

Christian Identity: Who You Are in Christ

Message 2: Sources of Identity, part 2

I recently read part of an article titled “Nine Ways to Find Your True Identity and Discover Who You Are.”¹ The author lists nine ways that we can identify ourselves, and all but one of them deal with internal evaluation. According to this author, you find your identity by looking internally at your own strengths, values, and beliefs. You meditate on these inner thoughts about yourself and simply accept who you are. Only if you are confused or overwhelmed should you look outside yourself to find your identity, according to this author.

I would deeply disagree with this article. If you follow this author’s advice, you’ll be in big trouble. We find our identity in other ways than looking internally. We should be much more concerned about the *facts* of reality than our inner *feelings*. Facts don’t care about your feelings.

This is the second part of the second message in our Summer Sermon Series dealing with Christian identity. The world today is very concerned about identity, and Christians should be very careful about how we identify ourselves and how we identify others.

Last Sunday, I spent most of the message dealing with improper or partial sources of identity. People identify themselves primarily by the way they feel about themselves. People identify themselves according to their physical appetites and attractions. People identify with popular trends and fads. People often identify themselves in ways that are indecent, undignified, and contrary to common sense.

Each of these ways of identification leads to problems, both personally and for society. We should avoid identifying ourselves in these ways.

Today I want to focus on the *proper* means of identifying ourselves. What are the proper sources of identification?

I. Proper sources of identity

First, we should note that the proper marks of identity are primarily *external*; they don’t depend on how we feel about ourselves. They do not appeal to the self as the final authority over identity. We should look primarily *outside* of the self to find our identity.

¹ <https://thirdbliss.com/finding-your-identity/>

Quote Bauder: People can say who they are only by pointing to things outside themselves. We know who we are only in terms of our relationships to other things, be they persons, activities, or objects. In other words, our identity is not in ourselves. In order to know who we are, we must look outward. Our identity is formed by the persons, objects, and activities with which we bring ourselves into relationship.²

This is not the way the world thinks about identity. People today base their identity primarily on inner feelings about themselves.

Here's a **quote** from a person who recently "transitioned" from a woman to a man—i.e., a woman who is pretending to be a man. Note the emphasis on the self in this quote.

"Being queer & trans are definitely some of my favorite parts of myself. and yet, there are so many things that i am learning to love about myself through this process. here's to me getting to know myself, share myself, and continually evolve to be the person i am, to be my favorite self in all contexts."³

Did you notice all the references to self in that quote? Beginning with self and inner feelings leads to disaster. Part of the problem in society today is that so many people are focused on self and inner feelings instead of on the facts of reality.

To properly identify ourselves, we begin by looking at facts external to us. We find our identity in our relationship to other things, not by gazing internally.

A. Identify yourself by your relationship to God.

Ps 100:3 *Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.*

1. The most significant factor in identifying ourselves is our relationship with God. Our Creator has the right to identify us, and we are obligated to accept the identity God gives us. To reject that identity is rebellion against our Creator.

² Kevin Bauder, *In the Nick of Time*, May 13, 2022 (originally June 29, 2012).

³ Amanda Harding, "'Sister Wives' Star Comes Out As Transgender, Warns Fans On Pronouns" Jul 1, 2022 DailyWire.com <https://www.dailywire.com/news/sister-wives-star-comes-out-as-transgender-warns-fans-on-pronouns>.

Today, there are millions of people in rebellion against their creator because they reject a proper relationship with God. Because they reject God, they reject God's way of identification.

2. Everyone falls into one of two categories in their relationship to God: saved or lost. You either are righteous in God's sight, or you are condemned. You are a sheep or you are a goat. So your identity should take into consideration whether you are a child of God or a child of the devil.
3. If you are a child of God, then a whole series of other means of identification comes into play. If you are *not* a child of God, then it doesn't really matter how you identify yourself. No matter how you identify yourself, your destiny is eternal judgment and condemnation.
4. If you cannot identify yourself as a child of God, you should change that identity. God invites us to identify ourselves with him. You can become a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Let God identify you; see yourself as God sees you.

B. Identify yourself by God's Word.

1. If you are a Christian, you must conform yourself to what God says about you. You must believe and put into practice biblical expectations.
2. Here's a list of the ways God identifies his people; these are the topics for the rest of the messages in this series. If you are a Christian, then...
 - a) You are a creature made in the image of God
 - b) You are a Child of God/part of the People of God
 - c) You are in Christ
 - d) You are a Priest/part of a Holy Priesthood
 - e) You are a Citizen
 - f) You are a Servant
 - g) You are a Steward
 - h) You are an Ambassador
 - i) You are a Saint
 - j) You are an Heir

k) You are a Soldier/Athlete/Farmer

l) You are a Vessel/Sacrifice/Firstfruits/Lump/Stone

The proper way to identify yourself is to accept the identity God gives you, as revealed in his Word. God is the potter; we are merely the clay. God has the right to identify us, and it is pure rebellion against God to identify ourselves in ways contrary to what God tells us.

That does not imply that all Xns are going to be exactly alike and the same. You can be your own individual person with your own set of personality traits, but you cannot reject the way that God identifies you without being in rebellion against God.

c. Identify yourself by your family.

