

“Who is Your God?”

Exodus 20:1 - 3

Big Idea – Apart from God people struggle with knowing their identity and purpose.

Jeremiah 9:3 “They use their tongues like a bow, shooting lies from their mouths like arrows. Lies, not truth, have grown strong in the land. They go from one evil thing to another. They do not know who I am,” says the LORD.

This verse almost sounds like a description of modern, secular culture and society today!

1. Identity Crisis

Ex 3:11 But Moses said to God, "**Who am I** that I should go to Pharaoh, and that I should bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?"

Job 9:14 “So **who am I**, that I should try to answer God or even reason with him?”

1Ch 17:16 Then King David went in and sat in front of the LORD. David said, “LORD God, **who am I?** What is my family? Why did you bring me to this point?”

People are anxious to know who they are, where they come from? Why Ancestry.com is so popular. Who am I?

2. I’m a created image bearer of the One true God.

Genesis 1:1 “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Genesis 1:26, 27 “Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image and likeness. And let them rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the tame animals, over all the earth, and over all the small crawling animals on the earth.”

27 So God created human beings in his image. In the image of God he created them. He created them male and female.

God made us to image or reflect Him like a mirror does. What does the Bible say our position is between God and the animals? God says that we are **under Him** as created beings and **over** the animals and creation.

Understanding our position under God enables us to remain humble and dependent on God.

Understanding our position of dominion over creation enables us to embrace our dignity as morally superior to animals, and expect more from others and ourselves as God's image bearers.

How do we image/reflect God?

Thinking with our heads, feeling with our hearts and doing with our hands. We think God's thoughts and agree with His Truths revealed in Scripture. We're to feel God's feelings, such as hating injustice and oppression, loving people, grieving over sin's devastating effects, and rejoicing in redemption. We're to join God's work using our hands to serve others, both believers and unbelievers, with acts of compassion and generosity.

As image-bearers of God we're made for friendship, community & conversation. God created Eve for Adam – "not good to be alone." God fellowshiped with them in the Garden, and God spoke to them saying they could eat anything except the tree with the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil.

Identity Crisis

Satan, God's enemy and our adversary got them to sin/disobey God by creating an identity crisis. He lied and said their eyes were closed, God didn't want them to be like Him, and said they could be like God if they would base their identity on someone or something else.

The truth was, they already were like God, made in His image. Satan got them to disbelieve or doubt their God-given identity "made in His likeness," and create their own identity apart from God. The result was first sin and first fall.

Humans in identity crisis ever since. Here's why:

I'm a Worshipper

Worship is the very essence of mankind. Not created to worship, but rather created worshipping. Our worship never starts and never stops. Our entire life is devoted to pouring ourselves into someone or something.

For the Christian, no such thing as secular and sacred – it's all sacred! 1 Cor.10:31

In God's eyes, our choices, values, purchases, words, actions and thoughts are all acts of worship. They make up our identity. Only question is: What is your object of worship?

All humanity is in two groups: those who worship their Creator God, and those who worship created things. Because of sin, we're likely to worship anyone or anything besides the God who made everyone and everything. That is Idolatry.

Idolatry is when we make a created thing a god thing, which is a bad thing. In fact it's so destructive and pervasive biblical counselor David Powlison said, "Idolatry is by far the most frequently discussed sin in the Scriptures." If our object of worship is anyone or anything other

than God, we're idolaters. Paul speaks of this in Romans 1:25 "...idolaters who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator..."

So, underlying our sinful false worship is fact that our identity has become rooted in our idolatry. Vital then to learn our Identity Idolatry.

3. Identity Idolatry

What we own is our public way of projecting our desired image or identity.

Think in terms of **Items**, **Duties**, **Others**, **Longings** and **Sufferings**.

Items – aka "stuff or possessions" - Consumerism/materialism is now essentially the American religion. 3 main traits:

1. Not a behavior, but a worldview that says who we are. Here designer labels and expensive make cars are paramount.
2. Comes from need to gain status and prestige with peers. Many believe the chief way to get social prestige and power is by conspicuous displays of leisure and purchases. If social prestige is connected to wealth, we show it by flaunting it.
3. Products not simply valued for usefulness but are central to our identity. Our stuff becomes carriers of meaning, defining us, giving signals to others, and building our identities.

