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## Identity: The Family Tree

My maiden name is *McArthur*, making me “a child of Arthur,” a descendant of a highland Scottish clan from the Argyll District of Scotland. Today, if I wanted to trace my roots, I could visit the village of Loch Awe, where our family members lived centuries ago, and see a four-poster bed where my ancestors slept in the fourteenth century. According to tradition, the MacArthur clan is as old as the hills: “There is none older,” an Argyll proverb claims, “save the hills, the Devil, and MacArthur.” Our ancestors were known as musicians, and they founded a school for playing the bagpipes. As a clan, we have a crest (a laurel wreath); a family motto (“*Fide et Opera*,” meaning “By faith and work”); a clan battle cry (“Listen, O Listen”); a signature green, black, and gold tartan; a family plant (wild thyme); and a sense of identity.

Jesus, too, came from a clan that had existed for generations: the house of David. Jesus’ mother, Mary, was a descendant of David’s son Nathan (Luke 3:31), but Joseph traced his family line through David’s son Solomon (Matthew 1:6). As Joseph’s adopted son, Jesus inherited the legal rights to claim his father’s lineage. Thus, Jesus was, on both sides of his family, a “son of David.”

David was the shepherd boy and talented musician who became Israel’s most famous king. Although he wasn’t perfect, David was described as a man following the Lord’s own heart (Acts 13:22), a standard against which all future kings would be measured. God promised that one day, one of David’s descendants would come as a messiah whose motto would be “God Has Set Things Right for Us” (Jeremiah 33:16, *The Message*). Jesus was the fulfillment of that promise.

David’s birthplace was Bethlehem, a small village in the hill country of Judah where his great-grandparents, Ruth and Boaz, had lived. By the time of Jesus, the village had dwindled to a population of perhaps 100 people, but family members still remembered their heritage with pride and claimed Bethlehem as their hometown. Hospitality played a huge role in the Jewish culture, so most homes included a guest room. If that room was full but more persons needed a place to sleep, the host family would say, “Come on in. We’ll make do!” (even if guests had to lodge in the area of the home where the animals usually slept).

That’s probably what happened when Mary and Joseph went to Bethlehem for the census. Jesus was probably not born in a detached stable or cave surrounded by strangers but in a relative’s crowded home surrounded and welcomed by family.

1. How does knowing your family line affect your sense of identity?
2. When has your heritage informed how you treated others?
3. How does your identity in Christ define who you are?

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