



Who Am I?

An Identity Workbook

Copyright©2012 by Louise Holzhauer
Scripture quotations taken from the New American Standard Bible®,
Copyright© 1960,1962,1963,1968,1971,1972,1973,1975,1977,1995 by The Lockman Foundation
Used by permission. www.Lockman.org

Contents

Introduction	v
1. Before You Begin	1
2. Who Does God Say That I Am?	5
3. My Purpose and My Values	11
4. My Personality	17
5. Gender, Body and Identity	21
6. My Natural Talents and Passions	27
7. My Spiritual Gifts	31
8. Communities Past and Present	37
9. My Story	45
10. My Character: Temporal and Eternal	51
11. Who Am I Now?	57

Appendices

Personality Traits	61
Who I Am in Christ – Scriptures	63
Where Can I Go From Here?	65

Introduction

Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." John 3:3. If this describes you, then my prayer is that you will affirm and understand the foundation for your identity in new ways, build on it with wisdom, and discover fresh hope, joy and direction for your life in Christ. However, if the language I've just used seems foreign to you, if you are not sure whether you are a child of God or not, then this introduction has been written for you.

There are basically two sources of identity in the world, though they may be expressed in a variety of ways. First, there is identity which has its foundation *inside* the person, that is, identity you create for yourself. Personal identity which is built upon one's internal beliefs and perceptions about one's self is probably most common in the western world. We are all born with a me-centered perspective which judges life according to the effect it has on us. If it feels good, it *is* good; if it feels bad, it *is* bad. If no stronger value system exists outside the person, we will also judge our own worth and identity based on how we feel about ourselves. If we've had some good, early social experiences, for example, we might define ourselves as "a people person." If we felt like an unwanted child, then we might define ourselves as unlovable or unworthy. This kind of foundation for identity is shaky, at best. It may be built on half-truths or even upon lies which we have unwittingly believed. It is changeable. When our circumstances tell us something new which conflicts with our earlier beliefs, confusion and even despair can result.

Second, there is identity which has its foundation *outside* the person, identity which is given to you. Certain cultures, religions and families have strong identity foundations which communicate messages like, "Our people work with their hands" or dictate a hierarchy of roles based on birth order or gender. Imagine being born the first child in a royal family, for example. A large part of your identity would be determined by factors outside yourself. When this kind of foundation for identity happens to accord well with the personality and gifts of the person concerned, it can serve as a meaningful basis for living. But the opposite is often true, resulting in a lifelong struggle to conform to an identity which has been handed to you wholesale. Once again, confusion and even despair can result.

Fortunately, there is a foundation for identity which is stable, yet flexible, comes from outside us, yet accords with our nature. That foundation is based in the Creator's understanding of us, His creatures. In order to fully comprehend His viewpoint, we need to be able to approach Him and to converse with Him. As imperfect and often wayward humans, our own sin and guilt block this conversation with a perfectly holy God. Who will save us from a life separated from Him? Only God can do that, and He has! It was for this reason that He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to earth – to live a perfectly righteous life on our behalf and to pay the just penalty for the sins of all God's children when He died on the cross. If you will give your heart to Jesus, sincerely confessing your sin and inability to save yourself, then He will remove *all* the debts you owe to the God of the universe. If that is something you would like to do, then stop and pray those thoughts right now. I'd also recommend that you start reading the Gospel of John in the New Testament which will tell you a lot more about Jesus. Call someone who can help you on the next step of that journey, but if you don't know anyone like that, try asking several churches in your area about a small group where you could learn more about "the Gospel" – which is the "good news" of Jesus Christ.

If you have a Gospel basis for your identity, then you have an unshakeable foundation which will support and enrich everything on top of it. When your beliefs about yourself are challenged, when confusion threatens through circumstances, your cornerstone will remain firm. That is my hope for everyone who takes the journey inside the following pages. Even if that still does not describe your worldview, you are welcome to continue through this workbook. There will be many things of value for you in terms of your own beliefs about your identity. However, there may be other things that you don't understand or accept. If any of those things should pique your curiosity about Christ, come back to this Introduction and reread it.

As a final note, this workbook is designed to be used by an individual or a group, one chapter per week for eleven consecutive weeks (12 weeks if you hand out the books the first week). There is no Leaders' Guide at present, but it is both profitable and a lot of fun to share highlights from the week's work in a small group setting.

It is my prayer that God will speak to everyone who reads this booklet in some new and wonderful way.

In Him,

Louise Holzhauer
October 4, 2010

Evaluating What You Wrote

The point of the previous exercise was to uncover some of the conscious and unconscious ideas that you already have about yourself. Now we are going to evaluate what you wrote – but please don't change any of it. You will have another chance to do the same exercise again later, but it will be valuable for you to keep your original thoughts.

When asked to say who they are, most people will include things like “wife” or “teacher” or “athlete.” These things are roles rather than parts of a core identity. They are ways that our identity shows up in the world, but they can and do change. It is also normal to include physical qualities, such as “young” or “athletic,” which are temporary descriptions rather than permanent characteristics. There is real danger in defining (rather than describing) ourselves in **temporary terms** because when these things change, we can feel that we have lost *ourselves*. For example, some women who identify themselves by their role as mothers experience bewildering existential loss when their children go off to college.

In pursuing identity, we want to uncover that core self which would be the same if you were a 20-year-old movie star or an 80-year-old, blind, indentured servant. As an illustration, Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a pastor and a world-renowned philosopher in pre-war Germany. But during World War II he participated in a plot to kill Hitler and spent his last months alone in prison before being executed. He struggled to understand himself in these new circumstances. He wrote a beautiful poem describing his dilemma entitled, “Who Am I?” Ultimately, he found that the center of himself was still a useable instrument in God's hands. The same gifts which allowed him to shepherd his parishioners helped him to encourage condemned prisoners. The intellectual prowess which had thrilled two continents poured into his letters home. The strength which had propelled him to join a dangerous cause allowed him to die with dignity.

So from this point on, when you ask, “Who am I?” answer yourself with ideas which wouldn't change if you were locked away in solitary confinement for 25 years. To begin to see the difference, go back over the things you wrote on the preceding page and underline in red all those temporary things which would change with time and circumstances.

A second ‘red herring’ in terms of identity is the problem of **negative qualities**. All Christians undergo the lifelong process of sanctification by which God remakes us in the image of His Son. Our sinful or broken parts are falling away and will not exist 100 years from now. Let's not define ourselves by the parts of us which are dying. While it is a valuable exercise to recognize our besetting sins, the purpose is to fight them, not to embrace them. While it can be helpful to understand our dysfunctions and wounds, the purpose is to heal them, not to be defined by them. For example, I know a man who struggles with the bizarre thoughts and anxiety rituals of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. Is OCD a part of his eternal identity? Of course not. I will recognize him in heaven by the incredible courage and deep faith he exhibits even now, not by the illness which has helped him develop those qualities.

