

*Finding Your True Identity*  
*In Christ, Pt. 1*  
**Identity Quest**  
*Isaiah 43: 1, 4-5, Ephesians 5: 9-10; I Peter 1: 13*

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What defines me?

Genetics. Family. Ethnicity. Class. Health. Education. Goals. Desires.  
Culture. Circumstances. Relationships. Effort. Mental images. Worldview.  
Choices. Bad breaks and good fortune.

These are all *identity markers*. They each contribute to our sense of self.  
Why does that matter?

Because who we understand ourselves to be affects how we feel, how we face adversity, what we strive for, and even the way we relate to others. Identity determines the choices we make. Simply put, we live out who we believe we are. We all act from an internal story. We express our sense of identity. Even when we are not aware that we are doing so!

Those listed identity markers represent powerful influences. Some identity markers are simply *givens*: I was born when and where I was born. I prefer blue to tan, and salty to sweet. I can't do anything about that. Some identity markers represent *choices*. The style and arrangement of both my clothing and my dwelling reflect choices based on identity. Even if my means are limited.

But are all the givens and all the choices the *truest* things about me? Am I locked into an identity by the given markers I cannot control? Or am *I* the one who bears the burden of choice, constantly creating my own identity along the way?

On the one hand, if I simply have no choice about the identity given to me, then I might despair that I am stuck the way I am. For many of my identity markers may have made me feel diminished, damaged or failed. Is that just the way it is? Or, I may feel arrogantly entitled. The world should serve me just because I've been given identity markers associated with privilege. But then I may live in isolating snobbery or continual fear that others will take from me what I never deserved in the first place.

On the other hand, if it's all up to me to create my own identity, I might get thwarted on the way to achieving what I determine to be. Then all my days will be

frustration. Or I may get ridiculously swelled with pride if I do become what I set out to be. Then I might become contemptuous of others who haven't made as much of their lives. If I define *my* life when I forge my own path, what do I do once I've gone years down a particular way and discover it's not the way that leads to flourishing? Can I make up for damaging choices? Or are my life and future locked in by what I freely, willfully chose in an attempt to create myself according to my own plan?

Either way-- predetermined destiny or freely forged choices--I may fall into despair of what I am and what I have done.

However, what if my *truest* identity is based on something even deeper than these important markers? Then I could be more than who and what has shaped me. I could be more than choices I have made. What if I could dig beneath these given identity markers to find a truer self and begin to live out more of who God made me to be?

The Christian hope is that our truest identity comes not from ourselves or our circumstances. Identity comes from the God who made us. From the way *he* sees me. From the way *he* values me. From the mission *he* gives me. In Scripture, we find a treasure trove of God's identity markers for authentic and flourishing life. Some are comforting and some are convicting. But most importantly, they are *true*. Identifying with God's identity markers leads me to the most authentic life.

Most radically, we discover that our identity does not just consist in being independent choice makers, who, if we could just have enough power and resources, could create our own fulfillment. *Rather, our deepest identity lies in being joined to Jesus Christ.* We become most free when we have given control of our lives to Christ. We become most truly who we were meant to be when we live in continual reliance on him. We become most fulfilled when we align ourselves with his mission to the world. *Jesus gives us an identity that is truly unique to ourselves yet at the very same time totally related to himself.*

This Lent, we will seek to uncover the great identity markers of Scripture. We will strive to make them our own. And we will quest to live more authentically from God's definition of us as revealed in his Word.

Neither natural nor cultural identity are easily changed. Identity in Christ is not easily grasped. It takes earnest prayer. We ask God, day by day, to give us a

true identity in Christ. We continually offer ourselves to the Triune God of grace to become who he made us to be. We invite the Lord to shape us according to his will. And it takes earnest questing for the truth about our identity in God's Word. Such Biblical exploration takes effort. Mental and spiritual work. For many other forces constantly offer us a different identity than that of Scripture. We intentionally have to write our Christ-identity on our hearts through constant reflection.

Prayer. Study. Self-offering. It can seem a daunting task to claim an identity rooted in the truth of God's Word. Yet, I believe that taking just **20 minutes a day** to engage the Scriptures and pray to God about identity in Christ can be transformative. Just being intentional every day for these brief periods can open us to the identity-changing power of his Spirit. I hope you'll take up the challenge and join me in this Lent's spiritual quest!

Each day we will follow a similar three-part pattern. We read Scripture passages, reflect on their meaning, relate them to our lives and pray to God about them. The Scriptures are the treasure. Our level of personal interaction determines what we will uncover. So every day, three verses are repeated. And every day three new verses are given. The pattern is the same every day. These are the three daily themes:

### 1) **Discover Your Identity in the Triune God**

Each day, we consider an identity statement or story from God's Word, pondering how God sees us and what it means for our lives. We receive God's view of who we are. There's a new passage every day. But also every day we start with a key passage from the book of Isaiah. These verses appear every single morning. By repeating this passage aloud daily it becomes part of us. Listen to this essential identity passage:

*But now thus says the LORD,  
He who created you, he who formed you,  
"Fear not, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name, you are mine.  
You are precious in my eyes, and honored,  
And I love you.  
Fear not, for I am with you.*

*(Isaiah 43: 1, 4-5)*

If we each write these verses on our heart, the whole study is worth it. Everything is here. Let's just unpack this passage a bit.

