

Identity and Destiny

I. Definition of Identity:

Identity is formed from the **qualities, beliefs, personality, and expressions that make up our personhood. We have both a personal identity and collective identity (ethnic, gender, family of origins, or social groups)**

II. In the Past, People Have Tended to Think That Their Identity Was Fixed. Today we hear the term “Identity Fluidity” which our Culture applies mainly to gender.

III. We are Developing a Spiritual Identity

Example: Who could say that our “Identity is fixed,” after listening to Danny Carrera from Victory Outreach (Last week) and hearing the testimony of his transformation from deadly Gang member to Pastor and Minister of the Gospel.

What Makes the Difference between an Identity as Defined by This World and one that is being formed by God?

The difference is that we as God’s people are gaining a sense of Focus on what we are choosing to become in God, instead of permitting the circumstances of life to beat us into a pummeled, fractured, diminished, meaningless (less meaningful) state of existence.

2 Corinthians 3:18 KJV, "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." Some translations say, "being transformed from glory to glory."

1 Corinthians 15: 51 – 57, (NIV) Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.” “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. Our Human Tendency is to Define Our Identity by External Things

This world teaches us to define who we are through superficial images of Success- our jobs, our careers, our financial status, our education, our appearance, what other people say about us, significant relationships, etc.

We are bombarded with messages telling us to define ourselves by external measures within our culture. We become trapped in a vicious cycle of trying to measure up to superficial criteria that can never deliver a stable sense of identity.

There have always been “Fantastic Personas,” fantasy based “Super Heroes,” as in the mythology of ancient societies, like Greco-Roman deities.

Super Heroes from our own childhood and current super heroes in our present culture cause us to live in a fantasy world. We take on “personas” that are larger than life, so we become prey to grandiosity and illusion because we feel inadequate and need to bolster ourselves.

Then we crash and burn and in this deflated state, we find ourselves feeling that we can’t measure up, so we give way to self-pity and pain; we hide out not willing to face what truly is rather than what we wish for or would prefer our reality to be.

Inevitably in the course of our lives, we experience loss in an area that we have relied on to define our sense of worth as a person. At this critical moment, the foundation of our identity is shaken. When our circumstances change, we continue in a vicious cycle to re-define ourselves by something else or someone else.

We will never find a stable identity or sense of self, as long as we try to establish our identity in external things because every time our circumstances change, we will be looking for some other external source to help us find a new identity.

In secular “Pop-Culture,” celebrities are constantly “Re-Inventing Themselves.” Social media has exaggerated people’s capacity to do this “on a whim.”

What Mankind is generally missing is the understanding that we are all on a journey to discover, uncover and come to peace with our true identity.

V. Our Identity Is WHO God has declared us to be and HOW God Sees Us

Paul explains our New Identity in Christ

Ephesians 1:1-11: The Passion Translation.

'Dear friends, My name is Paul, and I was chosen by God to be an apostle of Jesus, the Messiah. I'm writing this letter to all the devoted believers who have been made holy by being one with Jesus, the Anointed One. May God Himself, the heavenly Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, release grace over you and impart total well-being into your lives. Every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realm has already been lavished upon us as a

love gift from our wonderful heavenly Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus—all because He sees us wrapped into Christ. This is why we celebrate Him with all our hearts! And in love He chose us before He laid the foundation of the universe! Because of His great love, He ordained us, so that we would be seen as holy in His eyes with an unstained innocence. For it was always in His perfect plan to adopt us as His delightful children, through our union with Jesus, the Anointed One, so that His tremendous love that cascades over us would glorify His grace—for the same love He has for the Beloved, Jesus, He has for us. And this unfolding plan brings Him great pleasure! For it was always in His perfect plan to adopt us as His delightful children, through our union with Jesus, the Anointed One, so that His tremendous love that cascades over us would glorify His grace—for the same love He has for the Beloved, Jesus, He has for us. And this unfolding plan brings Him great pleasure! Since we are now joined to Christ, we have been given the treasures of redemption by His blood—the total cancellation of our sins—all because of the cascading riches of His grace. This superabundant grace is already powerfully working in us, releasing all forms of wisdom and practical understanding. And through the revelation of the Anointed One, He unveiled His secret desires to us—the hidden mystery of His long-range plan, which He was delighted to implement from the very beginning of time. And because of God’s unfailing purpose, this detailed plan will reign supreme through every period of time until the fulfillment of all the ages finally reaches its climax—when God makes all things new in all of heaven and earth through Jesus Christ. Through our union with Christ we too have been claimed by God as his own inheritance. **Before we were even born, He gave us our destiny;** that we would fulfill the plan of God who always accomplishes every purpose and plan in His heart. '

According to Ephesians Chapter 1, Christ has given us a new **Identity** and He is the Source of our Identity. We are:

1. Blest with every spiritual blessing
2. We have been chosen, redeemed, accepted by God, and forgiven.
3. God has lavished His grace on us.
4. God has given each of us a **destiny to fulfil His plan** and it is God’s intent to accomplish the purposes and plans in His heart.