So, wearing older, non-designer clothes, driving an older car, and using anything but the newest, latest and greatest technology somehow devalues you as a human being!

Bluntly put, when this is your religion/god, the "things you own, end up owning you!"

The problem is not in the mall, it's in us. Not a sin to purchase stuff, or even to appreciate and enjoy them, but when they become the source of our identity, it's idolatry.

Remember what Jesus said in Luke 12:15 "...beware of covetousness because a man's life does not consist in the abundance of things he possesses."

Duties – aka work, or what you do!

Life is full of duties, chores when you're young, homework in school, job requirements at workforce, duties to God in ministry service, duties in marriage, parents and grandparents' duties in our families. Done rightly they can be a way we worship God, or wrongly, a god we worship.

If your identity comes to you through what you do, this can cause you many problems & troubles: Like always needing to find something to excel at and be the best at, then overcommitting to this, and ignoring other things like people and your health, which are sacrificed on the altar of success to the god of achievement. Winning becomes all that matters. Often the more you win, the less compassion you have for others with no sympathy, or

downright scorn for those hurting, struggling or failing. As you succeed, you become proud and unpleasant to be around, because you feel like everything is about YOU. If you ever fail or lose, you become miserable and more miserable to be around.

Truth: You're not what you do! Yes, you have God given gifts, talents and abilities for the performance of necessary duties, but they shouldn't define you – your identity is not determined by what you do!

Instead, Who you are in Christ helps you do these duties faithfully without them becoming who you are, your essence.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”

Others

God made us for friendship and community, and it's a good thing to have friends, others in our lives, but the good thing becomes a god thing when we let others become the source of our identity.

Everyone broadly identifies with a collective tribe of people, (the greater community with whom you most closely identify. Like family, school, sports teams, nationality, race, ethnicity, gender, culture, income level, hobby, political party, theological affinity, sexual orientation and more. While it's good to have community, a tribe to belong to, it becomes a god thing if we base our identity on and idolize our tribes.

Why? Because if you idolize your tribe, you'll also demonize other tribes. That's why there is so much unnecessary and ungodly hostility, hatred and vitriol between countries, races, schools, economic classes, cultures, churches, political parties, schools and school systems, and even Christian denominations.

More personally speaking, this tendency to find our identity in others can manifest in both the idols of independence or dependence. With idol of independence you rightly fear allowing others to control your identity. Sadly, this fear causes people to wrongly avoid close relationships because we don't want to risk being emotionally hurt – but this means others still are controlling your identity.

In contrast, the idol of dependence causes us to not be able to stand to be alone and need some deep friendship if single, or place unrealistic expectations on dating partner or spouse. While might look loving we're not as much loving people, as using people to fulfill our need to belong, to be liked and be accepted!

Explains why some family members and friends are so demanding, smothering and needy. Also explains why we're so easily inflated by praise and deflated by criticism. It's like others have the power to say who we are based on a word or even a glance. With the internet and Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and all the other social platforms people wield this power over you in front of the whole internet world and you let it slowly rob you of peace and joy and fill you with a constant anxiety that you didn't get enough “likes”

Romans 12:2 “Don't let the world squeeze you into it's mold.”

Longings – aka feeling or emotions.

God gives us our emotions and feelings, but when we allow them to control us they can become the source of our identity. Our emotions can make our identity shift like an airborne balloon. If we are healthy, get good news, or achieve some success we feel powerful and hopeful. If we are sick, hear bad news or fail, we feel powerless and hopeless. So some people live emotionally volatile lives with towering high and lows as their identity crashes.

Living for the future causes you to always be looking to the future to get your next emotional high, rather than living in the moment. Often, this identity idolatry rooted in longings or feelings is confused with biblical hope. The Bible does talk about hope based upon biblical faith in God. When we truly believe that God is alive, in control and at work, this changes our attitudes. Hope helps us get up in the morning, seek the Lord in prayers, and face whatever the day brings forth.

