



Who Do You Think You Are?
by Pastor Doug Batchelor

An Amazing Fact: Identity theft is a growing crime in America. It happens when someone wrongfully obtains and uses another's personal data for fraud or deception, typically for economic gain. Unlike your fingerprints, your personal data - especially your Social Security number, bank account or credit card number, or telephone calling card PIN - can be terribly abused if they fall into the wrong hands, profiting others at your expense. Every day, hundreds, if not thousands, of people across the country report funds stolen from their accounts. In the worst cases, criminals completely take over victims' identities, run up vast debts and commit crimes, leaving the victims with destroyed credit and a criminal record that takes years to correct.

Did you know that the devil tried to steal your identity, leaving you in debt and with a criminal record beyond your means to repay?

A naturalist visiting a farm one day was surprised to see a beautiful eagle in the farmer's chicken coop. Befuddled, he asked, "Why in the world is that eagle living with chickens?"

"Well," answered the farmer, "I found an abandoned eagle's egg one day and laid it in the coop, and a chicken adopted it and raised the creature after it hatched. It doesn't know any better; it thinks it's a chicken." The eagle was even pecking at grain and strutting awkwardly in circles.

"Doesn't it ever try to fly out of there?" asked the naturalist, noticing that the bird never lifted its gaze.

"No," said the farmer. "I doubt it even knows what it means to fly."

The naturalist asked to take the eagle a few days for experiments, and the farmer agreed.

First, the scientist placed the eagle on a fence and pushed it off, bellowing, "Fly!" But the bird just fell to the ground and continued pecking. He then climbed to the top of a tall hayloft and did the

same thing, but the frightened bird just shrieked and fluttered ungraciously to the barnyard, where it resumed its strutting.

Finally, the naturalist took the docile bird away from the environment to which it had grown accustomed, driving to the highest hill in the county. After a lengthy and sweaty climb to the hillcrest with the bird tucked under his arm, he peered over the edge, and then spoke gently, "Friend, you were born to soar. It is better that you die here today on the rocks below than live the rest of your life being a chicken. It's not what you are."

Suddenly, the confused bird, with its keen eyesight, spotted another eagle soaring on the currents high above the bluff, and a hidden yearning was kindled within it. The naturalist threw the majestic beast up and over the edge, crying out, "Fly! Fly! Fly!" The bird began to tumble toward the rocks below, but then it opened its seven-foot span of wings, gracefully gliding into the blue sky. With a mighty screech, it instinctively began to flap its powerful wings, climbing ever-higher in spirals on unseen thermals. Soon after, the mighty eagle disappeared into the glare of the morning sun.

Spiritual Amnesia

My mother used to tell me that my brother Falcon and I had very different personalities. She remembered asking him, "Who do you think you are?" when he was just three or four years old. He'd always answer, "I'm Falcon Batchelor." He never had any doubts. But when she asked me that question, it made me think a long while. "Who am I? Where did I come from?" For Falcon it was very simple, but for me it was a profound mystery.

Likewise, many people are confused about who they are; they have an identity crisis. Edgar Rice Burroughs's Tarzan of the Apes chronicles the life of a man who was adopted by gorillas as a baby when his missionary parents are killed in Africa. The boy grows into manhood thinking he is an ape. Far from fantasy, the book is based on some true reports of human babies being raised by wild animals, like the wolf-child in France who ran around on all fours. He was a human who didn't know he was human; he didn't know who he really was.

For Christians to have that kind of identity crisis is a real tragedy. It's like a lost driver who keeps driving around even though he has no idea where to go. That's bad news.

Cases of complete amnesia are very rare: A person receives some kind of blunt trauma to the head and wakes up feeling fine, everything functioning normally - except she just doesn't know who she is anymore. I believe many Christians in today's church are going through all the motions, but they're really bewildered - suffering from "spiritual amnesia." They are unnerved into feeling insecure in their relationship with the Father and more easily fall into sin.

But it doesn't have to be this way, if they will remember who they really are.

Slaves to Forgetfulness

The Bible says, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he" ([Proverbs 23:7 NKJV](#)). What you think about yourself has a great impact on how you behave. It's true! For proof, we need not look any further than the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. They'd been treated like slaves in Egypt for so long that they started to think they were nothing more than that.

They didn't know who they were, even as God kept trying to tell them they were destined to be a great people. "And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" ([Exodus 19:6](#)). Israel was the Almighty's chosen people, yet at times they wished to return to their land of bondage. That's the epitome of an identity crisis.

How can a people chosen by God not know who they are? God was in their very midst, yet they still suffered from spiritual amnesia. Like Christians today who suffer from this same dilemma, their troubles stemmed from carnal thinking, and it was this very crisis of self that kept causing them to stumble, so much so that many of them never made it to the land flowing with milk and honey.

This is far different from the story of their ancestor and great Jewish hero Joseph, who experienced the most radical change possible in outward circumstances yet still retained the knowledge of who he was. Even though the attitude of those around him often changed suddenly, it never affected his attitude about God or his perception of God's thoughts toward him. He remembered that God chose his family, even when he ended up as a slave in a strange land. He conducted himself with faithfulness and dignity despite being falsely accused and thrown into jail. Not once did he think himself a slave or a prisoner, never allowing the environment around him to dictate who he was.

