



Identity



PREVIEW

Identity is one of the trickiest topics of all time. Who am I? Am I weird? Am I cool? God had a very special plan when he designed each of us to be unique with our own identity.

PRAISE

Psalms 139 is a meaningful passage that builds the narrative that God knows everything about you. He created you and your identity. Studying this Scripture passage can change your view of yourself. Your life has significance because God has laid His hand on you (vv. 5–6). No matter where you go, He will be right there leading you (v. 10). This is something to celebrate!

PARABLE

A certain major retailer was once known as the epitome of luxury and sophistication. Its brand was so well known that if you shopped there, people knew you identified with a wealthy lifestyle. Unfortunately, through the years this retailer's identity was challenged by discount brands, off-brands, and new competitors. Even though they tried to readjust their identity to fit the changing culture, today most clothes of that brand are now sold at discount stores and wholesalers, and they've had to close over 75 percent of their retail locations. Their downfall came because they listened to what people thought their identity should be. By comparison, their main competitor stayed true to its identity and has since attracted most of the failed retailer's customers. They have thrived because they stayed true to their identity and didn't bow to what people thought they should be.

PRESENT

Ask someone to read Ps. 139:23–24.) How does that apply to us? Identity is one of the most worrisome things teenagers will encounter during their junior high, senior high, and college years. Struggling to find who you are can be detrimental, even life-changing. Should you part your hair on the side or down the middle? Are you a jock or a nerd? Do you want to spend all your time playing video games? There are so many questions!

(Ask the group to relate a challenge they've encountered while trying to discover their identity.)

Our identity is usually formed or shaped by our family, our peer group, our circle of friends, our belief system, our society, and who we follow or want to be like. For example, growing up I wanted to be Michael Jordan, and so I adopted his mannerisms when playing ball. The only thing we ever had in common, though, is that I had my tongue out like he did—his was from concentration while driving to the hoop; mine was from exhaustion.

If you're not careful, your identity will be a collaboration of everyone else's ideas about you and not your own. The Bible indicates that God places a high value on a person's identity. In fact, identity was the reason that the early church thrived. Peter, Paul, James, and John were known as followers of Jesus by the way they talked and preached and ministered to people. Judas's identity was harder to distinguish. He seemed all right at first, but his ultimate actions of betrayal revealed his true identity.

As you navigate these trying years of crafting your identity, the easiest way to find it is to lose it. By that I mean we must lose who we are to gain an identity in Christ. (Ask someone to read Matt. 10:39.)

When you realize who you are and who created you, your life and identity take on a whole new meaning. It brings purpose and value, and ultimately it creates a bond to your Creator that can't be severed by anyone! (Read Ps. 139:14 and ask someone to explain how this verse affects their identity.) God made you with an intentional design. He knew that you would question your identity, so He gave you all the tools you need to find that identity.

PRACTICE

What are some things that influence your identity? Does social media help you form your identity? Why do you think young people struggle so much with identity? The New Testament church was so rooted in their identity that many lost their lives for it. As you discover your identity and allow God to show you who you are and why you're His, be prepared for people to challenge you. Everyone has their own idea of who you should be, but their ideas don't matter. It is God who shapes your identity and helps you to stay true to it.

PRAY

Lord, You formed us and knew who we would become. Give us the strength to seek our identity in You. Give us the patience and understanding needed by others who are on this journey of trying to find their identity and let us all realize that You created us according to Your purpose and design. Thank You for knowing our identity and helping us to discover it.

PLUS

Establish a connection with someone who doesn't look like you, talk like you, or think like you and find out what shaped their identity. Your identity in Christ could be the very thing someone is looking for.