Now listen carefully, those who base their identity in the future can be religiously devout, sincere, optimistic and like to talk about faith and trusting God. Often they'll piously quote out of context verses about victory, or something better, etc. Sometimes, they'll sincerely, but wrongly tell people who lost a loved one, a baby, a child, or even a spouse, well "God must have needed them in heaven" or "God needed another angel" etc. NOT!

Their identity might be found in things like physical healing, getting married, having kids, having a full time Christian vocational ministry, gaining financial security, reaching the next season of life, and so on. They say things like, "When I get to _____, things will be better, I'll feel better, etc." God says, "No, it's not when you get to the end of the journey, when you get to the station, it's now. I want you to enjoy the journey."

Not wrong to plan for a better tomorrow, it's wrong to set your joy, your identity on who we will be, what we will do or have tomorrow, based on our efforts, rather than on Christ today and what He makes us as we learn and believe who we are in Him.

Sufferings

As long as we're alive in this life there will be suffering – emotionally as we hurt and are hurt by others. Financially, as we struggle to get by, find or keep a decent job. Mentally we suffer with everything from overwhelming responsibilities of life, to the name-calling and bullying of others. We suffer relationally as friends, betray us, children ignore us, and spouses leave us. We suffer spiritually as it seems like in the middle of our distress, God is far away and uncaring.

When we suffer, if we're not careful, we can let our hurt become our identity; our pain can be sometimes all-consuming and overwhelming. Obviously, it's hard to tell a cancer patient or someone in deep pain that their pain is not the defining aspect of who they are. But, if we really love that person, we dare not lie to them and say God wants them to live a life free from all

suffering – that’s false! Suffering should lead us to Jesus who suffered more than anyone in history on our behalf! Turn in your Bibles to 1 Peter 5:12

1 Peter 5:12, 13, 16, 19;

Matthew 5:11, 12

Your identity should not be defined by the painful things, by the worst things that happen to you. They may help explain you, but you can’t allow them to define you.

You are not what happened to you. You are who God says you are!

ILLUS. Picture little boy – I know I’m somebody cause God don’t make no junk!

(Most are unaware of the source of their Identity and a crisis happens when a major life change occurs often in the form of hardships and pain. When that which his identity was tied to, whether a job, a person, a relationship, health or anything else crumbles under the weight of being a god, he suddenly realizes his identity was the idolatry of the treasured thing.

Crisis management sets in: 1. Lives in fear that the source of his identity may fail or be taken away, 2. As it totters, he panics and tries to salvage his identity idol. 3. When it fails him he looks for someone to blame.

Some blame God, some blame others, some blame themselves and feel like failures hating themselves for it.)

Sadly, many who lose one identity idol simply choose another, rather than turning to God through Jesus Christ.

Who am I? the answer to that question is found in Christ Who is the I AM.

So let’s go back to our opening question, “Who is your god?”

Jer 9:24 But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD.

Isa 41:13 I am the LORD your God, who holds your right hand, and I tell you, 'Don't be afraid. I will help you.'

Isa 43:25 "I, I am the One who forgives all your sins, for my sake; I will not remember your sins.

Isa 44:6 The LORD, the king of Israel, is the LORD All-Powerful, who saves Israel. This is what he says: "I am the beginning and the end. I am the only God.

Isa 45:18 The LORD created the heavens. He is the God who formed the earth and made it. He did not want it to be empty, but he wanted life on the earth. This is what the LORD says: "I am the LORD. There is no other God.

Isa 45:21 Tell these people to come to me. Let them talk about these things together. Who told you long ago that this would happen? Who told about it long ago? I, the LORD, said these things. There is no other God besides me. I am the only good God. I am the Savior. There is no other God.

Isa 52:6 This has happened so my people will know who I am, and so, on that future day, they will know that I am the one speaking to them. It will really be me."

Isa 65:1 The LORD says, "I made myself known to people who were not looking for me. I was found by those who were not asking me for help. I said, 'Here I am. Here I am,' to a nation that was not praying to me.

1Sa 18:18 And David said unto Saul, Who am I? and what is my life, or my father's family in Israel, that I should be son in law to the king?

2Sa 7:18 Then went king David in, and sat before the LORD, and he said, Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?