So from this point on, when you ask yourself, “Who am I?” think about the person you are becoming – who God is revealing you to be. Go back over the things you wrote on the preceding page and use a different color to underline the negative qualities which will not exist when you become your heavenly, holy, true self.

Why Pursue Your Identity?

You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations — these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit — immortal horrors or everlasting splendors. — C. S. Lewis in The Weight of Glory.

Why should you pursue your own identity more thoroughly or differently than you already have? On the surface of it, that seems like a very self-centered and worldly thing to do, and it can be. If your purpose is to exalt yourself, if your goal is primarily to live a fulfilled and happy life, then it constitutes the worst kind of idolatry. (Think about it.) However, there are many good, godly reasons to prayerfully complete the rest of this packet, so let's get oriented by reviewing a few of them.

As human beings, we have been created in the image of God, and God knows who He is. In fact, God's name, Yahweh, means "I am" (Ex. 3:14). God is the ground and the source of everything we are meant to be. His good and unchangeable nature is the perfect archetype for our own identity. To pursue our identity is to engage in a refining process which brings Him glory and brings us closer to Him.

Christ knew who He was. He used a number of beautiful metaphors to explain Himself to people, saying things like, "I am the way, the truth and the life." He knew His position before God, so He could not be controlled by the opinions of men or the temptations of Satan. While he must have been raised, as the eldest son, to become a carpenter, the supporter of his parents in old age and the patriarch of his family unit, His identity was not defined by those roles which had been assigned to Him. He was able to be true to His identity and calling in the face of betrayal, persecution, torture and death because He knew who He was.

What are some words or phrases you might use to describe Christ's identity? (Try to stay away from Biblical clichés like "Messiah" or "Son of God.")

The first and great commandment is to love God (Matt. 22:37-38). While there are many ways we can do that, one way is to care for the things He cares for. We can appreciate His handiwork in all created things, even – maybe, especially – ourselves. Why should we pursue and value our identity? Because God does. Because we can be the wisest, most beautiful, most useful, most glorifying creatures possible when we know and love how He has made us.

The second commandment is like it: to love others as we love ourselves. Hard to do when you don't love yourself. But it's still hard to do even when you have begun to appreciate God's fingerprints on your soul. Pursuing your identity can help you love others better because you are loving them as an instrument in God's hands, not because you are trying to validate your

own existence. Pursuing your identity can also help you identify those ways that you are most gifted and passionate about loving others, the ways you are best fitted to love them effectively.

Another reason to pursue our identity is that we are not as wise as we should be. The world, other people and Satan tell us lies about ourselves. We not only believe some of them, but we live them, acting parts and embracing tendencies which are not part of the wondrous creature we are each becoming. Knowing ourselves better can help us make healthier decisions about jobs, purchases and especially relationships. Pursuing our identity can help us separate the temporal from the eternal, the false from the true, the sinful from the pure, taking us another step down the path God has marked out for us.

Finally, it is sometimes true that when people on a spiritual journey lose their negative concepts of self, their sinful habits, facades, addictions, etc., they feel empty and lost rather than poised for growth and new adventures. This is because their identity is tied up in the things which are passing away. (There are other reasons for feeling lost, as when a role has been confused with identity, noted above, or when someone else has always told you who you are.) Jesus gives this illustration: *"When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order. Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."* Luke 11:24-26. Jesus is saying that it is important to pour good things into your soul when it has been cleansed, things which will remain and help you combat spiritual darkness. There are numerous things which can fill us, like God's word and spiritual community, but why not explore the good things God created which may already lie undiscovered inside you?

Perhaps this is a turning point in your life. Perhaps you have exhausted an old role or grown weary in an old struggle and you are asking God if there is more to *you* than has met the eye so far. There most assuredly is! People talk about "reinventing" themselves; we are going to ask God whether He wants to use us, His inventions, in some new way or reveal some new facet that will lead us further down the path toward Christ. When we finally arrive at the foot of the throne, "the spirits of righteous men made perfect," (Heb. 12:23) we will have become everything that God dreamed for us. Right here, in this moment, as we pursue our identity, we are in the process of *becoming* that new and glorious creature.

Why do you want to pursue your identity right now?

Will you fail to live continuously in the power of the Spirit? Of course you will. Is that failure a measure of your value? No it is not! Read the following Scriptures and write down the things they tell you about *who you are* if you belong to God.

Luke 15:21-24

Rom. 5:17

Rom. 8:29-39

2 Cor. 5:16-21

Gal. 2:20

Eph. 1:4-14

From the following verses, record the words or names God uses to refer to you:

John 15:13, 14: _____

Matt. 12:50: _____

Rom. 1:7: _____

Rom. 9:22-26: _____

1 John 3:1-3: _____

Rev. 19:7 (referring to Christ and His church):

Reflect upon what these words mean in terms of your value, your position, or your purpose.
Write down your thoughts below:

See “Who I Am in Christ” at the end of this book for more encouraging Scriptures concerning your identity. Are there any which are especially meaningful to you? If so, why?

3. Defining My Purpose and My Values

As a Christian you cannot talk about your identity without talking about the action of God on you, the relationship of God with you, and the purpose of God for you. –John Piper in “Christian Identity and Christian Destiny,” 4/17/94

Most of us would like God to write our calling in giant letters on our front lawn, something like: “Run for mayor this fall because I am preparing you to be the next President of the United States!” Yet, it’s rare that we actually get that kind of specific direction. Much of God’s refining work in us surely occurs as we struggle in the half-light. However, we can still discover some general things about the reasons we were put on this earth. Read the following Scriptures and write out anything which tells you more about your purpose(s).

Deut. 10:12-13: _____

Is. 43:1-7: _____

Micah 6:8: _____

Matt. 22:37-40: _____

Matt. 28:19-20: _____

John 17:17-26: _____

I Cor. 10:31: _____

2 Cor. 3:18: _____

Eph. 1:11-12: _____

Eph. 2:10: _____

Eph. 4:11-13: _____

I Peter 4:11: _____

Rev. 14:6-7: _____

After meditating on those verses and any others that God may bring to mind, ask God to give you discernment as you *prayerfully* write out a definition of purpose in your own words. *Do not* copy or paraphrase a definition you have found elsewhere!

