



Identity and Influence

Spiritual Exercise

The purposes we pursue are either from God or they are distractions to the ones He has prepared for us. There really are no gray areas. The key is surrendering to His will.

Prayer does not mean that I am to bring God down to my thoughts and my purposes, and bend his government according to my foolish, silly, and sometimes sinful notions. Prayer means that I am to be raised up into feeling, into union and design with him; that I am to enter into his counsel and carry out his purpose fully. D. L. Moody

God does not exist to answer our prayers, but by our prayers we come to discern the mind of God. Oswald Chambers

If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. John 7:17 (NASB)

Knowing the will of God is a challenge for most Christians. God has given us the keys to hearing: Trust, humility, fear (both terror and awe), surrender, and a heart turned toward obedience. It is not His intention that we “work up” any of these. They have been given as expressions of His grace. Our part is choosing to take hold of them – like a child receiving a gift.

Prayer

Introduction

In the Old Testament, there were kings, priests and prophets. Under the New Covenant, the leadership identities have changed. Jesus is now the King over many kings; and everyone in His kingdom is a royal priest. Prophet is now part of a five-fold gift given by the King; along with pastor, teacher, evangelist and apostle. Quite a few new identities have been added (e.g., disciple, bondservant, ambassador, elder and deacon).

Now that we know God has planted a desire in our heart and surrounded us with fellowships for the adventure, we must continue to search out the center of God’s will for our lives in the identity He has given us to fulfill. This may be an identity we have already been given – explicitly or implicitly. It may be one that He is waiting for us to step into. We may know our identity, or we may not. We may be resisting it – out of fear, disobedience, misunderstanding or false-humility.

Sadly, most Christians have allowed the world to define their identity. From well-intentioned parents, teachers and pastors, to mean-spirited oppressors, controllers and bullies, we have heard and accepted an identity that is likely much lower than our Creator intends. Of course, Satan is behind much of this – as he is busily conspiring with our carnal nature, suggesting that we settle for less.

Finding and keeping our identity is one of most challenging and critical battles we will face. Peter, Susan, Edmund and Lucy had no idea of their importance in the battle for Narnia until they discovered that they were the Kings and Queens. Like them, it is time we discovered who we are – not for ourselves, but for His glory and for His kingdom.

Identity and Influence (continued)

Definition

Influence (noun): The capacity to have an effect on the character, development, or behavior of someone or something, or the effect itself. [www.google .com](http://www.google.com)

Authority (*exousia*): power of choice, liberty of doing as one pleases; physical and mental power (the ability or strength with which one is endued, which he either possesses or exercises); the power of authority (influence) and of right (privilege) . *Blue Letter Bible Outline of Biblical Usage*

Searching Out the Matter

(All Scripture references, but those noted, are NKJV; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; footnotes excluded)

Who is Serving Who?

2Chronicles 16:9

Psalms 50:12

Isaiah 64:4

Isaiah 46:4

Mark 10:45

Psalms 50:15

John 14:13

Matthew 5:16

1Peter 4:10-11

Matthew 25:40

His Investment in Your Influence

Matthew 28:18-20

2Corinthians 5:18-20

Matthew 5:14-16

2Corinthians 2:15-16

2Corinthians 3:5-6

A Different Perspective

As we explore our identity in Christ, our identity for His Kingdom and our identity toward this fallen world, let's lay aside what it means to us (the self-focused view) and consider what it means to Christ. Why has He identified us the way He has – both generally (as a church) and in our specific roles? What are His expectations of us? What can we expect under His anointing?

It will also be helpful to consider our identity in Christ's Kingdom – in relation to His followers within our spheres of influence. The children of God have both understanding and revelation regarding our identity. Whether from understanding or revelation, who we are to the Body of Christ says something profound about our identity. What are their expectations of us? And what does Christ desire us to be to them?

Identity and Influence (continued)

Lastly, even the lost are drawn to us by the Holy Spirit. Why are they coming to us? What do they hope to see or find?

