

Personal Identity, Observations, Healing, and Me

Part – 1

Introduction

Today there is much effort put in to preventing identity theft. Cyber security is of high priority, to keep us, our assets, and countries safe from those who want to steal information. To do so, they may masquerade as someone or something benign to gain access; masters of disguise, trying to make us think they are something they are not. Because of this problem, pin numbers and passwords are used to prove your online identity.

We also have personal identities by which we are recognized. Our voice, our looks, the way we walk, our whole deportment; this is how we know each other. After we know someone for awhile, we can almost predict what their response will be to the things we say.

The problem we face is that our minds are often successful in presenting things to us in an altered view of reality, by misreading or over-reading other's thoughts and intentions. Satan also who is an expert in disguise, further tries to control our minds, by distorting reality through imagination and fear.

Recently I listened to a book which stirred my thinking on this topic of self-perception; consequently, thoughts began to form about our personal identity and how experiences of the past have formed who we are today. As I began to write, the thoughts unfolded before me giving me a little different look at the happenings of my life. It would be misleading for me to say I have it all figured out like I wish I did, yet through time and experiences I have learned a little about myself and God. The thoughts I have left here may not fit everyone; I am okay with that. I have no personal honor, nor anything to claim; even the inspiration for this writing was not of my own making.

Examine your own personal history and you may find that those negative things which have happened to you may positively impact your life, making you a better person. Undoubtedly, at the time they were unpleasant and to one degree or another may still influence your life.

I will not even try to compare your story to mine; it is inexplicably yours and you are the player in it. Comparing experiences are rarely helpful, except when it comes to someone understanding us. I believe as healing progresses, one should begin to view themselves and past happenings with understanding and compassion. I predict as you heal from painful past experiences through the help of God, you will find a different reason for sharing your story. Instead of a painful existence, it will be a story of redemption and a loving Father who gave it to you.

I do not have disrespect in my heart for the past or anyone in it. What I have written about myself is but a vague notion of my life. Anything more would better suit a conversation over a cup of coffee or tea. For me, the lines are blurry between my experiences in life, choices I have made, and knowing what normal means. Which one of us knows what normal is? After all, we only have our own existence to reference when considering what it is.

Part - 2

Who we are today is a combination of our family traits and culture, genetics, and the experiences we have been through in life. All of these, and possibly many more, have formed our character and deportment.

We have at least five forms of identity. We have the one we see in the mirror in the morning, which also adorns our driver's license and passport. Other forms are: who others think we are, who we think others think we are, who we think we are, and who we really are. It may help us if we identify which identity is the one that runs our lives, although all of them will have some influence. No one except those who are closest to us know the real person we are inside, and that is only if we let them in.

What others think we are and what we think others think we are, should have little bearing on who we really are. The problem though usually lies with the latter, which concerns who we think others think we are. This usually affects who we think we are. When we get over concerned with what we think others think about us, we usually accept that as the truth and try to change accordingly. This is dangerous ground; the next time we meet them we may have a different impression and start the process of reconstructing ourselves all over again. This makes for an endless cycle of dissatisfaction and unhappiness. We can never be good enough for the image portrayed by that thinking process.

Only our heavenly Father knows our truest form of identity. With him there is no makeup, or makeovers, or hiding our identity. He sees right down into the middle of us and sees who we really are, and who we have the potential to be. After all, he is the one who created us, and put us on this earth for a purpose; no hiding from him. In the big picture what he thinks of us really matters most.

For as long as I can remember, I have struggled with the proper perception of myself; my mind showing me the world through the kaleidoscope of self-doubt and self-blame. Over reading, overreacting, and taking unnecessary responsibility for things that are not mine to bear. Please tell me I am not the only one who has difficulties like that. If I am, then there is no need for you to read any further. I have too often been more concerned with what I think others think of me, than what God has created me to be. Perhaps this syndrome is more common than just me. I do not look over my shoulder at my history with self-pity. To do so would only burrow me deeper into the abyss of negative identity and keep me from being who God has intended me to be.

One must take caution not to disconnect from the past too much, for it is the past which has formed you into the person who you now are. My difficult experiences in life have given me compassion and sympathy. They have worn off some of the rough edges, leaving me more understanding and flexible and most of all, dependent on God. Without God to help me, they could have left me bitter and locked in a prison of self-pity. No one should have to face unpleasant experiences, yet it is those experiences that form us into the person we are.

