



## Identity Crisis: Who Am I?

A Question We Can't Afford to Ignore.

# Identity Crisis: I am Loved

Part 1 of a 6-part series on Identity

## Identity: I am Loved

Who are you?

If I asked that question, many of us would start talking about what we do:

"I'm a teacher, construction worker, cop, mom, etc."

We do it instinctively—as if “Who are you” and “What do you do” are the same question.

They're not, and it's important we understand the difference.

Identity influences everything we do. The way you act and think—about yourself and the people around you—flows directly from your sense of identity.

That's why we say:

“I don't know why I act that way?  
I guess it's just **who I am.**”

Something as powerful as your identity can't be ignored.

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## Mistaken Identity

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Whether you know it or not, your identity is causing you to act and think a specific way. This doesn't have to be a bad thing. It can actually be a terrific source of security and purpose--as long as your identity comes from the right place.

So, how do you know who you are?

How do you know?

I believe God made us. If that's true, he gets to say what we are.

*I realize there may be some reading who don't believe in a God who created us. If that's you, please consider reading further. Most of the people I work with do not share my worldview. However, many of them still find hope and peace when I share what God says about their identity.*

My kids make stuff all the time. Sometimes I can tell what they're making. Other times, I have no idea. But they do. They always know what it is. They know because they made it. And, if I ever disagree as to what "it" looks like, then that just means I'm wrong. Who am I to tell them what *they* made?

I suggest we use that same logic when talking about identity: ask the one who made us.

One of the best places to learn what God says about our identity is a letter the Apostle Paul wrote to a bunch of Christians living in Ephesus, a city in modern-day Turkey.

Here's how the letter starts:

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the **saints** who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus  
-Ephesians 1.1

Notice who the letter is addressed to? "The **saints** who are in Ephesus."

Paul didn't write a second letter to the "less than" saints who were in Ephesus. This letter was to the *whole* group, and he referred to each member as a saint.

That doesn't make much sense to us today because we use the word differently than they did. Today, a saint is someone who lived a near-perfect life, walked on water, and probably didn't even cuss when they stubbed their toe.

In other words, we make being a saint about **what you do**.

Stop Acting Like a Saint

That's not what the word means. When we do that, we ruin it and rob it of its power. The word saint means:

"someone viewed differently because of faith in Jesus"

In other words, **it's about who you are**—not what you do.



What's my point? When God gives you an identity, it is not based on what you do. You can't change it--for better or worse--by the things you do.

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*Reputation is who other people say you are. Identity is who God says you are.  
Reputation is achieved. Identity is received.*

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## American Idols

### Everybody Worships Something

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Our identity is what gives us meaning and purpose.

God designed us to get meaning and purpose from him. In exchange, he expects us to order our lives around him. The Bible calls that worship. The more we worship, the stronger our sense of identity.

Instinctively, we all know that, so **we all worship something**. Our hearts are always searching for a sense of meaning and purpose, convincing us to worship anything promising to provide it. Anything.

It might be God, but it could just as easily be my job, my wife, my reputation, etc. If it will make me feel valuable, I'll worship it.

In his book [Counterfeit Gods](#), Tim Keller writes:

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*"If anything becomes more fundamental than God to your happiness, meaning in life, and identity, then it is an idol."*

*Tim Keller*

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When we think of "idol worship" today, we imagine savages bowing before a statue or sacrificing an animal. However, every generation creates its own set of idols. Here's a list of some of our current favorites: [1](#)

### Our Favorite I-D-O-L-S

#### Items

*Who I am = what I have*

This is consumerism—the collecting of stuff. It's the belief/fear that you won't **be** enough until you **have** enough. To feel more confident, we buy more things.

**The Problem:** you can't define "enough?" It's a moving target. In reality, "enough" just means "more." It's a race we can't win because there is no finish line.

Looking to stuff for identity will never give you peace.



## Duties

*Who I am = what I do*

- "I'm a dad
- I'm a cop
- I'm the responsible one
- I'm the funny one
- I'm the man
- I'm the boss
- That's me. It's who I am."

**The Problem:** what happens when you can't *do* that anymore? When you lose your job or your kids move away or people stop laughing at your jokes? If all of your value is tied to your ability to produce, then you're only as good as your last best day.

Looking to work for identity will never give you peace.

## Others

*Who I am = what others say*

- What will *they* think if I do this?
- I'd like to do that, but *they'll* get mad.
- I should do this, but *they're* expecting me to do that.

Even when we don't know who "they" are, we still give them a tremendous amount of power. Our life is controlled by constant thoughts of what *they* will think. Social media feeds into this because we can use it to present only the parts of our life "they" will like.

