**“WOULD YOU BELIEVE"**

**#2: I Am Who God Says I Am**

A

dd one word to Descartes’ classic conclusion about his existence, and you get: “I do (*not)* think; therefore I am (*not)*.” A bartender once asked Descartes, “Monsieur, the usual?” The philosopher replied, “I think not,” then he vaporized.

Like circus mirrors that distort us, we can let others define us by how we look, dress or talk. As kids, my Southern cousins and I mocked our Yankee kin’s accents. And my red hair inspired nicknames I wasn’t too fond of. One study says Seattleites are tolerant, individualistic, happy, but snobbish. Well! Hrummmph!

Your unique identity, embossed deep within you, is about who made you, your life purpose, how you think, and your final destiny. Our Gerhard Ade confesses, “I’m not much, but I’m all I think about.” Does your self-image give you wings to soar or nail you to the floor?

DISCUSS: How have others defined you? How did that make you feel?

Got Some ID?

If your Mac dies, you see an Apple genius. Because God made you, He knows you best. Let’s read Psalm 139:1-18 (p. 467 NIV).

Tim Keller says, “Identity is only given by God and only found in Jesus Christ.” Let’s read 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 (p. 860).

Who are we *before* we have Jesus? Here’s Ephesians 2:1-10 (p. 869).

We get our new ID from what God’s *already* done, *is* doing and *will* do for us. He’s placed us *IN* CHRIST, is creating Christ’s character in us, and sees us *complete* in Him. God’s Spirit *LIVES* in us; He’s not *VISITING.* Let’s read Colossians 1:21-22, 2:13-15 (p. 875).

DISCUSS: What’s most misunderstood about how God has dealt with sin during this age of grace?

 “I Am A Rock. I Am An Island.

Therefore, I Must Be …. Rock Island!”

People thrive when their lives are based on who *God* says they are (John 10:10). To believers “in Christ,” God says you …

• Are *permanently* forgiven, never to be condemned or abandoned by God (Romans 4:7-8, 6:23, 8:1, 38-39; Hebrews 10:17).

• Are *right with God*, *holy* and *blameless* in His sight as His *adopted son* and *co-heir with Christ* (John 1:12-13; Romans 3:22-23; Galatians 3:26-29; Ephesians 1:4; Jude 24).

• As a citizen of heaven, you are assured that *Christ* will *complete* what He has *begun* in you (Ephesians 2:19; Philippians 1:6, 3:20-21).

• You belong to God, validated by His having placed the Holy Spirit in your spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

• You can live anxiety-free since God reshapes everything for your good (Romans 8:28; Philippians 4:6-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). “I’m invincible until the day God is finished with me down here.”

DISCUSS: Which of the above do you most need today, and why?

“What Kind of Fool am I?”

Can I get a witness for Michael Wells as he leads the believers’ cheering section: *“My identity is in Christ, not in the flesh that I will one day lay aside. I have a new life and a new man who is holy. … God doesn’t love you according to your behavior. He’s unchanging; His love for you is steady, consistent, unconditional. When we follow Jesus and know how much we are truly loved by God, we learn that He doesn’t love us less when we sin. If we don’t believe that, then we don’t know the Gospel.”*

DISCUSS: What is the Gospel? What is its most shocking element?

Who Are You Anyway?

The way God thinks runs counter to our *modus operandi* (Romans 11:33-36). He lovingly created us not as robots, but having free will. Our first parents used their freedom to disobey God. Born with their sin gene, unrepentant man seeks to control his world by rational means, opting to walk by sight, not by faith.

With His unsurpassed wisdom, **God acts in *super*natural, intuitive, creative ways that are alien to us**. As Graham Cooke frames it, “Would you send a stuttering, 80-year-old guy named Mo to free 3.5 million slaves from earth’s most powerful csar having only a stick? Would you lay siege to an impregnable city by walking around it mute for a week? If your 32,000-man army outnumbered your foe four-to-one, would you dismiss 22,000 of them who readily “outed” themselves as cowards, then select a mere 300 for battle based on how they drank water!” God is *not rational*! He’s *inscrutable*.

His ways are galactic. Most of what He does in the Bible is not logical. When we surrender to and place our trust in Him, He replaces our inferior way of thinking with a new identity and a transformed mind (Romans 12:1-2; Colossians 3:1-4 p. 876).

The Gospel is a divine exchange: Jesus takes your sin, and gives you His perfect standing before His Father. God poured out onto Jesus all His anger toward sin, so God’s got nothing to be angry with you about! Because God accepted His sinless Son’s sacrificial death as *full* payment for your sin, and gave you faith to trust in His forgiveness, He has declared you to be His adopted son, a saint, a citizen of heaven, and His ambassador on earth. Unlike religion, His Holy Spirit is not trying to change the *old* you which died on the cross with Jesus, but is helping the *new* you to think, see and speak as He does (Romans 8:5-8, 14, 29; Ephesians 4:17-24, 5:1-2)! You like?

Living as you’re known in heaven is *really* living! As a believer, since you are who *God* says you are, this is your identity:

*“As His adopted son whom He calls a saint and a citizen of heaven, God loves me just as much as He loves His Son, Jesus Christ, who by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit lives* in *me,* through *me and* as *me” (John 17:23; Galatians 2:20).*

**Does Jesus live in you? If not, please invite Him in.**

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