

Reconstructing Manhood

IDENTITY: Five Things You Get to Say About Yourself

Rough Transcript

Patrick Morley

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Good morning, men. Welcome to Man In The Mirror Bible study, we are in this series, **Reconstructing Manhood**, which we kicked off last week with Jeremy Schurke. How many of you enjoyed having Jeremy here last week? Yeah. Oh rah, Jeremy. Well, today we're going to jump right in to some of the issues that are perplexing, flummoxing, creating anxiety, angering older and younger men. And we're going to be talking about identity, five things you get to say about yourself. And in the spirit of reconstructing manhood, we're not really going to be doing macho stuff or discussing your femininity and so forth or any gender confusion, we're really just going to be going at it from the perspective of biblical manhood.

What I would like to do though is in the spirit of reconstructing manhood, let's welcome our online visitors with a very warm rousing Man In The Mirror welcome. On the count of 3, 1, 2, 3. Oh rah. Welcome guys. We are glad to have you with us this morning.

THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY

Okay, so the first thing up then is that we want to talk about the search for identity. I've been fooling around with t-shirts this week, just thinking about t-shirts and t-shirts are fun, and they can be whimsical. And they also can be used to send little signals about how you view yourself or what's important to you, different things. So I like this one, I'm kind of a big deal. I'm kind of a big deal. Another one, smart, rich, and famous. Maybe that would be an identity that somebody would want to assume. This one, just another day of not being rich and famous. And then I love my wife, but if you read carefully, it says, I love it when my wife lets me go play golf.

And then Jeremy from last week, now this is an interesting little signal to send with your t-shirt. It's not exactly a Christian Cross, but it is a cross. This is Jeremy's bio photo. And then I had been waiting for years to reveal my t-shirt to you. This is my t-shirt. Yes, dear. You're right. It's my fault. I'm sorry. It will never happen again. That's my shirt. And then this next one is kind of like totally unrelated. I just thought it was so hilarious. When this virus is over, I still want some of you to stay away from me.

So there are cues that we give to our identity or how we perceive our identity. So t-shirts is certainly one way, but bumper stickers often a cause, or maybe a political affiliation. Birth certificates can kind of tell us quite a bit about identity, but I just want to also point out that this is a subject we're getting more to the core of the essence of identity and not the kinds of things you would necessarily think of, just place of birth, gender, race, ethnicity, things like that. Calendars and checkbooks. People will tell you what they think is important to them, but if you really want to find out what's important to somebody. If you really want to know what's important to me, get ahold of my calendar and my checkbook, see how I spend my time and my money. And you will find out what's really, really important to me.

And then also obituaries and tombstones, passports and driver's license. So anyway, those are some cues. Well, what is identity at its simplest form? If you're just looking it up in the dictionary, it would be the characteristics that determine who a person is. But what we want to get at is what is the essence of

identity? And then what are the most important things that you want to say about yourself? And also what are the most important things that the Bible says about who you are? That's where we're going. That's where we're going. This is a Bible study. So let's go ahead and talk about what the Bible says okay.

Genesis chapter one, verses 26 to 28. This is the introduction of mankind. Then God said, and who is God speaking to? He was speaking to himself. He used the Trinity, a mysterious three-part relationship. One God, three persons. God said, let us make, let us the first indication of the Trinity that I'm aware of anyway, let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness. You stop right there. This word mankind is the word, Adam, Adam. Most of your translations would have the word, man in this slot. The NIV, the New Living Translation and the message which is a paraphrase, but the two translations, New Living Translation and the NIV translate this, mankind. There are a lot of words that have multiple meanings, Adam is one of those. There are over 15 of the word, Adam, if you look it up.

I am of the considered opinion, and I am not a Hebrew language scholar, but I'm of the considered opinion having looked at this for many, many years, that this is the proper way to interpret this word. And I'm going to show you why. Down to verse 27. So God created mankind, there's the word again, in his own image, in the image of God, he created them, male and female. He created them. So God didn't create a man and then turn them into a man and a woman. God created mankind in his own image, male and female did he create them. All right?

And then in verse 28, God blessed them and said to them, be fruitful and increase in numbers. So there you have procreation, fill the earth and subdue it, rule over it. There you have governments, you have creation care. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and every other living creature that moves on the ground. So we have governments, you can pull governments out of this. You can have creation care. You can't go any place in the world anymore, in the sea, anywhere and find water that doesn't have plastic in it. We probably have filled the earth, but maybe not in the right way. And so creation care can certainly be part of this. Climate, taking care of the climate, the environment certainly would fall in this. A lot of the mistakes that were made, were made out of ignorance, but a lot of them were made because of fallen human nature who got a little greedy and pushed the corners and disposed of toxic waste in a way that wasn't safe and has creative problems.

