

14. WHO ARE YOU REALLY?



A sense of inadequacy often informs the question around "Who am I?"

#NCSAMENTALHEALTHDEVOTIONS

WHO ARE YOU REALLY?

Ephesians 1:5: "For God decided to adopt us into His family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do and it gave Him great pleasure."

Who exactly am I? Who exactly are you? Our identity is something extremely important. The Bible tells us that God has in advance, even before we were born, made us His children. That is who we are. We are children of the Living God, the Most High. God made us His children because He wanted to and because it would give Him great pleasure.

Let us for a moment think about our identity and who we are. Imagine one day you wake up and you cannot remember who you are because you have amnesia. How will you react? Truth is, many of us wake up each morning not knowing who we are. This is a huge problem. We may not have amnesia, but we do not have any certainty about our identity. We don't have a specific identity that we hold onto as we wake up in the morning. If we do not know who we are, how then can we live life?

Our purpose in life is very closely tied to our identity and Satan knows it. He makes us doubt who we are so that we wander around in life, aimlessly. Because of this lack of identity, we struggle from day to day, just existing and not really living, not really fulfilling our full potential and our purpose in life.

If a soldier forgets that he is a soldier, he is of very little use to the army.

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Satan knows if God's children forget that they are God's children, they are of very little use to God's cause and to God's army.

During this time of loss we are going through and with the changes that are taking place, the carpet has been pulled from under us. Therefore each of us should more than ever be sure of who we are. God says He has predestined us to be His children. Even before we chose Him, He chose us. Even before we were born, God planned that we should be His children.

The Bible tells us by being God's children, we are royalty. Not the earthly kind like Prince Charles or Prince William or Princess Kate. The genuine, real kind, a child of the only true God of the Universe. If we were truly to believe that we are children of the universal God, we would live life completely differently from how we are living it at the moment. That is why Satan wants us to be in an identity crisis.

"Who exactly am I?" I bet you have asked this question somewhere in life. It is the one question that has been asked through the ages. As a matter of fact, that was the first question that got us into trouble. The first person to ask this question was Satan in heaven. He asked the question, and I am paraphrasing: "Who exactly am I?" He did not quite like the answer that was given him. We know that he was a covering cherubim. He was basically first in command in heaven apart from Jesus, or then second in command if you wish. He was in command of the angels, but that was not enough for him. He did not like the answer to the question. He sought more. He wanted to be in the place of Jesus. He wanted to be something that God did not make him to be.

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Because of the question 'who am I?' another problem came to our earth – evolution. The answer given that we come from monkeys, has left us dumbfounded. I don't know about you, but that is not a very satisfactory answer for me about who I am. Books have been written on the topic. Famous sayings have been written about who we are. We even have something called a midlife crisis, an identity crisis if you may, that came about because of the question, 'who am I?'

We often search for something or someone to tie our identity to. The country has made us into a number. Our identity numbers and our student numbers tell us who we are, but that just brought us down to a mere number. We search for our identity. We really do want to know who we are. We start filling in personality tests and temperament tests and Facebook tests that tell us 'you are a hippie', or 'you are a wild child', or 'you are a free spirit'.

We are constantly trying to discover who we are. When we are in high school, we fill in a career test to tell us who or what we need to become and what career we must pursue. According to the tests you need to become a pilot, or a doctor, a scientist or something different. There are even Christian songs like the one by 'Casting Crowns' asking, "Who am I?"

Why is everybody within this universe searching to know who they are? Why do we need to ask the question, "who am I"? An article in Psychology Today, tells us a sense of inadequacy surrounds the question. In other words, we ask the question because we feel that we are not enough. We feel we are inadequate and this leaves us wanting more and wanting something better.

A SENSE OF INADEQUACY SURROUNDS THE QUESTION IF "WHO AM I?". IN OTHER WORDS, PEOPLE ASK THE QUESTION BECAUSE THEY FEEL THAT THEY ARE NOT ENOUGH.

This is exactly what happened to Satan. He wasn't happy and satisfied with what he had and therefore he went looking for more. He coveted.

Another author in the field of Psychology, Victor Frankl, wrote a book, *'Man's Search for Meaning and Reason'*. In this book he wrote that there are basically three premises we as humans tie our identity to:

1. 'I am what I do.' [My occupation or job or abilities.]
2. 'I am what I have.' [My possessions, my wealth or my money.]
3. 'I am what people say about me.' [My status in society and people's opinions about me.]

