

In 1978, “The Who” released a catchy song that posed a simple, but profound question. Singing it in your head? “Who are you? Who, Who, Who, Who?” Nearly 40 years later, that question still echoes, and not just when dad listens to his old records, griping that bands don’t make real music anymore.

“Who are you?” is a prevalent question, because identity is a prevalent topic. Gender identity, racial identity, and political identity are all at the forefront of the news and social media. Google “Finding your identity,” and you’ll find over 11 million articles and blogs, promising to help you determine who you really are.

People are so interested in identity, because our identities give purpose, meaning, and direction to our lives. Identity helps us feel like we belong. Experts will tell you that you can live a fulfilling life, if you can just nail down your true identity, and live accordingly.

Regardless of what the “experts” might say, today we hear from THE expert. God tells us that as Christians, we have an identity that gives our lives purpose, meaning, and direction. God has given us an identity far better than any identity we could craft for ourselves. Today, I want you to see your identity in Christ, and how you can **Live Your Identity**.

The Apostle Peter wrote this first letter to people who were wrestling with their identity. 1 Peter was written for Jewish and Gentile Christians spread out all over Asia Minor, modern day Turkey. These new Christians in a largely un-Christian world faced persecution and suffering for their faith. Some must have looked at the correlation between persecution and their new faith and wondered, “Is “Christian” really the identity I want?” So Peter wrote to remind them who they were; that their identity in Christ gave their lives greater purpose, meaning, direction, value, and connection than any other identity could.

Really, that’s the problem with identity. Identities can go out of style, or stop applying. Identities can fill us with guilt and insecurity instead of fulfillment if we fail to live up to that identity. Fulfilling our identities sometimes leaves us feeling unappreciated.

The high school quarterback, whose identity centered on athletic ability, puts on 100 pounds and wheezes walking to the fridge. The identity that made him feel valuable fades into old trophies and newspaper clippings. The business owner who finds her identity in sales reports wonders, “Who am I now?” when her store closes. The pastor, who spends months planning a huge outreach event at church questions, “Is my work even valuable?” when no one attends. The teen whose identity consists of straight A’s and studying, is filled with insecurity when she gets a “Not accepted” letter from her dream college.

When we build our identities solely on ourselves, we build on cracked foundations. That doesn’t mean you can’t be proud of your gifts, or accomplishments, or think fondly on your past. But if that’s all your identity stands on, one failure, one change, or one reality check makes it crumble and leaves you wondering, “What’s my value; my purpose? Who am I?”

But notice, our identity in Christ doesn’t focus on us, or what we do. Instead, our identity is built on what God’s done FOR us.

Who are you? ***“You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.”*** We want identities that makes us feel valuable. Can anything prescribe value more than knowing that the God of the universe chose you to be his? Before God spoke and created light, the highest mountains, or the deepest oceans, or even mankind, God chose you!

We want identities that makes us feel accomplished. What greater work can you accomplish than God's work which produces eternal results? God appointed all believers as his royal priesthood, to share a personal relationship with God, wherein he trusts you, equips you, and uses your gifts to share the message of Christ with the world! What's even better? It's not even up to you to produce the results. God does that!

We want identities that impress. When God looks at you, he sees a perfect person, a holy nation; perfection that doesn't depend on our performance, because Christ has already accomplished it! Even when we sin, through Christ's perfection, God still sees holy people.

We want identities that help us belong. Through Christ, you belong to God as his prized possession. Literally, we're a possession "acquired through considerable effort." And what a price God paid to acquire us! God paid with his own Son, who suffered and died in our place, to acquire us from the jaws of hell. As God's prized possession, you'll belong to him for eternity. He'll never stop loving you, shut you down, or throw you away.

Brothers and sisters, that's who you are! An identity that gives us everything we could ever hope for, but so much better! Our identity in Christ is eternal. It'll never stop applying to us. We'll never grow out of it. We'll never feel unfulfilled in it, because in Christ, our identity is perfect and certain!

