



Identity Crisis: Who am I?

A Question We Can't Afford to Ignore.

Identity Crisis: I am Hated

Part 2 of a 6-part series on Identity

Identity: I am Hated.

You have an enemy. And, he hates you.

You'll never fully understand yourself or the world you live in until you accept the existence of your greatest adversary: Satan.

Right now, God is at work in your life. But, so is Satan. Both are facets of your identity: you are loved, and you are hated.

From [last week](#):

*"The way you act and think—about yourself
and the people around you—flows directly from
your sense of identity."*

If you don't perceive yourself as having a supernatural enemy, you'll spend your entire life frustrated and confused—blaming the wrong people (yourself and others) and wondering why things never seem to improve.

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Consider the Enemy

Paul—the same Paul who **just told us God loves us**—now warns the Ephesians of the “powers in the unseen world.”

You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, **obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world**. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God.

- Ephesians 2:2

At this point, many people roll their eyes, scoff, and dismiss me as too simplistic. Before you do that, please consider the possibility of a spiritual enemy.

It's Open-minded

A materialistic worldview is the minority position.

Outside of the West, most cultures have no problem accepting the existence of a supernatural enemy. If you believe those cultures might have something of value to contribute, then I would ask you to be open-minded in this area.

The anti-supernatural bias we hold in the West doesn't extend to the rest of the world. It also doesn't extend very far back in history. It's a relatively young concept—developed inside the last 300 years. Prior to that, everyone assumed the existence of good and evil without question. Can it be possible we're wrong and they're right?

For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places.

- Ephesians 6.12

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It's Consistent

If you already accept the existence of God, then why not also his adversary?

It surprises me how many people believe in a *good* form of the supernatural—to include some kind of afterlife—but at the same time deny an evil counterpart. The position seems more like a fairy tale than reasoned thought. How can we take any real comfort from a religion invented simply to make us feel comfortable?

For those who respect Jesus and his teachings, it's obvious he believed he was facing a very real, demonic enemy.¹

It's Emotionally Healthy

Sometimes, the most rational explanation for feeling like somebody is out to get you is *somebody is out to get you*.

¹ Luke 10.18; Matthew 25.41; also Luke 4



We've all had periods in our life when a barrage of problems felt too consistent and too severe to be coincidence. What do we normally do in those situations? We blame others or we blame ourselves. The first option leads to bitterness; the second to guilt and shame.

Another option is to say, "There's more to this than meets the eye."

Besides, it's naïve to assume the source of all our problems can be found in something we can see, touch, and comprehend. When we survey the horrible depths of evil occurring in the world, a supernatural influence provides the fullest explanation.²

Avoid Extremes

None of this is to deny additional explanations for our struggles in this world. As we've [written elsewhere](#), life on earth is a messy affair. Whether it's genetics, emotions, or poor decision-making, the "messiness" has many sources. Wisdom would have us avoid extremes:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.
-CS Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*

I just presented three reasons to avoid the error of denying Satan's existence. Others fall into the second, equally dangerous category. Seeing the devil behind every hardship is not rational or responsible. "The devil made me do it" should be seen more as an excuse than a sincere explanation.

The Problem Behind the Problems

Regardless, the primary source of the world's problems—the problem *behind* your problems—is our enemy. That's exactly what the word "satan" means: adversary. Until you see yourself as someone with a skilled adversary, very few pieces of your life will make sense.

... You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is **the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God**. All of us used to live that way...
- Ephesians 2:1–3a

Paul describes two cosmic forces locked in battle: God and Satan, who is "at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God." There's no middle ground. No ambiguity. No third side.

No one is neutral.

² Ephesians 6.12



We're either on God's side with Satan as our enemy, or we're on Satan's side fighting against God. We might prefer a battlefield with more options, but this is how God frames the situation: we're for him or against him.³

That said, I want to focus on one thing we must know about our enemy. He lies.

Satan Lies.

Jesus calls Satan "the father of lies."⁴ From the moment he entered our world, he's been lying.

"You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman.
- Genesis 3:4

As a chaplain, people frequently come to me when they're stuck—trapped in a dark season of life. Whenever that happens, I start looking around for lies.

What are you accepting as true that isn't?

Where's the lie?

Last week we covered five of the biggest lies Satan gets us to believe.

So, it's worth asking: Which lies are you believing right now?