Anyway, all I'm trying to show you is that the scriptures are not tone deaf to the current problems that we face. All right. And then Genesis 2:15, the Lord, God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it. So there you have our work and vocation, and then also to take care of it, which you've already talked about. Genesis 2:18, the Lord, God said it is not good for the man to be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him. So now we have the concept of marriage or companionship or relationships being introduced. And 2:24 says, that is why a man leaves his father and mother, and is united to his wife and they become one flesh. So there are a lot of identity things that are established right here at the beginning, just the essence of who we are.

You are the imago dei, you were made for procreation. Now, that doesn't mean that every man and every woman gets involved in procreation, but that's the general idea. The idea is to fill the, you hear people complaining about how many people are in the world, that was God's plan was to fill the earth, so there's that. And then now you have vocation, work, that part of our identity is that we are supposed to work. And part of our identity is that we, generally speaking, not always, but we'll have relationships that lead to marriage.

So this is also repeated in Psalm 3:8, which happens to be one of my favorite passages. When I consider the heavens, the moon and the stars, the work of your fingers, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you're mindful of them. And then it says human beings, that you care for them in the NIV or the children of the children of Adam, the children of Adam, that you care for them. And then verse five, who we are, you have made them a little lower than the angels and crown them with glory and honor. So you and I, we are God's crowning achievement. We are the perfection of God's design and

plan before we enter into our sinful state. We're a little lower than the angels. We've been crowned with glory and honor. You are the full expression of God's creative genius. That's part of identity.

And then verse six, you made them rulers over the works of your hands, you put everything under their feet. And this is dominion. This is where we prevail over the creation. God has put us in charge and we have organized that into different kinds of forms of governments and organizations to assist in that. But it's still part of our individual identity.

CLUES TO NARROW YOUR SEARCH

So now I want to just give you some clues to help you narrow your search for identity. And I want to start with a T-shirt. A T-shirt, this is the one that says, this is not who I am. I have been working with a man this week and over the last couple of weeks, but especially this week, who is the son of an adulterous relationship, wasn't wanted and comes from a broken home, grew up in poverty. He has several things going on like OCD and other things. He's living on one-third of what is considered the threshold for poverty. He has no vehicle. He is dependent on food banks for food, so he has food insecurity issues. Doesn't have enough money to go to a coffee shop and buy a cup of coffee. And at this point, he read on my email at the bottom of my email signature, I have this sentence. My worst day with Jesus has been infinitely better than my best day without him. And so he, in his most recent email said, that has not been true for me. Now, actually he's probably depressed, right? I would be. And I think he is based on, but he's extremely intelligent.

And so he picked that sentence apart because he's basically come to the conclusion that his identity is that he is a loser and he is beyond hope. There are people, hopefully not in this room, who just can't get by the idea that their T-shirt says loser, that they're walking around with a big L on their forehead. Other things on the T-shirt, this is not who I am is, this is what I do, what I have, a lot of men, hopefully not in this room, but a lot of men do come to find a lot of their identity in what they do. Maybe it's that they own a small business or maybe a medium size or a big business. They own a business, or they have a position with a title that's extremely important to them.

And when they think of themselves, their identity is very much tied to what they do. Of course the problem, and you've heard me say this before if you've been here for any length of time, if what you do is who you are, then who are you when you don't do what you do anymore? That can't be a form of identity. It's the same with things that you have possessions. It's the same with where you're from. I have a friend in Mississippi and whenever I'm around him and he meets somebody, he'll say, oh, it's really, really good to meet you. Now, who are your people? Now, who are your people? And so he has been acculturated to think of someone's identity being associated with who their family tree is.

And then the BBBB is, beauty, brains, bucks, and brawn. You've probably heard me talk about that before, but just your physical attributes. Maybe you're a handsome guy and so that's part of your identity. Maybe you're a muscular guy with a great physique and so you think that that's part of your identity or you project that as part of your identity. Brains and intellect, maybe you're intelligent, maybe that's important to you. Maybe it's extremely important to you to make sure that other people know that you're a smart guy. I would say that I have, in my younger days, fallen into that trap until I learned I wasn't that smart, I should say. And then beauty, brains, bucks, money.

I, certainly as a former materialist or recovering materialist, I've certainly had my fair share of wanting to project my identity, wanting people to perceive me as somebody that was financially successful. Beauty, brains, bucks, and then brawn, just the whole idea of being strong, machoism, if you will, as part of identity. And then the other things here, better indicators, shallow indicators of identity, but nevertheless, things that men do try to project as part of their identity, power, position, popularity, personality, or maybe the lack thereof.

