

Self-Identity

“Who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” Philippians 2:6-7.

The age in which we live gives us many options for self-identity. *Your job* it might say – *You’re a Salesman*. *Your friends* it might say – *You’re not you when you’re not around them*. *Your family* it might say – *Your abilities as a parent defines you*. Christianity, however, doesn’t tell us to layer our hobbies until we have an identity cocktail. The example that Christ gives us is that the way to find ourselves is to first empty ourselves. We’re to open ourselves and to let everything we love about this world – friends, family, jobs, hobbies – pour out of us. At first this seems counterproductive. Why would we need to lose ourselves in order to gain an identity? How does not identifying as a parent put me in a position that helps my children? If I don’t think of myself as my job, how do I do my job better? Christianity answers this.

Jesus shows us that only when we pour ourselves out do we find ourselves. Only when we empty ourselves of our earthly identities and serve and do good works do we find that we are Christians. If our true identities are our jobs, then when our children’s needs interfere with our job, our children will only be obstacles to get around in order to return to work. If our identities are our families, then we’ll ignore friends, associates and strangers outside of our family. We’ll place a hierarchy on the value of those around us and we’ll help, but only in descending order. If our identities are our friendships, then we’ll do anything to keep those friends, because friendship can be fragile and quickly lost. But if we’re Christians, then we’ll serve our friends and strengthen our friendships, because we’ve poured ourselves out. We know that our lives aren’t about us. We’ll serve our families and build them up. We’ll serve our co-workers and be better employees. We do this because these can be lost without destroying our self-identities.

Christians have a reason for doing all of these things and doing them well. We have guidelines for how and why to do them. For those whose identities are based on Jesus, if our families are taken from us, we’re not destroyed. If our friendships disintegrate, we’re still whole. If our jobs are lost, our lives are not lost. Because Jesus, who is risen and is Lord and Christ, is our identity. And nothing can take that away.

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