

## **Identity: Who Am I?**

Title: Part 1 – Do You Know Who You Are?

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As everyone is saying “Hi” here in the house I want to thank you for bringing us into your house or wherever you are watching this from. Let us know how we can pray for you and if this message blesses you then by all means share it with a friend.

So, back in August I made the mistake of watching the news for a couple days in a row. I used to be a news junkie! I would listen to NPR and talk radio. I would watch CNN and Fox News. If there was something going on in the world I knew about it and knew how the left and the right were spinning it. But during the pandemic I had to unplug from the news and now I only scroll through the headlines once a day just to know what is basically going on in the world and then I don't engage with it from there. It's just too toxic today! But back in August when I was watching for a couple days something hit me:

Everyone is on a journey sooner or later to find themselves. Our culture today emphasizes self-discovery but makes race, sexuality, and gender the center of the pursuit. It purposely pits us against each other! It's all over the news! So many people are confused about their identity today, confused about their racial identity, confused about their gender identity, confused about their sexual identity, confused about their spiritual identity, confused about their personal identity. Everyone today is on this journey trying to find themselves. Everyone is asking: Who am I?

AND that's not a bad thing! Christianity also makes self-discovery an important part of its message, but its criteria is totally different. Totally different! So, today is really the first part of a two-part message that God put on my heart. It was just more content than would fit into one message, so you have to come back next week because today won't fully address everything. Touch your neighbor and tell them “I'll see you here next week...” Tell them you'll save this seat for them!

If you are looking for a message title I am calling this half of the message:

### **Do You Know Who You Are?**

We are going to answer that next week, but today we are going to look at one of the most famous examples in the Bible of a confused identity. The story of Moses.

Moses was the greatest leader in the entire Old Testament. This is the guy who set the Jews free from 400 years of Egyptian slavery. If it weren't for Moses there would not be a nation of Israel today. This is the guy who God personally gives the Ten Commandments to! How next level is that? This is also the guy who took all of the oral tradition—the stories of creation and Abraham and Noah and Joseph—and writes that down in what today is the first five books of the Bible. BUT none of that would have happened. History would not have changed if Moses hadn't figured out, who am I? What is my true identity?

We pick up Moses story after the Jews had been slaves in Egypt for 400 years. Over that 400 years they multiplied so much that pretty soon Pharaoh became concerned that the Jews could unite and overtake the empire. So, he made a decree that all the baby boys were to be killed as a way of controlling the population. We enter the narrative with Moses' mother and her desperate attempt to save her baby boys life. She weaves a basket, puts him in this basket, and then takes him down to the Nile River hoping that if the crocodiles didn't eat him that maybe someone down river would find him and rescue him. As Moses floats he eventually comes to a place where Pharaoh's daughter was bathing, and she sees this little basket. She opens it up and takes this little baby home and pretends it's her baby, a gift from the Nile. He's not an Egyptian baby. He's a Hebrew baby. But Pharaoh's daughter says I'm going to take this baby home and pretend he's mine. So, Moses is raised as Egyptian royalty.

Now, pause the history lesson for a minute, you know what this means, right? Moses' life up until this point was a real "basket case." So, if you think nothing ever goes right in my life, I'm a total basket case. Congratulations! You may be the next Moses because he was a real basket-case.

BUT we have all the ingredients now for a story about lost identity, confused identity, missing identity. But Moses' story is also about someone rediscovering who he really was, how it changed his life, and how it changed his destiny and all of history.

And fortunately for us the story is summarized in the New Testament book of Hebrews. Hebrews 11:23-27, here is the cliff notes version of Moses' life:

<sup>23</sup> By faith Moses' parents hid him for three months after he was born, because they saw he was no ordinary child, and they were not afraid of the king's edict. <sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. <sup>25</sup> He chose to be mistreated along with the people of God rather than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. <sup>26</sup> He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward. <sup>27</sup> By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible.

In this passage we learn the four things that happen when you figure out your true identity. Again, you will have to come back next week to get that question fully answered. But the first takeaway today is this, write this down:

#### **KNOWING MY IDENTITY**

#### **Demonstrates spiritual maturity.**

I wrote this in my notes: The road to spiritual maturity is the road to personal identity. What does that mean? The closer you get to God the more you're going to understand you! Because God is your Creator. The more you understand your Creator, the more you're going to understand why He created you. Spiritual maturity leads to personal identity.

We see this in Moses' story. Growing up, Moses asked all the questions that everybody else in the world asks: Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going? Does my life matter? Does my life have meaning? What am I supposed to do with my life? Those are all identity questions. They are the most important questions in life. Who am I? What did God put me on this planet for?