So here are some concepts then you can use to narrow your answers to the questions. What are the most important things about me? Who am I? Who's the essence of me, my identity? Maybe you have a life verse that can direct you. I have one. Maybe you have a word that's your life word. My word, I've mentioned here before is integrity. For me, integrity is a one-to-one correlation between my Bible, my belief and my behavior. Maybe you have a calling from God that you have received from him that gives you a tremendous sense of identity. Maybe some kind of an organizing principle, how you prioritize your life. I have one. Mine is, I will commit myself to life of devotion and study of a God, then speak, teach, and write about what I'm learning so that I organized my life around that.

A life message that you have. I have one for writing books. And so a written life purpose statement. We have worked on that here in the past, if you've been here for any length of time. The importance of having that, there's a worksheet for that in the Man In The Mirror book. Mine is, and I've mentioned here recently, I want to live the rest of my earthly life for the will of God. That's my written life purpose statement. Maybe it's based on aptitudes and abilities or your spiritual gifts, but these are just some of the different things you could be thinking about that might help you narrow your answers.

But now let's take a look at the essence, if you will, that we can pluck from the Bible. Now, I have skipped 10,000 books on the subject of identity to get to this place. We could talk for hours and hours and hours about identity. But what I want to do is I want to give you what I think are five of the key essences of what the Bible teaches about identity. You might be able to add a few more, but these are certainly five of the biggest and chunkiest things that you could think about. And with regard to your T-shirt, the first thing is, your T-shirt should say something about your faith. You are the imago dei, you are the image of God. This is the starting point.

You could express this in many different ways. You could say, I wrote in my journal about a year ago, I wrote in my journal, it was kind of like one of those epiphanies that you have where you learn something you already know at a deeper level. And I wrote in my journal, the most important thing about me is that I'm a sinner saved by grace. So I could put a sinner saved by grace, or you might put, I love God with my whole heart. Or you could put, I believe in Jesus, or you could put, Jesus, or you could put, God, or you could write the apostles creed, whatever it is, but some statement or some thought that reflects your faith. Because for biblical manhood, the starting point for biblical manhood is some exertion about your identity as a follower of Jesus, however you want to say that, however you want to say that.

And then the next thing, and I've put these in a list and I've numbered them. I would not be so bold as to suggest, or presumptuous to suggest that these have to be in any particular order. It's your T-shirt. These are five things you get to say about yourself. You can say whatever you want. You can say them in any order. Nobody should be up here telling you that there's any exact way you have to do this.

The second essence of our identity is our relationships. We saw that in the Genesis passage. We see it also in Ephesians five, when it talks about a marriage and by extension, their family, there are many things. So for example, you might under your relationships, you could put husband, a father, friend, you could put all three of those husband, father, friend. Or you could put, I am the prophet, priest, and king of my family. Or you could put my identity is that I am a good provider. So you could put anything that you wanted on your T-shirt, but something about the priority of relationships to you, and then my roles.

Now, we've talked about roles here before with regard to identity. You can put anything you want. For me, my roles are that I am a son of the father, a son, a disciple, a friend of Jesus, a servant, a temple of the Holy Spirit, a vessel, and a charge or a ward. Those are the roles that are important to me. You might want to put down that your important role is that you are a follower of Jesus, that isn't also want to talk about with regard to faith, or you might want to put something in about being a father, whatever role it is, whatever roles that you have that are precious to you, that you feel like are part of the essence of your identity. So I would say that even though I don't think about husband as one of my identity roles

for general purposes, there is this sense in which it is a part of who I am, because I've been married for 48 years. I have been married for 48 years to one woman.

And the idea for that is that after God, but before all others, make your wife your top priority. You've heard talk about that before, if you've been here for any length of time. So faith, relationships, and roles. That was after God, but before all of this make my wife my top priority. And then my attributes, and this is where we get into character and conduct. In the book, *The Christian Man*, I listed this out, easily handled with the fruit of the spirit. Also humility, which I think is a good addition to the list of the fruit of the spirit, because basically humility drips off every page of scripture. James 4:6, God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Or it might be some other attribute that you have that you think is important but that relates to your character or your conduct.

For example, I already said, my life word is integrity. So maybe one of my attributes of the essence of who I am, I would want it to be known that integrity is part of my identity. And then finally, my mission you'll remember in the Genesis passage, there was plenty of purpose, feel rule, procreate, work, marriage. And so those are things that we actually do. So identity is being who I am, but it's also legitimate to think about, there's a part of it that has to do with what we do as well. And so you may have a specific mission that God has given you that is part of your identity. My mission is helping men find meaning and purpose in Christ. That's my mission. That's what I live to do. It's part of my identity. It's part of who I am.