My purpose is: _____

Whatever specific tasks God has given you to do today can be done in the larger context of your purpose. For example, if your task is to clean the toilet, it can either be done self-centeredly (and probably with resentment) or it can be done in service to Christ, perfecting your spirit and fulfilling a part of your purpose. With that attitude in mind, we are going to work toward a declaration of values which will help you make life decisions within the context of your purpose.

My Values

Everyone has values – or standards they live by. If your purpose is the destination on a map, then your values are the directions you use to make turns along the way. You turn right or left based on your priorities (which is another way of saying “values”). Some of your values are overt, like “Thou shalt not kill,” but some of them are less obvious. You may even be unaware of some of your most cherished values. The exercises in this section will help you explore your own value system, compare it to some Biblical values and sort out the principles you want to embrace from those which are less important – or possibly even destructive.

Our earliest value system comes from the people who raised us. Our parents and teachers used certain standards to measure our conduct, and those standards become rules or guides for us, as well. What moral values were taught or enforced in your family when you were a child? Some examples might be frugality, honesty, keeping up appearances, loyalty, privacy, fairness or hard work. Try to think of specific conversations or incidents which helped you learn these values. Spend some time on this.

Which of the values listed above are still very important to you? Circle them.

At this point we need to ask God for His guidance in regard to our value system. It may be that the values you listed above already reflect God's values, but look over the list below in any case. Read the Scriptures associated with these principles and ask God to help enrich your thoughts. Some of these are *personal qualities* as well as *values*; so try to look at them as **criteria for making and evaluating choices**. For example, if your college-age son needs a new computer, you might ask him to get along at the library until the end of the semester or you might give him your charge card to use at Best Buy – or any number of options in between. Generosity, love, wisdom, frugality, practicality, people-pleasing or family image are all priorities which might enter into your decision process. Right now we are looking for those priorities which God seems to value most highly according to His word. In the blanks at the end of the list, include any other *Scriptural values* which seem particularly important to you.

- **Putting God first.** Deut. 5:7.
- **Loving others well.** Matt. 5:21-22, 43-44; I Cor. 13:13.
- **Humility.** Ps. 18:27.
- **Honesty.** Lev. 19:11.
- **Freedom.** I Peter 2:16.
- **Generosity.** Luke 6:38.
- **Sincerity.** 1 Peter 2:1; Col. 3:22.
- **Forgiveness.** Matt. 6:14, 15.
- **Purity.** I Peter 1:15, 16.
- **Diligence.** Prov. 18:9.
- **Respect for parents and authorities.** Eph. 6:2; I Peter 2:13.
- **Self-control.** Gal. 5:22.
- **Prayer.** Ezra 8:23; James 5:16.
- **Justice.** Is. 58:6.
- **Mercy.** Matt. 5:7.
- **Provision for family.** I Tim. 5:8.
- **Peace and unity.** Heb. 12:14; Eph. 4:3.
- **Dependence upon God.** Prov. 3:5-6.
- **Godly wisdom.** Ps. 119:16.
- **Sabbath rest.** Lev. 23:3.
- _____.
- _____.

After prayerfully meditating on these values, circle the ones which other people might say characterize you. Ask a few people, if you dare!

What Have You Learned?

Perhaps there are values in the previous list which you realize should be more fundamental to you than they are. Write those down and commit them to prayer and meditation:

Now restate your purpose below (you are encouraged to memorize it).

My purpose is: _____

Go back over the previous exercises, and then write out a set of **five to ten values** which you feel are central to your life and conduct as a Christian man or woman, values you can embrace as part of your identity. These are the standards that you would like to use to evaluate your own decisions in the future. Use your own words.

My principal values are: _____

4. Describing My Personality?

But my dove, my perfect one, is unique! Song 6:9

Personality is an elusive concept which has been variously defined as behavior, character or individuality. It is a conglomeration of our actions, our preferences, our thought patterns, our habits and our feelings about life. It can include abstract ideas like anxiety and creativity as well as very practical skills like organization and public speaking. While the Bible never uses the word, “personality,” it has much to say about **our minds, our hearts and our wills**. Biblically, these seem to be the building blocks of personhood. God is very concerned about our **minds**: how we think, what we think about, and where we get our information. It is also safe to say that God is interested in our **emotions**. Though the word “heart” is used in the Bible with diverse meanings, we use it here to designate the place inside which bubbles over with joy or stagnates with pride or cries out in despair. God cares about where we find our security and our passions, how we love and what we feel. God is also enormously concerned with our **will**, our behavior, our decision-making and our actions. For our minds God prescribes His truth; for our hearts He offers His love; and for our wills God gives us very practical limits and commandments as well as promised rewards. These three things, mind, heart and will, correspond to our head, our heart and our hands, and they are all uniquely created by God in every individual. Like snowflakes, no two people are ever quite the same in the ways they relate to themselves, to God and to other people. *But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. Eph. 4:7.*

To the best of your ability, describe your **mind**. What are your thoughts like (logical, creative, practical, obsessive, etc.)? What are your most common thoughts (fears, tasks, prayers, abstract ideas, self-encouragement, etc.)?

To the best of your ability, describe your **heart**. What are your emotions like (controlled, volatile, stable, etc.)? What are your most common emotions (compassion, anger, depression, joy, etc.)?

To the best of your ability, describe your **will**. What are your decisions like (disciplined, spontaneous, prayerful, out-of-the-box, etc.)? What are your most common choices and actions (self-denial, self-indulgence, meeting immediate needs, serving others, etc.)?

Humanmetrics.com offers a free personality test which is based upon Carl Jung's classic, 4-element personality typing¹. Christian author, Gary Smalley, has his own free downloadable test at: smalley.cc/free-personality-test². Take both of these tests this week and print out the resulting description of your personality type from each. If you would like to take some more online tests, print out the results of those you find helpful. No personality test, free or professional, is really diagnostic. Testing simply gives you a starting point for describing the ways God has crafted your individual style.

What is your 4-letter type from the Humanmetrics test? _____

Here is a quick explanation of the letters. You can Google your 4-letter type for much more information.

I/E = Introvert (gets energy from alone time) or Extrovert (gets energy from people)

S/N = Takes in information based on the objective Senses or upon iNtuition

T/F = Makes decisions based on Thought (logic) or Feelings (emotions)

P/J = Perceiving (prefers a flexible lifestyle) or Judging (prefers a structured lifestyle)

Write out the positive and negative characteristics and tendencies from the type description which you find **most true** about yourself:

What is your dominant animal type from Gary Smalley's test? _____

The animal types also correspond to an older system which describes people as Choleric (The Lion), Sanguine (The Otter), Phlegmatic (The Retriever) or Melancholy (The Beaver). You can do some research on any of these types for more details.