So I am what I do, I am what I have, and I am what people say about me.

These three premises often inform us who we are. Unfortunately these three premises are inadequate and a very unstable way to define our identity. What happens when you lose these three things? What happens when you lose your job, when you lose your possessions, when you lose your status or when people's opinions about you change? Who are you left with then? If your identity is tied to these three premises and you lose them, you will also fall apart.

With COVID-19's lockdown and businesses losing financial income and with the economy falling, each of us is in danger of these three premises being shaken. Some of us already face some of these losses.

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2. 'I AM WHAT I HAVE.'
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VERY CHANGABLE PREMISES TO TIE
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A loss of work because we've been retrenched, or possibly a loss of relationships because of social distancing during the lockdown, or our bank account has run dry and we are starting to think of selling some of our property and some of the things we own in order to survive, in order to put food on the table. If we have tied our identity to the three premises and we start losing them, we will soon be left without an identity and without a purpose in life because our purpose in life is very tightly tied to our identity.

So, we are not these three things. It is a lie. It is not who we are. We are so much more than our job, our possessions and other people's opinions about us. God says our identity lies in Jesus Christ. Our identity lies in who we are in relation to Him. Ephesians 1:5 says: *"We are His children. We are His family."*

Satan was dissatisfied with who he was and ever since, he's been attempting to lead others into that very same dissatisfaction. Satan seeks to sow dissatisfaction in our hearts and amongst those who have been created by God. His first victims were the other angels in heaven. A third of the angels fell with him because he was able to create this identity crisis in them, this dissatisfaction of who God made them to be.

He brought that dissatisfaction down here to earth. The very first victim on earth was Eve. He brought dissatisfaction to Eve in the form of an identity crisis. In the Book of Genesis it tells us that Satan met Eve at the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, the only place where he could tempt her. He met her in the form of a serpent and he started talking to her.

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He asked her: "Is it true that God said you are not allowed to eat of any of the trees in the garden?" She answered him: "No, we can eat of all the trees except this one here. If we do, we will die." Then Satan told her: "You will surely not die, but God knows when you eat of the fruit of this tree, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God." He placed another option before her: "You are just Eve now, but you can be so much more than just Eve, you can be like God." And she desired to be more, she wanted to have a higher position, so she took of the fruit and she ate it.

We all know what happened after that. A lot of the trouble this world is in, is because of Eve's action on that day. The kicker is, although Satan was mixing truth with error, telling her half-lies and half-truths, she was already like God. Genesis 1:26 says: *"God created man in His own likeness, in His own image. He made them male and female."* She was chasing something that she already had. Certain elements of being like God, like knowing sin, knowing good and evil, God hid from us because He knew it was better for us not to have these attributes. But Eve ate the fruit and now we are plunged into misery and into sin and into death.

Satan knows if he could make us doubt our identity, he could also derail our mission in life. He could derail us from seeking the true purpose God created us for.

A while back, scientists did an interesting experiment on someone who had amnesia. Before he was involved in a car accident, he was a computer geek. When he woke up after the accident, he could not remember anything about himself.

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The group of scientists came to the following conclusion: If this man who had no prior training in terms of being a Navy Seal woke up with amnesia and was told that he was a Navy Seal, he would start acting and living like a Navy Seal, because that was exactly what this man did when they told him he was a Navy Seal.

Satan knows this principle. If we truly believe in our hearts who we are, if we tie our identity to something worthwhile, we would live according to that belief. Satan knows this and he wants us not to act like children of God. So he tries to create an identity crisis in us, to make us believe that we are not children of God.

Satan is a very arrogant being. He still spreads the identity crisis. He did not stop with Eve. He even went further to Jesus Himself. Before Jesus came to this earth, He gave prophecies to the prophets about the Messiah. His servants, the prophets, wrote them down in the Bible as we know them today. Jesus came to this earth as a human being. As a young child, He studied the Bible at the feet of his mother. The Holy Spirit brought to His mind and showed Him through these prophecies who He was and the great work that He was going to do on this earth. It seems that he was fully submerged into His mission and into His identity. At the age of 12, His parents were looking for Him and later found Him in the Temple in Jerusalem, teaching. His response to His mother Mary when she was frantically looking for Him was: *"Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I was about my Father's work?"*

Because He studied the Scriptures and understood His mission through the Scriptures, Jesus could, at a very young age, declare to His mother that He was the Son of God and that He was about His Father's work, preaching the gospel.

