

Identity Theft - March 8th - Who Others Say I Am is Not Who I Am - Justin Sternberg

TALK IT OVER

Key Scriptures from the Message:

Genesis 37:2-11
Genesis 37:18-20
Genesis 39:2-3
Genesis 39:6b-19
Genesis 50:20-21
Romans 8:28
2 Corinthians 10:5
Romans 12:2

Start reading

Genesis 50:20-21 NLT

You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good. He brought me to this position so I could save the lives of many people. No, don't be afraid. I will continue to take care of you and your children. So he reassured them by speaking kindly to them.

Romans 8:28 NLT

And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.

Corinthians 10:5 NIV

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Romans 12:2

Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is — his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- In Middle School and High School, were you more of a jock, class clown, beauty queen, or nerd, etc.? How did these titles have an impact on your identity?
- What was the most carefree time of your life? What impact did the opinions of others have on you then? Why?

Start thinking. Ask a question to get your group thinking.

- Read Genesis 37:2-11 and 18-20, Genesis 39:2-3, 6b-19, and Genesis 50:20-21. Justin used the example of Joseph to show the impact of being unwavering in your identity regardless of circumstances. Why do you think Joseph refused to allow himself to be identified by others? Like Joseph, have you ever experienced a crisis of identity because you were obedient to God?
- Read Romans 8:28. Paul is saying that we can be assured that God causes all the circumstances of our lives to work together for the good of whom? Where do you stand in relation to this verse? Is God with you? If you have questions, talk with your group leader.

Start sharing. Choose a question to create openness.

- Justin talked about installing a security system of filters to prevent future identity theft. What were the steps he mentioned? How often do you think you will need to take those steps? Why?
- What role do the opinions of others play in your everyday life? In what situations would you say their influence is the greatest? Why?
- Many individuals begin being defined by others at a very young age. Their definitions often led to pride or heartache. Discuss how the image placed on you by others early in life impacts your identity today.
- Justin talked about the struggle he faces because of his desire for the approval of others. What struggle or habit is presently defining you?

Start doing. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Read these scriptures about our identity in Christ. Do it everyday for a week.
Ephesians 2:10 - I am God's masterpiece
Psalm 139:14 - I am fearfully and wonderfully made
1 Peter 2:9b - I am chosen, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God's very own possession
Colossians 2:10 - I am more than a conqueror through Him who loves us

Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

- Jesus, help me to see myself as you see me and to live in freedom from allowing my identity to be defined by the way others see me. Thank you for the identity I have in you. Amen.

Start digging. For further study.

- Read the article on the back and discuss it.

Question: "How should we live our lives in light of our identity in Christ?"

Answer: Our identity in Christ is first and foremost one of newness. We are new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). Identity is defined as “the collective aspect of the set of characteristics by which a thing is definitively recognizable or known,” so our new identity in Christ should be recognizable both to ourselves and to others. If we are “in Christ,” that should be evident, just as being “in the world” is equally evident. A further definition of identity is “the quality or condition of being the same as something else.” In the case of our identity in Christ, our lives should indicate that we are the same as Christ. The name “Christians” means literally “followers of Christ.”

In our new identity in Christ, we are no longer slaves to sin (Romans 6:6), but we are reconciled to God (Romans 5:10). This new identity completely changes our relationship with God and our families, just as it changes the way we see the world. Our new identity in Christ means we have the same relationship with God that Christ has—we are His children. God has adopted us as sons. We are able to call Him “Abba! Father!” (Romans 8:15–16). We are both joint heirs (Galatians 3:29) and friends (John 15:15) of Christ. And this relationship is even stronger than those we have with our earthly families (Matthew 10:35–37). Instead of fearing God as judge, we have the great privilege of coming to Him as our Father. We can approach Him with confidence and ask of Him what we need (Hebrews 4:16). We can ask for His guidance and wisdom (James 1:5) and know that nothing will take us from Him (Romans 8:38–39). We also rest in His authority and respond to Him with trusting obedience, knowing that obedience is a key part of remaining close to Him (John 14:23).

The family of God encompasses a vast body of believers who strive together to grow closer to God (1 Corinthians 12:13). It’s a family that is stronger for the gifts of each person in it (Romans 12:6–8). Members of this new family seek the best for one another (1 Corinthians 10:24), encourage each other (Galatians 6:1–2), and forgive each other (Matthew 18:21–22). Each member has a specific role, but the roles are acted out with respect and grace (1 Peter 5:1–5). Most of all, we respond to each other in love—not the feeling, but a selfless, conscious act of sacrifice, which is reflective of the agape love of the God who loved us and gave Himself for us (Galatians 2:20).

We are no longer citizens of the world but apart from it (2 Corinthians 6:14—7:1). We understand that we are a part of a heavenly, God-ruled kingdom. Things of the earth no longer draw us (Colossians 3:2). We don’t fear or over-emphasize suffering on earth or the trials we face (Colossians 1:24; 1 Peter 3:14; 4:12–14), nor do we place importance on things the world values (1 Timothy 6:9–11). Even our bodies and our actions reflect that our minds are no longer conformed to the world (Romans 12:1–2) but are now instruments of righteousness to God (Romans 6:13). And our new kingdom perspective means we understand that our enemy is not the people around us but the spiritual forces that endeavor to keep the people from knowing God (Ephesians 6:12).

All of this is the ideal—the character of a mature follower of Christ. One of the greatest blessings about our identity in Christ is the grace we’re given in order to grow into the spiritual maturity that truly reflects our new identity (Philippians 1:6). Our lives in light of our identity in Christ are filled with a heavenly Father, a large, loving family, and the understanding that we are citizens of another kingdom and not of this earth.