¹ Used with permission.

² Used with permission.

Write out the positive and negative personality traits from the detailed descriptions which you find *most true* about yourself:

Now look over the sample list of personality traits in the appendix and write out anything you feel describes you which has not already been covered. Feel free to add your own descriptors, too.

Read one or both of your detailed personality summaries, as well as your self-evaluations, to a trusted friend who knows you well, and get their feedback. What did they have to say?

How does your personality reflect Christ? For example, an orderly mind reflects the God of order (I Cor. 14:33).

Contrary to popular opinion, your tested personality traits can change somewhat over time as you learn and grow. Is there anything that you would like to ask God to help you change?

There may be aspects of your own personality that you have not really embraced. Somewhere along the line you may have learned to value certain traits over others and probably to dislike certain characteristics about yourself. Perhaps you accept these traits with a sigh but not with joy. For example, you may be fundamentally logical but wish that you were fundamentally imaginative. Write down anything about your own personality that you do not like or accept, and ask God to show you how He feels about your unique characteristics.

What Have You Learned?

The distinctive ways that God has created your personality are part of your identity. God loves beauty and variety, and you are a part of that picture. When we get to heaven, it will not be full of identical copies of Christ; it will be full of incredible creatures that reflect Christ's glory in many different ways. Knowing who you are will help you cooperate with God's work in you. He loves the way He is crafting you, and there is no reason you shouldn't love it too, as long as you recognize His authorship. Write down **five to ten personality traits** that you believe contribute to the identity of the amazing creature you are becoming:

Is there anything else you've learned this week that contributes to your identity?

5. Gender, Body and Identity

In addition to a mind, heart and will, God created you with a physical body. Although we know that it will be resurrected one day, we are largely ignorant of the extent to which a physical body will be a part of our eternal identity. For example, Matt. 22:30 tells us that there will be no marriage in heaven, but will there be male and female? I Cor. 15:37-49 tells us that our resurrected body will be very different, but will it be a perfect version of the one we have now? How old will we be? Will we have superhuman abilities? While it's fun to speculate, we really don't know.

That said, our physical bodies do have an impact on our identity here in this world, helping sanctify the spirit which will last into eternity. For example, limiting or painful disabilities are not, presumably, a part of our eternal destiny, but they certainly shape the people we become. Your body is God's gift to you. Like your spirit, it is both wonderful and fallen. And it is not a random happen-so, but your body is a purposeful part of God's work in your life. Like most other gifts of God, we can either think too little of our bodies or become ruled by them. We can deny them or worship. The purpose of this section is to help you discover ways in which your body shapes your identity and whether there are changes you might make.

- Check one: I like my body.
 I don't like my body.

What part(s) of your body do you like the most?

What part(s) of your body do you like the least?

Why did you answer as you did?

Go back and look over your notes on identity from the first week. Were there any thoughts which pertain to your physical body? If so, how do those things impact your identity? Give examples, if possible.

The body is the Temple of the Holy Spirit, a wonderful product of God’s imagination. *For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother’s womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. Ps. 139: 13-14.* The Bible assumes that we are going to care well for our bodies (Eph. 5:29) – just as we have been asked to care for everything in creation. If you were living in a friend’s home while they were on vacation, how would you treat it? Be specific. Would you try to get to know it, clean it, fix things that you broke, appreciate your friend’s taste or ingenuity?

Your body is the temporary home that God has lent to you. Good stewardship means taking care of it. What are some of the ways you take care of your body?

Stop right now and thank God for your body, confessing any ways you have not treated it like the gift that it is. Are there any ways in which you need to be a better steward of your body?

Use the space below to write out some of the *good* things about your body.

Satan finds many ways to twist God’s good gifts. In terms of our bodies, the flipside of disliking them is worshiping them in some way. Jesus said we should not even worry about our food or clothing (Luke 12:22-26)! Yet, some of us compulsively feed our bodies and others anxiously sculpt them away to nothing. The beauty industry in the western world surpasses anything Peter would have recognized when he said, *“Your adornment must not be merely external — braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God.” 1 Peter 3:3-4.* Various addictions trap us through our bodies. And you probably know someone who is sacrificing their family or their worship time or their money to pursue an athletic

activity as though it was a religion. Is there any sense in which you need your body to *feel* a certain way, to *look* a certain way or to *perform* to a certain standard in order to know who you are? What would you experience if you couldn't meet that need? Explain.

Scripturally, the body's most important impact on our lives and identity is a spiritual one. The Bible recognizes that we are intimately connected to our bodies. Our physical life affects our soul, and our spiritual life affects our body. Sin which contaminates the body contaminates the heart. And Paul said with pride that he bore "the marks of Jesus" on his body because through his wounds the world could see the allegiance of his spirit.

How has God used your physical body to shape your spirit?

Because we are flesh, God Himself became flesh. It was the precious body of Jesus Christ which was given in payment for our sins. It is His body which continues to heal and inspire us: *And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."* Luke 22:19. What does it mean to you that our Lord Jesus Christ had – and still has – a human body?

Gender and Identity

We know that our physical makeup and our body chemistry are gender-based. However, gender is also a spiritual trait. Man and woman together were created to reflect the image of God. For all their similarity, each carries a bit of uniqueness which is necessary to reveal God's character in total. We can see how our physical bodies reflect some of the spiritual qualities God has given to the genders. For example, the female body produces less testosterone and is physically smaller, on average, than the male. Thus, woman was given as a "helper" to the more robust man in his work (Gen 2:18), and he is expected to use his strength to defend those who are weaker. On the other hand, only women can nourish a new life, and a woman's heart is like God's in her ability to love the helpless. *As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you. Isa 66:13.*

What makes a man a man or a woman a woman? List below as many characteristics that seem to be gender-linked as you can. For example, women have been proven to have superior verbal skills!

What qualities of *yours* seem to be linked to your gender and in what way?

Circle any of those qualities in the two lists above which reflect something in God's character.

Christian psychologists commonly agree that **a woman's deepest need is to be cherished** while **a man's deepest need is to be effective in the world**. We can see these gender-based desires as they were cursed after the Fall:

To the woman: *"Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."* Gen 3:16

To the man: *"Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life."* Gen 3:17

How has your desire for fulfillment, specifically as a man or a woman, shaped the way you live and relate to others? Give at least one example.

What do you appreciate about the gender you have been given?

What do you dislike about the gender you have been given?

The most astounding spiritual implication of gender surely surrounds the eternal covenant between God and man. Christ, our Bridegroom, has paid the dowry for the church, His bride. At the end of time, the marriage supper of the Lamb will mark the consummation (pun intended) of our betrothal and the beginning of our true union with Him. *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church."* Eph. 5:31-32.

