale University Divinity School, D.Min., Fuller Seminary) is a theology professor at Friends University in Wichita, Kansas, and a writer and speaker in the area of Christian spiritual formation. He also serves as the director of the Aprentis Institute for Christian Spiritual Formation at Friends University.

Smith was mentored by two great Christian writers, Richard J. Foster and Dallas Willard. Smith cotaught a course for Fuller Seminary, "Spirituality and Ministry," with Willard for ten years. He was a student of Foster's from 1981 to 1984 and is a founding member of Foster's spiritual renewal ministry, Renovaré. Smith has spoken at over fifty regional and local Renovaré conferences.

Smith is an ordained United Methodist Church minister and has served in various capacities in local churches.

Books by James Bryan Smith

- *A Spiritual Formation Workbook* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1992)
- *Devotional Classics* (with Richard Foster) (HarperSanFrancisco, 1992)
- *Embracing the Love of God* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 25,000 copies sold
- *Rich Mullins: An Arrow Pointing to Heaven* (Broadman and Holman, 2000) hit the *New York Times* bestseller list.
- *Room of Marvels* (Broadman and Holman, 2004) won the Bronze medal in the category of Religious Fiction by the *Publishing Journal*, 2005.
- *The Good and Beautiful God* (InterVarsity Press, 2009)
- *The Good and Beautiful Life* (InterVarsity Press, 2010)
- *The Good and Beautiful Community* (InterVarsity Press, 2010)
- *The Kingdom and the Cross* (InterVarsity Press, 2010)
- *Hidden in Christ* (InterVarsity Press, July 2013)

Visit aprentis.org for more information about Smith, his books and ministry.