

Christian Selfhood

Responding to Carl Trueman's *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self* (Crossway, 2020).

I. How God determines our identity

- God made you. He defines who you are.
- God reveals your identity through both creation and his word.
 - Through creation: your body, your mind and personality.
 - Through Scripture: this takes priority over creation; it provides the lenses for seeing creation.

Our culture	Christianity
We are defined by how we feel about ourselves.	We are defined by what God thinks of us.
Sex is the center of our identity.	Sex is a wonderful gift from God, but only a part of who we are. Our sexuality must serve who we are in Christ.
Our purpose is our own sense of wellness and satisfaction.	Our purpose is to bring honor to God and find our satisfaction in him.

- Beware of letting feelings drive your life: "I don't feel close to Jesus. I don't feel like I'm a good Christian."
- Beware of a twisted view of freedom that rejects outside authority: "I don't have to listen to you. No one can tell me what to do. I shouldn't have to do anything that doesn't feel natural to me."

II. How our identity in Christ shapes everything else

Our culture	Christianity
Morality is just people's individual preferences (emotivism).	God establishes the objective standards for morality.
The great virtue is being true to yourself.	We must be true to God, even when that means denying ourself (Mt 16:24).
Marriage is all about personal satisfaction.	Marriage is about serving God, even when we don't feel personally satisfied.

Other cultural effects:

- Education as formation, not performance
 - Vs. "[I]nstitutions cease to be places for the formation of individuals via their schooling in the various practices and disciplines that allow them to take their place in society. Instead, they become platforms for performance, where individuals are allowed to be their authentic selves precisely because they are able to give expression to who they are 'inside'" (49).
- High view of motherhood
 - Modern culture seeks to erase the traditional cultural ideal of motherhood. Instead, the state educates and forms children (262).
 - Now, giving birth is not a fulfillment of what it means to be female, but a great burden to be overcome through technology (259).
- High view of singleness

- As Christians, we must refuse to allow our sexuality to be the central defining aspect of who we are. You are not less of a person if you are single and celibate. In Christ, you are whole and complete.
- High view of history
 - For our culture, “[w]ith no higher order to which we might look in order to understand human existence teleologically, we both are isolated from the past ... and are left free floating in the present” (388). Life is now merely lived for the present; the pleasures of the immediate moment.

III. Preparing for challenges

- Preparing for conflict, for intolerance, for ridicule and injustice:
 - “[T]he sexual revolution ultimately has one great goal, the destruction of the family” (262–63). Indeed, the goal now is the destruction of all sexual categories, since gender is just a social construct (364).
 - For moderns, Christians are the enemy: “[A]ny religion that maintains a traditional view of sexual activity and refuses to recognize identities built on desires and activities that they regard as wrong is by definition engaged in oppressing those who claim such identities” (400).
- Preparing for the end of free speech:
 - For moderns, why would “bad” words and ideas be allowed when their only purpose is to inflict psychological damage? (252)
 - Squelching of contrary opinions is already quite advanced: search engines, academic publishing, public school and university discussion, laws for therapy for homosexual desire, “hate speech” legislation: all these repress countering viewpoints.
- Nevertheless, we must still speak up—*in love* (Eph 4:15)
 - The conversation needs to go deeper than sexual ethics:
 - Authority: we disagree about who determines identity.
 - Human purpose: since there is no consensus on the proper ends of human existence, there can be no agreement on morals (83).
 - When we talk about sexual morality, we’re really talking about what it means to be human (264).
 - Since the assumption is that our sexual morals are based on bigoted preferences, we need to emphasize biblical and creational arguments for the “why” of sexual ethics.
 - Creational arguments:
 - It takes a man and a woman to have offspring.
 - Our DNA is an objective witness from God about our gender.
 - But we need to be cautious: our biology is affected by the fall (e.g., a genetic predisposition to alcohol abuse).
 - Biblical arguments: see “The Great Love Story of the Bible” SS on 7/26/20, along with all the classes in that series.
 - Loving our LGBTQ+ neighbors means we must not affirm their sinful sense of identity. How do we do this well?
- Taking the beam out of our own eyes before removing the splinter from the eyes of others: Trueman confronts us that we are all expressive individualists. We think about identity as a *choice* that we make. How can we better internalize our true identity, which Christ imparts?

Who You Are in Christ

I. Your old identity: who you no longer are

You do not define yourself anymore.

You are not defined by what you do. Gal 2:16; 2 Tim 1:9

You are not important because of how good you are at different things. Eph 2:8

You are not significant because of how much you do or how much you serve. Eph 2:8

You are not defined by what family you come from, or where you went to school. Gal 3:28

Your worth is not in whether you are single or married. Matt 19:12; 1 Cor 7:7

You are not defined by how many kids you have or by how good they are.

Your importance is not a function of how educated your children are, or how they are educated.

You are not worthwhile because you are smart, or a failure because you are not. Rom 12:16

Your life is not great because of how many amazing experiences you have had.

You are not important because you have lots of stuff, or lots of really nice stuff. 1 Tim 6:7-9

Your happiness does not depend on how well your team does, or whether your political party is elected.

Your worth does not come from having suffered more than others.

Your age does not make you better than others, or worse.

You are not important because you are what the world calls beautiful, or worthless because you are not.

