

Identity Crisis?

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Our identity is who we are. Assimilation is a matter of losing one's identity and being absorbed into another. For example, people whose identity is closely bound with their nation guard the distinction between themselves and other nations. This is seen among individuals who take pride in their national heritage. For some, it has to do with keeping one's identity. Having a strong sense of identity is key to avoiding assimilation.

Other things factor into our identity. The following are a few: intelligence, gender, skin, ancestry, eyes, hair, the place of birth – whether town, city or state. These have to do with origins from natural birth, those fleshly distinctions that contribute to individuals' uniqueness. Some of these things are more important to us than others. For example, many of us are not so associated with our town, city, or state that we cannot take residence elsewhere. However, one might be like Robert E. Lee, who counted being a Virginian more important than his sympathy for the North. With any of these things, we can lose our balance and become something other than who God wants us to be. If left unchecked, these identity markers can become a hotbed for the pride of life and the death of the soul.

Our earthly origins and dispositions are peripheral to who we are, not the core.

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them (Genesis 1:26-27).

We are made in the image of God. This is the substance of our identity. Therefore, the concern about assimilation must be on this point. To move away from this is to be absorbed into the world.

We were innocent when we came into this world. The beauty of it is seen in children. In the process of time, we lose our innocence because we are weaker than Satan. We sin: "*it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me*" (Romans 7:17). Hence, through sin, we lose our identity. We are renewed through faith in Jesus Christ.

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:11-13).

Identity begins with being a child of God. Here is the ground we must guard. It is the only part of our individuality that matters.

God's design and what matters to us can be opposites to each other. In this world, we have two sides to life: "*That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*" (John 3:6). God has placed emphasis on the spiritual side. One can be successful in the world with a name, wealth, attractiveness, and intelligence, yet be a scoundrel. By the same token, one can be a failure, unnoticed, poor, plain, and unimaginative, but decent, honest, and just. Which identity is worthy of God? Which has spiritual success? Our origins from natural birth often vie with our spiritual life. Thus, we are commanded,

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish (Galatians 5:16-17).

The most important marker of who we are is found in our character. Character comprises attributes of behavior that demonstrate our spirit. Consider this example. Two disciples of Jesus were on the road to Emmaus as recorded in the book of Luke. Jesus accompanied them in a different form, and they did not know it was their friend. After He revealed Himself and departed, they marveled:

their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He vanished from their sight. And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:31-32).

They said their hearts burned within them. This expression shows how, on some level, they recognized Jesus, though His appearance confounded their understanding. This demonstrates the true nature of identity. Jesus' form was fluid. He was raised from the dead with a body of power. He was the same man they knew before His death and resurrection; He just had a different appearance. His character remained the same. He was still the Son of God. We, too, as God's children, must maintain our God-given character lest we become assimilated into the world of death. In such a state, we would be unrecognizable by God.