

Ultimate Identity Part 1 – July 10, 2022

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What identity has the most influence on how you live your life?

As human beings whether we consciously are aware of or not we live our lives based on multiple identity markers. What I mean by identity markers are things such as Age, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, religion and so forth. The issue of Identity and discovering who you truly are is not new. You will find numerous books on discovering your true self. Why? because at some point in our lives as human beings we all face the existential question of who we truly are and what our purpose in life is

What we believe about our identity has implications for who we become and who we don't become.

Fourteenth century mystic St. Catherine said "When we are who we are called to be, we will set the world ablaze."

Pete Scazzero a well-known pastor and author says this "The vast majority of us go to our graves without knowing who we are. We unconsciously live someone else's life, or at least someone else's expectations for us. This does violence to ourselves, our relationship with God, and ultimately others."

The next four weeks we will look at: What is our ultimate identity? How can we practically live from our ultimate identity? What are the implications of abiding by our ultimate identity?

Transition

In order to answer the question of what our ultimate identity is or should be as human beings we are going to take a look at letter in the New Testament, the letter of Ephesians

Ephesians 1: 3-6; 11-14

Transition

Now before I unpack a little bit of what you just heard and before I talk about what I mean by our ultimate identity I want to first spend time examining what identities have the most impact on how you and I live our daily lives.

I. As human beings we tend to ground our identity in ourselves as opposed to heaven

A. List of top identities we tend to live out of in our North American Context

1. I am what I do
2. I am what I have
3. I am what people think of me
4. I am what I want
5. Sexual identity- if this is your ultimate identity question posed by John Mark Comer
"Is this identity a large enough container to hold your inner ache for a life of meaning and purpose?"

B. All these identities that we tend to live from in our culture today are grounded in ourselves in one way or another and all of them can be taken away or change

Transition So the question for me then becomes this, if my ultimate identity shouldn't be grounded in myself, where should I receive my ultimate identity and purpose from?

II. Our ultimate Identity is that we are chosen to be united with Christ to be loved and to love

- A. Ultimate identity refers to the identity that serves as the point of reference for all other identities in our lives. In others words every other identity that we have is informed by this ultimate identity.

Now what I want to suggest to you about what our ultimate identity is or should be is grounded in a counter cultural narrative that began over two thousand years ago and has transformed and impacted the lives of many people. This narrative is found in the teachings of Jesus and in Scripture. This narrative tells us that we have been fearfully and wonderfully made by a Creator who is interested in every facet of our lives and who wants to provide you and me a life of meaning and purpose.

It is because of this that Paul is writing this letter to the churches in Ephesus, to people who are new to faith and who are in desperate need to hear about this incredible news. In the first 3 chapters of this letter Paul is speaking with great excitement all about what our ultimate identity is. In fact, the first 14 verses in chapter 1 are all one run on sentence in the Greek text and there are no instructions in the text until chapter 4. Let me summarize in a few words what Paul is saying in the first 3 chapters about what our ultimate identity is. **Our Ultimate identity is that we are chosen to be united with Christ to be loved and to love.**

“Christians affirm a foundation of identity that is absolutely unique in the marketplace of spiritualities. Whether we realize it or not, our being is grounded in God’s love. The generative love of God was our origin. The embracing love of God sustains our existence. The inextinguishable love of God is the only hope for our fulfillment. Love is our identity and our calling, for we are children of Love. Created from love, of love and for love, our existence makes no sense apart from Divine Love.” -David Benner

Now let me further expound on what we read in chapter 1 and what I mean by saying we are chosen to be united with Christ to be loved and to love.

- B. The first 14 verses you will find the expression “In Christ” along with “in Him” or “in whom” 11 times in the Greek text. what Paul is communicating here to the people in Ephesus is that before the existence of the universe God, the Creator had already decided to choose us as human beings to love us, to be united with Him so that in turn we would love others the way he loves us.

Now what does it mean to be united with Christ?

“Christ and the believer are bound into unity in which Christ sets the parameters for life and makes available God’s provision for life.” -Klyne Snodgrass

- C. I want to challenge you to try grounding your ultimate identity in believing that you are chosen to be united with Christ to be loved and to love others.

“In order for our knowing of God’s love to be truly transformational, it must become the basis of our identity. Our identity is who we experience ourselves to be—the I each of us carries within. An identity grounded in God would mean that when we think of who we are, the first thing that would come to mind is our status as someone who is deeply loved by God.” -David Benner

What will begin to happen in your life when you embrace being chosen to be united with Christ to be loved and to love as your ultimate identity? You will have your ultimate point of reference for living in this chaotic and painful world. This identity of being chosen by God to be united with

Christ to be loved and to love is an identity that is constant. It does not change, and it cannot be taken away.

Conclusion

Here is some homework for next week I want you to spend time reflecting on your habits and reflecting on what other identities tend at times to take the place of your ultimate identity. Next week we will dive into how we can move beyond a cognitive knowledge of our ultimate identity to practically living from it.

Questions:

1. What identity has the most influence on how you live your life?
2. Why do you think we tend to live from an identity that is grounded in ourselves as opposed to heaven?
3. How does knowing you are chosen to be loved and to love change the way you see your true self?