

Self-Image & Identity

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

An Excerpt from the *BIBLICAL COUNSELING KEYS*

What Is Your Identity?

What is an identity? Are you born with your identity? Is it changeable or unable to change?

If someone were to ask: “Who are you?” what would you say? Most of us describe ourselves by what we *do*: “I’m a teacher.” “I’m an accountant.” “I’m in sales.” Others spend years studying genealogy, tracing their roots to learn who they are through their family lineage. But name tags aren’t necessary with God, who formed your heart and fashioned life itself. He knows your *true* identity—He knows the *true you*. ...

*“For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.”*
(Psalm 139:13)

- **Your identity** is your distinct personality and physical characteristics.
 - Your identity includes your family lineage, your genetic makeup, your DNA.
 - Your identity incorporates your particular physical mannerisms and patterns of behavior.
- **Your identity** involves both your inner character and your outer conduct that distinguish you from everyone else.
 - Your identity reveals the individual characteristics by which you are known.
 - Your identity, as seen through your visible conduct, should consistently reflect your inner character.

*“As water reflects the face,
so one’s life reflects the heart.”*
(Proverbs 27:19)

Your Inner Identity vs. Your Outer Identity

The visible or outer you stares back at you in the mirror. The internal you—the *real* you within your heart and mind—is known by God. Discern the difference between the visible you and the real you.

- **The Visible You**—How you are known by *others*
 - Your appearance and appeal
 - Your personality and persona
 - Your masks and pretenses
 - Your verbal and visual communication
 - Your talents and gifts
 - Your actions and accomplishmentsThe book of Proverbs reiterates this fact regarding the importance of our actions. ...

*“Even small children are known by their actions,
so is their conduct really pure and upright?”*
(Proverbs 20:11)

- **The Real You**—How you are known by *God*
 - Your basic nature
 - Your inner character, convictions, and core beliefs
 - Your value system
 - Your thoughts and inclinations
 - Your deep-seated needs, dreams, and desires
 - Your innermost feelingsProverbs also reveals the reality that God knows us even better than we know ourselves. ...

*“A person may think their own ways are right,
but the LORD weighs the heart.”*
(Proverbs 21:2)

What Are Inner Emotional Conflicts?

Emotional conflicts within those who are struggling to establish a personal identity are common to every age group. These feelings are related as much to external events as they are related to inner thoughts and preoccupations.

- **Anxiety**—“I don’t know who I really am.”
- **Depression**—“I have no hope for the future.”

- **Self-doubt**—“I am so inadequate.”
- **Self-consciousness**—“I am unacceptable and unloved.”
- **Low self-worth**—“I am not good enough.”

*“How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?”*

(Psalm 13:2)

What Are Outer Evidences of Inner Conflict?

According to the American Psychiatric Association **inner emotional struggles** with identity usually result in the following patterns of inconsistent behavior:

- **Difficulty** in making a positive spiritual commitment
- **Unhealthy** friendships
- **Rejection** of family values or blind acceptance of the values of others
- **Struggles** with sexual immorality
- **Difficulty** in establishing intimacy
- **Excessive** difficulty in choosing a career

*“Such a person is double-minded
and unstable in all they do.”*

(James 1:8)

What Differentiates *My View* of Me from *God’s View* of Me?

- **Do you think** ... you are unacceptable?
God says ... you are accepted by Him. (Acts 10:34–35)
- **Do you think** ... you are alone?
God says ... He will never leave you nor forsake you.
(Deuteronomy 31:8)
- **Do you think** ... you are incompetent, a failure?
God says ... He has made you competent. (2 Corinthians 3:5)
- **Do you think** ... you are not good enough, imperfect?
God says ... He has made you perfect in Christ.
(Hebrews 10:14)
- **Do you think** ... you are a mistake?
God says ... He skillfully made you in secret. (Psalm 139:15)
- **Do you think** ... you are defeated?
God says ... you are more than a conqueror. (Romans 8:37)
- **Do you think** ... you are unloved?
God says ... nothing can take away His love. (Romans 8:38–39)

- **Do you think** ... you can’t be forgiven?
God says ... Your sins are forgiven and are gone. (Psalm 103:12)
- **Do you think** ... you don’t have enough strength?
God says ... He will strengthen you Himself. (Ephesians 3:16)
- **Do you think** ... you can’t have victory over a sinful habit?
God says ... You have victory through Jesus. (Romans 6:14)

Key Verse to Memorize

*“I have been crucified with Christ
and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.*

*The life I now live in the body,
I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave himself for me.”*

(Galatians 2:20)

Key Passage to Read

Ephesians 5:8–17

Fighting Lies with God’s Truth

Lies:

- “I feel worthless unless I’m accepted and loved by family and significant people in my life.”
- “I’ll never feel valuable because this is just the way I am. I cannot change.”
- “My life has no value because I’ve done so many things wrong. My life is ruined!”

Truth:

- I am chosen by God. (Ephesians 1:4)
- I am a child of God. (John 1:12)
- I am born again. (1 Peter 1:23)
- I am free from condemnation. (Romans 8:1)
- I am free from sin. (Romans 6:11)
- I am free from God’s wrath. (Romans 5:9)
- I have a new heart. (Ezekiel 11:19)
- I have a new spirit. (Ezekiel 36:27)
- I have a new mind. (1 Corinthians 2:16)
- I am redeemed. (Ephesians 1:7)
- I am purified. (1 John 1:7)
- I am accepted by Christ. (Romans 15:7)
- I am an heir of God. (Galatians 4:7)

How to Recognize Your New Identity in Christ

- **In Adam:** Old Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)
In Christ: New Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- **In Adam:** Unrepentant Heart (Romans 2:5)
In Christ: New Heart (Ezekiel 36:26)
- **In Adam:** Slave to Sin (Romans 6:6)
In Christ: Free from Sin (Romans 6:7)
- **In Adam:** Death (Romans 6:23)
In Christ: Life (Romans 6:22)
- **In Adam:** Powerless (Romans 5:6)
In Christ: Powerful (2 Peter 1:3)
- **In Adam:** Enemy of God (Romans 5:10)
In Christ: Reconciled to God (Romans 5:10)
- **In Adam:** Condemned (Romans 5:18)
In Christ: No Condemnation (Romans 8:1)
- **In Adam:** Slave (Galatians 4:8)
In Christ: Son (Galatians 3:7)
- **In Adam:** Slave to Impurity (Romans 6:19)
In Christ: Slave to Righteousness (Romans 6:19)
- **In Adam:** Poverty (2 Corinthians 8:9)
In Christ: Riches (2 Corinthians 8:9)
- **In Adam:** Accused (Colossians 1:22)
In Christ: Blameless (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24)
- **In Adam:** Under Judgment (Romans 5:16)
In Christ: Justified (Romans 5:16)
- **In Adam:** Under a Curse (Galatians 3:10)
In Christ: Redeemed from the Curse (Galatians 3:13)
- **In Adam:** Under Wrath (Ephesians 2:3)
In Christ: Free from Wrath (Romans 5:9)
- **In Adam:** In Darkness (Ephesians 5:8)
In Christ: In the Light (Ephesians 5:8)

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Related Topics ...

- Codependency
- Manipulation
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- Pride & Humility
- Purpose in Life
- Rejection & Abandonment
- Self-Worth

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www.HopeForTheHeart.org

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