

Gen. 1:26-27; 5:1-2; Psalm 8:3-6 Aug. 28, 2022
Mark 10:2-9

**Made In His Image
Identity – 1**

This article appeared the first week of August: Last week, Maryland police found a disoriented shirtless man walking down Interstate 795 in Maryland. The area is close to an intersection of two major highways on the outskirts of Baltimore. The man, who was described as having a slim build and was only wearing black shorts, required medical attention and was unable to remember his name or contact information for family members, police said in a statement.

According to the police report, authorities took the man to a local hospital. After receiving medical treatment, the man was still unable to recall his identity.

However, the 33-year-old man, whose name has not been released, was reunited with his family after police received numerous tips on social media. His family had been searching for him for approximately a week, according to police.¹

How heart-breaking it must be to not know who you are! The first most important question anyone can ask is “Who am I?” ... Who are you? How you answer that question has a profound impact on your course in life. Who we believe we are, who others believe we are, and who we are created to be, is the most significant influence on the choices you make in life, how life turns out for you, and where you will spend eternity.

Additionally, our identity, who we are, is intertwined with our belonging and our purpose. The Bible, and our Christian faith, has quite a bit to say about who we are, who we belong with, and our purpose in living. My contention is that the Bible’s guidance on these vital beliefs is the sure and wise path a fulfilling life now and eternal life later.

Who Are We?

Have ever looked up at the stars in the night sky and wondered what significance you have in this vast universe? You would be in good company if you did. Perhaps 3,000 years ago the Psalmist wrote:

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? Psalm 8:3-4.

Have you ever had moments in your life when you asked yourself, “How did I get here? What am I doing here? Who am I?”

Many people never ask these kinds of questions consciously, but seek answers nonetheless. The first and foremost influence on identity is our family. As we grow older our peer group has a great influence. Other influences are schools – what they teach children about themselves. In addition to all these

influences is your own mind and what you tell yourself. Your self-talk shapes your identity.

Ask people who they are and most will answer according to where they work, or their profession, or their family origin, or national origin, and some, these, days according to their sexual preferences.

Men often conflate their identity with their job, work, or career. That's why at the Walk to Emmaus retreats men are admonished not to even mention what they do for a living. The aim is to discover their true identity in God's economy.

Often people don't consciously answer this question – who am I, really? – until they have a crisis in life, or hit “rock bottom” because of the bad choices they've made, or they rebel against all the people and things that try to tell them who they are. If one does not consciously recognize their identity, then one simply goes along with the ideas and ideologies of others. Society, culture, tradition, and family may tell them who they are or should be. Sometimes that is a very good thing – providing boundaries and community. At other times it can be destructive and oppressive when ideologies and notions about one's identity that are not true, form one's self-image.

Fearfully & Wonderfully Made

A few years ago, the Associated Press reported on a new exhibit at the London Zoo: “The captives in the human zoo sunned themselves on a rock ledge, clad in bathing suits and pinned-on fig leaves. Some played with hula hoops while others waved. A signboard informed visitors of the species' diet, habitat, worldwide distribution, and threats.”

A child looking at the exhibit asked, “Why are there people in there?” Polly Wills, spokeswoman for the London Zoo, replied, “Seeing people in a different environment, among other animals... teaches members of the public that the human is just another primate.” The Zoo's press release said, “We have set up this exhibit to highlight the spread of man as a plague species and to communicate the importance of man's place in the ecosystem.”

Al Mohler (President of the Southern Baptist Seminary) writes: “The Human Zoo is a perfect illustration of our contemporary confusion.... The London Zoo may want its visitors to learn ‘that the human is just another primate,’ but... all this talk about human beings as mere animals... is undermined by a single second's reflection on the fact that it is the humans who built the zoo, captured the animals, and came up with such a silly idea as ‘The Human Zoo’ in the first place. The humans were not captured and placed there by apes or elephants. The signs identifying the various creatures were not produced by the inhabitants of the reptile house....”

Dr. Douglas Kelly (Reformed Theological Seminary) reminds us: “The question of origins is one of the most significant that a person ever faces: where we came from is crucial to understanding who we are and where we are going.... The

Biblical vision of man as God's creature, whom he made in his own image, has had the most powerful effect on human dignity, on liberty, on the expansion of the rights of the individual, on political systems, on the development of medicine, and on every other area of culture...."

Humans are not just any other animal. We are special creations of God with capacities (and therefore responsibilities) not found in other creatures. *So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Gen. 1:27. We are incredibly complex. At conception a complete and unique human DNA (male or female) comes into existence, and soon forms into a complete and unique human being. *Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart... Jer. 1:5. This is crucial for you to understand ... for our children to understand. We are individuals before a living God. If you do not believe in God, you easily view people as soulless, cogs in the great collective, to be used by the powerful. If humanity is seen as a collective (not a collection of individuals) then individuals will be sacrificed for "the greater good." That's happening in our country today.**

The fine print of a legal document has nothing on us. A single human chromosome contains twenty billion bits of information, the equivalent of about 3 billion letters, or about 2 million pages, which would fill about 4,000 textbooks. If all the DNA molecules in one cell were unwrapped and stretched out end-to-end, the total length would be about six feet. Almost every cell in your body contains six feet of DNA, wrapped up into a very compact space. We are fearfully and wonderfully made.

There is something of the image of God contained in what is uniquely male; there is something of the image of God contained in what is uniquely female. Made after God's image, means that both male and female are necessary. Maleness is good; femaleness is good. Men are not women; women are not men. But together they can mirror God. We are made in the mirror image of God and God is looking to see Himself in us.

I quoted Psalm 8 a little earlier: *When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? Here's the second part of that praise: *You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet, Psalm 8:5-6. This echoes what is said about the creation of humans when God said, *Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth, Genesis 1:26.***

The idea of dominion is not to abuse the earth and all God created, but it does mean to care for it as would God and have authority over it. This is God's

creation and He intends us to be good stewards of what He has created. We are made in God's image, but we are not God, so let us act with humility. *Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments, Psalm 119:73.*

Here's what I want you to remember: you and I are God's creation, a special creation. Your identity has its roots in your Creator. We are human beings, each unique and precious, given by God tremendous capacities and responsibilities not given to other creatures.

Let us not reject our high calling and position of care and authority over the earth all that is in it. Let us not lower ourselves to be mere animals or even second-class humans, lorded over by other humans. For we belong to God ...

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth, Psalm 139:13-15.

There's a little-known story of the Bible found in 2 Sam. 9:1-13. It's about Mephibosheth, grandson of King Saul, son of Prince Jonathan. This prince lived like a pauper because He did not know who he was, before King David brought him into the royal household. Although we are children of God, with unlimited potential, unlimited resources, we may find ourselves living below our station. *My people are destroyed for the lack of knowledge...* Hosea 4:6.

When you don't know your identity, you may be satisfied anywhere and anytime; or, dissatisfied all the time and everywhere. When you don't know your identity, people will take advantage of you, or you will take advantage of others. Why? Because if you don't know your true identity found in God, you won't act as a child of God. I fear too many people who call themselves Christian have yet come to that realization.

Still, I pray that you will realize your true identity in God. Next week I will speak about God's image in us - tarnished and restored. Following that I will talk about our belonging and then our purpose. I leave you with this:

Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture, Psalm 100:3.

¹ Eric Cervone August 02, 2022; <https://www.theblaze.com/news/amnesiac-man-reunited-with-family>