Thus our genders are meant to play out, in living color, the eternal love bond which God has with His people. Though some of us do not like the role we have been assigned in this drama, no Christian can say he does not like the drama itself! If it chafes to be assigned the part of helpmate (woman plays this role whether or not she is married) or if the responsibilities of spiritual leadership seem too heavy, we can remember that the genders which shape us are based in the character of God.

What do you think Paul intended when he said, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus"* Gal. 3:28? Does it contradict the Scriptures we've read (and others) which differentiate the genders?

What Have You Learned?

My earnest expectation and hope [is] that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. Phil 1:20

In what way(s), if any, does your gender shape your identity?

You live in a tent of flesh which is a gift from God Himself. It will wear out and be changed one day, but it is important now. Finish this sentence:

In terms of my body, I am a person who: _____

Is there any way you would hope to change what you have written above?

Would you say that Christ is exalted in your body? If so, how?

6. What Are My Natural Talents and Passions?

*Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
1 Cor. 10:31*

Why don't roses smell like codfish? Why does the world come in so many colors? It must be that God loves variety. He also made human beings with an infinite variety of abilities and interests which reflect His own. These gifts are part of God's "common grace" and belong to believers and unbelievers alike. Some of your abilities may be closely linked to your physical body. Olympic champion Eric Liddel said that he felt God's pleasure when he ran. Other talents may be intellectual or creative or empathetic, combining aspects of body and spirit. Whether you love to cook, speak multiple languages or have a natural connection with animals, all of these talents come from God (Ex. 35:35) and are a part of the person you were created to be. These gifts can be exercised in the name of reputation or self-fulfillment – or your passions can be dedicated to the Lord in ways that will last beyond this life (Rev. 14:13). Will Eric Liddel be the fastest man in heaven? Only God knows, but we will still be praising the Lord in eternity for the glory achieved through his passion and ability.

How well do you know yourself? Some people have no idea what their abilities or passions are. To begin with, see if you can answer most of the following questions.

What's your favorite color? _____

Favorite kind of music? _____

Favorite book, movie, painting or poem? _____

What are you really good at? _____

If you weren't able to answer, then you might want to spend some focused time getting to know yourself a little better. How do you expect to use the instrument God has given you if you don't know what it is or how to play it? Don't just answer the next set of questions; *pray* about them.

What do other people tell you that you do well? Answer based on past conversations but also ask at least two other people who know you currently.

What do you do in your spare time?

What would you do if you could take up any hobby or vocation in the world?

What skills have you *developed* in your life? (Include “everyday” things like cooking, sewing, chess, sports or languages if you have deliberately developed them.)

What skills would you like to develop?

When you were little what did you want to be and why?

What would you like to be now if you had it to do over again and why?

What brings you joy? Write down *anything* that comes to mind.

What do you really *dislike* doing or experiencing?

Based on your answers, is there anything in your life that you might want to change? (E.g., something in your job that is not a good fit or some skill that is going completely unused.)

Sometimes we have passions that do not turn out to be real areas of talent. Haven't we all heard an enthusiastic singer who really doesn't have a natural gift for it? If that might be the case for you in some area, it can be a huge disappointment. However, if we fail to recognize our own limitations, we can spend fruitless time and energy on a passion that misses the real fulfillment for which God created us. Is there any area of passion for you that you need to consider letting go of? If so, how will you make that decision?

If you feel really unable to assess yourself in this area, there is a career test called the Strong Interest Inventory that a counseling professional can administer for you. The Princeton Review website has a free "5-minute Career Quiz" that will give you a brief version of the same job-related information. Like all such tests, they are not really diagnostic but give you more ideas to pray and talk about. However, these tests fail to cover areas of passion or artistry which can be extremely significant for God's Kingdom. Sometimes these areas can only be discovered through prayer and active exploration. If you would like to embark on a journey of exploration, write down your specific commitment to do that with a proposed time frame, and communicate it to someone else who will pray for you. Then start keeping a journal of the things that give you joy and make a list of some various areas of interest, training and service that you will deliberately try on for size.

What Have You Learned?

Based on your answers above, what are the major passions and abilities that you currently possess?

How are you using (or how would you like to use) these gifts for God and for other people?

Which of your interests might you like to develop further?

The parable of the talents in Matthew 25 encourages us to use everything that God has given us for His Kingdom. (In fact, our English word “talent” derives from this parable.) On the lines below, write out a personal prayer asking God to continue revealing your talents and dedicating your gifts and passions to Him.

7. What Are My Spiritual Gifts?

As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. 1 Peter 4:10

Every person has been created with various natural gifts and talents. These are God's "common grace" for the world. But God also gives His chosen children other "spiritual gifts" when they are reborn as Christians. These gifts are meant specifically for the aid and help of the church, Christ's body. Through the ages, the church has attempted to quantify and categorize these gifts from Scriptural lists such as those below:

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. Rom. 12:6-8

But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of miracles, and to another prophecy, and to another the distinguishing of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills... And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues. All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not workers of miracles, are they? All do not have gifts of healings, do they? All do not speak with tongues, do they? All do not interpret, do they? 1 Cor. 12:7-11, 28-30

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers. Eph. 4:11

Underline as many gifts as you find mentioned in the passages above. It is not certain whether these lists are meant to be exhaustive and continuous or if they are merely examples of some of the gifts observed in the church at the time of the Apostles. In addition, some denominations continue the use of the so-called "sign gifts" in various forms, which involve God's miraculous intervention. Other churches believe that these gifts ceased when the canon of Scripture was closed around the end of the first century A.D. Examples of these gifts include speaking in tongues, foretelling the future and supernatural healing. Because of the controversial nature of these gifts even within denominations, they are not included here, but you are free to investigate them yourself. We will outline and explore a short list of some of the spiritual gifts. Ask your church if they advocate a particular list, and use the procedure on the following pages to evaluate *that* list if you would prefer.

8. Communities Past and Present

May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and multiply you, that you may become a company of peoples. Gen 28:3

Before He fashioned the world, God was in relationship with Himself: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Mankind was created in His image, to love God and other people. It is not good for us to be alone (Gen. 2:18), so God created community. We are like the colorful pieces of an ingenious jigsaw puzzle. While the pieces have individual uniqueness and beauty, their truest identity is revealed only when they lock arms and hearts in relationship with others.

