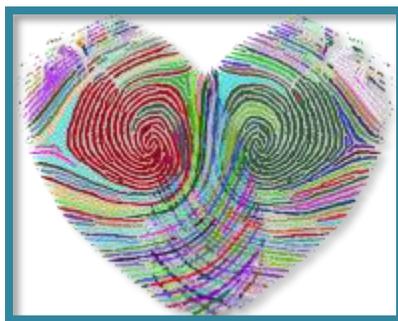


Identity



Psalms 139:16-18 (MSG)

*Oh, yes, you shaped me first inside, then out; you formed me in my mother's womb. I thank you, High God—
you're breathtaking!*

*Body and soul, I am marvelously made! I worship in adoration—what a creation! You know me inside and
out, you know every bone in my body; You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from
nothing into something. Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth; all the stages of my
life were spread out before you, The days of my life all prepared
before I'd even lived one day.*

Who is this who knows me better than I know myself and loved me before my earthly mother or father? God, our Father, is our 1st Love! The above scripture verse is proof that each of us was created in love **on** purpose. If we do not believe this, then we still have not stepped into the ability to allow God to love us unconditionally. He thought about the exact “purpose” for which we needed to come into the earth, the time in history we needed to be born, the family we needed to be born into and the people who would cross our path in this lifetime. You were created on purpose and the only One who knows exactly what that purpose looks like is your Creator, God. It seems senseless to look anywhere else to answer the question “What is my purpose?”

God, likewise, created us with the need for relationships. As infants develop, they are wired to attach to their caregiver. As a healthy child continues to grow, their



attachment will extend to other members of family and friends at various stages of development. Freud, Piaget and Erickson each have their own theory on how this works if you would like to research further.

Within each of us is a need to be loved, nurtured and protected, but sometimes (due to experiences outside our control) this natural process may become perverted. Abuse, neglect and rejection are some things that pervert our sense of healthy relationship and development. When this occurs, we may begin to *dys*function in our development and need for healthy bonding. The following are just a few examples of how dysfunction may appear in one's life:

- Many children who are abused begin to struggle with their sexual identity and become attracted to those of the same sex.
- Children without a healthy father figure may become resentful, bitter and distant. Young girls searching for love and affirmation may begin experimenting with sex at an early age in an attempt to be validated. Also, children who suffer rejection may get involved in pornography and masturbation to sooth their pain.
- Some children will attach themselves to anyone who shows them a little affection and that individual becomes their lifeline (co-dependency).
- If the caregiver is abusive and controlling, this can impart a spirit of fear and/or rebellion against authority figures.
- Addiction (alcohol, drugs, sex, food, shopping etc.)

Our culture is becoming less connected “relationally” due to the façade of being more connected through social media. I believe we are reaping what has been sown from one generation to another. We are living in a society where children are being raised as “its” and not “boys” and “girls”. God created “male” and “female”; therefore, it is “good” to know gender; although, there is no gender in the “spirit”. He also created the “family” unit in a covenantal relationship between man & woman. Satan does not want us to know our true identity; therefore, we may struggle between God’s absolute truths compared to cultural norms. As a result of this assault against our true identity, we may have an “identity crisis”.



Identity Crisis-a period or episode of psychological distress, often occurring in adolescence but sometimes in adulthood, when a person seeks a clearer sense of self and an acceptable role in society-
confusion as to goals and priorities:

Just as an umbilical cord brings nourishment to a fetus, intimacy with God brings nourishment to our soul. Our true identity is birthed out of God's imagination.

My Story

I want to share something that I believe will speak to many of us; therefore, I am going to be transparent here. I have been in situations that have caused me to see the limitations others would like to put on me because of certain characteristics. It does not matter whether it is in Christian or secular settings...