We all ask these questions growing up. But at some point you've got to figure out the answer. In verse 24 it says this:

<sup>24</sup> By faith Moses, **WHEN HE HAD GROWN UP**, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

When he had **grown up** he refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. He refused—that means to reject, to disown, no turning back.

Moses is having a full-scale identity crisis. Here's a guy who's born a Hebrew slave, the poorest of the poor, no clout, no influence, but he's raised in Pharaoh's palace, the richest and most powerful man in the world. You couldn't get further apart in the economic and social strata. But when he had grown up he asks: Who

am I? A rich Egyptian? A lowly Hebrew? Royalty? A slave? He's got an identity crisis going on and he's got to decide who am I going to be?

AND there are only two options. I can pretend for the rest of my life that I really am Pharaoh's grandson. He could pretend. And if he does that he's going to have fame, he's going to have fortune, he's going to have a luxurious lifestyle. Every pleasure he could ever want—power, possessions, position, privilege, status, sex, servants—everything he could ever want is his if he just keeps his mouth shut.

On the other hand, if he admits what I really am is the son of Hebrew slaves, he is going to be poor his entire life, he's going to be disgraced, humiliated, thrown out of the palace and put into slave labor! Which one would you choose? Would you fake it for the rest of your life and be somebody you weren't really meant to be? Or would you be who God made you to be? That's a stressful position, right?

So much stress in life comes from you not knowing who you are. When you don't know who you are then you live for the expectations of others. You live for the approval of others. You live in the fear of rejection by others. You become a people pleaser because you don't know who you are.

Let me show you someone who was not confused about their identity. John 8:14:

**14 Jesus answered, "Yes, I am saying these things about myself, but they are true. I know where I came from and where I am going."**

That is spiritual maturity! Jesus says I know where I came from and I know where I am going so it doesn't matter what you say, I know these things are true about myself.

As your pastor, as someone who loves and cares about you, I want you to get to that point too! It is my job to help you get to the point where you're able to say to the rest of the world, "I know where I came from, and I know where I'm going." That is spiritual maturity! You know who you are, and you know who you aren't, and you don't try to be who you're not. You know your strengths and you know your weaknesses and you focus on your strengths not your weaknesses. You know what God made you to be and you know what God didn't make you to be. You know what your past is. You don't lie about it; you don't fake it. But you don't let it ruin the rest of your life! I am a product of my past, but I'm not a prisoner of my past! Amen? I'm a product of my past, but I'm not a prisoner of my past!

The most spiritually mature person in history said, "I know who I am and where I came from and where I am going, and your opinion doesn't matter." Jesus was clear on His identity. Success comes from being who God made you to be and accepting who God made you to be. Maturity does not mean approval by other people. You don't really care what other people think because I know who I am, and I know where I'm going.

That's the identity crisis that Moses faced. But when he had grown up he refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. Knowing my identity demonstrates spiritual maturity.

Here's another takeaway:

### **KNOWING MY IDENTITY**

### **Defines my responsibilities.**

What I mean by that is it clarifies what God expects of me. God created you to do some things in life. But He didn't create you to do everything! The reason you've been under so much stress and worry is because you're trying to do everything. Those are warning signs. When you try to do everything God's going, "Wait a minute! Time out! I didn't ask you to do everything. I created you to do certain things tied into your identity. That's your responsibility."

Think about it, God custom made and planned all of the events around Moses' life in order to prepare him for one task and one task only. He wanted Moses to be the deliverer of Israel. So, everything that happened in Moses' life was designed to set him up to do that. Starting with God giving Moses the parents he had because they had the exact DNA needed!

You know why you have your parents? Because they had the exact DNA to make you! And God was more interested in making you than He was their parenting skills! Your parents may have been great parents, bad parents, indifferent parents, or terrible parents but God chose them. Why? Because they had the DNA to create you!

So, God planned, this is going to be Moses' parents BUT He also planned that his parents would not raise him. Instead, God's plan was that he would be raised in royalty. In an Egyptian palace! Both of those things were part of God's plan to prepare Moses—born a Jew but raised Egyptian. That would make the perfect combination for a national leader. AND maybe you weren't raised by your parents either. Hear me, while it may have been painful and left you scared, that was part of the plan. If Moses had been raised by his parents he couldn't have been the person God wanted him to be and neither could you!

When Moses finally learns his real identity—I'm not Pharaoh's grandson, I'm not even Egyptian, I am a Hebrew slave's son—when Moses finally learns that he knows immediately his assignment, his mission, his purpose. He can no longer ignore the cries of his people's pain. Look at verse 25 again, this time from the Message Translation:

**<sup>25</sup> He CHOSE a hard life with God's people rather than an opportunistic soft life of sin with the oppressors.**

In your life, if you're going to be what God wants you to be there's going to be some things you have to say no to. You may have to choose a harder path. But the negatives are always followed by positives! When? It says, "when he had grown up."

