

## Identity

1. About a month ago, Jennifer, myself and a few others went to a conference. Among the first words out of the speaker's mouth were, "you cannot give me anything I need. You cannot affect my happiness. I have everything I need in Christ."
  - a. At first, I thought he was spouting off pious platitudes.
  - b. And then, as I listened to his testimony, I realized this guy was for real.
  - c. How did he get to where he was?
  - d. And then I began to realize what was right before my eyes, something I had seen only a handful of times before...this guy knew who he was (in Christ).
  
2. I'm not there yet...does that surprise you? The truth is, neither are you. I am still coming to realize who I am (in Christ) and what that means for my life. I have an identity crisis and so do you.
  - a. Ephesians 4:22-24 "*You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self (IDENTITY), which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self (IDENTITY), created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*"
  - b. *Our struggle is that we are trying to put on the new self over top the old.* (Illustrate with a youth with 2 coats) That is like wearing two heavy winter coats one ovetop of the other. Besides the fact that the outside one won't fit very well over the other one, it will be very hot and very uncomfortable. You aren't able to move properly and you are weighed down with too much stuff.
    - i. We are told to "*PUT OFF*" *our old self, our old identity*, (which is in a state of continuous corruption by deceiving desires).
      1. What is our old self? What does it entail? What does our old identity contain?
        - a. A lot of our identity is shaped by our parents, peers, and the world.
        - b. Our identity isn't just our personality.
        - c. Our identity is what distinguishes us as unique creatures..
        - d. Our identity is the sum total of our experiences, beliefs, and perceptions.
        - e. Identity is such a complex issue that psychologists have studied the development of a person's identity, beginning at infancy, when the child begins to see himself as an extension of his or her mother, through the child's development as an independent creature, ultimately to the development of the self.
      2. So as we grow as human beings, we develop an identity that we have obtained through our various experiences, hurts, wounds, exploits, and out of these things, we have deeply ingrained belief systems, programmed reactions to things that happen to us and perceptions of what we think is true or real.
        - a. For example, two children can have identical experiences but they will make completely different conclusions about the event. A family breakup due to divorce may cause one to develop issues with abandonment while the other develops anger toward men.
      3. The problem with our natural identity is that it is built upon false presumptions, distorted facts and biases.
        - a. We develop beliefs without even realizing it about the world and about ourselves. Our identity is molded by those beliefs.
        - b. I develop instinctive reactions to certain stimuli...like reacting to touching a hot burner...but in an emotional or physical way.
        - c. I have perceptions based not upon fact but upon fiction...upon what I believe is reality but is far from it.
      4. *At the core of our need as a human being is a need to feel valued and to have meaning.* Our identity is shaped by the way we believe we get those needs met.

- a. If a young woman, who has experienced a void in her life, wants to feel valued, she finds it is temporarily experienced in the arms of a man. Or if a man is feeling pain, he seeks to soothe that pain with drugs or alcohol. These are all learned behaviors and they shape our identity. They are all based upon lies we have learned.
- b. But just like the woman at the well, we have multiple lovers, twisted beliefs and distorted views of reality.
- c. We have spent our lives “looking for love in all the wrong places.”
- d. In every place, we look for value, meaning, attention and love.
- e. And yet, it remains elusive.

**3. Into this picture of broken humanity, Jesus, the Son of God steps.**

- a. He who knew no sin...enters our lives and shows us what real love looks like.
  - b. He demonstrates our infinite value, the everlasting meaning of our lives, gives us eternal attention and unconditional love.
  - c. When we place our faith in Him, we experience a rebirth, a brand new life, a spiritual rebirth that allows the supernatural love of the Father to begin to permeate and penetrate our lives. We obtain a brand new identity **that isn't** based upon our failed experiences, our flawed expectations, our warped perceptions. We get a new identity that is based in eternal and lasting and true values and meaning.
4. And the renewal process is begun...to implement on a daily basis, Ephesians 4:22-24. *“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self (IDENTITY), which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self (IDENTITY), created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”*
- a. We lay aside our old identity, we put it off, we take it off, like a coat. We make the choice to no longer allow our past to control us, to call it what it is...DEAD.
  - b. And then we put on our new self, appropriate the new Identity that God has given us in Christ. An identity that is true and made to look like who? *We put on our new identity that is created to look like God.*
    - i. Hey, just like in the garden of Eden...where our original identity was to look like God.
    - ii. Our new identity is whole, right, complete, without any lack, it is Holy (meaning without flaw or corruption), it is righteous (which means grounded in love).
5. I want to show you a video now that illustrates this.

i.

6. I want to tell you a story that Dan Mohler told us. He was used to driving an old truck, but one day, a person in his congregation bought him a brand new truck. He was blessed. Two months after he got it, he was driving through an intersection and a lady ran a stop sign. You guessed it. She t-boned his truck. Badly. He was out of his truck in a flash and by her side. He asked her if she was okay. She said yes, and then she began to cry. “Oh my, the owner of that truck is going to kill me” She didn’t know Dan was the driver. He replied to her, “its just a truck ma’am.” “no, you don’t understand, look at that truck, oh my god, He is going to be so mad.” Dan finally said to her, “Ma’am, Im the driver of the truck and I’m not mad. It’s only a truck.” As she looked at him, he said relief spread across her face. It was like Jesus had just forgiven her.

a. I want you to see what the identity differences were between these two people.

i. Dan...didn’t get his value from his truck, or from any “things.” He didn’t even get his value from what people thought of him. His identity was so firmly rooted in Christ that he AUTOMATICALLY stepped into a crisis and demonstrated Christ to this woman. He didn’t even have to think about it.

ii. This woman’s identity was rooted in the world. Her identity expected the worst, expected someone to come yelling mad at her, “why did you do that?” (as if people really try to get into accidents).

b. When crisis come, we discover very quickly where our identity and value comes from.

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