

Wrestling with Identity

Identity - a stable and enduring self-understanding that serves as the fundamental core of who someone is.

Traditional View:

Identity is assigned by the clan, family, or community

Late Modern View:

Identity is determined by the individual based upon subjective feelings, dreams and desires – “*Expressive Individualism*”

“Each person has a unique core of feeling and intuition that should unfold and be expressed if individuality is to be realized.” --Robert Bellah American Sociologist

“[the culture of authenticity is one where] each one of us has his/her own way of realizing our humanity, and that it is important to find and live out one’s own, as against surrendering to conformity with a model imposed on us from outside, by society or the previous generation, or religious or political authority” -- Charles Taylor, Catholic Philosopher “The Age of Authenticity”

Problems with Expressive Individualism as a basis for identity formation

- It's incoherent – lacks consistency and congruity.
- It's unstable – prone to shift and change with feelings and circumstances

- It's an Illusion – It doesn't work. We are not purely individual by nature. We are regularly evaluating our feelings according to culturally accepted values.
- It's Suffocating – often expressive individualism is based on a role and not an identity. Often our sense of self will be determined by that which is completely outside our control. (ex. An Athlete, A Top Earner, A Parent or any other role upon which my identity is based may/will change due to circumstances outside my control)
- It's Excluding – expressive individualism often sets up unhealthy competition and comparisons. (ex. The competition between the two composers Mozart and Salieri)

What is Man?

1. Man is Created

Utterly Dependent (Deut. 8:17-18)

Morally Accountable (Gen. 2:16-17; Ps. 119:4; Jn. 14:15; 2 Cor. 5:9-10)

2. Man is born in Adam

Spiritually Dead (Rom. 9-20; Eph. 2:1-3)

A Slave to Self, the World and the Devil (Rom. 6:19-20; Eph 2:1-3; Eph. 4:17-19)

An object of God's Wrath (Eph. 2:1-3)

3. Man can be Born Again in Christ.

In Christ, you are Spiritually Alive

In Christ, you are Free

In Christ, you are Justified, Adopted and a New Creation with a new purpose.

"In Christ"

You are Justified – declared *legally* innocent and accepted as righteous. (Gal.2:15-16)

"The gospel encourages me to rest in my righteous standing with God, a standing which Christ Himself has accomplished and always maintains for me. I never have to do a moment's labor to gain or maintain my justified status before God! Freed from the burden of such a task, I now can put my energies into enjoying God, pursuing holiness, and ministering God's amazing grace to others. The gospel also reminds me that my righteous standing with God always holds firm regardless of my performance, because my standing is based solely on the work of Jesus and not mine. On my worst days of sin and failure, the gospel encourages me with God's unrelenting grace toward me. On my best days of victory and usefulness, the gospel keeps me relating to God solely on the basis of Jesus' righteousness and not mine." - Milton Vincent *The Gospel Primer*

You are Adopted – have become a legal son or daughter to someone who is not your biological parent. (Rom 8:14-17; Eph 1:3-14)

"The gospel is not just a message of reconciliation with God, but it also heralds the reconciliation of all believers to one another in Christ. Through the death of Christ, God has brought peace where there was once hostility, and He has broken down the racial, economic, and social barriers that once divided us outside of Christ (Eph 2). Also, when God saved us, He made us members of His household (Eph 2:19), and He gave us as gifts to one another (Eph 1:18). Each brother and sister is a portion of my gospel inheritance from God, and I am a portion of their inheritance as well. We are significant players in each other's gospel narrative, and it is in relationship with one another that we experience the fullness of God in Christ (Eph 3). Hence, the more I comprehend the full scope of the gospel, the more I value the church for which Christ died (Eph 5:25), the more I value the role that I play in the lives of my fellow-Christians, and the more I appreciate the role that they must be allowed to play in mine." Milton Vincent, *The Gospel Primer*

You are a New Creation with a New Purpose – (2 Cor 5:17-21; Eph 2:10)

Through the gospel I learn not only of the saving works of God on my behalf, but I also learn that one of God's key purposes in doing these works is to put me to work myself. The Bible tells me that when Christ redeemed me, He did so in order that I might now be "zealous for good works." When God "works" in me day by day, He does so in order to produce in me the desire and the power to "work for His good pleasure." Indeed, though I am saved by grace and not by works, I am God's "workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that would walk in them. Preaching the gospel to myself each day not only reminds me of the love of God for me, but it also reminds me of the love of God for the works that He has saved me to perform. When I see the Cross, I see the premium that God places on the works that He has prepared for me." Milton Vincent, *The Gospel Primer*