Here's the biggest sign you are growing up no matter how old you are: when I stop blaming other people for my life's direction! That's a mark of maturity. I stop blaming other people for my life's direction. Which is incredibly hard because everything in our culture says nothing is ever your fault. We grow up learning in America it's always somebody else's fault. Blame everybody else: It's the government's fault, it's your parent's fault, it's the school's fault, it's the person who hurt you's fault. We're taught to blame everything in our life on other people. Maturity though is when I stop blaming other people.

Listen to me church, God sent me to tell someone this today, other people in your life can and will hurt you. Other people in your life can and will harm you. Other people in your life can and will scar you. But no one, NO ONE, can ruin your life without your permission!

Here's the question I want you to wrestle with today: Who are you blaming for the direction of your life? Who are you blaming for your unhappiness? Who are you blaming for your addictions? Who are you blaming for you not owning your responsibilities?

Knowing my identity helps me define my responsibility and that comes when I grow up and stop blaming others. Again, don't miss next week as we dive into our true identity, but here's the next:

**KNOWING MY IDENTITY  
Decides my priorities.**

It helps me to decide what to focus on and what to ignore. When you know who you are and who God made you to be, it helps you know what matters and what doesn't matter. What to value and what not to value. What to prioritize and what to not prioritize. When you know exactly who you are and who God made you to be, you know how to spend your time and how to spend your money. It helps you set priorities.

Think about Moses. Born a Hebrew slave, raised in the lap of luxury as Pharaoh's grandson. He sees all these slaves out here being beaten, murdered, wasting away, starved to death as they build the pyramids, and he could have said, "I've got plenty of excuses to ignore those people... It's none of my business! Besides, I have palace priorities. I'm the grandson of Pharaoh. Maybe one day I'll work within the system to make changes for justice but not today."

No! Once Moses knows his true identity it changes his priorities. All of a sudden the stuff in the palace doesn't matter anymore. Verse 26:

<sup>26</sup> He thought [That's a judgment call. It means to evaluate, to consider, to weigh, he thought or reckoned] that it was better to suffer for the promised Christ than to own all the treasures of Egypt.

Moses' values shifted once he knew who he really was.

So, question: If I asked you right now "Tell me the five most important values in your life and name them in order." Could you do that? If I said, "What are you going to build your life on? What are the five most important values to you? Could you make a list? Could you prioritize them? Because if you can't name them, if you don't decide what's important to you, other people are going to decide what's important to you! And you will live for what the crowd says is important. If you don't know them then you certainly can't live them.

As I was getting ready for today I was reading up on Moses' story and the interesting thing is five thousand years later, the world's top three priorities haven't changed from Moses' day. In fact, every advertisement is based on one of these three values. Like:

**Popularity.** Call it power, call it prestige, call it status, the world values popularity. As Pharaoh's grandson, Moses is the heir apparent. He's Mr. Popularity. He's a celebrity. He gets into every club in Cairo. He doesn't have to show any ID. They don't card him. He's on the A list. TMZ follows him everywhere. He's got status, fame, and power, the first thing the world values but when Moses learns his true identity what did we read? Verse 24, "*He refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter.*" Everyone wants popularity and also:

**Pleasure.** Everybody wants pleasure. If it feels good do it. I want to be happy. I want to have fun. I want to get high. I want to experience life. Pleasure from sex, pleasure from food, pleasure from recreation. There's nothing wrong with pleasure; it's just not supposed to be your priority! Moses lives in a palace with every pleasure possible known to man. He can have champagne and caviar every meal. If he wants his grapes peeled he's got twenty women to peel them for him. There's a harem in Pharaoh's court. He's got all the women he wants. BUT Moses walked away from pleasure because of a new set of values! AND he walked away from:

**Possessions,** which is the third value that has not changed in our world for the past 5,000 years. Possessions, money, wealth, security. All of the wealth of the ancient world was stored up in Pharaoh's palace. Pharaoh was the wealthiest man in the world and Moses is going to inherit it all as his grandson! But he is going to walk away from it to go and join a bunch of slaves? You've got to be kidding me? Who makes that kind of choice? Somebody who knows his identity! Amen?

Moses walks away from everything most Americans spend their life trying to get—money, sex, and power. But he walks away from it because he knows his identity. And once he knows his identity it sets his priorities.