Mk 6:3 *[Jesus was known as the] son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?*

Mt 13:55 *Is not this the carpenter's son? ...*

1. Jesus was born into a human family, and so are we.
2. Family is one of the most significant markers of identity. We get our name, our ancestry, our ethnicity, and many other identifying factors through our family. Family plays a huge role in self-identification.
3. One of the great tragedies of our culture is that the traditional family is breaking apart. Children who don't have a stable family environment often have trouble identifying themselves. They don't fit in to a normal family structure, and that leaves them questioning their place in the world.
4. One of the reasons young children are confused about their identity is because of their parents. The parents are confused and corrupt on these issues, and the result is that the children are equally confused and corrupted.

E.g., parents bringing their kids out to a gay pride parade or to drag queen story hour—they must be crazy. Many parents today are telling their children that they can decide on their gender and their pronouns. Parents strive to bring up their children “gender neutral”; the children will decide their own gender.

5. It's important for Christians to develop and maintain a strong family life with strong family ties and clear family roles. A child needs to have certainty and security within his family. A child learns who he is through his family. So strong and secure families are very important.

D. Identify yourself by your church.

Acts 11:26 ... *the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*

1. Church can provide a great deal of stability and support for those who attend, especially for children. Participating in the life of the church shows children who they are. They learn how God identifies them, and they see how they fit in to God's plan for them.
2. If you want your children to be stable and not easily led astray, it is in your best interests to make church a basic, regular part of your life.
3. Teach your kids that church attendance is a non-negotiable. Children should know that recreation takes second place to church participation. A robust, regular, committed church life helps children develop their identity.
4. Also, I think it's good to identify with a particular tradition or a category of church life. E.g., I feel most at home in a conservative, independent Baptist church. I want to raise my children in that tradition; I hope they will adopt it and retain this tradition for themselves. Consistency in your religious tradition helps your family.

E. Identify yourself by your vocation.

Mk 6:3 *Is not [Jesus] the carpenter...*

John 4:26 *Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am [the Messiah].*

1. Vocation or career is a very common way people identify themselves. Vocation is an identifier, but it's not the most important way we identify ourselves.
2. Christians view vocation as the means by which we serve God and serve our neighbors. Vocation/career is, in a certain sense, a calling; and we use our vocation for God's purposes. We believe that God has providentially put us into the vocation we are in.

3. So it is legitimate to identify ourselves, to some degree, by the jobs that we do—our careers, our vocations.
 4. Vocations often change over time, but whatever our vocation is, we know that God wants us to use our vocations for God's glory and for the good of others.
 5. Even if you are retired, you should see your vocation as a retiree as a means of serving God and serving others. How can you use your retirement years to serve God and others?
- F. Identify yourself by your nation or ethnicity.
1. The nation of Israel began with God choosing Abraham and his family line.
 2. God constituted the Jewish people as a nation when he gave them the OT law, the law of Moses. The OT law amounted to a sort of constitution that governed the nation. The Israelites identified themselves as part of the nation—God's chosen people.
 3. Jesus strongly identified with his people, the Jews. In fact, he said that God sent him to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Mt 15:24). His own people rejected him (John 1:11) and crucified him.
 4. The church, of course, has no national or ethnic identity. We are all one in Christ—Jews, Gentiles, slaves, free, men and women. Our ethnicity and national origin have no significance within the church. We ought to be colorblind in the church.
 5. But personally, most people are part of a nation, they often reflect an ethnic identity. And that is perfectly fine. We should enjoy our ethnicity. To a certain degree, our family ethnicity identifies us.

So these are all legitimate, proper ways for us to identify ourselves. We identify ourselves primarily by our relationships to God, God's Word, family, church, vocation, and nation. There are other markers of identity, but they are not as important.

We find our identity, primarily, by looking at these *external* sources. We don't find our identity primarily by our internal thoughts and feelings about ourselves. We look externally at facts and reality, not internally at our own heart. We consider God's providence in our lives—where has God put us? How has he equipped us? What opportunities has he given us? What are the physical facts before us? These facts tell us who we are.

If you refuse to identify the way God identifies you, then other things will identify you. If you can be whatever you want to be, and if there are no solid markers of identity, then you are simply adrift on a sea of uncertainty. You can't know who you are, so you just choose an identity that appeals to you. You can't really know who you are, because your identification is not based on anything secure or unchanging. Perhaps people today are so full of anxiety and depression because they are unsure of who they are. There is nothing certain in today's world upon which to base an identity, so people are unsure and anxious about themselves. They don't know who they are, what their purpose is, or where they are going.

Christians need not be confused about their identity. In many respects, God identifies us. We know who we are because we know who God is. We understand our relationships and our world because we accept what God says about those things.

Failure to allow God to identify you is simple rebellion. If you don't like the way God identifies you, you simply need to submit to God's providence in your life. Trust that God has given you what you have and put you where you are for good reasons. We must trust that God gave us the proper identity, no matter how we feel about it. Prov 3:5-6

Christians see how God identifies them and align themselves with that identity. Unbelievers typically don't care about what God says; they rebel against God and do whatever they feel like doing. They will eventually regret that rebellion. But believers must conform themselves to the identity God gives them.

Ultimately speaking, God is the source of our identity. It's our responsibility to accept that identity and use it to serve God and others. If we refuse to do so, we alienate ourselves from God and incur God's judgment.