Our Christ-crafted identity is so unfathomably perfect that it gives our lives clear purpose: ***"That you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."*** As Christians, our lives' purpose is to share the good news, to declare the praises of the one who freed us from the darkness of unbelief; who brought us, his people, into his marvelous light; who freed us from blindly searching for an identity that could give our lives purpose and meaning, like people lost in a dark cave looking for a way out. Our purpose is simple. To praise and proclaim, to ***"let your light shine before men."***

As Peter explains, there are two ways we can shine the light of Christ: By "declaring his praises" to others, and by our lifestyle. Our identity in Christ gives us purpose, and also direction.

Peter calls us ***"aliens and strangers in the world."*** Aliens and strangers doesn't sound like a good identity to have, especially right now! But in reality, that's a beautiful reminder of who we are in Christ. When Peter refers to "aliens and strangers," he's talking about temporary residents who maintain citizenship in their homeland, but dwell in a different country for a time.

That's our identity. We're temporary residents here, not citizens. That means we have something so much greater than 70-80 years of life to look forward to. We look forward to going home... to Heaven for eternity! Our identity is so much greater than temporary enjoyment. It promises eternal joy!

And while we look forward to receiving the fullest joy in Heaven, Peter urges us to ***"abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul."*** Some people might say, "See! God just wants you to be his little nameless servant who's forced to do his bidding. He wants to prevent you from being yourself."

But God wants us to abstain from sinful desires, because he doesn't want us to throw away our perfect identity in Christ! Sometimes we get so caught up in our sinful desires, that we get spiritual dementia. We forget who we are.

As Peter says, those sinful desires war against your soul. Satan knows who you are-- God's prized possession. So he'll do everything he can to rip you away. He's not just picking a fight. Satan wages war against you, with an intimate knowledge of your weaknesses. He wants you dead, to stand over you and strip away your identity in Christ. That's why God urges us to stay away from sinful desires, because Satan knows that if he can get you to cling to them, he can get you to let go of your hold on Christ. Cling to Christ, who made us a holy nation, by

defeating sin and Satan! We abstain from sin, not because it earns our identity, but because **“you have received mercy.”**

The difficulty is that living for Jesus makes you a stranger in the world; makes you stand out in the crowd. But that’s a good thing! If you think of teenagers, you understand how much “standing out” from the crowd goes against our nature. We want to fit in, not be different. But when you stand out in the crowd because you serve Jesus, you’re letting your light shine. And people notice.

As Peter says, **“Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”** Dear Christian, you’re being watched. People that know your faith observe you carefully, to see if you’re really any different. When an unbeliever watches or interacts with you, are they seeing the light of Christ? Or a person stumbling around in the darkness, just like them?

God gives us blessed opportunities to live our identity every day, even when we don’t realize. When the nurses see a family smiling, praying, and singing hymns through the tears as they huddle around a dying Christian, the light of Christ shines. When co-workers see a Christian respond with forgiveness and grace when they’re mistreated, the light of Christ shines. When a classroom sees a Christian college student refuse to back down from defending her faith to her atheist professor—she stands out, and the light of Christ shines.

When we live our identity, people notice. Some might ridicule or mock you, but others will wonder, will ask—“How do you deal with it? What makes you different?” Your example won’t bring them to faith, but it might just convince them to give Jesus a second thought, and to come to his Word for answers.

Christians, we’re like the moon. Did you know the moon doesn’t actually produce any light? Some of you are saying, “Uh...Pastor, I’ve been outside at night. Pretty sure the moon shines.” Actually, the moonlight is just the light of the sun reflecting off the moon, like a mirror. That’s what we are as Christians. We’re simply reflecting the light of the Son. The way we live reflects our identity in him.

Maybe you don’t always abstain from sin. Maybe sometimes you blend in instead of standing out from the world. Somedays, our actions feel more like that of a citizen of earth, not an alien or stranger. But who are you, really? Your identity doesn’t depend on you. It depends on Christ! And through Jesus, who forgives you, who saved you, who shows you his mercy—this is your identity. We are **“a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God.”**