

DAY 5: YOU KNOW ME

Read Psalm 8 and Psalm 139:1-18.

What are the great questions and astonishing answers both in Psalm 8 and Psalm 139 that speak to our identity that can be found in God? What words, phrases, or verses could you **memorize as you pray through these extraordinary passages** about how God loves you, knows you, and cares for you?

DAY 6: "AND THAT IS WHAT WE ARE!"

Read 1 John 3:1.

This may be my favorite verse in the Bible. I think I quote it more often than any other. What has me so captivated is the astonishing truth about a believer's identity in Jesus. In Christ, we have become sons and daughters of God. In Christ, we are adopted (Ephesians 1:5) into God's family. We become God's sons and daughters (John 1:12).

**THE ONLY THING I NEED TO ASK
TO UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING
ABOUT YOU, IS
*what do you worship?***

And John is telling us to WAKE UP to the great love our Father has lavished on us: that we (and this is our identity in Jesus Christ) should be called children of God! **And this is what we are!** "What we are" even suggests the very substance of our being, our deepest and truest

identity, is found in being God's sons and daughters. The image of God within us is restored and renewed in Jesus, by the life and love he gives.

Time for another poem—an old one. Do an Internet search for *Love* by George Herbert. In this poem, Love = Jesus.

This poem was written over 400 years ago, so you may need to read through it several times to "get" what is being said. It's basically a conversation between somebody (perhaps like you or me) that knows their own sinfulness, and doesn't yet know how to "accept being accepted." But in this poem, Love's incredible mercy and grace are just starting to get through. Read it and ponder how much you are loved. Read it and be blessed. **Rejoice that your identity is found in Christ Jesus.**



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APRIL 30, 2017

GET REAL

WEEK THREE

The Real You

DEVOTIONAL BY PASTOR AARON KUNCE



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ENTER THE FLOURISHING PROJECT to discover the real you—your truest and deepest identity. Here are the main ideas from Sunday's message about identity:

1. We are created in God's image (Genesis 1:27).
2. After sin damaged and distorted the image of God within us, Jesus came to restore our life, renew our identity, and lead us to flourishing. He offers this invitation to new life in him by grace through simple faith.
3. The church is here to help in all of this. When we flourish, we can have the experience of happiness.

This devotional will approach the topic of identity from several different angles and direct you to key passages in Scripture for study, reflection, application, and prayer. Enjoy!

DAY 1: A RICHER LIFE

Read Mark 10:17-27.

If there is one gospel text that recurs with regularity in the lives of Christians throughout history—people we sometimes refer to as “the Saints”—it is the story of Jesus and the rich young ruler who came to him looking for the secret of happiness (“What must I do to inherit eternal life?”).

Jesus told him, “Go, sell all that you have and give it to the poor, and come and follow me.” **He was not calling this young man to a life of misery, but to a new life, richer than anything he had ever known before.** Mark notes, significantly, that Jesus looked on the man “and loved him.” But evidently this was both too much and at the same time not enough for him. Perhaps he would’ve preferred a list of “five principles” or “ten easy steps.” So, he went sadly away.

For followers of Jesus throughout the past 2,000 years, this story represents the pivotal choice for their own lives. Would they respond to Jesus’ challenge and invitation, or would they too, like the young man in the story, shuffle sadly away? Happily, followers of Christ throughout church history chose the former. **How will you choose?**

DAY 2: COME OUT OF HIDING

Read John 4:3-42.

The story told in this passage of Jesus and the woman at the well in Samaria is a beautiful narrative and the longest recorded dialogue anybody has with Jesus in all four gospels. You could say this woman is hiding in broad daylight, mainly because she feels shame over her self-identity. She’s had several husbands, and the man she is currently living with is not her husband. After one conversation with Jesus, her sense of self is radically altered. **Her identity that had been shattered and fragmented by her broken life was reconstructed and renewed by Jesus. Jesus showed her he knew her completely, and yet, loved her completely.**

She found her identity in the gaze of Jesus Christ and it changed the course of her life. She became the first evangelist of the New Testament and ran back to town—to the very people she was hiding from—with the good news of a God who knows, loves, and offers life. She said, “Come see this man who has told me everything I’ve ever done! Could this be the Messiah?”

In a beautiful poem by Fleur Adcock called *Weathering* (you’ll need to do an Internet search) she talks about happiness and how her soul has a “new complexion.” I think this woman at the well was smiling and I think she was starting to flourish. As I read the text, I believe her countenance changed with her transformed identity. You could even say her soul had a new complexion.

Have you, like this woman, allowed the giver of life to reshape your identity through his love for you?

DAY 3: THE IMAGO DEI

Read Genesis 1:27.

Let’s reflect for a moment on the Image of God. It’s how you and I have been created. The Image of God (Latin: Imago Dei) is a concept and theological doctrine which asserts that human beings are created in the image and likeness of God. So, the starting point when thinking about our true identity is that each one of us—everybody on the planet who has ever lived and everybody yet to come into this world—is imprinted with God’s image and likeness. We are imbued with his glory, dignity, goodness, and beauty.

And God is not competitive with human flourishing. He has desired for us to flourish from the very start. The great biblical image is the burning bush Moses encountered in Exodus 3. It was burning, but not consumed. When God comes close to his creation he sets it on fire. He makes it radiant and beautiful, but he does not consume it. And God wants us to become radiant and beautiful—flourishing in every area of life (John 10:10).

An early Christ follower who lived 1,900 years ago said, “The glory of God is a human being—fully alive.”

Look back at The Flourishing Project diagram for a moment. **Where do you long to be more fully alive? Where do you desire to see more life, more abundance?**

DAY 4: WHAT DO YOU WORSHIP?

Read Exodus 20:2-6; Psalm 99; John 4:21-24.

As God’s image-bearers we reflect the image of a loving, wise, and good God to the world. A good word to keep in mind here is *orthodoxy*. Now, most of the time when we hear the word orthodoxy, we think of right belief. And that’s a sense of it. But *doxa* in Greek means *praise*. Orthodoxy is *right praise*. **If things are going wrong in our world it is mainly because wrong things are being praised.**

A protestant theologian from the 20th century said, “The only thing I need to ask, to understand everything about you, is what do you worship?” What do you give the highest value to? That will tell me everything about you. A compromise of the image of God in us occurs when we start to worship anything other than God.

Part of our responsibility as people who have been created in God’s image is to bear his image to the world. We need to model how to worship rightly. We need to teach the world again how to praise. This is part of the call of the church. We carry (like emissaries of the King) the image of the Good King of the world. We need to do this confidently as people on a mission. The Imago Dei (Image of God) within us leads us into the Missio Dei (Mission of God).

What stands out to you from the Scripture you read above on the importance of worship?