Our New, Our True, Identity leads us to fulfill our Destiny.

VI. What are the Barriers that try to Prevent Us from Living Out Our True Identity in Christ?

We consent to the truths about our new identity in Christ intellectually, but we are profoundly affected by:

1. Our life experiences (family dynamics, trauma, failures, broken relationships)

Arthur Burk, founder of Plumblin Ministries, has stated that trauma itself is a specific scheme of the enemy to gain access to us for purposes of future torment and emotional torture.

2. How we see ourselves is often defined by others particularly the words and opinions of someone who holds a position of influence in our minds or thinking.
3. Satan tries to paint lies and false beliefs as truth:
 - Instead of seeing ourselves as accepted by God, we receive rejection.
 - Instead of seeing ourselves forgiven and blameless before God, we continue to rehearse our past failures and mistakes and give them the power to define us.
 - Sometimes, the lie is connected to a very real, painful experience. We must acknowledge the pain and invite God into this place of brokenness to heal and integrate the fragmented parts of our hearts. Surrender the lie to God and ask Him to help us believe the truth about who He says we are.

VII. Seeing Ourselves as God Sees Us Is a Process

We are called to live out of an identity based on how God sees us.

He defines our significance and we find our worth in Him.

We are freed to live confidently, instead of trying to change who we are based on the shifting values of culture and what others think about us

Example of Gideon

Judges 6:12-22 (NIV)

'When **the angel of the Lord** appeared to Gideon, he said, "**The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.**" "**Pardon me, my lord,**" Gideon replied, "but if the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all His wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, 'Did not the Lord bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the Lord has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian." The Lord turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?" "**Pardon me, my lord,**" **Gideon replied, "but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family.**" The Lord answered, "I will be with you, and you will strike down all the Midianites, leaving none alive." Gideon replied, "If now I have found favor in Your eyes, give me a sign that it is really You talking to me. Please do not go away until I come back and bring my offering and set it before You." And the Lord said, "I will wait until you return." Gideon went inside, prepared a young goat, and from an ephah of flour he made bread without yeast. Putting the meat in a basket and its broth in a pot, he brought them out and offered them to him under the oak. The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread, place them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And Gideon did so. Then the angel of the Lord touched the meat and the unleavened bread with the tip of the staff that was in his hand. Fire flared from the rock, consuming the meat and the bread. And the angel of the Lord disappeared. When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the Lord, he exclaimed, "Alas, Sovereign Lord! I have seen the angel of the Lord face to face!"

'And Lived'

Gideon was believing lies about himself and the Angel of the Lord had to challenge him about believing he was small, weak and impotent against the massive armies of the Midianites.

The Midianites had been long-term "Invaders" of the land of Israel coming over and over again destroying and stealing the crops and herds of the Israelites.

Lies about ourselves, like the Midianites, are long-term "Invaders" coming over and over trying to steal and destroy our purpose and destinies.

Gideon thought so little of himself that he requested, over and over again, signs to help him believe that he could be the deliverer that the Angel of the Lord was saying he was.

VIII. Challenging False Beliefs About Yourself

Once we recognize a false belief, we must surrender it to God, then replace the lie with truth found in Scripture.

More often than not, the lie is connected to a very real, painful experience. Take some time to grieve over the experience, then, invite God into this place of brokenness. After you have surrendered the lie over to God, pray that He will help you believe the truth about **who He says you are**.

Deeply seated lies have created neurological pathways like “Ruts in the brain,” which the enemy of our souls uses to keep us chained to these false beliefs. The antidote is to “See and Identify the lie quickly, renounce it, repent again and move forward in God to embrace our new Identity in Him.

We may not always “feel” forgiven or blameless, but the truth is, God sees us that way. This is where faith comes in.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (ESV) “For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,”

God has given us everything that we need to demolish strongholds or false beliefs, and He empowers us to do so.