What were Moses' values? Well, fulfilling God's purpose was better than popularity. Moses decides, "I know I could stay here and be the grandson of Pharaoh and be very popular. But fulfilling God's purpose is much more important because fame doesn't last." Because of His new identity he also realizes loving God's people is better than pleasure. So, what does he do? He trades in the palace to go help a bunch of slaves. Moses also now values this, and this is huge for you and I today, having God's peace is better than possessions. Why? Because peace comes from doing God's purpose and you can't buy that.

Again, what motivated Moses to do that? What motivated him to change? Notice the rest of verse 26:

**...for he was looking forward to the GREAT REWARD that God would give him.**

In other words, vision sets values. What I look at is what I'm going to become. And what I look at most is what I'm going to love the most. My vision determines my values. And Moses is a man of vision. He looks ahead to his reward. "I know I'm going to have to go back and be a helpless slave but in heaven I'm going to be rewarded for eternity forever and ever and ever. I'm looking ahead at the reward. I'm not looking at the here and now. I may not have money on this earth. I may not be powerful on this earth. I may not have the most pleasure on this earth. But I know I'm going to be rewarded in heaven!"

The Apostle Paul had the exact same vision. Philippians 3:8:

**<sup>8</sup> Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.**

All the stuff I used to have: all the clubs and the popularity and the sex and the drugs, none of that is worthwhile anymore compared to the priceless gain of knowing Jesus! AND that's why you can't miss the conclusion of this message next Sunday!

Knowing who I am decides my priorities. One more and we are done:

**KNOWING MY IDENTITY**

**Determines my destiny.**

Once Moses realized who he was his life took a whole new direction. But here is the rub, here is the problem: We want to change our circumstances; God wants to change our character!

We're so excited about changing our circumstances. Because we think if I can just get away from this relationship, if I can just get away from this home, if I can just get away from this environment, then I'll be happy. You know what the problem is? When you move you take you! Everywhere you go, there you are! Amen? We want to change our circumstances; God wants to change our character!

Verse 27 tells us that knowing my true identity determines my destiny, look again:

**By faith Moses left Egypt, unafraid of Pharaoh's wrath and moving forward as though he could see the invisible God.**

Learning your true identity does two things. It gives you the courage to let go of the past. And it gives you the courage to walk into the future.

First, it gives me the courage to leave my past behind. It says “Moses left Egypt.” He had the courage to leave it all behind. He left Egypt. Knowing my identity gives me the courage to leave my past behind.

What does Egypt represent? In the Bible Egypt always represents slavery and bondage to something. Slavery and bondage. So, here’s the question: What’s your Egypt? What’s got you enslaved? What’s got you under its control? What’s got you limping through life in chains? What’s your Egypt? Do you have the courage to walk away from it? You don’t until you know your true identity.

So, Moses left Egypt. Why? Because he knew his identity. Knowing my true identity gives me the courage to let the past go, to leave it behind me. **AND** it gives me the courage to move into the new me. Creating a new ID. The Bible says, (spoiler alert, have I mentioned don’t miss next week, but):

**“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” 2 Corinthians 5:17**

You get a whole new identity in Christ! That’s why they call it being born again! You get a whole new identity! Your true identity! You get a fresh start! A brand-new slate! Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new! Can we give God some praise for that in the house today!

So, I let go of the past, but it also gives me the courage to keep going. In verse 27 it says, “*Moving forward as though he could see the invisible God.*” He kept right on going. Why? Because he knew who he was, and he kept his eye on the Invisible One! Listen to me, when you know who you are and where you are going no critic and no problem can stop you! It says, “*He was not afraid of the king.*” You know why? Because Moses now reported to a higher authority than Pharaoh! You may be god of Egypt but I serve the Lord of lords! The King of kings!. The Alpha and the Omega!

It says Moses kept right on going. But if you don’t know who you are, you’re going to give up. You’re going to give up on your dream. You’re going to give up on life. You may give up on a marriage. You’re going to give up if you don’t know who you are.

Knowing your identity gives you persistence, gives you endurance. It says he had the ability to keep on keeping on. The secret of success is persistence because that doesn’t happen overnight. But the secret of persistence is vision. He kept his eye on the one who is invisible.

Church I want this so badly for you and me. Because you can only do the impossible in your life when you see the invisible. You can only do the impossible when you see the invisible.

It was impossible to free the Jews from four hundred years of slavery. Moses had no army. He had no weapons. And Pharaoh was the most powerful man in the world. That’s an impossible task. But when you see the One who is invisible then you know that you can do the impossible!

The two easy mistakes you will make in life are forgetting your identity and losing your focus. I’ve seen people who started out so right in life and got so screwed up because they forgot their identity and they lost their focus. Who am I and what did God call me to do?

So, Hebrews 12 encourages us with this: (v.1-2)

**Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we’re in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever.**