Beginning with the Common, Foundational Roles

Matthew 4:19

Matthew 8:23

Luke 6:40

1Peter 2:15-16

2Corinthians 5:20

Greater Than...

Luke 7:28

Matthew 3:13-15

John 14:12

Mark 11:23

Kings and Priests

Revelation 1:4-6

1Peter 2:9-10

Christ's Gifts to the Church

Ephesians 4:7,11-16

James 5:14-15

1Timothy 3:13

The Temple of God

Ephesians 2:19, 22

2Corinthians 6:16

John 20:21-23

One More Role to Consider

Isaiah 62:6-7

How is This Possible?

Acts 2:22

John 5:19-20

John 15:4-8

Identity and Influence (continued)

2 Chronicles 16:9

Galatians 2:20

Philippians 2:12-13

Luke 12:32

Assignment

It is important to know who we are in God's plan and who He wants us to be.

1. How would you describe yourself as a member of God's Kingdom (e.g., apostle, evangelist, pastor, teacher, prophet, watchman/intercessor, elder, deacon)?
2. What are your leadership roles in the Body of Christ and your community (e.g., employer, deacon, chair of _____)? Describe your relationship with the fellowships, ministries and groups with whom you are involved. Ask God to clarify His intention for your involvement in each of them.
3. Each day this week, pray the prayer of Psalm 139:23-24. Ask God to reveal any role you may have dismissed out of fear, misunderstanding, false-humility or disobedience.
4. With a will to do His will, search out the matter of the foundational roles, the roles given by Christ as gifts to the church, and any other roles the Spirit leads you to explore.
5. Consider carefully any opportunities you have been offered to lead a group, ministry or fellowship. Let God, through the Holy Spirit, reveal the ones that are His intention (versus the ones that are distractions).

Identity and Influence (continued)

Devotion

Dear Dreamers,

There is something wrong with the church in America. If that comes as a surprise to you, then I strongly (but tenderly) suggest you get your head out of the sand. The statistics are irrefutable: Divorce and abortion rates the same in the church as in the world; 65 – 87% of college freshman, who were raised in Christian families, are leaving the church; the total dollars spent by the church in America divided by the number of baptisms - \$1.55 million. The question is no longer “Do we have a problem?”, but “What can be done about it?”

Personally, I have not given up hope in God’s grace and mercy for the church in American. I believe that His eyes are still roaming, to and fro across this Earth (and our nation), looking for those in whom He can show Himself strong. I just wonder how much more He will tolerate. It is time for decisive action; action that will not come from the corporate church, but from each individual and family.

The answer is radical, but simple.

I am convinced that every Christian must intentionally, and solemnly, return the American Dream – trade it back in – for the dream God has had for you since before time began. As I’ve said before, the American Dream has cast a spell on the church in America. We have drunk deeply of its potion, and have become drunk with its intoxication. It is impossible to overestimate the damage our worldly drunkenness and stupor has brought down on our children, grandchildren... Oh, Lord, when will it stop?

Let me be clear – the American Dream and God’s dream are not the same. It is an insult to Him to even suggest such a thing. The abundant life is not measured in square footage, retirement savings and legacies. America is no longer a Christian nation. America is more like the world (described as our enemy in the Bible) than many nations on this Earth. And friendship with the world is enmity toward God. When will we stop investing in, and depending on, the kingdoms of this world? Are we not called to be fully committed to the kingdom of God?

Dear brethren, we are so far from God’s dream for us that it’s just too difficult to describe it in terms that are understandable in our current situation. In fact, it would be better to challenge you with seeking that perspective from Him and His word. Here are a few good starting points:

But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10

...that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what *is* the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power... Ephesians 1:18-19

Please, please, please, don’t stop with a mental assent to these verses. Take this to the Lord and ask Him to show you how much greater His dream is for you and your family – not in the sweet-by-and-by, but in the abundance of His life right now.

And ask for the grace to repent of such a tragic, foolish transaction. Our children’s eternal lives depend on it.

Your fellow ambassador,

Rob