

The Algorithm vs. the Altar

Where Do You Go to Figure Out Who You Are?

The Tension

We live in a world that constantly tells us who we should be. Social media feeds, personality tests, career titles, relationship status—all of these compete for the authority to define us. But God claims to have spoken first. Before any of those voices existed, He formed you, knew you, and declared you His. The question is: whose voice gets the final word?

The Text

Primary Passage: Psalm 139:1–18

Supporting Texts: Galatians 1:10; Jeremiah 1:5; Romans 8:15–16

Key Truth

Your identity is not something you construct; it is something you receive from the God who made you and redeemed you in Christ. Every other source of identity is shifting sand.

Discussion Questions

1. When you introduce yourself to someone new, what do you lead with? What does that reveal about where you find your identity?
2. Read Psalm 139:1–18 aloud together. What stands out to you? Does anything make you uncomfortable? Why?
3. Things like social media give us the ability to curate how people see us. How does that practice shape how we see ourselves? Do you think there is a there a spiritual cost to it?
4. Galatians 1:10 draws a hard line: seeking human approval and serving Christ are presented as incompatible. Do you agree? Where do you feel the tension between the two in your own life?
5. Do you feel it's easy to only find your identity in God? Would anything change in your daily life if you actually believed, deep down, that God's view of you matters more than anyone else's?
6. Galatians 3:27 says those who have been baptized have put on Christ. How does baptism into Christ impact our understanding of identity? What exactly are we "putting on"?

How-To/Application

How can you apply this to your life?

- **Become Intimate with Scripture (Daily):** Study the Bible and ask yourself how God defines you. How does that compare with how the world defines you?
- **Reject The World's Definitions:** Recognize any false identities or self-defeating beliefs the world calls you to embrace (e.g. "I am what I achieve" or "I am only worthy if I am perfect"). Actively replace these definitions with biblical truths.
- **Have a Consistent Prayer Life:** Schedule time each day in prayer. Ask God to help you really see your worth through Jesus' sacrifice.
- **Let Go of External Validation: Audit your triggers.** Pay attention to when you feel the strongest urge for approval—is it after a social media post, a work project, or a conversation?
 - **Expose the underlying need.** Ask yourself, "What am I actually needing right now? Reassurance? Connection? Confirmation that I matter?"
 - **Recognize the cost.** Constantly seeking validation leads to "bondage" where you must hide your true self to fit others' expectations, resulting in burnout and resentment.
 - **Practice "God-Referencing."** Instead of asking, "What will they think?", start asking, "What does God think?"
 - **Live for "Audience of One."** Remind yourself daily that God's approval is a divine assignment, not a group decision.
- **Engage in Community:** Connect with your church family and embrace your identity as part of the body of Christ who can help you
- **Define Your Values and Rules:** What are the values that you will work to move toward? What are values that you will use to move away from? Establish rules based on Scripture that keep these rules in check.

The Takeaway

This week, pay attention to the moments when you look to something other than God to tell you who you are; approval from a boss, likes on a post, validation from a relationship. Don't judge yourself for it. Just notice it. Write it down. Bring it back next week.

Personal Reflection

Where am I most tempted to let the world define me instead of God? What is one identity truth from Scripture I need to remind myself and hold onto this week?

My Notes