

# Identity Theft - March 15th - Who Do I Want to Be? - Clay Weed

## Key Scriptures from the Message:

Romans 12:2  
Philippians 4:8  
Colossians 3:2  
Luke 19:1-10

## TALK IT OVER

### Start reading

#### Romans 12:2 NIV

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.

#### Philippians 4:8 NLT

Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.

#### Colossians 3:2 NIV

Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

#### Luke 19:1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

### Start talking. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- Was there anyone you wanted to be when you were a child? How is that different from what you actually are today?
- Can you name a time when you pretended to be someone you were not because of the need to fit in?

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

- Read Luke 19:1-10. Clay said that at some point between being camouflaged and conformed to an identity that others had put on him, Zacchaeus had a heart change. He realized that God had a greater purpose for his life, and the identity that everyone else had grown to despise, needed to be traded in for the identity that God had for him all along. Share a time when you were conforming to an identity others had put on you, but you were transformed because of your knowledge of who you really are in Christ. How did this impact you and others around you?
- Clay listed three dangers of using camouflage to hide out in our everyday lives: We blend in with everyone else around us; We take on an identity of something that we were never intended to be; We settle for being less than who God designed us to be. Cite examples in your life. What impact did that camouflage have on you emotionally, spiritually, or physically?
- Read Romans 12:2. What does that verse mean? Now read Philippians 4:8 and Colossians 3:2. How do these verses direct your focus in order to avoid the trap of defining yourself in terms created by others?

### Start sharing. Choose a question to create openness.

- Who or what makes you feel valued? Do you believe it is a good decision to seek and gain value from this person or activity? Why or why not?
- Are you presently being someone or doing something (job, playing a sport, volunteering, in an organization) because someone other than yourself thought you should? How does this make you feel?
- What role do the opinions of others play in your everyday life? In what situations would you say their influence is the greatest? Why?
- As we are wrapping up this Identity Theft series, what are the identity in Christ statements that have stood out to you the most? Example "John 1:12 - I am God's child".

### 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.  
2 Corinthians 3:18 - I'm being changed into His image  
2 Timothy 1:9 - I am called of God  
John 17:21 - I am one in Christ  
Galatians 3:9 - I am blessed  
2 Corinthians 5:17 - I am a new creation

### Start praying. Be bold and pray with power.

- Pray for wisdom and protection from the temptations to conform to the world. Don't forget your spiritual armor! (Ephesians 6:10-18)

### Start digging. For further study.

- Read the article on the back and discuss it.

**Question: "What does the Bible say about popularity / wanting to be popular?"**

Answer: We all crave acceptance by others. Babies are socialized by learning to read the cues from those they want to please and adjusting their behaviors accordingly. However, when we seek most of our validation and self-worth from the opinions of other people, we are on the wrong path. Popular opinion changes like the breeze, and when we place too much importance on it, we are setting ourselves up for an endless string of disappointments. As long as we pursue popularity as a means to happiness, we are flirting with idolatry. When we find our personal worth in anything or anyone besides God, we are creating an idol. An idol is whatever or whomever we use to meet deep, heartfelt needs that only God can meet.

The desire to be popular is more than merely wanting others to think well of our character—we should desire to have a good testimony in the world (Philippians 2:15). A focus on popularity is an obsession with self. The craving for popularity is part of the “pride of life” mentioned in 1 John 2:16. It feels good to the ego to consider ourselves popular, and we tend to bask in that feeling rather than deal honestly with ourselves about our own weaknesses. This leads to pride. Pride inflates our view of our own importance and blinds us to our sins and failings (Proverbs 16:18; Romans 12:3). Even when the choice to please others does not involve open disobedience to God, pride is always at the heart of the desire for popularity. And God hates pride (Proverbs 8:13; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5).

Popularity is an elusive god that many have chased to their own destruction. King Herod was basking in popularity at the very moment of his ghastly, public death (Acts 12:19–23). False teachers are always popular with the “itching ears” crowd (2 Timothy 4:3). A sad example of choosing popularity over God is found in John 12:42–43: “Many even among the leaders believed in [Jesus]. But because of the Pharisees they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved human praise more than praise from God.” Everyone who desires to be popular will have to choose many times between the approval of others and the approval of God. God’s plan for us is often in conflict with the world’s plan for us (1 John 2:15). To be “popular,” we must choose the world. But doing so means Jesus is not Lord of our lives; we are (Luke 9:23).

Galatians 1:10 says, “Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.” According to this verse, we cannot consistently please both God and the world. The desire for popularity is rooted in our old sinful nature. When we give in to it, we are living “according to the flesh” (Romans 8:5, 12). Even Christian leaders can fall prey to this seductive desire. Teachers or preachers who become intoxicated with their own popularity are at risk. Unchecked, a desire to be popular can lead them to become men-pleasers, teach heresies (2 Peter 2:1), and design their ministries to please the most people (2 Timothy 4:3) rather than remain true to the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).

Jesus is our model. He was a favorite with both God and man as he grew up (Luke 2:52). But there was never a contest in His mind about which He would choose, and He proved that over and over again (John 8:29; Mark 1:11). He did not let temporary popularity influence Him or dissuade Him from His purpose (John 6:15). He never shied away from the hard truths, even when it meant rejection (John 6:66), threats (John 11:53–54), and, eventually, death (John 19:16).

Jesus gives us a perfect example of the way He wants us to relate to others. We are not here to make a name for ourselves. We are here on assignment from our Heavenly Father (Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19). People may love us, or they may hate us, but our commitment to our purpose should never waver (Hebrews 12:1–3). When we choose to allow God to define our value rather than other people, we free ourselves to follow everything Jesus calls us to do. He knew it would be hard, but He gave us the best counsel when He said, “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:11–12).