

**TRINITY BIBLE CHURCH
WHO GOD SAYS YOU ARE?
December 28, 2014
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LET ME BEGIN WITH THIS QUESTION: WHO DO YOU SAY ARE?

YOUR ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION IS IDENTITY-SHAPING, LIFE-ALTERING AND ETERNITY-AFFECTING.

LET ME CONTINUE WITH SEVERAL OTHER QUESTIONS FOR YOU TO PONDER:

- 1. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOURSELF?**
- 2. HOW DO YOU INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO OTHERS?**
- 3. HOW DO YOU PERCEIVE YOURSELF?**

IN MAINSTREAM POP PSYCHOLOGY AND IN SOME SO-CALLED CHRISTIAN CHURCHES, THEY TALK A LOT ABOUT SELF-ESTEEM, SELF-IMAGE AND SELF-AWARENESS. BUT IN CHRISTIAN BIBLICAL COUNSELING AND HEALTHY CHURCHES, WE USE THE LANGUAGE OF IDENTITY. AND MORE SPECIFICALLY, OUR IDENTITY AS GOD SEES US!

SO I ASK YOU: “WHAT’S YOUR IDENTITY?” “WHO DO YOU SAY YOU ARE?”

HOW YOU ANSWER THIS MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION, DEFINES PRECISELY WHO YOU ARE! AND WHEN YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHO YOU ARE, THEN YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO. LISTEN, IF YOU DON’T KNOW YOUR IDENTITY, THEN HOW WOULD YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO?

HOW YOU ANSWER THE QUESTIONS ABOUT WHO YOU ARE AND HOW YOU SEE YOURSELF, DRAMATICALLY AFFECTS HOW YOU ACT, YOUR JOY, OR LACK OF IT AND MAY AFFECT YOUR DESTINY.

OFTEN TIMES OUR IDENTITY IS CHANGED BY THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF OUR LIFE. FOR EXAMPLE, SHORTLY AFTER SHERRY RECEIVED CHRIST, SHE REALIZED THAT HER IDENTITY HAD CHANGED! SHE MOVED FROM BEING JEWISH TO BEING A CHRISTIAN — A GENTILE! AND THERE ARE MANY OTHER CIRCUMSTANCES THAT CAN CHANGE OUR IDENTITY. DIVORCE, DEATH OF A SPOUSE, THE BIRTH OF A CHILD OR GRANDCHILD AND SO ON AND SO ON, CHANGES WHO WE ARE.

IN SOME CASES, OUR IDENTITY IS IN TOTAL CRISIS, IN CONFLICT AND IN CHAOS. IT SEEMS THAT WE HAVE LOST ALL SENSE OF WHO WE ARE AND PERHAPS, WHO OTHERS SAY WE ARE!

BUT REGARDLESS OF WHOM WE OR OTHERS SAY WE ARE, AS CHRISTIANS WE MUST CENTER ON WHO GOD SAYS WE ARE — AND NO ONE ELSE — NOT EVEN OURSELVES!

I PRAY THAT THIS MESSAGE WILL PRESENT TO YOU, A CONCISE AND A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF “WHO GOD TELLS US WE ARE!” AND “WHO WE ARE, IN CHRIST!”

LET US BEGIN BY GOING BACK TO THE BEGINNING — THE BOOK OF GENESIS. IN THE FIRST CHAPTER AND VERSES 26–28, WE READ: “THEN GOD SAID, ‘LET US MAKE MANKIND IN OUR IMAGE, IN OUR LIKENESS’. NOTICE THAT THIS SPEAKS OF IDENTITY — “WHO GOD SAYS WE ARE!” GOD SAYS, “I’VE MADE YOU IN MY IMAGE AND LIKENESS!” THIS IS THE FOUNDATION OF OUR IDENTITY AND THIS IS OUR IDENTITY!

GOD THEN REVEALS WHY HE MADE US IN HIS IMAGE, VERSE 26: “SO THAT THEY MAY RULE OVER THE FISH IN THE SEA AND THE BIRDS IN THE SKY, OVER THE LIVESTOCK AND ALL THE WILD ANIMALS, AND OVER ALL THE CREATURES THAT MOVE ALONG THE GROUND. SO GOD CREATED MANKIND IN HIS OWN IMAGE, IN THE IMAGE OF GOD HE CREATED THEM; MALE AND FEMALE HE CREATED THEM.”