One must be careful not to stare too long at the injury, but to treasure the healing. The injury must be acknowledged to ourselves, but then we must move on into understanding and healing with the help of an all-mighty God and Father.

Part - 3

As I look back on the younger version of me, I have compassion for that little boy. He was one of those who wore those jeans with that Husky's tag on the back. I do not know how many of you remember that brand. Thinking back, I see him as an average boy. He was not that smart in school, but neither was he at the bottom of the charts. He even took an interest in sentence structure and speaking correctly, of which a little has stuck around. However, those three-minute reading comprehension drills, and typing classes almost got to him. He really experienced a lag in third or fourth grade, but he eked by. I believe there were other factors in his life which caused him to become distracted and fall behind.

I see him driving tractor and taking responsibility on the farm at far too young of an age. His dad did not have an older son, so he put him on the tractor, or whatever other piece of farm equipment and let him go at it. Through it all, he lived to tell the story.

I see him a little older now, beginning to feel the need to fit in with his friends. I watch him trying to excel in those things that naturally perked his interest. He played ball too hard, and no doubt tried too hard to fit in.

I see him relocating with his parents to another State and making new friends. I see him succumbing to peer-pressure and doing things he knew he should not do. Yet he so badly wanted to fit in with his friends; they portrayed so much confidence and they seemed so much wiser in the ways of the world. He tended to have this feeling of naivety, and shame that hung around him when he was with them. At times he talked too much, or tried too hard to fit in. Looking back, it does not seem so strange that he had these struggles; they seemed pretty normal for a young person trying to find their footing in life.

I see him through the years of working for his dad, and all the things his dad taught him. His dad still had the habit of giving him too much responsibility for his age, which occasionally caused him undue stress. His father engaged in a variety of different occupations, which at times caused some vexation, but it also gave him a wide variety of experience.

As he approaches marriage, I see him faltering, stumbling, and almost falling down. I would like to go to him, put my arm around him, and tell him everything will be okay. I would tell him that his mind was not going crazy, he just had a few too many difficulties to sort out, that is why his nerves could not handle the strain of getting engaged to the girl who he felt he could not live without. I see now how Satan got involved, pushing his fear to the point he could not manage any more. I feel bad for him because by in large, he walked that journey alone. He had those who showed understanding and compassion, listening to him, but he could not figure out what was going on inside his head, much less articulate it to others.

I see him heal emotionally from that dark valley and marry the girl of his dreams. I see how there were wounds from that experience that took a long time to heal. Most of all, I see the miracle of God, transforming what was broken to healing. From there I see his life as a journey of learning who he is, and the transforming power of God's grace and love.

As I observe his life now from a distance, from an adult point of view, things do not look so abnormal. He could have been one of half the population, for all I know. It is possible there were things which challenged his ability to cope as a young person should, of which some still bother him. However, they are losing their grip, and the healing stream of God's love, continues to wash them away. They may trip him up from time to time, but they no longer define who he is. He is still somewhat the same, afraid to launch out into the world of unknowns. He would rather stay with what he has become comfortable with, than become subject to failure which he is still predisposed to think.

Part - 4

Today I still struggle with my identity; mostly fear of what others may think, or failure to be worth something. There are also times I lose my balance and fear takes over; cold relentless fear, driving me back into that mindset of worthlessness and self-deprecation. It is difficult for me to forget myself and face life's challenges with confidence.

I have a wonderful wife who helps me immensely to get back in focus, and we have a wonderful family who love and care about each other. There should be no reason for me to not feel up to the mark, but I sometimes struggle. Yet God does not let me by with too much negativity and self-pity.

What I have experienced in life some may call it low self-esteem, or an inferiority complex. These may be accurate descriptions, however, today when I see the actions of others that mirror what I experienced, it causes me to wonder what is causing them to be insecure. Are they dealing with a family trait or are there other things that play a part in it? What has caused them to feel the need to have the approval of others? This could be a natural part of a young person trying to find themselves, but it could also mean that they have unnatural insecurities that are causing them to seek it in the wrong places.