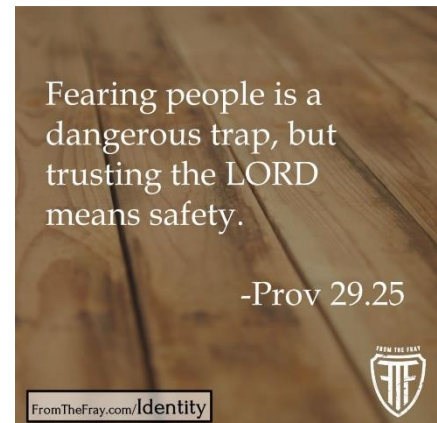
**The Problem:** even on their best days, people are still flawed, broken, and instinctively selfish. All of us are. Allowing another broken person to control your sense of meaning and purpose will be disastrous for both of you.

Looking to others for identity will never give you peace.

## Longings

*Who I am = tomorrow I will...*

- I'm poor, but I'm going to be rich
- I'm sick, but I'll be healthy
- I'm single, but I'll be married



- I don't yet, but someday I'll have kids

In other words: I have this problem, but someday I'll fix that problem and then—on *that* day—I'll be somebody.

**The Problem:** it's naïve to think your current problem is the last problem you'll ever have. Optimism and hard work are wonderful things, but the nature of life is just to move from one problem to another.

Looking to a better tomorrow for identity will never give you peace.

## Sufferings

*Who I am = what happened to me*

Everyone suffers at some point. Most of us recover and move on.

But, there are others who "just can't" move on or let it go. Long after the event has passed, they continue thinking of themselves in light of that suffering.

- I'm divorced
- I have cancer
- My kids hate me
- My spouse cheated on me
- My boss fired me

Suffering is awful, but please hear me say this:

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*You are not who you are on your worst day.*

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**The Problem:** Your sufferings may describe you, but they don't define you. Your disease, income, GPA, marital status...those are individual chapters in the overall story of your life. To allow them to define you is to choose to remain a victim.

Looking to your sufferings for identity will never give you peace.

## Blessed Assurance

Better than an Idol

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Back to Paul's letter. He offers this prayer for the Ephesians.

I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the **confident hope** he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.  
-Ephesians 1:18



I love the term “confident hope.” It describes a person who is utterly unbreakable by anything life throws at them. A spiritual translation would be “blessed assurance.”

No idol can give you that.

As long as you think your identity—your meaning and value—comes from anything in this broken world, you’ll never have peace.

That’s why Paul goes on:

I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead...

-Ephesians 1.19-20

That does NOT say: “God’s power for those who don’t cuss when stubbing their toe.” It just says: “God’s power for people who believe in God.”

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*God’s desire to be in your life isn’t based on what you do.  
It’s based on who you are.*

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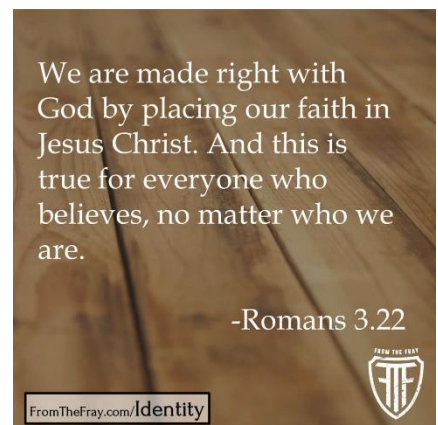
Repeat it Until you Believe it

The reason you and I have a hard time believing that is because we live in a world that tells us we’re only as good as our last best day.

The truth is: saints are as good as God’s last best day.

As often as you have to—until you believe it—please tell yourself:

- I am not what others think of me
- I am not my past
- I am not what I did
- I am not what happened to me
- I am who God says I am



I am Loved.

So...who are you? Who *does* God say you are? Back to Paul one more time:

Even before he made the world, God **loved us and chose us** in Christ to be holy and **without fault in his eyes**. God decided in advance to **adopt us into his own family** by bringing us to himself **through Jesus Christ**. This is what he wanted to do, and it **gave him great pleasure**.

-Ephesians 1:4–5



You are loved. You are chosen. You are without fault. You are adopted.

You are someone God loves so much, he chose to be in his family. Through Jesus' work--not yours--God adopted you.

Don't overlook the timing of when all of this happened: "before he made the world." Before you were born and had a chance to earn God's love, he had already decided on the matter. He wasn't going to judge you by how much you could perform, or by what other people have to say about you. God decided to judge you on the merits of Jesus--a man "without fault."

Confusing and unfair? Only if you try to understand God's thoughts with your mind. Rather--in faith--take him at his word. He adopted you because "he wanted to."

You--a saint--"gave him great pleasure."

From the Fray,  
-bill

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[1] Mark Driscoll, "[Who do You Think You Are?](#)"