The talents, skills and gifts God has placed in me, I believe, are for a particular purpose in business, ministry and God's Kingdom. I know [my gifting](#) is in the areas of administration, wisdom, scribing, prophetic, intercession and discernment. I recall a couple of years ago having a strong desire (and still do) to break through this unseen spirit that tries to stifle what the Holy Spirit is doing in me. I had agreement in prayer (with another sister in Christ) asking the Holy Spirit to help me rise "above" this cultural stronghold. I believe that God is answering my prayer but it takes "courage", renewing my mind with the Word of God, and Holy Spirit boldness! This does not mean disrespecting people (we are called to love) but what it does mean is hearing God's voice above ALL others. To be quite honest, it also means that we cannot fear what may happen to us when we speak as led by the Holy Spirit. It takes knowing who you are in God and a lot of humility. It will not come any other way, believe me. I declare scriptures over myself, family and friends. What I am finding is that God is calling me to a place of maturity and "this" will make all the difference in how I navigate through life. He is affirming me and teaching me that I do not have to prove myself to this world because I am His beloved! He is well able to both father and mother me...

If you truly desire God's will to be manifest in your life, surrender to Him. It is well worth it for Him to get the glory in your life! This is the hour when God is calling us to "awaken" to who we are in Him alone. This means that nothing (but **choice**) can hold me back from what God has for my life. I cannot look at my race, age, gender, economic status or any other qualifier (or disqualifier) because God has a plan and I am saying "YES" Abba (*no fear*)!



I am very grateful for the Blood of Jesus that has cleansed (and is cleansing) me from ALL the wounds of my past. Jesus is Savior *and our elder Brother* who has gone before us all. Walking out salvation is a process and we are all on a journey of discovery. I discover a little more about God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), self and others each day I am alive. That is a great thing! I don't hold any offense against those who have tried to put me in a box because they are/were also in a box. Let God shatter your man-made, self-imposed box right now! We, children of God, are no longer orphans.

Read Romans 12:1-2, 6-10 (NIV) and understand that you are “created” for a higher calling!

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 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.

6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your[a] faith; 7 if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; 8 if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead,[b] do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.

Prayer for YOU from Ephesians 3:16-21

⁶ May God grant you out of the riches of His glory, to be strengthened and spiritually energized with power through His Spirit in your inner self, [indwelling your innermost being and personality], ⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through your faith. And may you, having been [deeply] rooted and [securely] grounded in love, ⁸ be fully capable of comprehending with all the saints (God's people) the width and length and height and depth of His love [fully experiencing that amazing, endless love]; ⁹ and [that you may come] to know [practically, through personal experience] the love of Christ which far surpasses [mere] knowledge [without experience], that you may be filled up [throughout your being] to all the fullness of God [so that you may have the richest experience of God's presence in your lives, completely filled and flooded with God Himself]. ²⁰ Now to Him who is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly more than all that we dare ask or think [infinitely beyond our greatest prayers, hopes, or dreams], according to His power that is at work within us, ²¹ to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen.



Journal

Day 1

Challenge



Go to [Romans Chapter 7:14-8:39](#) and *prayerfully read* through each verse asking the Holy Spirit to speak to you “Spirit to spirit”. This should be done when you have a moment of solitude; therefore, do not rush through this assignment. Write down each verse that speaks to you in the space below and why it speaks to you.

What about it speaks to who

you are



or



who you are becoming?

Example: Romans 8:22-25 speak to me because....



Day 2

What's Your Story?



Ask the Holy Spirit to show you words that have distorted your “true self” (the image of God). Write down the area(s) of your life people have compared you to others and/or tried to put you in a box. (*It is also a good time to forgive them.*) Find the appropriate scripture verse that cancels this negative self-image.

Example: Guilt/Shame **Hebrews 10:22**



Day 3

Anchor: 

What does the Bible have to say about “Children of God?”

Ephesians 1:11

In Him also we have received an inheritance [a destiny—we were claimed by God as His own], having been predestined (chosen, appointed beforehand) according to the purpose of Him who works everything in agreement with the counsel and design of His will...

John 1:12

But to as many as did receive and welcome Him, He gave the right [the authority, the privilege] to become children of God, that is, to those who believe in (adhere to, trust in, and rely on) His name—

1 John 3:1

[Children of God Love One Another] See what an incredible quality of love the Father has shown to us, that we would [be permitted to] be named and called and counted the children of God! And so we are! For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

Galatians 3:26

For you [who are born-again have been reborn from above—spiritually transformed, renewed, sanctified and] are all children of God [set apart for His purpose with full rights and privileges] through faith in Christ Jesus.