AND I JUST LOVE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT IN VERSE 28A: “AND GOD BLESSED THEM.” AND HE CONTINUES TO BLESS US, HIS BORN-AGAIN CHILDREN, EACH AND EVERY MOMENT OF THE DAY!

AS WE READ THROUGH THE BIBLE, WE SEE MANY INSTANCES WHERE SCRIPTURE DEFINES EXACTLY WHO WE ARE.

ONE OF MY FAVORITE EXPRESSIONS OF OUR IDENTITY IS FROM 1 PETER 2:9-10: “BUT YOU ARE A CHOSEN PEOPLE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, GOD’S SPECIAL POSSESSION, THAT YOU MAY DECLARE THE PRAISES OF HIM WHO CALLED YOU OUT OF DARKNESS INTO HIS WONDERFUL LIGHT. ONCE YOU WERE NOT A PEOPLE, BUT NOW YOU ARE THE PEOPLE OF GOD; ONCE YOU HAD NOT RECEIVED MERCY, BUT NOW YOU HAVE RECEIVED MERCY.”

PETER COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE SUCCINCT IN THIS STATEMENT OF TRUTH!

NOT ONLY ARE WE THE PEOPLE OF GOD, WE ARE HIS CHILDREN!

LISTEN TO WHAT PAUL TELLS THE GALATIANS IN CHAPTER 4 AND VERSES 5-7: “BUT WHEN THE SET TIME HAD FULLY COME, GOD SENT HIS SON, BORN OF A WOMAN, BORN UNDER THE LAW, TO REDEEM THOSE UNDER THE LAW, THAT WE MIGHT RECEIVE ADOPTION TO SONSHIP. BECAUSE YOU ARE HIS SONS, GOD SENT THE SPIRIT OF HIS SON INTO OUR HEARTS, THE SPIRIT WHO CALLS OUT, “ABBA, FATHER.” SO YOU ARE NO LONGER A SLAVE, BUT GOD’S CHILD; AND SINCE YOU ARE HIS CHILD, GOD HAS MADE YOU ALSO AN HEIR.”

AND NOT ONLY ARE WE GOD’S HEIRS, WE ARE CO-HEIRS WITH CHRIST! ROMANS 8:17 SAYS: “NOW IF WE ARE CHILDREN, THEN WE ARE HEIRS—HEIRS OF GOD AND CO-HEIRS WITH CHRIST, IF INDEED WE SHARE IN HIS SUFFERINGS IN ORDER THAT WE MAY ALSO SHARE IN HIS GLORY.”

WE ARE ALSO HEIRS TO THE PROMISE AND TO ETERNAL LIFE — “IF YOU BELONG TO CHRIST, THEN YOU ARE ABRAHAM’S SEED, AND HEIRS ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE.” (GAL 3:29).

THEN TITUS 3:3-7 REMINDS US OF WHO WE WERE AND HOW OUR IDENTITY CHANGED AS A RESULT OF THE CLEANSING BLOOD OF JESUS. “AT ONE TIME WE TOO WERE FOOLISH, DISOBEDIENT, DECEIVED AND ENSLAVED BY ALL KINDS OF PASSIONS AND PLEASURES. WE LIVED IN MALICE AND ENVY, BEING HATED AND HATING ONE ANOTHER. BUT WHEN THE KINDNESS AND LOVE OF GOD OUR SAVIOR APPEARED, HE SAVED US, NOT BECAUSE OF RIGHTEOUS THINGS WE HAD DONE, BUT BECAUSE OF HIS MERCY. HE SAVED US THROUGH THE WASHING OF REBIRTH AND RENEWAL BY THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHOM HE Poured OUT ON US GENEROUSLY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR SAVIOR, SO THAT, HAVING BEEN JUSTIFIED BY HIS GRACE, WE MIGHT BECOME HEIRS HAVING THE HOPE OF ETERNAL LIFE.”

