



Who Am I?

Giving pastors tools to deal with the contemporary social identity crisis

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- I. **Human beings have had questions about their identities for centuries.**
 - A. They have continually struggled with some basic philosophical questions.

 - B. What is the definition of identity and the crisis people now face?
 1. Identity is how a person sees them self. It is usually determined by what a person associates them self with. All identity is connected to what a person associates with.
 2. The crisis comes when there are changes in a person's life that create uncertainty or confusion.
 3. There are different things that can cause an identity crisis.
 - a. Damage to a person's support system: Death of special people, divorce or breakdown of a marriage
 - b. Changes in a person's life: illness, accident, trauma, change in schools and neighborhoods
 - c. Loss of job or new job
 - d. People's online of social image changed
 - e. People getting stuck in responsibilities and situations
 - f. Mistaken beliefs
 - g. Isolation
 - h. Lack of control over situations
 4. Identity is developed over time. The Psychologist **Erik Erikson** taught an eight stage development process of identity. Each stage captures different virtues in people and each one highlights key people in the development process The eight stages are:
 - a. Basic trust vs mistrust (Infant)
 - b. Autonomy vs shame and doubt (Toddler)
 - c. Initiative vs guilt (Pre-school)
 - d. Industry vs inferiority (School age)

- e. Identity vs role confusion (Adolescent)
 - f. Intimacy vs isolation (Young adult)
 - g. Generativity vs stagnation (Adult)
 - h. Ego integrity vs despair (Elderly)
5. Poorly developed identity affects a person's sense of social connectedness.
- C. They have tried to understand their identity both individually and socially.
- D. They have used several indicators to establish their identity.
- E. Their attempts to create a personal identity have produced different byproducts.
- F. When individuals come to your church, they bring their self-generated identities with them.

II. The Bible deals with the issue of person identity.

- A. There are examples in the Old Testament.

There are passages that deal with God's relationship to **unborn children**.

- God knows their **gender** before birth: Gen 16:11; 18:10; Jdg 13:3; Isa 9:67; Luke 1:13, 31.
- God **names** some before birth: Ishmael- Gen 16:11; Isaac- Gen 17:19; Solomon- 1Chr 22:9; Josiah- 1Kin 13:2; Cyrus- Is 44:28; John the B- Luke 1:13-15; Jesus- matt1:23.
- God knows about their **physical make-up**: Ps 139:12-16
- He knows about their **spiritual lives**: Jer 1:5
- He knew about their behavioral limitations: **Nazarites**

- He knew their **birth-order**: Gen 25.
- He knew their **social-status**: Ishmael- Gen 16:12

B. There are examples in the Epistles.

The majority of the epistle authors identify themselves not by nationality or family name but as **servants** of Jesus Christ. That was their main identity:

Paul: Rom 1:1; Titus 1:1; Php 1:1

James: Jam 1:1

Jude: Jude 1:1

Peter: 2Pet 1:1

John: Rev 1:1

C. There is material in the Apocalyptic Literature.

D. There are passages dealing with God changing people's identity.

E. There are examples seen in the life of Jesus.

F. There is an example in the life of the apostle Paul.

III. **The struggle over identity is a major problem in modern culture.**

A. The struggle manifests itself in different areas of life.

1. Gender:

2. Sexuality:

3. Appearance:

4. Wealth:

5. Accomplishments:

6. Race:

7. Politics:

B. There are different causes for the current crisis.

1. There is a quest for autonomy in many people.

2. The thoughts of many people are corrupted by sin.

Carl Trueman (Strange New World and The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self) looks at the portions of corrupt thought that have brought our current culture to the way it thinks about gender and morality.

- **Rene Descartes:** Thinking is the grounds of certainty. "I think therefore I am".
- **Jean-Jacques Rousseau:** Identity is in the psychological life. Feelings are central to man's assessment of himself.
- **Karl Marx:** There is not distinct human nature. People are the product of their environment.
- **George Hagel:** Human self-consciousness changes over time. Human nature changes and emerges.

- **Fredrich Nietzsche:** God is dead. Enlightenment replaces Christian faith. We can self-create.
 - **Oscar Wilde:** Shatter the traditional codes of morality. Ethics are a matter of taste.
 - **Sigmund Freud:** Pursue happiness. Sex is integral to human happiness.
 - **Wilhelm Reich:** Traditional family is oppressive and socially damaging.
3. People have misplaced priorities in life.
 4. There is Satanic temptation presented to people.
 5. There is a seductive nature tin social media.

IV. There are biblical solutions that pastors can offer for the modern identity crisis.

- A. There are signs of teen identity issues that leaders should be aware of. This list comes from an article titled “15 Warning Signs of Teenage Identity Issues” by Josh Watson
 1. A disordered or unrealistic perception of oneself
 2. Lack of congruent behaviors and values in different settings
 3. Self-worth relies on the opinions of others
 4. Poor academic performance or failure
 5. Promiscuous behavior
 6. Low self-esteem
 7. Putting down others (i.e teasing, gossiping)
 8. Dramatic or out of context behavior
 9. Glances around to monitor others
 10. Putting others down
 11. Keeps his or her own views or opinions to self
 12. Intense emotions of anger or sadness
 13. Change in peers and/or avoids positive friendships
 14. Disregarding rules and limits
 15. Use of illegal substances
- B. Leaders need to help their people renew their minds.

- C. Leaders need to help people learn to lay down some of their self-seeking obsessions.

- D. Leaders need to help people learn about being faithful and not famous.

- E. Leaders need to help people learn about contentment.

- F. Leaders need to help people learn to surrender certain things to God.

- G. Leaders need to help people learn about the “In Christ” principle of life.

- H. Leaders need to model a proper self-identity in front of their people.

- I. Leaders must learn not to show favoritism in their ministry.

V. Conclusion:

Works Referenced

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