Then one day, he goes before Pharaoh, who recognizes in Joseph a sense of nobility and leadership and promotes him to the position of prime minister of the mighty empire. Because he had not forgotten who he was, no matter how low he found himself, Joseph always floated to the top.

Reality Check

A lot of talk today revolves around self-esteem, usually for those who don't have enough. But sometimes we can have too much; some people are very much in love with themselves. Both of these extremes are counter to what God wants for us. Further, I haven't seen very many "healthy" presentations on the difference between a good attitude in Christ and an overabundance of self-esteem. Many folks get this confused and cling to unrealistic visions of grandeur.

So the Bible reminds us, "For I say ... to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith" ([Romans 12:3](#)). Notice that Paul does not say, "Think low of yourself." No, he's telling us to be realistic about ourselves.

We have two extremes we must avoid. Some people think of themselves as trash and go groveling

around letting people step all over them. Imagine meeting Michael Jordan on the basketball court and asking him, "Can you play basketball?" He answers, "I'm learning." That's not humility - that's a lie! In the very least he should say, "I'm pretty good." Being realistic isn't being arrogant, and Christians should have a reasonable confidence about what they can (and can't) do.

At the other end of the spectrum, we have the smug, arrogant problems of the last-day church that thinks it is far better off than it really is. [Revelation 3:17](#) warns, "You say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing' - and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (NKJV). Isn't Jesus saying here, "You don't know who you really are"? The last-day church is wretched and poor, but her members think they are superior and rich. We desperately need to grasp who we really are, what our true condition is before God.

Essentially, it is better to come in thinking a little less of yourself than thinking too highly. If you're not sure how to feel about yourself, be cautious to think less than more. You should let the Lord level the field for you. [Jeremiah 45:5](#) commands, "And do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them" (NKJV). Is it okay to seek great things? Yes, but not for yourself! Seek great things for God, and He will show you who you are.

An Unreliable Source

To find out who you are, the last place you need to look is the world. You are not who the world thinks you are. Jesus did not obtain His identity from what the world thought of Him; it didn't even know who He was. Sadly, His very own received Him not. If the world can't figure out who Jesus is, why should we worry about what it thinks of His followers?

Jesus asks, "If I, your Lord and Master, have been persecuted and rejected, why are you expecting otherwise?" Don't wait for the world to appreciate or recognize you and know who you are in Christ. It will never happen; they will never heap praise on you. Remember, the nation of Israel was destroyed because it did not know who Jesus was!

The apostle Paul says, "And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day" ([1 Corinthians 4:12, 13](#)). Expect only this from the world; don't try to get your identity from it. The world looks at us as the offscouring, the stuff you scrape away.

Today's church gets into a lot of trouble trying to get its self-esteem from the world. It often wants to be appreciated and accepted by the world, and this misguided desire leads some in the church to adopt worldly characteristics - in style, in worship, in conduct, in dress, and in music - and it reaps worldly consequences. Likewise, if you're trying to be recognized by the world, you are probably doing something wrong. Jesus said, "Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets" ([Luke 6:26](#)).

The teachings of Jesus are foreign to the world. They are radical and strange: love your enemies, turn the other cheek, go two miles instead of one. How can the world understand that when it is so different? It doesn't understand why you would walk back to the grocery store to return that extra nickel in change, or to be completely honest with your taxes when you could easily cheat. It's illogical!

Don't get your identity from the world; it tries to make you believe you're not much more than a monkey. But [Romans 12:2](#) says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (NKJV).

A Tree or a Turnip?

Now I want you to explore who you are - in Bible terms. This is where you can get an accurate, reliable picture of who you are to God, the One who created you and knows you better than anyone else.

This might seem a little strange, but are you a tree or a turnip? Let me explain!

Some people are always in a frenzy, convinced that life is a shopping spree. They are running around eating and drinking and trying to get as much carnal pleasure as possible, believing that we're here for only a short while. Turnips have a very short lifespan, measured in weeks, and then they wither, crack, and die. Is that who you are? Or are you a tree - an ageless redwood? What does the Bible say?

"For as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands" ([Isaiah 65:22 NKJV](#)).

If you win a 10-minute shopping spree at an electronics store, are you going to shop furiously or casually? Of course, you'll be running at breakneck speed up and down the aisles stuffing the most expensive items you can find into the cart! You'd be in a frenzy. Why? Because you're thinking like a turnip - your time is short.

If all you see to life is pleasure now, you'll be frantically trying to get as much of it as possible, all the while never realizing that this life is about getting a good foundation for living in eternity. God wants us to experience life like a redwood tree, not a turnip.

Are you here for just a little while? Your answer will affect your philosophy about everything else. Some Christians say they believe in heaven and eternity, but in their innermost souls they're thinking like a turnip "just in case," and they are suffering spiritual amnesia for it. They're frantic because their time is running short.