JUST AS SHERRY’S IDENTITY CHANGED WHEN SHE ACCEPTED JESUS AS HER PERSONAL SAVIOR, EVERY BELIEVER HAS EXPERIENCED THIS LIFE-CHANGING MOMENT. AT THAT WONDERFUL MOMENT, WE DIED TO OUR OLD SELF AND BECAME RENEWED IN CHRIST.

“THEREFORE, IF ANYONE IS IN CHRIST, THE NEW CREATION HAS COME: THE OLD HAS GONE, THE NEW IS HERE!” (2 COR 5:17). AND BECAUSE WE ARE A NEW CREATION IN CHRIST, WE ARE EXEMPT FROM GOD’S WRATH — WE ARE HELD HARMLESS BECAUSE — “THERE IS NOW NO CONDEMNATION FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN CHRIST JESUS, BECAUSE THROUGH CHRIST JESUS THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT WHO GIVES LIFE HAS SET YOU FREE FROM THE LAW OF SIN AND DEATH.” (ROMANS 8:1-2).

BUT THOSE WHO HAVE NOT GIVEN THEIR LIFE TO CHRIST ARE THE CONDEMNED CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL AND WILL SURELY SUFFER THE EVERLASTING TORMENT DESTINED FOR THEM — THE LAKE OF FIRE, ACCORDING TO REVELATION 20:15: “ANYONE WHOSE NAME WAS NOT FOUND WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF LIFE WAS THROWN INTO THE LAKE OF FIRE.”

I WOULD SUGGEST TO YOU THAT WE CAN CONDENSE NEARLY ALL THAT GOD SAYS WE ARE INTO FOUR CATEGORIES:

- 1. WE ARE THE RECEIVER OF HIS REVELATION;**
- 2. WE ARE HUMBLY HONORED;**
- 3. WE ARE HIS REFLECTION AND;**
- 4. WE ARE BLESSED SO THAT WE CAN BLESS OTHERS.**

LET’S LOOK AT THESE STATEMENTS IN MORE DETAIL.

1. WE ARE THE RECEIVER OF HIS REVELATION

THE GOD OF THE BIBLE IS TRINITARIAN: FATHER, SON, AND SPIRIT AND REFERRED TO AS “US” AND “OUR.” “LET US MAKE MAN IN OUR IMAGE AND LIKENESS”, FROM GENESIS 1:26.

IN HIS TRIUNITY, GOD, IN HIS ETERNAL NATURE AND ESSENCE, REPRESENTS A COMMUNITY OF LOVE, AFFECTION, AND COMMUNICATION. GOD THE FATHER, GOD THE SON AND GOD THE SPIRIT HAVE BEEN COMMUNICATING WITH ONE ANOTHER FROM ETERNITY PAST AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO FOREVER FOR THEY ARE ONE!

BECAUSE WE ARE MAKE IN THEIR IMAGE AND LIKENESS, WE SHARE IN THE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE DIRECTLY WITH THEM — THEY SPEAK TO US AND THEREFORE WE ARE RECEIVERS OF THEIR REVELATION. AND ACCORDINGLY, WE SPEAK TO THEM THROUGH OUR PRAYERS.

AND IN ADDITION, WE DON’T HAVE TO DETERMINE OR DECIDE WHAT OUR IDENTITY IS BECAUSE GOD HAS ALREADY CHOSEN TO REVEAL IT TO US. HE HAS, IN HIS KINDNESS, CHOSEN TO SPEAK TO US. THIS MEANS THAT WE DO NOT NEED THE SPECULATION OF PHILOSOPHY OR RELIGION OR THAT OF MAN. WE NEED ONLY THE REVELATION OF GOD.

THROUGH HIS WORD AND DEED, HE HAS TOLD US WHO HE IS AND HAS REVEALED TO US, WHO WE ARE IN HIM.

THIS COMMUNICATION IS VITAL IF WE ARE TO WALK WORTHY IN FAITH AND PRACTICE. FAILURE TO DO SO IS AN OBSTACLE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR TRIUNE GOD AND DIMINISHES THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH WE WERE CREATED.

2. WE ARE HUMBLY HONORED

SO, WHO ARE WE? WELL, FIRST, WE ARE REVELATION RECEIVERS. NEXT, WE ARE HUMBLY HONORED. I WANT YOU TO SEE HERE THAT THERE IS GOD, AND THEN LOWER CREATION.

