

Who Are You?

A study through our identity as followers of Jesus

Who are you? How do you see yourself? Answering these questions has to do with self-identity. There are many places we look to for self-identity. First, our primary source of identity comes from our family background and ethnicity. Who are parents were or weren't as well as our race plays a huge part in how we see ourselves. Another category for identity is pain or loss. For example, a life-long illness can become more than a struggle but an identity that can consume the one suffering. Connected with pain is also failure. Those of us who have experienced a divorce, been fired from a job, or failed at achieving a goal can easily identify ourselves as a failure. An identity definer that is most common in America is identity based on achievement. This has to do with our careers, how much money we make, and the level of education we have. A close second for Americans is our obsession with appearance. Because of this we pursue our identity through an endless cycle of clothing purchases, diets, and plastic surgery. Not all of these identities are harmful. However, it is helpful to stop for a moment and ask yourself these questions: "How do I see myself?", "Where do I look to for my identity?", "Am I pursuing an identity based on achievement of superficial appearance?" Identity is a huge issue!

While self-identity has to do with how we see ourselves or how we want others to see us, Biblical identity has to do with how *God* see's us. Real transformation occurs when we begin to see ourselves how God see's us. Specifically this has to do with being "in Christ" or the doctrine of our union with Christ (See Ephesians 1). In the early church followers of Jesus were first called "Christians" in Antioch (Acts 11.26). Today the term "Christian" means lot of things. When someone says, "I'm a Christian," that can mean, "I was born Christian," "I'm a member of a Church," or it can mean the person is a genuine disciple of Jesus. However, because of this confusion, we like to talk about 5 Biblical identities here at Seaside that every believer now has in Christ. These help us understand what it means to be a Christian.

We wrote them in "we are" statements. For example, "We are a Family to one another." These identities aren't meant to be a burden like a "to do" list. We aren't trying or striving to be this. Rather they are identities given to us in Christ and we get to live them out. Some of them will be easier for you to grasp than others. But all of them are things that are true about you as a Christian. They are things that are true of you now, though you will need time to experience what it means to live your life in light of this identity. For example, when a man and woman get married they are now given new identities as husband and wife. However, they spend a life time living in light of that identity. We put this 5 lesson study together to help you grow in your understanding of your identity in Christ. It is our prayer that it will be a blessing to our church as we grow in our identity in Christ.

We are a Family to one another.

We are children of God who live and care for each other as a family. God has always desired a people-an earthly family-who would live in such a way that the world would know what he is like. Jesus said that those who live in his ways and obey his Father are truly his family. Through Jesus we believe we are children of God and brothers and sisters with each other. As family we see it as our obligation to personally care for the needs of one another - both physically and spiritually. We disciple, nurture, and hold each other accountable to this Covenant life together. We do this through Sunday gatherings, Discipleship groups, and daily living together.

The beginning of God forming a people for Himself

[12:1] Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. [2] And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. [3] I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:1-3 ESV)

Those who believe in Christ are called "children of God"

[12] But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, [13] who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13 ESV)

Together we are God's people

[19] So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, [20] built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, [21] in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. [22] In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22 ESV)

Instructions on how we treat each other

[12] Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. [13] Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. [14] Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. [15] Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. [16] Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. (Romans 12:12-16 ESV)

Questions

1. What does this identity mean to you personally?
2. What is one thing that stood out to you in the scriptures above?
3. What are some obstacles to living out this identity for you?
4. How can we apply this identity to our church, community group, or household? Name some specific things we can do.

We are Witnesses of Jesus to the world.

Webster defines “representative” as, “standing or acting for another especially through delegated authority.” God has made us His representatives based on His authority in the world. We are sent by God to restore all things to Him. God sent his son, Jesus, to Earth to take on human form and live within the culture. He worked, ate, and interacted among the people; living in such a way that those around him could see and experience what God was truly like. Jesus came so that all people, places and things could be restored to a right relationship with God. In the same way, we believe we are missionary representatives sent into our culture to restore all things to God through Jesus. We live this out individually and in community.

Jesus came to be among us

[14] And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14 ESV)

The Son sends us

[21] Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” (John 20:21 ESV)

The Son was sent to reconcile us to God

[19] For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, [20] and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. Colossians 1:19-20 ESV)

We are sent with the message of reconciliation

[17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. [18] All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; [19] that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. [20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. [21] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21 ESV)

We are to be Jesus’ witnesses

[8] But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8 ESV)

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We are Servants to the people around us.

We are servants of God who serve others as a way of life. Fully God-fully human, Jesus took on the posture of a servant. He gave his life, even unto death, so that others could experience salvation, peace and restoration. Jesus said, "I am among you as one who serves..." All those who follow Jesus are called to serve in the same humility. For us this means joyful submission to God, leadership, and to each other, as we serve whomever God brings into our lives. We do whatever needs doing, whenever it's needed, and wherever it leads us.

If Jesus came to serve so will we

[42] And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

[43] But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, [44] and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. [45] For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:42-45 ESV)

Jesus gives us an example to follow

[12] When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? [13] You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. [14] If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. [15] For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. [16] Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. [17] If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. (John 13:12-17 ESV)

Be like Jesus and be a humble servant

[5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:5-11 ESV)

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We are Learners of Jesus who are continually growing.

We are disciples of Jesus who take responsibility for our own development and the development of others. As a young man Jesus grew in both height and wisdom. He learned from local religious teachers, by living in community, and through regular times of listening to God. Jesus called others to follow his ways, to be his disciples and live in obedience to all that God commands. He then sent these followers out to make new disciples. We believe we are also called to be followers of Jesus who take responsibility for our own development and the development of others. This includes both our personal time with God as well as involvement together in training provided by spiritual leadership.

The early church began with teaching

[42] And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. (Acts 2:42 ESV)

God's plan for maturing His People

[11] And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, [12] to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, [13] until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, [14] so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. [15] Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, [16] from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. (Ephesians 4:11-16 ESV)

Teaching is a part of the Great Commission

[18] And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20 ESV)

We need to teach others

[2:1] You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, [2] and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Timothy 2:1-2 ESV)

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We are Worshipers of the One True God

We were created to worship. The question is not whether we will worship, but who or what will we worship. Sin has distorted our worship of God, so that we now worship created things instead of our Creator. Our worship is a 24/7 response of the heart to who God is and what he has done in the gospel. The gospel redeems us from erroneous or idolatrous worship to truth and spirit worship. As disciples we worship individually and corporately in true heart worship because of what Jesus has done on the cross to make our worship acceptable in the sight of the living God.

The First Command

[20:1] And God spoke all these words, saying, [2] "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. [3] "You shall have no other gods before me. (Exodus 20:1-3 ESV)

The Idolatrous Exchange

[21] For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. [22] Claiming to be wise, they became fools, [23] and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. [24] Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, [25] because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (Romans 1:21-25 ESV)

What God has done for us

[3] For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. [4] But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, [5] he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, [6] whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, [7] so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:3-7 ESV)

Worship God with everything!

[16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. [17] And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:16-17 ESV)

Worship God by surrendering your life to Him

[12:1] I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. [2] Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2 ESV)

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