*But now thus says the LORD,*

We start with this foundational affirmation that there is a God and that our God speaks. He's not any old god. He's not a god we make up. He is the LORD I AM, the God who made himself known in history to the people he called to himself. He led them out of slavery into the Promised Land. He spoke in the past, and he continues to speak now. For the words recorded in Scripture are not just words from another. They become God's word to us in the present moment. Now, thus says the LORD. God is about to address you each morning!

What does he say? The LORD identifies himself before he gives us our identity:

*He who created you, he who formed you,*

This God who speaks is the same God who made us. He specifically, intentionally formed each one of us. We are not self-generated. We are created.

But there's more. God did not just make us and leave us alone. He made us to be in relationship to him. He knows that life is not easy. He knows we've gotten into some messes. And he has come to save us. He has come to lead us to our deepest fulfillment by restoring our relationship to himself.

*“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name, you are mine.  
You are precious in my eyes, and honored,  
And I love you.  
Fear not, for I am with you.*

The LORD speaks to us an identity in which we can be confident and courageous. For God undercuts our fears. He speaks an identity deeper than any circumstance. Stronger than any consequence. He has claimed us. He loves us. He honors us with his attention and his care. He with us. Simply, he is our God and we are his people. We're family. And he has undertaken to get us safely through. We are never alone. He is at work in us.

And then there's this startling affirmation. “You are precious in my eyes.” The eternal Creator God values each of us as precious. He beholds us in the same way we look upon a jewel or any other beautiful treasure. Lovingly. Adoringly. With shining face and beaming countenance. That's most deeply who we are. Precious in the eyes of the one who made us. What a passage!

## **2) Unmask the Deception**

Holding on to this joyful identity, however, is not easy in a world such as this. So part two every day, we expose a common false identity in our culture that works against seeing ourselves through God's eyes. We reckon with the counter-programming we all receive, battling it with the truth of God's Word. The daily verse reminds us:

*Walk as children of the light, and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.  
Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.  
(Ephesians 5: 9-10).*

This is the section where we get challenged to see how we've taken on false identities and how we can give them up.

Scripture is like a close friend. The ones who love us most will tell us the truth about ourselves. We can take it from them because we know they care about us. God loves us so much he will not simply flatter us or fawn over us. He tells us the truth about ourselves. He blows apart our illusions. He exposes our idolatries. Precisely because he loves us and wants the best for us. That's the risk and the opportunity in this Lenten journey. God will confront us with truth. It may hurt for a moment, but it is the truth that saves us from destruction.

## **3) Dig Up the Promise in Prayer**

Finally, we take up the identity promise in prayer. John Calvin likened prayer to digging up treasure. It takes two hands: God's Word and our prayers. We study Scripture and pray through it, integrating our lives into God's Word. We ask God, boldly, simply, and from our hearts, to give us an identity rooted in Christ Jesus. Such identity prayer is hard work. It's *dependent* work, requiring the Holy Spirit to open our minds and mold our hearts. But it's *dependable* work as God may be counted on to meet those who seek him in Scripture. The daily verse is an encouragement to keep on going:

*Preparing your minds for action...set your hope fully on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:13).*

And so at the end of each day, I will be encouraging you with a particular direction for prayer. We will ask God to seal into our hearts the identity truth he has for us for that day.

My hope is that if we thoughtfully read aloud these Scriptures each and every day, by the end of Lent, they will be in our heart and mind! I cannot emphasize enough how crucial to the process is saying, learning and pondering these essential verses. They make it all come together! I hope we can each relax into the time it takes to say these verses every day. I also hope you will grant yourself the leisure to read and pray certain Scriptures more than once when the guide suggests. So much of this process is just forging open the space and time to hear God speak!

Also, in each section every day you will find a Biblical *identity marker*. These are distillations of the truth of the passages for the day. All the identity markers are collected in a section at the end of this book so you can review all the truths God has revealed in this season. They represent a Scriptural counter-programming to the many false messages of identity we hear today. And, even more, they represent God's life-giving, transformative definition of who we are

Our passages are organized into six themes, one for each week of Lent. These are six ways God sees us which shape our deepest identity. If we could each grasp these six essential statements, we would be well on our way to living from a truly Biblical identity in Christ.

So each week we ask, "Who Am I?" And from Scripture we answer, I am:

- 1) *Created, Called and Claimed*: By the Triune God in Covenant
- 2) *Hopelessly Fallen*: and Mortally Wounded by Sin
- 3) *Utterly Redeemed*: Jesus Assumed My Identity to Give Me His.
- 4) *Lovingly Adopted*: Into Christ to Share his Sonship
- 5) *Daily Dependent*: On Christ My Life
- 6) *Significantly Sent*: To Participate in God's Redeeming Work

By Easter, we will see how our true identity is in Christ alone. We are created to know God our Father through Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit. We live to share in his love in the relationships, places, times and circumstances he has given us with the gifts and challenges, blessings and suffering he sends us for his glory and our everlasting fulfillment. *That's most truly who we are.*

The quest to reclaim this Scriptural identity, our *true* identity, is thrilling, daunting, interesting, challenging and transformative. I look forward to exploring with you each day during Lent!