IT TALKS ABOUT BEASTS OF THE FIELD, AND BIRDS OF THE AIR, AND FISH OF THE SEA. AND BETWEEN LOWER CREATION AND GOD IS MANKIND, MEN AND WOMEN. WE ARE BELOW GOD, BUT ABOVE THE ANIMALS.

AND ANYTIME WE TRY TO ESTABLISH OUR IDENTITY AND WE DO NOT UNDERSTAND IT BIBLICALLY, IT RESULTS IN TRAGEDY. ONE OF TWO THINGS HAPPEN:

FIRST, WE BECOME PEOPLE WHO THINK TOO MUCH OF OURSELVES AND WE BELIEVE WE'RE GOD-LIKE AND THAT WE'RE ALMOST DIVINE. OR A SPARK OF THE DIVINE IS WITHIN US AND THAT WE'RE PART OF SOME DIVINE ENTITY WITH A COSMIC CONSCIOUSNESS AND THAT WE'RE SOMEHOW EQUAL TO GOD. AND SOME GO AS FAR AS BELIEVING THAT WE'LL REINCARNATE, PAY OFF OUR KARMA AND WE'LL ESCALATE TOWARD DIVINITY.

SECONDLY AND CONVERSELY, SOME SAY WE'RE NOTHING MORE THAN HIGHLY EVOLVED ANIMALS. WE'RE JUST LUCKY ANIMALS WITH THUMBS AND THAT'S ALL WE ARE. AND THAT WE'RE REALLY NOT ABOVE LOWER CREATION, WE'RE JUST THE LUCKIEST AMONG LOWER CREATION.

TO THEM, WE ARE NOTHING MORE THAN SIMPLY HIGHLY EVOLVED ANIMALS.

THE FACT REMAINS THAT IF WE DO NOT HAVE A TRUE BIBLICAL IDENTITY, THEN WE TEND TO EITHER THINK TOO MUCH OF OURSELVES OR CONVERSELY, THINK TOO LITTLE OF OURSELVES.

HUMILITY, THE ROOT OF WHICH LITERALLY MEANS TO KNOW YOUR PLACE, IS TO KNOW THAT YOUR PLACE IS UNDER GOD, BUT ABOVE LOWER CREATION. WE'RE NOT ANIMALS — AND AS GOD'S IMAGE-BEARER, WE HAVE DOMINION OVER THEM. WE'RE ALSO NOT GOD, WE ARE CREATED BEINGS, AND WE ARE HERE BECAUSE OF HIS DIVINE DESIGN.

3. MADE TO MIRROR

SO, NUMBER ONE, WE ARE REVELATION RECEIVERS. NUMBER TWO, WE'RE HUMBLY HONORED. AND NUMBER THREE, WE ARE MADE TO MIRROR.

WHEN HE SAYS THAT WE ARE MADE IN HIS IMAGE AND LIKENESS, AND THOSE TWO WORDS ARE ESSENTIALLY SYNONYMOUS, WE THINK OF IMAGES IN OUR LIFE. EVERY MORNING, MOST OF US GET UP AND LOOK IN A MIRROR AND THAT MIRROR IS REFLECTING BACK TO US OUR IMAGE, OUR LIKENESS, WHO WE ARE! AND SHOWING US, AND REVEALING TO US, WHO WE ARE.

AND WHAT GOD SAYS IS THAT THOUGH HE IS SPIRIT, HE WANTS HIS ATTRIBUTES TO BE VISIBLE ON THE EARTH. HE WANTS CREATION TO KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT HIM. AND SO HE'S MADE US AS HIS MIRRORS. WE WERE MADE TO MIRROR AND REFLECT. AND WHEN WE LOVE OTHERS, WE REFLECT GOD'S LOVE TO US. AND GOD IS TRUTHFUL. SO WHEN WE TELL THE TRUTH, WE REFLECT HIS TRUTHFULNESS TO OTHERS. GOD IS ALSO FORGIVING AND WHEN WE FORGIVE OTHERS, WE REFLECT HIS GRACE AND HIS MERCY TO OTHERS. AND THE LIST GOES ON AND ON!

