

Vision - Identity

I don't know about you, but I've been called a lot of different things in my life. If you ask people who I am, you will get several different answers.

My kids call me dad.

If you ask kids in Xander's class, they will say I'm Xander's dad.

If you ask some of Marissa's friends, they might say I'm Marissa's dad.

When I meet people who know my brother they ask if I'm Jason's brother.

Some of the kids at the grade school call me Pastor Tim, some call me Tom.....

People who knew me when I was young still call me Timmy.

My mom calls me the greatest gift ever.

My wife calls me the greatest gift ever.....see there's some consistency!

When I introduce myself, I usually say I'm Tim Caraway. Sometimes people look at me like "so" or "how am I supposed to know you". So I might follow up with how they may know me and sometimes that's awkward for me.....trying to tell them who I am beyond a name.

Do you ever have a hard time explaining who you are? I know exactly who I am, but sometimes it's hard to put into words. Let's practice.....(Ask some people who they are)

See these words are all labels. First, you have a name that labels you. Many people know who you are because of your name. They associate that last name with your family (good or bad), they may even associate it with things they have heard your name attached to (good or bad), and you get a label. (We are not going to practice that....)

Then, even the terms we may use to further describe ourselves cause more labels to be attached to our name. For those of you who work in the school system, you see a kid's name on your roster and immediately you think of that older sibling you already had....you think oh boy, HIS brother....you start slapping labels on this other kid

We get these labels attached to us, some unfairly, some maybe we deserve, but they start to shape how people view us, and eventually even how we view ourselves.

Ephesians 5:4 (HCSB)

4 Coarse and foolish talking or crude joking are not suitable, but rather giving thanks.

The reason these things are not suitable is because they don't build up or edify....they tear down. If a person hears negative things about themselves over and over (even in a joking manner) they may start to believe it.

A couple verses earlier Paul tells us to be imitators of God, as dear children. God does not have bad things to say about you. You hear me? He has nothing but good to say about you.

I'm continuing in the vision series today, covering prophetic vision of who God says the church is. Again as I shared last week....we NEED to hear the voice of God. It doesn't matter if it's through a friend, God's audible voice, in a song, just dropped in your spirit, or through any number of ways that God speaks....the main thing is that we hear Him.

I want to talk about identity today. This is the state or condition of being oneself, not another. It's who you are.

Too often we let this world tell us who we are....or even who we are not! And then that is what we believe....when we do that, the devil is winning!

2 Corinthians 5:17 (HCSB)

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come.

If you have chosen Jesus as your Lord and Savior, than this verse is about YOU! If you've not made that decision yet then today is your day! If you are in Christ then you have been made new. It doesn't matter what labels have been attached, if you are in Christ you have a new label....forgiven, cleansed, redeemed, overcomer!

But why is it so hard for the new creation to know their identity?

A big part of it is the world's view of God's church, the church that these new creations belong to but more than that, the church that they ARE. You know.....we ARE the church.

It's kind of like when you have a last name that is associated with people that have done a lot of bad, you are automatically associated with that, even if they have changed, even if the accusations weren't true, even if YOU, personally never did anything wrong. You are told you are no good because of an association.

This is what we see in the church....the world says the church is full of radicals and frauds. Then depending on what denomination or type of service you have, you are given additional labels.

We have two choices....let the world tell us who we are....or let God tell us who we are!

As a spirit filled, born again believer, your identity is in Christ. How many of you know that? How many of you know what that actually means?

Too many Christians go around saying "My identity is in Christ!?" not even sure what it means.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (HCSB)

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come.

This verse is sooooo critical to understanding identity.

First, it's in Jesus that you are redeemed. It's HIS death, HIS resurrection, faith in HIM....that is what makes it possible for us to be a new creation. We can only be a new creation as a result of what HE did, then we identify with HIM.

See the NEW means that you are recreated and at a whole new level of excellence. This is why new life, rebirth is so important.....it's better....substantially better. It's on a whole new level! When you are made new, it's not at all restored to the original state, it's new. Not "fixed up".....NEW....meaning unprecedented, uncommon.

Have you ever thought of yourself that way....I am unprecedented. That means without previous instance, never before known or experienced. That's how you should feel as a Christian....

