

WHO AM I?

↳ I AM LOVED

MATTHEW 6:19-21; 24
ROMANS 8:31-29

MAIN IDEA: WHAT ROLE DOES GOD'S LOVE PLAY IN MY IDENTITY?

WHAT IS IDENTITY?

Dictionary Definition: The set of qualities, beliefs, and characteristics that define an individual, distinguishing them from others

UNDERSTANDING IDENTITY

- **Social Identity:** This represents how an individual is perceived in public or social settings, encompassing aspects such as race, ethnicity, height, weight, gender, age, socioeconomic class, religion, occupation, family connections, friendships, popularity, style, social media presence, etc.
- **Personal Identity:** This refers to an individual's self-perception. Unlike social identity, which is grounded in tangible attributes, personal identity is often rooted in mental and spiritual aspects.

DIG DEEPER

WHAT ROLE DOES MY IDENTITY PLAY IN FOLLOWING JESUS?

↳ IN ORDER TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION, WE MUST UNDERSTAND AT THE FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FINDING YOUR IDENTITY IN THE WORLD VERSUS FINDING YOUR IDENTITY IN CHRIST.

Matthew 6:19-24 (ESV): ¹⁹ “**Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth**, where moth and rust **destroy** and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but **lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven**, where **neither moth nor rust destroys** and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For **where your treasure is**, there your **heart** will be also.

²² “The **eye** is the **lamp of the body**. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³ but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴ “**No one can serve two masters**, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be **devoted** to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

NOTICE THE PARALLELS JESUS SPEAKS OF:

THE WORLD

- (v.19) “**Lay up treasures on earth**”

Result: Moth and rust destroy; meaning, none of our earthly possessions have any eternal value.

- (v.23) “**If your eye is bad**”

Result: Your whole body will be full of darkness; meaning, what you look at influences how you see yourself, and God. An unhealthy eye leads to an unhealthy lifestyle.

- (v.24) “**No one can serve two masters**”

Result: You will be devoted to one, and despise the other; meaning, we can't live with one foot in the world and one foot out. Jesus asks us for full devotion, not half, for it is impossible to serve both Jesus and the world.

FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST

- (v.19) “**Lay up treasures in heaven**”

Result: Moth and rust do not destroy; meaning, as followers of Christ our lives are not based upon materialism.

- (v.23) “**If your eye is healthy**”

Result: Your whole body will be full of light; meaning, what you look at influences how you see yourself, and God. A healthy eye leads to an healthy lifestyle.

- (v.24) “**No one can serve two masters**”

Result: You will be devoted to one, and despise the other; meaning, followers of Christ live fully devoted to the ways of Jesus. The ways of Jesus cannot coincide with the ways of the world. For you are either a slave to sin, or a slave to righteousness [Romans 6:23]

TOE STEPPER: THE ROOT OF MISPLACED IDENTITY IS IDOLATRY

WHAT ARE YOU SEEKING TO GET FROM THE WORLD, THAT YOU'RE NOT FINDING IN GOD?

CONTINUING ON



Matthew 6:19-24 (ESV): ¹⁹ “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

- (v.21) “**heart**”: In this time period, the heart was believed to be the center of one’s being involving one’s emotions, reason, purpose, and will. – So when Jesus tells us, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also,” What he’s really saying is:

Matthew 6:22-23 (ESV): ²² “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³ but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

↳ WHAT YOU SEEK IS EVIDENT IN YOUR ACTIONS.

↳ WHAT YOU SEEK IS INFLUENCED BY WHAT YOU SEE.

IS WHAT YOU ARE SEEING INFLUENCING WHAT YOU ARE SEEKING?

- What are you seeking? Are you seeking status? Belonging? Money? Fulfillment? Purpose?
- In a world with anything and everything at your fingertips, you have to ask yourself the question: “Is what I view feeding the Spirit or is it feeding the flesh?”
- The Spirit and the flesh both have an appetite – the more you feed it, the larger that appetite grows.
- Jesus tells us there are only two options: serve God or serve the world [sin] – Feed the Spirit or Feed the flesh.

Matthew 6:19-24 (ESV): ²⁴ “No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

- Though Jesus uses money in this example, anything can be applied in its place. WHY? Because the ways of Christ contradict the ways of the world and vice-versa.
- (v.24) “**serve**”: (Gk. *douleuō*) translates to the work of a slave, not the work of an employee. When you seek your identity in unstable things [the world], you’ll ultimately get caught in a rat race of constant competition until it all fades away.

Romans 8:12-17 (CSB): ¹² So then, brothers and sisters, we are not obligated to the flesh to live according to the flesh, ¹³ because if you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all those led by God’s Spirit are God’s sons. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father!” ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God’s children, ¹⁷ and if children, also heirs—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO LOVE?

↳ AT THE ROOT OF LOVE AND IDENTITY LIES THE DESIRE TO BE ACCEPTED.

GOD'S LOVE COINCIDES WITH HIS ACCEPTANCE & OUR ACCEPTANCE COMES THROUGH OUR ADOPTION INTO GOD'S FAMILY. BUT UNDERSTAND, ACCEPTANCE DOESN'T EQUAL AFFIRMATION OF A SINFUL LIFESTYLE.