AND SO OUR LIFE IS TO BE ONE OF REFLECTION. NOTICE THAT WHAT WE DO AS CHRISTIANS DOES NOT BEGIN WITH US, IT BEGINS WITH GOD. AND THE GOAL IS NOT FOR THE WORLD TO KNOW YOU OR ME, IT IS FOR THE WORLD TO KNOW HIM.

WE ARE NOT THE OBJECT — HE IS. WE ARE TO REFLECT, TO MIRROR, TO SHOW, TO ECHO SOMETHING OF GOD'S ATTRIBUTES TO THE WORLD.

WHEN WE REFLECT GOD'S ATTRIBUTES, ALL THE GLORY GOES TO HIM AND NOT US! AS A MIRROR, WE REDIRECT HUMAN PRAISE TO DIVINE PRAISE. LET ME GIVE YOU SOME EXAMPLES:

"OH, THAT WAS VERY KIND AND LOVING OF YOU." WE CAN RESPOND — "THANK YOU! I LOVED YOU WITH GOD'S LOVE AND KINDNESS." OR "THAT WAS VERY GENEROUS OF YOU." AGAIN, "THANK YOU! I GAVE TO YOU BECAUSE OF WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN TO ME." ONCE AGAIN, AND SO ON AND SO ON!

WHAT THAT ALLOWS US TO HAVE IS THIS COURAGEOUS HUMILITY TO BE BOLD, TO BE GENEROUS, TO BE LOVING, TO BE TRUTHFUL AND MORE. THE THOUGHT OF SAYING TO OURSELVES, "WHAT CAN I SAY OR DO TO MAKE ME SOUND OR LOOK BETTER TO SOMEONE ELSE", VANISHES FROM OUR MIND. WE SIMPLY ASK OURSELVES, "WHAT CAN I SAY OR DO THAT RIGHTLY REFLECTS THE IMAGE OF GOD?"

LET ME GIVE YOU A METAPHOR OR AN ANALOGY OF THIS PRINCIPLE. WHEN SOMETHING APPEARS TO BE BLACK, IT IS BECAUSE IT HAS ABSORBED ALL WAVE LENGTHS OF COLOR. BUT WHEN AN ITEM APPEARS TO BE WHITE, IT HAS REFLECTED THESE WAVES OF LIGHT.

TO TRULY BE AN IMITATOR OF GOD, WE MUST REFLECT THE LIGHT OF JESUS TO THIS FALLEN WORLD.

LISTEN TO WHAT JOHN SAYS IN HIS GOSPEL IN CHAPTER 8 AND VERSE 12:

“WHEN JESUS SPOKE AGAIN TO THE PEOPLE, HE SAID, “I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. WHOEVER FOLLOWS ME WILL NEVER WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT WILL HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE.””

THAT’S WHY JESUS IS CALLED THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD. THAT’S WHY JESUS SAYS, “IF YOU’VE SEEN ME, YOU’VE SEEN THE FATHER.” WHAT HE IS SAYING IS THAT HE’S THE PERFECT MIRROR. HE’S THE SINLESS MIRROR. EVERYTHING THAT COULD BE SEEN ABOUT GOD’S CHARACTER IS MADE VISIBLE ON THE EARTH THROUGH THE LIFE, DEATH, BURIAL AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS.

HE IS THE IMAGE OF THE INVISIBLE GOD. IF WE’VE SEEN HIM, WE’VE SEEN THE FATHER. THAT’S WHAT HE SAYS! AND IN FACT, THAT’S WHY HE DIED, BECAUSE HE KEEPS MAKING THAT CLAIM. AND HE ROSE FROM DEATH TO SHOW US THE LOVE OF GOD, AND THE JUSTICE OF GOD, AND THE FORGIVENESS OF GOD! AND HE CONTINUES TO MIRROR, TO REFLECT, TO IMAGE, TO SHOW WHAT THE FATHER IS LIKE TO THE WORLD! AND BECAUSE WE HAVE BEEN MADE IN HIS IMAGE, WE MUST NOT APPEAR TO BE BLACK, BUT WHITE — AS WHITE AS SNOW, BECAUSE HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS HAS BEEN IMPUTED UPON US!