When Jesus makes you new, you are not what you were, you are a brand new never before seen creation.....it's because you now identify with a righteous, holy, Savior!

The old has passed away. I do believe that once you are saved, God wipes your slate clean, your past sins are cast into the sea. But this passing away....it's more than just sin....

Your old value systems....gone

old priorities.....gone

old beliefs.....gone

old loves.....gone

old plans.....gone

Now here is the common mistake and identity killer..... just because you are new and the old has passed away, it doesn't mean that evil and sin are expelled from your life!

Evil and sin are still present....BUT the believer now sees them in a new perspective AND sin no longer controls you!

John 8:36 (HCSB)

36 Therefore, if the Son sets you free, you really will be free.

Your identity is in Jesus. We need to soak in His truths about who we are in Him! Think about what the church could do if we could come to know **who we are** as He says we are!

Your identity is not what others say you are and it's not what you say you are...it's what God says you are!

Loved, Forgiven, Washed Clean, Free, Righteous, Set Apart, Never Alone, New, Child of God!
That's who you are!

Now for the church.....This church is not what people say it is either. We are His body. We are His bride. We are here to do His work....if you are not then you are in the wrong place!

What is our identity as a church. This comes from prophetic vision....this means it's what GOD says this church is.....IN CHRIST! It's what HE sees. Let's claim it as it is so!

Some of these things are repeats of last week when I shared foundational characteristics but this week we are talking about more than merely qualities that we should have, we are saying this is what we ARE!

- A house of freedom where strongholds and chains are broken

People this is more than our name.....Freedom truly reigns in Christ Jesus.....IN HIM there is not one single thing that can hold you down.

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 (HCSB)

3 For though we live in the body, we do not wage war in an unspiritual way, 4 since the weapons of our warfare are not worldly, but are powerful through God for the demolition of strongholds. We demolish arguments

Our power comes from Jesus and Him alone! He has the power to demolish all spiritual strongholds. We have to be a house of freedom where freedom actually happens in people's lives! It's more than a name, it's who we are! It's our identity in Jesus.....FREE PEOPLE

2 Corinthians 3:17 (HCSB)

17 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

- A house of love that guides everything we do that keeps us genuine and prevents us from being hypocritical

1 John 4:19 (HCSB)

19 We love because He first loved us.

Everything we do is because Jesus loves us and because of that I preach because I love you, our ministries are in place because we love people. It's all out of love, we care, for real....

- A hospital for the hurting, place of healing

A hurting person is an injured person. They have been struck down, they are in pain, they need help.

Psalm 147:3 (HCSB)

3 He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

- A Lighthouse

John 8:12 (HCSB)

12 Then Jesus spoke to them again: "I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows Me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life."

- bright light in the darkness
- giving hope and dispelling the lies and works of the enemy
- the light comes from within and cannot be contained, it spills out into the area all around us

- A place of raising up and sending out all over the nation and the world

Matthew 28:19 (HCSB)

19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

- A house of balance
 - Wrath/Love
 - Faith/Works
 - Word/Spirit
 - Love/Holy,Just
- A house of great peace and unity where tired, weary souls can find rest

Psalm 62:5 (HCSB)

5 Rest in God alone, my soul, for my hope comes from Him.

- Strong Men - Godly leaders, power

- Women - bubbling forth with hospitality, joy, and love
- Supernaturally meeting specific, tangible needs

Titus 3:14 (HCSB)

14 And our people must also learn to devote themselves to good works for cases of urgent need, so that they will not be unfruitful.

- Healing, Deliverance, Salvation, Love, A Family, A Father, A Savior
 - when people come to our church they are going to find these things
- Will be enabled to reach the unreachable, the hard hearted, the lowly, and the low

Proverbs 14:31 (HCSB)

31 The one who oppresses the poor person insults his Maker, but one who is kind to the needy honors Him.

You are a Child of God (Satan's lie - You are a victim of your past)

You are a Redeemed Individual (Satan's lie - You're of little worth)

You are a Forgiven Person (Satan's lie - Your past sins are so awful it's impossible for you to find forgiveness and acceptance.)

You are a New Creation - (Satan's lie - You cannot be totally changed)

You are an Overcomer - (Satan's lie - You're incapable of having victory over your besetting sins.)