We will do ourselves a favor if we own our past, instead of ignoring or pushing it back away out of sight and of mind. I do not even know for sure what all that entails in my life. However, it is very difficult to work with a problem if we don't believe it exists. By owning the past, we cease to let it control us and can then say, "This is me, this is what I have been through, this is how it affects me, this is how it altered my view of myself, others, and life around me. With God's help I am going to make it."

Looking back in the Bible, there were many individuals who had identity problems. King Saul was jealous of David to the point it he hunted him like an animal. The Pharisee who prayed in the temple, said that he was thankful he was not as other men, going on to list their sins. There is the rich young ruler who came to Jesus asking him how to inherit the kingdom of God. Jesus gave him the recipe, but he was not willing to sell his riches to gain it. Evidently, he liked the honor and prestige it brought him. There was Ananias and Sapphira, who were willing to lie about the sale of a property, apparently wanting to look good to others, but having deceit in their hearts.

Today there are leaders of countries which have identity problems; inflated egos and thoughts about themselves. They think more of their own agenda than the people whom they are to serve. They do not care enough what others think of them; they have their own self-serving agendas. This self-centered leadership has the potential to cause great suffering to their people.

Identity problems are not new, and God is more than willing to help us with it. In many cases, if people had humbled themselves there would have been hope, and their stories would be different. The same lesson can apply to us today. If we humble ourselves, then God has something to work with. As long as I hold on to my identity and hurt, I will remain unhealed and unhappy. Sometimes letting go of our personal perception of ourselves opens the door to a change of heart.

Our personal identity should not be connected to the house we live in or car we drive or the clothes we wear. True, we want to be respectable and to care about what we look like; there is a balance. However, preoccupation with these outward things may be a symptom of deep-seated insecurity. On the other hand, the lack of care about these things may be a sign of a lack of self-respect. It may indicate a person identifies themselves as being ugly, worthless, in despair, or too broken inside. These often are rooted in experiences of the past which need healing.

In an ideal world, there would be no peer pressure or stigma. There would be no divide of classes between the rich or the poor, or the socially accepted person and the one who was not. Everyone would have the same respect and care for everyone. But instead of a world of love, we live in a broken world, where sin, vice, and hate are rampant.

Thinking back, I do not know when I became affected by this identity problem. In my teen years I gave sports all I had, thinking that would be a way I could be accepted. I remember torn clothes and a sore body from playing so hard. Looking back now, I can see that as a part of trying to redeem my deep-seated insecurity. Diving for the ball, pushing myself ridiculously hard, to make myself feel like I was valuable. Somewhere deep inside, to be ordinary was not good enough. Was this an insecurity I picked up as a child; an ideal, a standard of performance, or a name to live up to? Had I erroneously arrived at the conclusion that accomplishment equaled love and acceptance? Or was this a normal reaction anyone can grow up thinking? Somehow the praise of being extra ordinary helped sooth some inner lack of self-worth.

As I look at myself today, compared to who I was then, I hardly seem like the same person. I still have identity problems, wanting to be like someone else. The experiences of life have changed me. Some of them have been very painful, others like a light of understanding that clicks on. Understanding myself has helped immensely yet any change or healing has been the work of the Lord. Deep inside I am still the same little boy, but when I view things through what the Lord has done for me, I know things are different. I am no hero, but my heavenly Father is.

I would not choose some of the experiences I have faced in life, however who would I be if I had not gone through them? Would I have compassion and understanding, or I be anything like I am today? I would not choose the experiences, but I would choose the healing, acceptance, and quietness I feel today. This is nothing but the work of God. I expect there will always be things to work through, but I have faith in God that his grace is sufficient for me. He has shown so many times how much he loves me that I have no excuse to doubt.

The biggest healing factor I have found is to know God loves me; to be secure in his love. When I seek his approval instead of the world around me, things come into focus. With him, he does not love me because I do good things and try to please him. He loves me because he is God and God is love. His love is not contingent on my performance, but because he created me, and God does not create junk or trash. When I depend on him, instead of loving myself, his blessings flow into my heart and life. He loves me because I am his child and I trust him because he is my Father.

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. (13) Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, (14) I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (15) Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Philippians 3:12-15 KJV

The Unlikely Writer

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