4. BLESSED TO BLESS

IN ADDITION TO BEING REVELATION RECEIVERS, BEING HUMBLY HONORED, AND MADE TO BE A MIRROR OF GOD, WE ARE BLESSED SO THAT WE CAN BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS.

REMEMBER IN GENESIS 1 AND VERSE 27 IN REFERENCE TO MANKIND, MOSES TOLD US THAT “GOD BLESSED THEM.” AND AT THAT POINT, MANKIND (ADAM AND EVE) HADN’T DONE ANYTHING TO DESERVE HIS BLESSING — GOD JUST BLESSED THEM! THEY DIDN’T EARN THEIR BLESSING. IN FACT, IT WOULDN’T BE GRACE IF IT WAS EARNED. GOD, OUT OF HIS GOODNESS AND GRACE, SIMPLY BLESSED THEM, JUST AS HE POURS OUT HIS BLESSINGS UPON US. WHAT THIS MEANS IS THAT GOD ACTIVELY LOVED THEM WITH A FATHER’S AFFECTION.

TO MY DISMAY, SO MANY OF US HAVE A VERY CORRUPTED VIEW OF GOD IN THAT WE THINK THAT WE NEED TO DO SOMETHING TO MAKE HIM BLESS US OR TO MANIPULATE HIM TO BLESS US. THEIR VIEW IS TAINTED BECAUSE OUR GOD IS A GOD WHO BEGINS WITH BLESSING. OURS IS A GOD WHO LIKES TO BLESS HIS PEOPLE. OURS IS A GOD WHO IS FILLED WITH GRACE AND FILLED WITH LOVE AND FILLED WITH MERCY.

AND IN AN INFINITELY PERFECT WAY, HE IS A FATHER WHO ADORES HIS KIDS AND WOULD DO ANYTHING FOR THEM.

I ONLY HAVE A BIT OF THAT HEART FOR MY KIDS AND GRANDKIDS, BUT GOD IS A PERFECT FATHER WITH LIMITLESS RESOURCES, AND HE BLESSES WITH A TRUE AND UNYIELDING FATHER'S AFFECTION.

THE BOTTOM LINE IS SIMPLY THAT WE ARE BLESSED TO BLESS — SO THAT WHATEVER GOD TEACHES US, WE CAN TEACH OTHERS! AND WHATEVER GOD GIVES US, WE CAN GIVE TO OTHERS. AND WHATEVER GOD DOES FOR US, WE CAN DO FOR OTHERS! WE ARE TRULY BLESSED, AREN'T WE?

TODAY'S CULTURE WANTS US TO BELIEVE THAT WE, HUMAN BEINGS, ARE THE OBJECTS OF WORSHIP. JUST LOOK AT HOW WE IDOLIZE SPORTS FIGURES, HOLLYWOOD CELEBRITIES, WEALTHY PEOPLE AND YES, EVEN SOME MEGA-CHURCH PASTORS!

GOD DIDN'T CREATE US TO GLORIFY OURSELVES. HE MADE US TO GLORIFY HIM! HE FASHIONED US TO BE THE MIRROR OF HIS CHARACTER AND ATTRIBUTES SO THAT OTHERS WOULD WORSHIP HIM. DO YOU SEE THAT?

SOME OF YOU MIGHT SAY, "THIS DOESN'T SOUND LIKE ANYTHING I'VE EVER HEARD." THAT'S BECAUSE THE WORLD IS FILLED WITH LIES, AND THAT'S WHY SO MANY PEOPLE ARE MISERABLE AND LEAD A MISERABLE LIFE. THEY FOLLOW THE WAYS OF THE WORLD AND NOT THE WAYS OF GOD!

THERE ARE TWO POINTS THAT ARE VERY CLEAR TO ME AND I PRAY THAT YOU WILL SEE THEM IN THE SAME LIGHT.

THE FIRST IS THAT OUR IDENTITY IS RECEIVED, IT'S NOT ACHIEVED. ADAM AND EVE DID NOTHING TO OBTAIN THEIR IDENTITY. GOD MADE THEM, GOD SPOKE TO THEM, GOD DEFINED THEM AND GOD BLESSED THEM. IT'S ALL ABOUT GOD NOT US. IT'S NOT SOMETHING WE DID OR CAN DO, IT'S SOMETHING GOD DID AND CONTINUES TO DO IN OUR LIFE. IT'S NOT WHAT WE ACHIEVE OR EARN, IT'S WHAT HE GIVES. DO YOU TO SEE THAT?