You must no longer boast about your own strength, or put any confidence in it. Phil 3:3

Your life is not all about you. Rom 14:7

Your peers do not define you.

Your worth is not defined by what everyone thinks of you. Matt 6:2, 5, 16

You are not defined by what the media or the movies think of people like you.

You are not defined by the shameful and hurtful things others have done to you.

You are not important because lots of people seek you out.

Your sin no longer defines you.

Your savior knows everything about you, yet he does not reject you or shame you. John 4:16-26; 8:11

You are no longer dead in your trespasses and sins. Eph 2:1; Col 2:13

You are not a failure or a lost cause. Rom 8:1, 33-34

You are not worthless.

You no longer have God's righteous anger upon you. John 3:36; Eph 2:3; 5:6

You are no longer allowed to condemn or hate yourself, for God does not condemn or hate you. John 3:17-18; Rom 8:1

You are no longer a slave of sin, Satan, or the weakness of your sin nature. John 8:34-36; Rom 8:9, 15; Gal 4:3, 7, 8; Eph 2:2; Col 1:13

II. Your new identity in Christ: who you now are

You are now one with Jesus Christ, crucified and raised. 2 Thess 1:1; Matt 25:35–40
You are long-planned and longed for, chosen by God. Rom 1:2; 1 Cor 2:7; Eph 3:9; Phil 4:1; Col 3:12; 1 Thess 1:4; 1 Pet 1:1
You have died and been buried with Christ. Rom 6:4–5; 2 Cor 4:10; 5:14; Col 2:12; 3:3
You have been raised and now live with Christ. Rom 6:4–5; 1 Cor 15:22; Eph 2:5–6
You have been saved. Eph 2:5; Col 1:14; 2 Tim 1:9; Tit 3:5 You are being saved. 1 Cor 1:18; 15:2 You will be saved. 1 Thess 5:8–9; Heb 7:25; 1 Pet 1:9
You have been shown grace; you are a vessel of mercy. Matt 5:7; Luke 1:50; Rom 9:15, 23; 11:30; Eph 2:4; 1 Pet 1:3; 2:10
You are called by God. Rom 1:6; 8:30; 2 Thess 2:14; Jude 1
You have received the Holy Spirit. Rom 5:5; 8:9,15 (“the Spirit of adoption”); 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; Gal 3:14; 4:6; 1 Thess 4:8; 1 John 4:13
You are forgiven and are now righteous in God’s sight. Ps 32:1; Acts 13:38; Rom 8:1; Eph 1:7; 4:32; Col 1:14; 3:13; 1 John 2:12
You are saved from sin’s power and share in Christ’s victory over sin. 1 Pet 1:2
You are holy, a saint. 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 3:12; 2 Tim 2:21; Heb 3:1
You are being made holy by Jesus. Heb 10:14
You are enlightened by God in the truth. Rom 1:17; 10:20; 2 Tim 3:7; 1 John 5:20
You are a new creation. 2 Cor 5:17
You are God’s precious child. Matt 5:9; Rom 8:14–16; 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 3:26; Eph 5:1
You are God’s treasure. Matt 10:30; Mark 14:24; Acts 20:38
You belong to Christ. John 17:10; Rom 1:6; 7:4; 14:8; 1 Cor 3:23; Gal 5:24; Phil 3:12
You are a fellow ruler with Christ. Rom 5:17; Eph 2:6
You are a whole person in Christ, lacking nothing. You are well supplied with all things necessary for life and godliness. Jam 1:4; 2 Pet 1:3
You are part of God’s people, the body of Christ. Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:27; 2 Cor 6:16
You are a renewed worshiper. Heb 12:28
You are a citizen of Christ’s kingdom. Eph 2:19; Phil 3:20; Col 1:13
You are an exile in this broken world. Heb 10:13; Jam 1:1; 1 Pet 1:1, 17; 2:11
You are destined to suffer with Christ in this life. John 16:2, 33; 21:18; Rom 8:17; 2 Cor 5:2, 4; Phil 1:29; Col 1:24; 2 Thess 1:4–5
You have a vital role to play in God’s kingdom. Matt 28:19–20
You are in a life-or-death fight against sin and Satan. 1 Tim 6:12
Your life adorns the gospel, brings glory to God, and makes others want to believe in him. John 17:10; 2 Cor 4:15; 1 Thess 1:7; 4:12; Tit 2:10
You are God’s means of blessing others. Rom 15:22–29
You are firmly established; hope and joy are yours. 2 Thess 3:3
You are an heir of fabulous wealth. Rom 8:17; 10:12; Gal 3:29; 4:7; Eph 1:14, 18; 2:7
You will persevere to the end and win the victory over sin and Satan. 1 Pet 1:7, 9
You will be raised with an imperishable, glorious, powerful body, no matter how perishable, dishonored, and weak your body is when you die. John 6:40; 1 Cor 15:42–43; 2 Cor 5:1, 4; Phil 3:21; Tit 1:2
You will be saved from God’s coming wrath. Rom 5:9; 10:9, 13; 1 Thess 1:10; 5:9
You are glorious and you are destined for glory. Rom 8:18, 23, 30; 1 Cor 2:7; 2 Cor 3:8; Eph 1:4; 2 Tim 2:10
You can be confident about everything the Scriptures say about you. Luke 1:4; Eph 3:12