Acts 17:28-30

28 For in Him we live and move and exist [that is, in Him we actually have our being], as even some of [a]your own poets have said, ‘For we also are His children.’ 29 So then, being God’s children, we should not think that the Divine Nature (deity) is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination or skill of man. 30 Therefore God overlooked and disregarded the former ages of ignorance; but now He commands all people everywhere to repent [that is, to change their old way of thinking, to regret their past sins, and to seek God’s purpose for their lives],

Philippians 2:15

so that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and guileless, innocent and uncontaminated, children of God without blemish in the midst of a [morally] crooked and [spiritually] perverted generation, among whom you are seen as bright lights [beacons shining out clearly] in the world [of darkness],

Day 4

Reflection



Henri J.M. Nouwen says the following about the “lost soul” in *The Return of the Prodigal Son*:

It goes something like this: I am not so sure anymore that I have a safe home, and I observe other people who seem to be better off than I. I wonder how I can get to where they are. I try hard to please, to achieve success, to be recognized. When I fail, I feel jealous or resentful of these others. When I succeed, I worry that others will be jealous or resentful of me. I become suspicious or defensive and increasingly afraid that I won't get what I so much desire or will lose what I already have. Caught in this tangle of needs and wants, I no longer know my own motivations. I feel victimized by my surroundings and distrustful of what others are doing or saying. Always on my guard, I lose my inner freedom and start dividing the world into those who are for me and those who are against me. I wonder if anyone really cares. I start looking for validation of my distrust. And wherever I go, I see them, and I say: “No one can be trusted.” And then I wonder whether *anyone* ever really loved me. The world around me becomes dark. My heart grows heavy. My body is filled with sorrows. My life loses meaning. I have become a lost soul¹.

If I am honest, and I must be for God to bring me to a place of maturity and complete sonship, I can relate to the Prodigal Son mentality and barrenness of the soul *as a Christian*. What that means to me is that there is still a ways to go in accepting complete love of the Father. The world is still in my soul if any of me resonates with what Nouwen has detailed regarding the “lost soul”. Granted, I do not live from this place, but occasionally when fear seeks to sneak in the back door, I can go to this place forgetting that I am a child of God. Again, Nouwen shares:

The choice for my own sonship, however, is not an easy one. The dark voices of my surrounding world try to persuade me that I am no good and that I can only become good by earning my goodness through, “making it” up the ladder of success. These voices lead me quickly to forget the voice that calls me “my son, the Beloved”, reminding me of my being loved independently of any acclaim or accomplishment. These dark voices drown out that gentle, soft, light-giving voice that keeps calling me “my favorite one”; they drag me to the periphery of my existence and make me doubt that there is a loving God waiting for me at the very center of my being².

[Is there anything in you that relates to this text?](#)

¹ Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming*, image books ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1994, ©1992), 1. Page 47

² Henri J.M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming*, image books ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1994, ©1992), 1. Page 51



Day 5

Heart to Heart



Look at the following verses in comparison to Day 4 reading; and ask the Holy Spirit to give you a fresh revelation of what it truly means to receive God's grace!

Ephesians 2:1-10(NSRV)

*You were dead through the trespasses and sins ² in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³ All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. ⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵ even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ[a]—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— ⁹ not the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ **For we are what he has made us**, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.*

Philippians 1:6 (AMP)

I am convinced and confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will [continue to] perfect and complete it until the day of Christ Jesus [the time of His return].



Day 6



Pour out your heart to God...



Day 7



Take Action

How will you move forward?

Transforming you into His Image

Begin to mediate on the Beatitudes and allow the Holy Spirit to bring fresh revelation of what Jesus shared with His disciples.

The Beatitudes

5 When Jesus[a] saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5 “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11 “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely[b] on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Salt and Light

13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot.

14 You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. 15 No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.