

## **Chapter Fourteen**

# **Identity and Identification**

Perhaps the most crucial problem we face in our day is the restlessness and lostness of a world of men and women who have lost their identity. This is not too surprising when one observes the rapid decay of all the traditional anchor points. The shocking absence of moral standards, the dissolution of the family; the sad state of the church; the complete lack of integrity in government; the realization of the fact that man has succeeded in polluting large segments of his environment; the dissipation of energy supplies; the wets between nations, sexes, and individuals--all spell out the bankruptcy of human society. No wonder many are feeling so much adrift in a sea of uncertainty that they really don't know who they are!

This identity crisis is not a new phenomenon. I remember some years ago thinking about myself: "How come you think you know who you are? How can you be so sure of your identity when so many are not?" As a matter of fact, I must confess I was more than a little bit impatient with those who weren't squared away because it seemed so simple to resolve the issue. So I decided to find out how I know who I am. I took a sheet of paper and wrote WHO AM I? at the top and proceeded to fill it out. In doing so I discovered I had to say "in relation to what?" So I ended up with a list of people and things on the left side of the page, with my identity is related to them on the right side. It turned out like this:

### **WHO AM I?**

**My Identity-- Relating to:**

1. GOD...	<p>His creation--made in his image.</p> <p>His child. He's my loving heavenly Father.</p> <p>An individual. A one-of-a-kind handmade original, with a God-given personality. I'm me.</p>
2. JESUS CHRIST...	<p>I'm his, for he bought me with a price-- his life.</p> <p>I'm accepted in him. He loves me without reservation or qualification, with an everlasting lover</p>
3. THE HOLY SPIRIT...	<p>I'm indwelt by him, regenerated by him, sealed by him: made safe and secure under God's ownership.</p>
4. MY FAMILY...	<p>I'm Pearl Smith's husband, responsible to provide the leadership of love toward her. I'm Don and Dave's dad, enjoying a man-to-man relationship with them as my two grown sons.</p>
5. GOD'S FAMILY...	<p>A member of the greatest family in heaven and on earth! Joined to every other member of the body of Christ, worldwide. Enjoying the privilege of fellowship with many of God's own.</p>
6. OTHER PEOPLE... At work, etc...	<p>Relating to a great bunch of folks in a loving church fellowship.</p> <p>Enjoying wonderful fellowship with fellow workers, fellow elders and pastors.</p> <p>Meeting more of God's dear people all the time.</p>
7. IN TIME...	<p>I'm a man under construction--just in process, not a finished product, but learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Possessor of eternal, abundant life in Christ.</li> <li>· Joint heir with Christ of all that's his.</li> </ul>
8. IN ETERNITY...	<p>I'll receive the fullness of my inheritance: a resurrection body, knowing as I am known, glorified, experiencing the glorious liberty of the sons of God, conformed to the image of God's Son!</p>

## Adam or Christ?

This leads us to the matter of *identification*, a very important consideration both for us and for those we counsel. Here again I turn to the Bible and find that I am either identified *with Adam* or *with Christ*. If one has not yet claimed Jesus Christ as Savior, he is still in Adam and thus heir to all that means: a fallen, depraved nature, condemnation, frustration, futility, death.

On the other hand if I have received Christ, I am identified with him and made partaker of a new nature, the divine nature. I think it is more easily seen in chart form, like this:

### MY IDENTIFICATION WITH CHRIST IN HIS DEATH

<p>IN HIS DEATH</p>	<p>· <i>He died for me</i> (Rom. 5:8).</p> <p>This means fullness of pardon, forgiveness, acceptance.</p> <p>· <i>I died with him</i> (Rom. 6:6).</p> <p>This puts the old man out of business--frees me from what I was in Adam, a slave to sin.</p>
<p>IN HIS BURIAL</p>	<p><i>I was buried with him</i> (Rom. 6:4).</p> <p>This means that if I want to relate to the old man, I'll have to dig him up.</p>
<p>IN HIS RISEN LIFE</p>	<p><i>I live with him</i> in newness of life (Rom 6:4b -5).</p> <p>The old way of sin and death has n~ more claim on me.</p>
<p>IN HIS GLORY</p>	<p><i>I share the splendor of his character, b'yhis indwelling life</i> John 17:22, 2 Cor 4:7, Rom. 8:17,18).</p> <p>My humanity is fulfilled as he lives in me and makes me the man I want to be.</p>
<p>IN HIS CONCERN FOR A LOST</p>	<p>I have been sent as his ambassador to share his good news with a world that <i>does not</i> know <i>him</i> (John 17:18, 20, 2 Cor. 5:19-21).</p> <p>Wherever I go, he goes--so I am his representative--a high calling and responsibility.</p>
<p>IN HIS TRIUMPH</p>	<p>· <i>He always leads me in triumph</i> (2 Cor.2: 14).</p> <p>· Over sin (Rom. 6:14).</p> <p>· Over circumstances (Rom. 8:25-28).</p> <p>· Over Satan (Col. 2:15).</p>

IN HIS REIGN	<p>· <i>I am to reign in life through him</i> (Rom. 5:17).</p> <p>This is for the present.</p> <p><i>I will reign with him</i> --in the future (Rev. 5:10).</p>
AS JOINT HEIR WITH HIM	<p><i>Sharing in all that is his</i> (Rom. 8:14, 17).  This means more than I Can even comprehend, for his Word says, "All things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. 3:21-23).</p>
BUT ALSO--IN HIS SUFFERING	<p>· This is part of the package, for we are heirs "...provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him (Rom. 8:17b, and Phil. 1.29 and 1 Pet. 4:12-13).</p>

The living out of all that this identification affords makes for a very exciting and worthwhile life. Why? Because it is the life of Jesus (the life of the ages) being manifested in us. But notice that it is life out of death. We must be DYING TO LIVE!

...unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit lie who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life (John 12:24-25).

....always carrying in the body the *death* of Jesus, so that the *life* of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the *life* of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So *death is* at work in us, but *life* in you (2 Cor. 4.1012, italics mine).

This is the truth we must live and share with those God calls us to help--the many around us who are dying to live.

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