Originally, the experience of community was meant to bless our lives. However, the curse of the Fall skewed all our relationships. As a result, community now has two distinct effects on us. First, it can still bless and fulfill its members, as when an excellent marriage completes both husband and wife. On the other hand, community also exposes our sinfulness. For example, marriage often reveals the selfishness of both spouses. Yet, God is pleased to use these fallen interactions to sculpt our spirit and grow our dependence on Christ. You are encouraged to think about both the positive and negative effects of community as they have shaped your eternal self. This section will guide you in identifying some of the communities to which you belong and how those communities have helped form your identity.

Communities in Your Past

The most important community in your past is your family of origin. Parents stand in the place of God to a helpless infant, meeting physical, emotional and intellectual needs. In this process a child learns what the world is like, what relationships are like and what God is like. The integration of nature and nurture in our early environment (both of them subject to God's sovereignty) is a powerful tool for molding our identity.

From our families we are meant to learn three basic truths. The first is based on faith in the generic sense. Faith teaches us that there is something larger in the universe, some purpose or Person within which **we are safe**. The second truth comes directly from our inclusion in the family group which teaches us that **we belong**. The third truth develops as we grow, but our family starts us on the path to personal identity. Family interactions teach us whether we are good, talented, stupid or unwanted. Family teaches us whether we are **lovable**. Look over the diagram below and consider how it applies to your upbringing.

We are meant to learn...

Missing a block leaves us struggling with...

I am lovable

IDENTITY

Worthlessness

I belong

FAMILY

Loneliness

I am safe

FAITH

Fear

What did you learn about each of these truths from your early family life? What did you miss?

I am safe:

I belong:

I am lovable:

Every family – every community, really – has its own identity (personality, values, stories, etc.) which rubs off on its members. For example, the town mayor’s family might develop an identity of power or propriety while the town drunk’s family could carry a burden of shame. The way you fit into your family also contributes to your identity. If you were the oldest sibling, perhaps you learned a confidence or morality that is slightly different from your brothers and sisters. Looking back at the family values you recognized on pages 12 and 13 may help you with the following questions about your family.

How would you describe your childhood family’s basic identity in a few words?

In what ways, positive or negative, did your early family life impact your *physical identity* (e.g., were your physical needs met, were sports important, were there medical problems, was body image or nutrition an issue)?

In what ways did your family of origin impact you *intellectually* (e.g., how important was education, what were the sources of knowledge your family relied upon, was truth a value)?

What is the *emotional* legacy of your early family life (e.g., was trust an issue, were all types of emotions allowed, did you receive a strong or weak emotional foundation for life)? Did your family teach you to express yourself, to fear emotions, to depend on others, to care for others, to be bold, to be stoic, etc.?

Most of us have been wounded in some form by our families. Like Christ, you will not carry your wounds into eternity except as beautiful scars which will bring more glory to God. List any ways you have seen your early wounds become treasures already.

List the wounds which remain unhealed and offer them to God for His work of grace in your spirit. If you would like to talk with someone else about them, make a commitment to do that.

What, from your family of origin, do you already see as a part of your eternal identity?

What else from your family, if anything, would you like to incorporate into your identity?

Although God sets the lonely in “families” (Ps. 68:6), these are not always families of blood. There are many communities which help shape your true self – and which are shaped in turn by your participation. God has given each one of us a neighborhood, a nation, ethnicity and a church or other spiritual community. In addition, we all have a society of friends, a workplace, a learning community or interest groups that help us grow. In addition to your family there were probably other communities in your past which helped shape you. Think about peers, clubs, church groups, fraternities, teachers, etc. List two or three other communities or relationships which had a lasting impact on your life and describe what that impact was:

What did all these earlier life experiences teach you about the value and/or the danger of being in community?

Your Communities Today

Communities radiate out from us in circles of intimacy, some very close and others superficial. Our closest communities are usually quite small – perhaps only two people. And the largest community to which any Christian belongs is “a great multitude which no one could count” (Rev 7:9). On the following lines, list the **three closest communities** to which you belong *right now*, and describe the kind of person you are when you are with them.

1. _____

When I am with them, I feel that I am _____

How do you contribute to the identity of this group? _____

2. _____

When I am with them, I feel that I am _____

How do you contribute to the identity of this group? _____

3. _____

When I am with them, I feel that I am _____

How do you contribute to the identity of this group? _____

Some of our larger communities are more circumstantial than transformative. For example, a generation or two ago, most Americans had a strong national identity. For a variety of reasons, nationality is less important today. For one person a neighborhood or workplace may be integral to life. For another, those are just places they happen to be right now. With which of your **larger communities** would you say that you really *identify* and what makes you say that?

The People of God

The people of God are a special community that stretches across time and space. While we will not keep our marriage relationships in heaven (Matt. 22:30), we will always be God's children together. In heaven and on earth, the bride of Christ is a plurality! In the Old Testament the gathered congregation was called the *kahal Yahweh* or God's assembly. In the New Testament we are called "the church," the body of which Christ is the head. Like all communities, the church is meant to make us holy through challenges and opportunities. But no matter the challenges, we are to be united and never to renounce her: *Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Heb. 10:25)*. Though it is, in reality, the largest community to which you belong (think about it), the body of Christ is also meant to be a place of intimacy.

Read 1 Cor. 12:12-27. Does this describe the way you feel about the church? Why or why not?

How has belonging to Christ's body specifically shaped your identity?

When you are sitting in the pew next Sunday morning (or perhaps the folding chair on Saturday night) look at the worshipers around you. *These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. (Rev. 14:4).* Note how that experience of community impacts you. What (if anything) do you know to be true about yourself as you sit there among them?

Your Love Languages

One of the most pleasant ways we experience community is having our needs met and our identities affirmed. Not everyone experiences affection the same way, however. It is good for you and those close to you to know how you prefer to receive love from others. Take the following test on the internet and record your results below⁴. (Dr. Gary Smalley's book, *The 5 Love Languages*, is a great resource to follow-up on these ideas.)

<http://www.5lovelanguages.com/assessments/love/>

What are your love language scores?

Words of Affirmation: _____

Quality Time: _____

Receiving Gifts: _____

Acts of Service: _____

Physical Touch: _____

Do you agree with these results? Why or why not?

With whom would you like to share these scores?

⁴ Used with the permission of Moody Publishers.

What Have You Learned?

Would you say that you are a person who belongs? _____

Look back over the experiences of community which you have recorded in this section. In what important, eternal ways have you been shaped by your various communities?

Are there any recurring areas of sin or weakness which the experience of community has exposed in you?

