

Identity: Who Are You?

QUICK REFERENCE COUNSELING KEYS Excerpt

A Change of Identity . . .

What is your real identity? What is an identity? Is your identity something you are born with? Is it changeable or never able to change? Ever since Adam made his choice to disobey God in the Garden of Eden, he and all his descendants have been identified with sin. His declaration of independence explains the rebellious nature we each inherited. Because we were born into the family of Adam, we all possess the natural bent to live self-centered lives. Yet with a heart of love, the heavenly Father has persistently sought to draw each person with His offer of adoption. He desires to adopt us into His family and to give us a new nature . . . the same moral nature of His Son. When you become a true Christian by receiving Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior, you also receive a new identity. As a child of God, your old sin nature has been exchanged for a glorious new identity in Christ!¹

“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Q: “What is your identity?”

- The identity of a person is based on the distinguishing characteristics of that person.
- Your identity involves both your inner character and your outer conduct that distinguish you from everyone else.
- The word “identity” comes from the Latin word *idem*, which means “same.”²
- Your visible conduct should consistently reflect your inner character. This forms your identity.

“As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects the man.”
(Proverbs 27:19)

Q: “What causes the struggle with identity?”³

Most people experience confusion about who they really are because they lack a biblical understanding of what determines their identity. Your behavior is an outgrowth of your identity. Our personal identity is determined by what “family” we are born into. Spiritually, everyone is a descendant of Adam—we were born into “Adam’s family.” No one in Adam’s family has the capacity to live as God designed us to live.

A new spiritual life is made possible in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. To embrace Him as your personal Lord and Savior is to inherit a new family and a new identity “in Christ.” With this new identity you will begin to develop Christlike character by choosing to rely on Him to deal with your daily problems.

“In Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.”
(1 Corinthians 15:22)

Causes of Struggle with Identity⁴

The Family of Adam

Every individual is born into the family of Adam, is identified with Adam, and will exhibit the character of Adam. Adam represents the humanistic view of life.

- The one in Adam sees human beings in control of events and circumstances.
- The one in Adam believes there is no absolute truth; everything is relative.
- The one in Adam believes in choosing one's own moral restraints.
- The one in Adam sees self-fulfillment as life's highest purpose.
- To be in Adam means that you are an heir to everything he was.⁵ (Romans 5:12)

The Family of Christ

- The one in Christ sees God in control of events and circumstances. (Proverbs 16:4)
- The one in Christ is set free by the truth. (John 8:31–32)
- The one in Christ knows moral absolutes that establish godly behavior. (Psalm 119:4)
- The one in Christ sees fulfilling the will of God as life's highest purpose. (Matthew 7:21)
- To be in Christ means that you are an heir to everything He is.⁶ (Galatians 3:29)

Paul prays that you may "[have] the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints."
(Ephesians 1:18)

My New Freedom

- **Lie:** "My life has no value because I have failed and deserve to be punished."

Truth: I have God-given value based not on my past performance but on Christ, who lives in me and who gives me freedom from condemnation.⁷

- I am free from accusation. (Colossians 1:22)
- I am free from condemnation. (Romans 8:1)
- I am free from the law. (Romans 7:4)
- I am free from sin. (Romans 6:11)
- I am free from God's wrath. (Romans 5:9)

Key Verse to Memorize

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."
(Galatians 2:20)

Key Passage to Read and Reread

Ephesians 5:8–17

In Adam

Slave to Sin

"We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin."
(Romans 6:6)

Death

"The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."
(Romans 6:23)

Enemies of God

"If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life."
(Romans 5:10)

Condemned

"The free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification."
(Romans 5:16)

Under Wrath

"Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind."
(Ephesians 2:3)

In Christ

Free from Sin

*“One who has died has been set free from sin.”
(Romans 6:7)*

Life

*“Now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.”
(Romans 6:22)*

Reconciled to God

*“If while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.”
(Romans 5:10)*

No Condemnation

*“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
(Romans 8:1)*

Free from Wrath

*“Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God.”
(Romans 5:9)*

Related Topics . . .

- Codependency:
Moving from Bondage to Balance
- Manipulation:
Severing the Strings of Control
- Perfectionism:
The Push to Perform
- Purpose in Life:
Pinpointing Your Priorities
- Rejection:
Healing a Wounded Heart

1. Bill Gillham and Anabel Gillham, *Wheat & Tares* (Fort Worth, TX: Gillham Ministries, 1994), audiocassette.
2. Merriam-Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary* (electronic edition) Merriam-Webster, 2001.
3. See Gillham and Gillham, *Wheat & Tares*.
4. See Gillham and Gillham, *Wheat & Tares*.
5. Discipleship Counseling Services, *Discipleship Counseling Training Student Manual* (Dallas: Discipleship Counseling Services, n.d.).
6. Discipleship Counseling Services, *Discipleship Counseling Training Student Manual*.
7. For this section see Discipleship Counseling Services, *Discipleship Counseling Training Student Manual*.

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Identity: Who Are You?:

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