**IF WE TRULY BELIEVE IN OUR HEARTS
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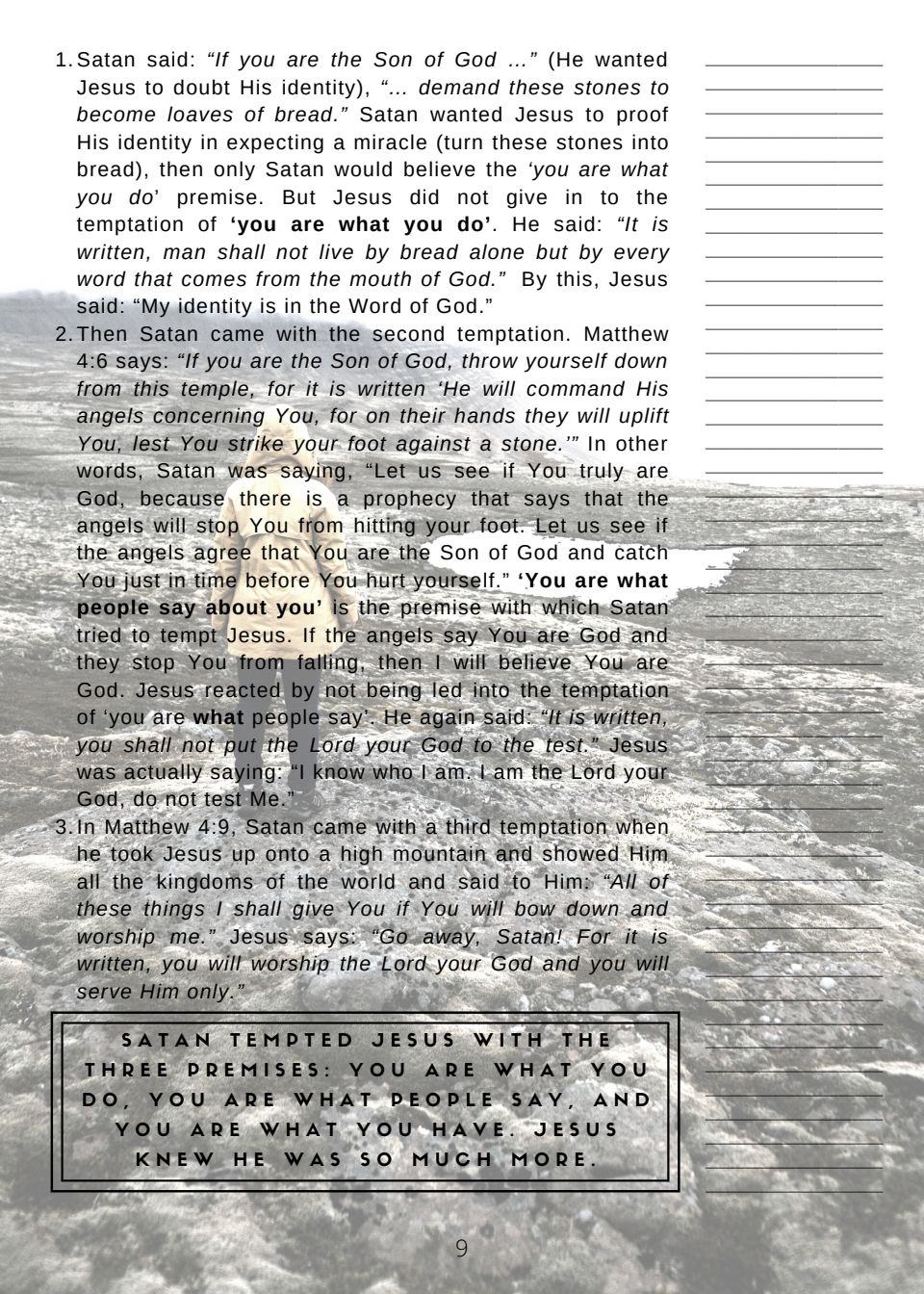
The Bible tells us at the age of roundabout 33, Jesus stood up in the temple to read from the scroll of Isaiah the prophecy regarding the Messiah. He also declared to those in the gathering that the prophecy had been fulfilled in their hearing. He said to them: "I am the One that this prophecy speaks about."

