



"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him." -Lamentations 3:22-24

Sam had everything going for him in life. He was the star of the school's record-breaking soccer team. He had a college scholarship almost in writing from one of his favorite schools. He had been dating his girlfriend for over a year now, he had a great group of friends, and life was good. Until one evening practice, Sam was pushing himself to the limit. It was wet on the practice field, but that didn't matter. At least not to Sam. He needed to remind everyone that he was the best. He tried to pivot and get a perfect scoring chance, but his foot slipped. All he remembers from that point is hearing a pop and being on the ground. His career was never the same from that point. He wasn't drawing interest from the college scouts anymore. He was bitter and angry. His relationship and friendships began to suffer. He wanted a do-over, a fresh start, but couldn't find it anywhere.

With nowhere else to go, he showed up at youth group one night. The teaching that night was about some weird Latin-sounding word called vocation. Sam didn't quite understand the term, but knew that it had something to do with the roles God had given him. He was given a sticky note to write out a vocation on it, and Sam just stared at it blankly. "I don't have one anymore. I was the star athlete! That was who I am! Or...I guess now, that's who I was. And now I have nothing. Now I *am* nothing", Sam thought. But then he saw the other sticky notes being placed on the wall of the youth room. Written on them, in barely legible teenage handwriting from his peers, were words like: Friend. Artist. Son. Daughter. Neighbor. Cousin. Student. Teammate. Youth group member.

Sam sat there for a moment, taking it all in. And then for the first time in a long time, Sam smiled. His youth leader noticed, and while the other students were busy talking with one another about what was on the sticky notes and arguing about why "friend" and "neighbor" didn't follow the "I before E rule" the same way, she gently came over and asked Sam what he was thinking. "I had been asking for a fresh start from God. Been angry with Him about it for a long time. Though I had lost everything. But now I realize, while I really miss being the star of the team, I'm still a teammate. A friend, though I haven't been a very good one. A son. A youth group member. God sure has given me a lot of great gifts to help me in this difficult time. Thanks for asking. And I think now I know what to write on mine!"

Sam scribbled down three short words, and then he got up and limped over to an open spot on the wall and stuck his note there. A note that reminded him that yes, indeed, God's mercies were new every morning. That God was faithful! That He had not abandoned Sam, and that God would be with him every painful step of the way, because the road that Jesus had walked for Sam was far more painful.

What was on that note was a vocation of receiving. Receiving from God each and every day. Receiving new life. Receiving hope for the future. It was a vocation of remembering. Remembering that his identity was not in a game, but in the Gospel. Remembering that life was not about winning but about witnessing. Remembering that this life was but a moment compared to eternity. Remembering that he was never alone. It was the vocation that would never change, no matter what. The vocation that changed his prayers, dreams, hopes, and life. That gave him hope for whatever would come next in this time of rebuilding.

It simply read: "Child of God."

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the vocations and roles that you have given to me. Help me, as your dear child, to gladly receive your gifts and to find my identity in you. Remind me of the blessing I have of prayer, to talk to You in all circumstances. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Journal Prompts:

-What vocations could I write down that God has given me in my own life?

-How are these different roles gifts for?