BECAUSE OUR IDENTITY HAS BEEN DEFINED BY GOD AND NOT BY WHOM WE SAY WE ARE, WE CAN BE FREE FROM THE PERFORMANCE AND COMPETITIVE TRAPS OF THE SECULAR WORLD. WE ARE SET FREE FROM THE BITTERNESS, AND THE JEALOUSY, AND THE COVETING THAT MARKS OUR WORLD.

THIS FREEDOM ALLOWS US TO PRECISELY BE WHO GOD MADE US TO BE! AND WE SHOULD REJOICE IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT IT'S ALL ABOUT HIM AND NOT ABOUT US.

NUMBER TWO, WE ARE NOT MORE VALUABLE THAN ANYONE ELSE AND WE ARE NOT LESS VALUABLE THAN ANYONE ELSE. ALL PEOPLE EQUALLY BEAR THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD — MALE AND FEMALE, YOUNG AND OLD, BLACK AND WHITE, RICH AND POOR, FIRST WORLD AND THIRD WORLD, BORN AND UNBORN AND HEALTHY AND SICK.

THAT IS WHY, AS CHRISTIANS, WE ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO HAVE A CONSISTENT AND GODLY WORLDVIEW WHO BELIEVES IN THE DIGNITY AND EQUALITY OF ALL PEOPLE.

YES, SOME PEOPLE ARE RICHER, SOME PEOPLE ARE SMARTER, SOME PEOPLE ARE TOUGHER, SOME PEOPLE ARE MORE COMPETENT, CAPABLE, AND ABLE, BUT ALL ARE MADE IN THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS AND GOD AND HAVE DIGNITY, VALUE, AND WORTH.

ONE OF THE GREATEST LIES IS THAT SOME PEOPLE ARE MORE VALUABLE THAN OTHERS.

LET ME SAY THIS: OUR NET WORTH HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH OUR SELF-WORTH. AGAIN, OUR NET WORTH HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH OUR SELF-WORTH.

AN UNBORN CHILD, SOMEONE WHO IS POOR, SOMEONE WHO IS IN THE THIRD WORLD, SOMEONE WHO IS SICKLY, SOMEONE WHO CANNOT DEFEND THEMSELVES IS, IN EVERY WAY, EQUAL IN VALUE TO ANYONE ELSE ON THE EARTH! WHY? BECAUSE THEY TOO, BEAR THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD. THAT'S WHY WE DON'T KILL THE UNBORN. IT'S WHY WE DON'T KILL THE ELDERLY. IT'S WHY WE DON'T BELIEVE IN THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST AND THE DARWINIAN EVOLUTION THAT THOSE WHO ARE STRONG SURVIVE AND THOSE WHO ARE WEAK ARE WORTHLESS. IT'S WHY WE DON'T BELIEVE IN RACISM, CLASSISM AND SEXISM!

AND EVEN THOUGH MANY PEOPLE DO NOT REFLECT THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD, ALL PEOPLE EQUALLY BEAR HIS IMAGE AND LIKENESS.

I WOULD SUGGEST TO YOU THAT UNDERSTANDING THIS CONCEPT HAS PROFOUND IMPLICATIONS FOR NOT ONLY HOW WE SEE GOD, BUT HOW WE VIEW OTHERS AS WELL AS OURSELVES!

AS I CLOSE, I WANT TO MAKE IT PERFECTLY CLEAR TO YOU THAT YOUR IDENTITY IS DEFINED BY WHO YOU SAY YOU ARE AND YOUR ACTIONS. IF YOU SAY YOU ARE OF THIS WORLD, YOU WILL ACT AS IF YOU ARE OF THIS WORLD — AND VICE-VERSA.

BUT IF YOU CAN IDENTIFY YOURSELF AS ONE WHO GOD SAYS YOU ARE, THEN YOU WILL ACT ACCORDINGLY AND PRESENT YOURSELF AS A TRUE CHILD OF GOD AND A CO-HEIR OF JESUS! AMEN AND AMEN.