Being an entrepreneur, that might be part of your identity because that's who you are. Or maybe your life's work is being an auto mechanic and that's just part of your mission is to help people with their transportation needs so that they can safely get their children to school and soccer and get to work so they can earn their paycheck. So that might be something that is related to your life's work as your mission. Or it might be my mission is helping disciple men, or my mission is serving others. But that would be part of a legitimate part of your identity. So the main part of the talk really is just this T-shirt. You get to say five things about yourself.

What are the five most important things that you want to say about yourself? This is the essence of who I am, my faith, relationships, roles, attributes, and mission. That's the Big Idea for the day. **This is the essence of who I am: my faith, my relationships, my roles, my attributes, and my mission.**

WHAT'S ON YOUR T-SHIRT?

And so what's on your T-shirt. That's the final thing I want us to take a look at. On your tables, on the back of your handout, like I said, as a separate handout, second handout, is this sheet it's called T-shirt identity worksheet. Clever name, huh? And so up at the top is reproduced what we just went through. This is who I am and those five things, faith, relationships, roles, attributes, and mission. Then there is a large T-shirt in the middle for you to write down what you consider to be your identity. You can write anything you want. I'm going to encourage you to use the top T-shirt with the five things already in there as sort of a teacher's aid for you.

And I want you to go ahead, you don't have to think through this for three weeks to do it. Go ahead and write down five things as a first draft. And here's how you do it. In the first line, what is the most important thing I want to say about my identity? What is the single most important thing that I want to say about who I am? And then secondly, after you have done that, in the second line, what is the second most important thing that I want to say about who I am? And then in the third line, likewise, the third most important thing, and then the fourth most important thing. And then the fifth most important thing I want to say about myself. And then I would just say that after that everything starts being about equal. The difference between one and five might be quite a bit, but the difference between six and 10 is not going to be quite as much, even though those might still be important things to you.

And then, also you'll notice at the bottom of this worksheet is a, if you want to do it, and this is totally up to you, but I'd encourage you to, this is not who I am. And so it might be, you want to put a famous person. If you want to be a famous person, then you might want to put down, this is not really who I am. I'm not really a famous person. That's not really what my life is about and so on and so forth.

This week, I had a man come and do some work at my house. I met him last week. We had a nice introduction. I gave him a copy of the book, *The Man In The Mirror*. And when he came yesterday, he began to open up to me. His wife has a brother who lives in Chicago. He's given me permission to tell this story. His wife has a brother who lives in Chicago. He's a pedophile. And his wife's brother is married to a woman who's a drug addict, so a pedophile and a drug addict. And two years ago, they had a baby. The baby, when it was born was not breathing. Maybe it's related to, maybe it's not. It's unknown at this point how damaged the child is, but it's 90%, according to the doctors that this child will need lifelong assistance, lifelong care, probably some autism involved at least.

When this young man, who's 32 years of age, he and his wife heard about the pregnancy, they started making plans. And so two years ago, with the help of the court system in Chicago, and at that point, the support of the family, they intervened and rescued this little baby. And so this little baby's been living with them for two years, for two years. Recently, some of the extended members of the family have gotten the idea that somehow the government is sending this young man and his wife a check to take care of the child. And so now they want the baby back. They want the two-year old baby back. So what they did was they went to court and they filed litigation, not mentioning the fact that there had already been litigation and custody had already been awarded to this young man that I'm talking to and his wife.

So unless he goes through the legal system and files another motion and hires another lawyer goes back to court and everything, then this little child will just be taken from them. So he's doing all that. He's very even keeled about. He's quite a mature young man. When I was talking to him about what I wanted to share with you this morning, identity, I showed him this worksheet with these five things on here, my faith, my relationships, my roles, my attributes, and my mission. And when he saw that word, my mission, he just kind of lit up. He said, I just figured out my mission. I just figured out my mission.

Our two-year old daughter is now my life's mission. I'm committed to spend all of my resources and all of my time and all of my energy to protect and provide for this little two-year old child. Even though she's not my biological child, my mission is, and I know that this little child, I'm going to be taking care of this little child for the rest of my life. There will never be a time when this little child doesn't live with us, but she is my mission. This is somebody who understands the biblical concept of identity.

The Big Idea today; **This is the essence of who I am: my faith, my relationships, my roles, my attributes, and my mission.** Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, thank you for what your word says about who we are and help us not to settle for second things, Lord, like money, power, fame, prestige, whatever, but rather let us be men who cling to first things, our faith, our relationships, the roles that you give us, our attributes in both character and conduct, and then the mission that you have for us. Help us to cling to your word and not be distracted by worldly ways. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.