Is there any sense in which you have not fully recognized yourself as a relational being that is meant for community? Are there changes you would like to make in this area? If so, note them, and consider asking someone else to pray about this with you. *For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst. (Matt. 18:20)*

9. What Is My Story?

You are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. 2 Cor. 3:3

God loves stories, and so do we. When He wanted to communicate His truth to us, He did it largely through stories. When Jesus taught the crowds in Israel, he often told parables. When we see God glorified in this life, it is often through the stories which are alive all around us. In case you've never thought about it, you have a story. You are the only one who can tell it, because you are the only one who has lived it. It's a gift and a resource that God has given only to you. When you meet Moses one day in heaven, aren't you going to want to hear his story? Maybe he's going to want to hear yours, too. Your story was written by God to bring Him glory, not just here on earth but for all eternity.

In addition to bringing God glory through the telling, your story has also shaped your soul. It's a tool that God is using to make you more like Christ in unique ways. He's sculpted your heart, your mind and your will through the blessings and the struggles He's purposed for your good (Rom. 8:28). Therefore, your story and your identity are intimately linked. There are parts of your story which reveal the beauty of your eternal self and there are parts of your story which reveal the shadows which are falling away from you. The purpose of this section is to help you think about the story God has written for you and how that story has shaped your identity.

How has someone else's story revealed God's glory to you?

Is it difficult for you to believe that your life is a story which God is telling? Why or why not?

On the following pages next to the arrows, list **five or more defining moments/events** in your life. Spend time praying over them, asking God to help you understand how these moments have shaped the person that you are. Leave the "Qualities and Lessons" space blank for now.



Qualities and lessons: _____



Qualities and lessons: _____



Qualities and lessons: _____



Qualities and lessons: _____



Qualities and lessons: _____



Qualities and lessons: _____



Qualities and lessons: _____



Qualities and lessons: _____



Qualities and lessons: _____

Most people find that their life is made up of periods of light and chapters of darkness. Moments of light and blessing bring God glory by illuminating some facet of His character, e.g., His mercy, goodness, beauty, truth or justice. We see this in stories of Christ healing people, for example. These moments deserve celebration and inspire us to become more like God. However, difficult episodes of darkness also bring Him glory. We see this most clearly in the story of Christ on the cross. When we suffer the pain of our own story, we can either cling with faith to the Unseen Refuge or become despairing and hopeless. There is a sorrow which leads to life (2 Cor. 7:10-11). This sorrow acknowledges that man has fallen from the perfection God created and that our sin has wrought changes which are to be mourned because they do not spring from God's original, delightful plan. This kind of mourning is found throughout the Psalms and is a valuable form of worship. This kind of mourning is not without hope, and this kind of mourning accomplishes God's refining work in us, developing qualities like compassion, patience and humility.

Go back over the incidents you wrote down on the last two pages and use the margin space to mark them as stories of **light or darkness** in your life. On the last few lines of each narrative note any **qualities or lessons** which God has so far developed *in you* because of each chapter in your story.

What are some of the ways you see God glorified in your story?

Are there people in your life with whom you would like to share part of your story? If so, write their names below and pray about how and when you might do that.

What Have You Learned?

How has God used your unique journey to burn away the dross and to sculpt the artwork you are becoming? Look back over the incidents in your story and the qualities they have given you. Think about the resources you can offer because only you have lived through your story. Consider the ways God may already have used your story to work in someone else's life. How has your story shaped your distinctive identity?

You may want to write or record some of your story in a form which can be kept by your family members. It will be a valuable resource to you and to them, and that is one way that God's work in you can be passed along to new generations. Perhaps you could write about your life in a journal which reflects your personality and keep adding to it as you live out more of the story God is telling through you.

10. My Character: Temporal and Eternal

The Bible spends a great deal of time painting a portrait of God. The Old Testament shows us God's character through the Law. He has His priorities straight; He honors families; He rests; He is honest; He loves His people; He values life and marriage. And He wants His children to be like Him. What would it mean to live in a world where everyone loved God, respected man, always told the truth and dealt honestly with one other – where everyone obeyed the Law? I suppose it would be a lot like heaven! In the New Testament we see God more clearly in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ. It is both our duty and our glory to become like Him in terms of our character: our heart, mind and will. While we are not on the way to becoming little cookie-cutter Jesus copies, we *will* all reflect His character traits in unique ways.

We can't really talk about character without talking about our failings as well as our virtues. Bear in mind that your weakness and sin is NOT accompanying you to heaven. It is not a part of the eternal you. However, part of the process of becoming your true self involves identifying the parts which need to be "put off" (Eph. 4:22) and then working with the Holy Spirit to speed that process. This section will help you take a look at some of the flaws you are growing out of as well as the character qualities which are becoming a part of your eternal self.

The Temporal: Weaknesses and Wounds

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves. 2 Cor. 4:7

Temptations to Sin

Part of the recovery process for Alcoholics Anonymous involves making a "searching and fearless moral inventory" of ourselves. Addicts or not, we all have besetting sins and particular temptations we face as individuals. For some of us Satan approaches through luxury, diversion or impulsiveness. For others he attacks our thought-life with dark and shameful secrets. Read the Scriptures below as you examine your own heart, mind and will. Think about acts of omission as well as commission. Obviously, we are all guilty of many, many particular sins. Prayerfully ask God to show you those areas of *special* or recurring danger as well as those areas where God is at work most strongly in the present moment. Next to each Scripture write anything God seems to be saying about your character (for some of these Scriptures there may not be anything to write):

Deut. 5:6-21 _____

Prov. 6:16-19 _____

Rom. 13:13-14 _____

2 Cor. 12:20 _____

Eph 4:31-32 _____

Col 3:5-9 _____

James 1:19-21 _____

What areas of sin seem to be particularly troublesome to you?

Our Wounds: Means of Grace or Weapons of Destruction?

God intends our injuries to be opportunities for His grace in our lives (James 1:2-4), enlarging our hearts, stripping away our idols, developing our strength and drawing us to depend on Christ. However, our wounds often lead us into sin instead. Pain can cause us to isolate ourselves, to turn our anger on the wrong target or to lose hope. Grief over loss which might have been a fitting memorial to a good gift can become bitterness toward God or the world. Where we might have become wounded healers like Christ, we can become wounded destroyers instead. Ask God for His eyes to examine your own wounds and the ways they may be causing you to hurt others. This is a complicated subject and one you might want to explore with the help of a trusted friend or a counselor. Summarize your thoughts about the wounded parts of your own character as you answer the following questions.

Heart:

- Are there ongoing resentments you deal with (anger, envy or selfishness)?

- Are there particular fears which trouble you or lead you into sin?

- Which sinful desires and temptations are you most vulnerable to, and do you understand why?

Mind:

- Where do you have difficulty believing God's truth? (For example, some of us struggle with His promise to provide for us; others don't really believe we are forgiven, etc.)