I don't think Jesus had any doubt about who He was, but if there was any doubt, it was taken care of when He was baptised in the Jordan River at the beginning of His earthly mission. In Matthew 3:16, after His baptism by John the Baptist, we read: "*And when Jesus was baptised, immediately He went up from the water, and behold, the heavens opened to Him and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove coming to rest on Him; and behold a voice from heaven said, 'This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.'*" [This is His identity.]

Jesus was very secure in His identity. The way in which He became secured in His identity was by reading the Word of God and by studying the prophecies that spoke about who and what He needed to be. In our lives today, the Bible also speaks about who God made us to be. We are children of the Most High God. It also speaks about our mission and how we need to live and how we need to act as the children of God. We need to be very secure in our identity.

Jesus was secured in His identity, but Satan didn't care. He still wanted to cause an identity crisis, not only in Eve, not only in the angels in heaven, but also in Jesus Christ Himself. The Bible tells us after Jesus came up out of the water, He was led away by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Matthew 4:3 tells us that Satan tempted Jesus with the three identity criteria.

**WE ARE CHILDREN OF THE MOST HIGH
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1. Satan said: *"If you are the Son of God ..."* (He wanted Jesus to doubt His identity), *"... demand these stones to become loaves of bread."* Satan wanted Jesus to prove His identity in expecting a miracle (turn these stones into bread), then only Satan would believe the *'you are what you do'* premise. But Jesus did not give in to the temptation of **'you are what you do'**. He said: *"It is written, man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."* By this, Jesus said: *"My identity is in the Word of God."*
 2. Then Satan came with the second temptation. Matthew 4:6 says: *"If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from this temple, for it is written 'He will command His angels concerning You, for on their hands they will uplift You, lest You strike your foot against a stone.'"* In other words, Satan was saying, "Let us see if You truly are God, because there is a prophecy that says that the angels will stop You from hitting your foot. Let us see if the angels agree that You are the Son of God and catch You just in time before You hurt yourself." **'You are what people say about you'** is the premise with which Satan tried to tempt Jesus. If the angels say You are God and they stop You from falling, then I will believe You are God. Jesus reacted by not being led into the temptation of *'you are what people say'*. He again said: *"It is written, you shall not put the Lord your God to the test."* Jesus was actually saying: "I know who I am. I am the Lord your God, do not test Me."
 3. In Matthew 4:9, Satan came with a third temptation when he took Jesus up onto a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and said to Him: *"All of these things I shall give You if You will bow down and worship me."* Jesus says: *"Go away, Satan! For it is written, you will worship the Lord your God and you will serve Him only."*

SATAN TEMPTED JESUS WITH THE THREE PREMISES: YOU ARE WHAT YOU DO, YOU ARE WHAT PEOPLE SAY, AND YOU ARE WHAT YOU HAVE. JESUS KNEW HE WAS SO MUCH MORE.

Satan said to Jesus, if You are the king of this earth, if You own all of these lands, all of these people, then You are truly God, bringing to light the third premise, namely **'you are what you have'**. But Jesus said to him: "I know who I am. Go away from Me. You must serve the Lord your God and bow down and worship Him only."

Satan tempted Jesus with the three premises: **'you are what you do'**, **'you are what people say'**, and **'you are what you have'**. Jesus never doubted His identity. He knew He was so much more than these three things. If you look at His early earthly life as a human, Jesus didn't have a very amazing job. He was a carpenter. He also didn't have wealth because he said to those who wanted to follow him: *"Foxes have holes and the birds in the air have nests, but the Son of man has no place to lay His head"*. He wasn't rich. People did not always have good things to say about Him because of His hometown. They asked when they heard that He came from Nazareth: *"Can anything good come from Nazareth?"*

Jesus had every opportunity to break down because these three premises were not always present in His life. But He did not break down because He knew His identity was in what God said about Him and not what people said about Him. He was convinced of his God-given identity because of what the Bible said. He stood on the promises of the Word and lived His life and mission according to what the Word told Him about Himself.

What about you today? What about your identity? Where does your identity lie? I'd like to encourage you with some of the verses from the Bible on what exactly God says about us.

JESUS' IDENTITY WAS IN WHAT GOD SAID ABOUT HIM AND NOT WHAT PEOPLE SAID ABOUT HIM. HE WAS CONVINCED OF HIS GOD-GIVEN IDENTITY BECAUSE OF WHAT THE BIBLE SAID. WHAT ABOUT YOU?

We started off with a very important verse in Ephesians 1:5 which says: "We've been adopted to be children of the Living God." I hope and believe that after today, you will tie your identity to these verses the way Jesus tied His identity to the verses where God spoke about Him.

