

Who are you?

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When groups of people come together, they're often asked to introduce themselves. If you've experienced this, you'll notice that most methods ask for two key pieces of information: a person's *name*, and – in some form – who they *think* they are.

Your name is the only thing in this life that you actually own. It's a critical part of your *identity* before God, others, and yourself; and in some way it tells everyone who you are. Through most of history, parents carefully selected children's names based on linguistic meaning (Proverbs 22:1). Consider some of the most famous names in the Bible: Joshua (Jehovah is salvation), Samuel (asked of God), David (beloved), Solomon (peace), Isaiah (salvation of Jehovah). Each time these people's names were spoken, they were reminded of *who they were*.

Our names are so important to our identity that our names are written in the Book of Life (Daniel 12:1, Revelation 20:15), and God gave people *new* names when He changed their identity: Abram (high father) to Abraham (father of a multitude), Jacob (supplanter) to Israel (he strives with God), Simon (hearing) to Peter (rock). God was permanently reminding these people of *who they were*.

Sadly, the careful selection of a name is a tradition that's all but lost. Today many children's names are chosen because parents like the sound or written appearance; the latest trend seems to be making up completely new names. Many modern names no longer identify us as – or remind us that we are – people of God.

The other critical piece of our identity is *how we think* about ourselves.

Each time you think or speak the words "I am..." you're doing two things: identifying *who you think you are*, and making an oath about *who you're going to become*. Each time you make an "I am" statement your unconscious interprets it as a promise and modifies your behaviour to fulfill it. So you must carefully guard your identity, especially in three areas:

First: *what your body is doing is not who you are*. Have you ever heard someone say "I am cancer" or "I am backache?" While "I am contagious" can be a warning to others about your having a communicable disease, *you are not the disease*.

Second: *what you feel is not who you are*. We often incorrectly use "I am" to

describe how we feel in our current state. “I am cold” is actually “I am feeling cold,” and “I am sick” is actually “I am feeling sick.” The same is true of your emotional state: “I am depressed” is actually “I am feeling depressed.” *You are not the feeling.*

Third: *what you do is not who you are.* You are not your job, your hobby, or your behavior – these are usually labels about your gifting, your fun, and things you might need to improve. *You are not what you do.*

Choose your “I am” carefully. Only God can tell you who you really are: He called you from the womb by name (Isaiah 49:1), to be adopted as His child (Ephesians 1:5).

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