

Who Am I? Part One

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In life, everyone has to search for and find their identity. We want to know who we are, why we are and what we are supposed to do with our lives. This search for identity results in different cultures, beliefs, opinions and philosophies. It results in groups, divisions, schisms and factions. Our search for an answer to the question "Who am I?" leads to the fracturing of the human race along geographical, social and political lines. It results in schisms within nations based on things like social class, ethnic culture, and educational background. These divisions exist because part of seeking out "who I am" is seeking out "who I am not". Worldliness seeks its own, loves its own and praises its own (John 15.18-19). Though all of the various distinctions mentioned so far are false, through worldly eyes they are important points of difference. We cannot seek for our identity in the world (1 John 2.15). If we look for our purpose and character within the world, then we should expect to see the same distinctions and divisions within the body of Christ that the world incorrectly creates. Peter and Barnabas were carried away in worldly definitions of self when the Jews in Antioch led them astray (Galatians 2.12-14). Christians are made as a new creation in Christ Jesus — they are a new person with a new identity. All of the worldly things that previously defined us are washed away in the blood of Jesus Christ. "Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3.11). We must not make this talk of unity in Christ philosophical; we must make it practical. To put Romans 3.29 into modern language, is God the God of Democrats only? Is he not also the God of the Libertarian? Is he the God of the European only, or is he not also the God of the African? All of the distinctions (political, social and cultural) that we used to think were so important must be put away. Everyone who has been baptized into Christ has clothed themselves with Christ; all mankind may become children of God and thus stand on equal footing before God, who shows no partiality (Acts 10.34, Romans 2.11). We must take our concept of "the other", throw it in the trash and then be content to leave it there. We must learn to renew our minds and see everyone (including ourselves) through the eyes of God who loves and cherishes each and every one of his children (Romans 12.1-2, 1 Timothy 2.4). This is earthshaking and groundbreaking. This is something that remained a mystery to the Israelites up until the time of the gospel when God revealed how the Gentiles would be included in salvation (Ephesians 3.4-7). God doesn't make distinctions, so neither should we (Romans 10.12). This is unnerving and intimidating. All of the ways that I used to understand myself have to be changed. All of the ways that I made myself fit into the world where I live must be altered. My entire life must be reordered and conformed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is part of the upward call of Jesus Christ; this is part of making my life a spiritual sacrifice, of making my citizenship in a heavenly nation rather than an earthly one. I have to put away the things of worldly distinction and take on the things of spiritual distinction. I must find out what the true marks of Jesus Christ are and bear those things in my body (Galatians 6.15-17). While this is something that is (and likely will always be) difficult to do, we must learn to see the world through spiritual eyes. We must learn to hate the darkness and the division that it brings to the children of God. We must learn to refine ourselves in the fire of God's word, burning away what is shameful and keeping everything that reflects the grace and mercy of our God and Father who lives in heaven (Matthew 5.16).