LIE: I am what I can buy.	TRUTH: You can't take it with you. You'll never be able to buy "enough." Even if you could, you'd live in fear of losing it.
LIE: I am only what I can do and accomplish.	TRUTH: Accomplishments stop feeding your ego the minute you're no longer able to accomplish. Besides: until you know who you are, you won't know how to have peace about what you're supposed to do.
LIE: I am what other people say I am.	TRUTH: You are who <i>God</i> says you are. Your reputation is who other people say you are; your identity is who God says you are. Confusing reputation and identity leads to a crisis.
LIE: I will be great if only...	TRUTH: God <i>already</i> made you someone precious and capable. Your value is not waiting on the other side of your problems.
LIE: I am my past. I am the sum of all my sufferings.	TRUTH: Failure is an event, not a person. God sees you through Jesus' victory—not your disappointments. You are not what happened <i>to</i> you; you're what Jesus did <i>for</i> you.

³ Matthew 12.30

⁴ John 8.44



Big Lies

I want to reframe the lies above by giving you 3 of the most powerful lies in the history of the world.

1. *The way you live your life doesn't matter.*

Life's short, do what you want.

2. *You are never going to change.*

The life you're living now is the life you're stuck living until you die.

3. *Things are never going to get better.*

If you think this world is a bad place, well...get used to it. It is, and it always will be.

In one way or another, we all buy into these lies. They're suffocating—binding our will and pulling us down into despair. That's why these next words from Paul are so important:

But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, that even though we were dead because of our sins, **he gave us life** when he raised Christ from the dead... For **he raised us from the dead along with Christ** and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.

- Ephesians 2:4–6

Truth Bombs

God threw you a rope. When we were lifeless, blind to our own blindness, God turned on the lights and threw us a rope. Specifically, he sent Jesus.

Breaking Free

Since lies have always been our mortal enemy, it's no coincidence Jesus presents himself as Truth:

Jesus told him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

- John 14:6

Notice he doesn't just claim to be a *source* of truth. Rather, Jesus is Truth embodied.

And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

- John 8:32

Seeing Clearly

This is what Satan's lies look like when viewed through Truth.

1. *The way you live your life ~~doesn't~~ DIDN'T matter.*

But it does now! Jesus saved us from death and gave us a place in his family. Our lives represent him to a world still lost in darkness. The love we show others may be the light they need to break free.



For we are God's **masterpiece**. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.
- Ephesians 2:10

A masterpiece is the result of love and skill. All of God's love and skill went into designing you for meaningful work. He equipped you to play a specific role in his plan.

2. *You ~~are~~ WERE never going to change.*

You were dead, but Jesus saved you from your enemy's grip. Prior to Christ's intervention, you were powerless to Satan's control. You could read as many books, do as many drills, climb as many 12-step programs as you wanted, but you'd still be lifeless inside.

But now—the power of God *in* you is greater than the sin *around* you.⁵

Your enemy wants you focusing more on your sin than your savior.

That's overwhelming, and it leads to despair. You need to believe progress is possible. You're not stuck anymore.

3. *Things ~~are~~ WERE never going to get better.*

The season of life you're going through is just that—a season. Seasons, by definition, change. Your enemy wants you to view that dark season as a life sentence. It's not.

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love.
- Romans 8:38

All of us—whether we acknowledge an enemy or not—know this world isn't the way it should be. From the moment Adam and Eve believed their enemy's first lie, the world has been slowly falling apart.

We see it every day, but we refuse to accept it. That's why we have causes and charities and missions to push back darkness in the world. God wired us that way—with discontent for living in a dark world.

Why? Because this life is *not* all there is. There's this life, and then the next:

He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever." And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new!"
- Revelation 21:4–5a

⁵ 1 John 4.4



I am Hated.

You have an enemy who hates you. Both spiritual and powerful, he remains an inescapable piece of your identity.

1. Doubting his existence is an option, but that requires faith.
2. The smarter wager would be doubting your doubts, contemplating your enemy's existence, and transferring your faith to a God who claims to be on your side.

There's no human solution to our spiritual problem. Positive psychology, better education, social justice, pharmacology, talk therapy—all wonderful things—cannot effectively engage the enemy.

There's a darkness inside your heart. It's the same evil that threatens your family and hovers over our communities. We can feel its presence, but to resist it, we have to call it what it is: Satan.

When we do that—accept the battle as spiritual—we bring an entirely new set of resources to bear on our enemy. And we soon find: the enemy who hates you is no match for the God who loves you.

The LORD hears his people when they call to him for help. He rescues them from all their troubles. The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed.
- Psalm 34:17–18

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