- Colossians 2:9 says that in us lies the fullness of Christ. The Bible in Basic English translates the verse as: *"For in Him all the wealth of Gods being has a living form."*
- 1 Peter 2:9 says: "We are a royal priesthood, a chosen nation."
- Genesis 1:27: "You are created in the image of God."
- Jeremiah 1:5 says that God formed you in your mother's womb and that He has a specific purpose for you.
- 1 Corinthians 12:27: God says you are the body of Christ, you are one with Him.
- 1 Corinthians 6:17: "You are spiritually one with Him."
- Romans 6:6: "You are no longer slaves to sin."
- John 15:5: You are the branches and He is the vine and if "we stay in Him, we will bear much fruit."
- 1 Corinthians 6:19 says we are vessels for the Holy Spirit.
- Romans 8:17: "We are joint heirs of Christ, because we are His children."
- "We are more than conquerors", says Romans 8:37.
- 2 Peter 1:3, 4: "We are partakers of His Divine nature."
- Philippians 4:13 says "You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you."
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 says we are a new creation in Christ.
- Matthew 5:14: "We are the light of the world."
- Matthew 5:13 says we are the salt of the earth. It is extremely interesting that the Bible calls us the salt of the earth, because when you cook food and you do not put salt in, it basically makes the food very bland.

JEREMIAH 1:5 SAYS THAT GOD FORMED YOU IN YOUR MOTHER'S WOMB AND THAT HE HAS A SPECIFIC PURPOSE FOR YOU.

- God is saying when you are the salt of the earth, it is like adding salt to food. A little bit of salt, when added to food, makes it taste so much better than what it did before. God is saying you are the salt of the earth. You are that little something when added into the earth, you give the earth flavour. You make the earth tastes good.
- Ephesians 2:10 says we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works.
- 2 Corinthians 5:21: "We are His righteousness."
- 2 Timothy 1:7: "We are the power of Christ."
- In John 15:15, Jesus calls us His friends.
- Philippians 3:20: "We are citizens of heaven."
- Psalms 139:14 says: "We are fearfully and wonderfully made."
- 1 Thessalonians 5:5: "We are children of the light."
- 2 Corinthians 5:20 says we are ambassadors for Christ, because God makes His appeal through us.
- "We are God's chosen ones", says Paul in Colossians 3:12.
- Romans 8 verse 17 says we are heirs with Him.
- Acts 1:8 says we are His witnesses.
- In 1 Corinthians 2:16, He says we have the mind of Christ.
- 1 Peter 2:5 says we are living stones that are being built into His spiritual house.
- "We have His redemption", says Ephesians 1:7 to 8.
- "We are fellow workers together with God" (1 Corinthians 3:9).
- "We are saints together in all places for all purposes" (1 Corinthians 1:2).
- "We are sojourners on an exile" (1 Peter 2:11).
- God says in Ephesians 6:11 that we are His soldiers.

**GOD IS SAYING YOU ARE THE
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- And then the last verse, to me the most beautiful, is 2 Corinthians 2:1: *“For we are the aroma of Christ to God amongst those who are being saved and amongst those who are perishing.”*

All these verses are talking about God's opinion of us. God is telling us in His Word who He created us to be, what our identity is. We need to start believing it. We need to start living it. If we believe it, if we tie our identity to these verses, our lives will be transformed. We will live so much differently. God says we are what make the earth tastes and smells good. We are that aroma, that sweet smelling smell amongst those who are being saved.

Do you believe it? If not, take these verses, tie it upon your arm, write it on your door post, post it everywhere you go, recite it and repeat it until you believe it, so that your life will be transformed. So that you, like the man who was told he was a marine when he woke up with amnesia, will also declare that you have amnesia and all the beliefs you had regarding yourself in the past, are no longer true.

Start today to believe the things God declares about you. Believe that you are a child of God, a righteous child of God who no longer falls to sin, an ambassador for God, a citizen of heaven, a royal priesthood and joint heirs with God and more than conquerors with His divine nature. You are a new creation, a light, the salt, an aroma to the world and you will live your life accordingly.

Believe that Satan will no longer derail you from your purpose God has created you to be. May you start believing that your identity is not determined by sin and by this world, but by what God made you to be – His child!

2 CORINTHIANS 2:1: “FOR WE ARE THE AROMA OF CHRIST TO GOD AMONGST THOSE WHO ARE BEING SAVED AND AMONGST THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING.”

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