DIG DEEPER

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ADOPTION?

- In order to understand the significance of adoption, you have to journey back to the very beginning of creation [Genesis 1-3]. In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve lived in perfect relationship with God, and all things belonged to God [family of God]. Sin entered the world when Adam and Eve were deceived by the Serpent thus their perfect relationship with God was broken. They were transferred out of the kingdom of God and into the rule of sin. From Adam and Eve on, all people will be born into sin [Romans 5:12-13]. However, God promises in Genesis 3:15, that he will restore the relationship that was broken, pay the price for our sins, and redeem his people.
- How will God accomplish this? In that time period, if you could not pay your debts, you would have to sell yourself into slavery until your debt was paid off. However, one of your family members could come with money and pay your “*redemption price*” which would transfer you back into the family. This person was called a “*kinsman redeemer*.”
- Jesus is our “*kinsman redeemer*.” He paid the price for our sins through his death, burial, and resurrection, and when we believe and put our faith in Him, we are adopted back into the family of God. Jesus frees us from the control [shackles] of sin on our lives.

Romans 8:15-17 (CSB): ¹⁵For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear. Instead, you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, “**Abba, Father!**” ¹⁶The Spirit himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children, ¹⁷and if children, also heirs—heirs of God and coheirs with Christ—if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

(v.15) “Abba, Father!”

- The word “*abba*” in the Hebrew is a sincere way of saying father – it's personal, almost like a nickname.
- This is important because it reflects our relationship with God as His children. – God loves us with a sincerity and a love so deep we can never fully grasp it. He loves us as his own.
- When you were born, there's nothing you had to do to earn your parents love. They love and accept you because you are their own.
- However, there are situations where that's not the case. There are earthly parents who haven't displayed love or acceptance to their children. BUT



HOW MUCH GREATER IS IT THAT WE HAVE A HEAVENLY FATHER WHO DISPLAYS WHAT TRUE LOVE IS FOR US; WHO LOVES US BEFORE WE ARE EVEN CREATED, AND LOVES US REGARDLESS OF OUR SITUATIONS AND CIRCUMSTANCES.

Psalms 139:13-16 (ESV): For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. ¹⁵My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

WHEN WE UNDERSTAND THIS DYNAMIC OF GOD'S LOVE FOR US, WE ARE ABLE TO FULLY UNDERSTAND THE SOURCE, PURPOSE, AND VALUE OF OUR TRUE IDENTITY.

SOURCE – PURPOSE – VALUE

THE WORLD

- **Source:** Identity comes from external things – appearance, relationships, sports, job, social media, sexuality – shifts depending on circumstances.
- **Purpose:** Self-directed – pursues personal success, happiness, belonging, etc. apart from God.
- **Value:** Something that must be earned or determined by others through approval, success, following, etc.



LEAD TO DESTRUCTION

FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST

- **Source:** Rooted in who Jesus says you are, not who the world says you are.
- **Purpose:** Lives to glorify God by pursuing the will of God. A follower of Christ realizes that achievements, possessions, and popularity are not inherently sinful, but they do not idolize them.
- **Value:** Something that is given by God – not earned. Followers of Christ are saved by grace through faith – not performance.



LEAD TO TRUE LOVE AND
ACCEPTANCE

THE FINAL STEP IN UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE GOD'S LOVE PLAYS IN OUR IDENTITY:

Romans 8:35-39 (ESV): ³⁵ **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?** Shall *tribulation*, or *distress*, or *persecution*, or *famine*, or *nakedness*, or *danger*, or *sword*? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things **we are more than conquerors** through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither *death* nor *life*, nor *angels* nor *rulers*, nor *things present* nor *things to come*, nor *powers*, ³⁹ nor *height* nor *depth*, nor *anything else in all creation*, **will be able to separate us from the love of God** in Christ Jesus our Lord.

UNDERSTANDING GOD'S LOVE AND OUR IDENTITY MEANS WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT THERE IS NOTHING THAT CAN SEPERATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD.

THE TESTIMONY OF CORRIE TEN BOOM

- Betrayed in February 1944 by a Dutch informant for hiding Jews in their house, the Ten Boom family was imprisoned by the Nazis. Corrie and Betsie Ten Boom were sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp where 90,000 women were imprisoned. The prisoners were overcrowded with over 700 people in each barrack. There was no ventilation or protection from the cold winter weather. They slept on straw covered platforms that were infested with fleas, lice, and rats. They were barely fed and suffered from malnutrition. They were beaten, humiliated, and forced to perform hard labor.
- However, Corrie Ten Boom has managed to smuggle in a Bible, and along with her sister, they would read Scripture every night. One of their most frequent passages was Romans 8:35-39. It was this Scripture that reminded them of the hope of the Gospel and the love of Jesus.
- Betsie would eventually pass away in the camp in December 1944, she would leave her sister with a final word.
- Soon after, Corrie would be released due to a clerical error – one week before all women her age were executed. Corrie would dedicate her life to ministering the Gospel and sharing the hope and love of Jesus.

"THERE IS NO PIT SO DEEP THAT HE IS NOT DEEPER STILL." – BETSIE TEN BOOM