Who do you think you are? If you're like them, you'll always be frantic because this life is indeed short. But if you believe you are a tree, living with the promise of everlasting life, you won't need to get all that pleasure right here and right now. You'll be satisfied living with self-denial, because you know even greater things await in paradise. You can think, "At His right hand are pleasures forever more through eternity. I don't have to think like a turnip and get it all right now. I can think like a tree." The one who trusts in the Lord is "like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" ([Psalm 1:3](#)). This world is temporary - you don't have to be.

Are You a Saint?

Have you ever wondered why Paul and other Bible writers refer to us as saints now? (See [Romans 1:7](#) for an example.) I think Paul addressed the church as saints because he hoped they would rise to the occasion. If he talked to them like they were saints, they'd start acting more like saints.

I've heard about pastors who visit backslidden church members and address them as though they were already active Christians again. They boldly ask these prodigals to visit a lonely neighbor who needs encouragement and prayer. And these backslidden members think, "Me? Have prayer for them? I've been away so long!" Yet they do what their pastor asks and suddenly start living out the expectations and it starts becoming real again.

It's the same with bad habits such as smoking. I've kicked the habit and have helped others do the same, and I know that when you hear yourself saying, "I'm trying to quit smoking," you're in trouble. Instead you should be saying, "I have quit smoking." There's a big difference, because you need to see yourself free from smoking; you need to think of yourself differently.

If you always see yourself as fallen, oppressed, and a captive of the devil, you'll be in spiritual captivity. You've got to see yourself as free. Jesus promised, "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" ([John 8:36](#)). Are you trying to be free, or has He already made you free? See the difference? God tells us we are saints! "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness" ([Colossians 1:12, 13](#)). Will God deliver us, or has He already delivered us? When you believe it by faith, it becomes real. Jesus said, "According to your faith be it unto you" ([Matthew 9:29](#)).

Before Augustine converted, he lived a very profane and immoral life. But sometime after he experienced his radical conversion, he was walking down a street in Milan, Italy, and one of his old girlfriends saw him and was amazed that he looked right at her but kept going without even a nod of recognition. She chased him down the street, calling out, "Augustine, it is I! It is I!" But he turned and looked at her and said, "But it's no longer I."

This is the essence of righteousness by faith. You become righteous when you believe in His promises. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)). Do you think you are an old, dying creature, or a new creature living in Christ? What does the Bible say? You're not trying to shake off your old life, for that has already passed away. Paul's words were carefully chosen!

So who do you think you are? All things are new when you are in Christ. That's who you are, and it's wonderful when you start to envision it and make it real for your life.

Are You Chosen?

"For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" ([Deuteronomy 7:6](#)). This promise comes from the Old Testament, but I believe it very much applies to His people today. We are spiritual Israel, and God says we are special.

Peter bears this out when he writes, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" ([1 Peter 2:9](#)). Peter was writing to a church who had spiritual amnesia, a church whose bar was set too low. They forgot who they were, and Peter had to remind them.

The church needs to be reminded of that often, but especially today. Think about it: How many generations have there been in the history of the world? Now which of these have been the most privileged? Arguably, there are a couple: the generation that witnessed Jesus's first coming - who wouldn't have wanted to live then? - and the generation that will behold His second coming. What a privilege to avoid the taste of death, to be alive on earth when the Lord descends!

God is telling you and me who we are - we don't have to wonder or be confused. We are peculiar; we are unique. We are chosen to reveal to the lost their true identity. This is the purpose for which you have been called - it is why you were born.

A New Name

In 1970, the federal government established the federal Witness Protection Program. This project still provides a new identity to individuals who give court testimony or serve as witnesses even though it could endanger their lives, as in cases against organized crime syndicates. In exchange for this valuable testimony, the government gives witnesses completely new identities, furnishing them with new names, legal papers, occupations, and homes. (The government will even create new histories, complete with high school and college diplomas! In some cases, if a witness has a criminal record, it is wiped perfectly clean!)

Likewise, God promises His redeemed, "You shall be called by a new name, Which the mouth of

the Lord will name" ([Isaiah 62:2](#)). God has given each of His children a new identity in Christ, His Witness Protection Program's best Agent, replacing the one the devil offered us in the garden of Eden when he tried to steal our identities as children of God.

Christ paid "top dollar" for you - with His blood - to provide this new identity. The Bible says that we are not our own. We belong to God. "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" ([1 Corinthians 6:20 NKJV](#)).

Who do you think you are? You're His! Where do you think you belong? On the winning team! You no longer need to be suffering spiritual amnesia; you don't need to be in the depths of an identity crisis. "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" ([1 John 3:1 NKJV](#)).

This message has extraordinarily good gospel potential, even though it might seem best suited for believing Christians. Salvation is all about getting a new identity! The more we tell people who they are in God, the more willing they will be to change leaders. Like I once did, they will cease to be slaves of the devil and will become servants of the Lord. Ask them who they think they are, and then tell them what Jesus says. They'll discover what it means to live life like a redwood and not a turnip; they will become new creatures living for eternity.

They will become saints, His chosen generation.