- Are you renewing your mind through regular study of God’s word? If not, what is stopping you?

Will:

- In what areas of life do you struggle most with overt sins – sins you’ve actually committed, not just thought about?

- Failing to love others well is often tied to self-protective coping strategies (e.g., lashing out when we feel attacked, withdrawing from intimacy, etc.) Are there ways you can see this in your own life?

- Most of us have trouble with our mouths. What spoken sins are most troublesome to you (e.g., gossip, exaggeration, flattery, vain promises, etc.)? Do you understand why?

The Eternal: The Fruit of the Spirit

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory. 2 Cor. 3:18

Now for the good stuff! In addition to the spiritual gifts you catalogued earlier which relate to our *tasks* in the church, every believer is charged with cultivating the fruit of the Spirit which concerns our *character*. These are the things which are going to flower into full-blown glory in heaven, but they are growing right now. There are many places in Scripture where we can find lists of **godly qualities**. Underline the ones you find in the following verses.

Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Matt 5:5-9

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Gal 5:22-23

Walk as children of Light (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. Eph. 5:8-10

So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. Col. 3:12-13

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. Rom. 12:9-13

Since every Christian should be developing these qualities, they *will* be a part of your eternal identity. Still, we may consider whether there are a few areas where God has given you maturity beyond your years – these might be qualities you could teach or encourage in others. They might be qualities God wants to use in some current situation. There may also be unique opportunities God has given you to shine for him through your story. Ask a couple of friends to tell you which character qualities in you most remind them of Christ (really!). Prayerfully evaluate yourself as well.

What godly character traits have been especially evident in your life? Explain each.

Which “fruit of the Spirit” does God seem to be cultivating or using most in your life right now? Explain.

Complete this sentence: “God, I give you glory and honor for empowering me by the Spirit to become more like your Son in His qualities of:

What Have You Learned?

Which of your character flaws do you sense God targeting for removal right now?

Are there any weaknesses or wounds that you would like to work on? Ask someone to pray for you about this (either specifically or generally).

How does it make you feel to know that your sin nature will cease to exist and your wounds will all become badges of God's grace in eternity?

As a unique child of God, what are some ways your *character* is being used to glorify Him in this life?

When you become fully transformed, seeing God face to face, hearing Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21), what are the character traits you most hope He might mention with approval?

11. Who Am I Now?

He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it. Rev. 2:17

The title of this section has a double meaning. You are going to repeat the exercise that you did at the beginning of this workbook, and your answers may be somewhat different this time around – you may see yourself differently now. However, it also reflects the fact that all of us are in the process of *becoming* the person who will stand with the community of saints in eternity. *For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known. 1 Cor. 13:12.* To be sanctified is to change, to evolve, to grow. You will put your name and date on this final exercise because if you do it again in five years, you may see some differences. Will your identity actually change? Well, your eternal self will not really change, but it may become a little more refined as you grow, a little more clearly revealed.

Spend this week journaling the same question we started with, “Who am I?” **Go back and prayerfully meditate on the “What Have You Learned” pages from each chapter.** It might even be helpful to copy just those pages and put them together in a notebook for reference. After you have distilled and meditated on all that you have studied, write a summary below. Be specific and individual. There are certain things everyone can truly say about being a child of God, but also include the ways your identity reveals your uniqueness. Ask God to help you understand your own deepest beliefs and feelings about yourself. This time write out two different summaries – one which includes things you may still believe about yourself which are *not* a part of your eternal destiny and another one reflecting the immortal person you are becoming. It would be great if you had nothing to write on the first list!

Things Which Do Not Define Me

Think about the ways you thought of yourself before starting this workbook and even earlier in life, maybe before becoming a Christian. How would you have named yourself then? By the way, it's OK for this "name" to reflect roles, negative qualities or parts of your story. This is how you *used* to think of yourself.

Now ask God to give you an idea for a new name, one that fits His perspective on you and the person you are becoming. What would you like your new name to be if you could choose it right now? It is all right if your name reflects a role *in the following sense*: sometimes a role can illustrate many qualities at once. However, if you choose a name which is more of a role than a quality, be sure you understand *why* you have chosen it as a word-picture. For example, if you choose, "Mother" it should be because you are a nurturing shepherd who gathers in the little ones in every context, not because your identity is rooted in your own children.

I would like my new name to be:

If you can find a small, white stone you might like to write this "name" on it as a reminder of God's work in your life. Put your name and the date below with thanksgiving for His beauty revealed in you today.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Personality Traits

Adaptable: Making changes when necessary.

Adventurous: Bold, exploratory, willing to take risks.

Aesthetic: Notices the beauty of things, ideas, etc.

Altruistic: Caring to contribute to the betterment of the world.

Artistic/Creative: Engaged in creative work in any of several art forms.

Calm: Serene. Peaceful.

Compatible: Being in harmony with others and having the ability to work well with others.

Compassionate: Having sympathy and feelings for people with problems.

Competitive: Striving to win.

Courageous: Meeting danger or difficulties in spite of fear.

Courteous: Being thoughtful of others.

Decisive: Making decisions promptly and definitely.

Dedicated: Being seriously devoted to causes and/or goals.

Detail-Oriented: Concerned for the small things that need doing. A list-keeper.

Dramatic: Experiencing and displaying passionate emotions.

Enterprising: Enjoys initiating ideas and actions.

Enthusiastic: General eagerness about life, people and new situations.

Friendly: Developing close personal relationships with people. Drawing others in.

Honest: Having integrity and keeping one's promise.

Independent: Preferring to guide and hold one's self accountable without outside intervention.

Industrious: Being consistently active and getting work done.

Influential: Motivating or encouraging others.

Loyal: Showing devotion to people and/or things.

Moral: Guided by a fixed set of standards.

Open: Easily sharing oneself with others. Not self-protective.

Patient: Being able to wait and taking time to do things.

Perfectionistic: Trying to achieve the highest possible degree of excellence.

Persevering: Being persistent in pursuit of tasks.

Private: Keeping intimate details of life out of general conversation.

Relational/Social: Drawing one's energy from contact with people.

Responsible: Being accountable for duties and following through with your duties.

Self-Controlled: Controlling your own actions and feelings.

Self-Reliant: Confidently trusting one's self to do things independently.

Stable: Being constant in one's emotional responses, not dramatic.

Who I Am in Christ

I am ...

a child of God ~ John 1:12

a friend of Jesus Christ ~ John 15:15

justified ~ Romans 5:1

a temple of the Holy Spirit ~ 1 Corinthians 6:19

a member of Christ's body ~ 1 Corinthians 12:27

chosen by God ~ Ephesians 1:3-8

redeemed ~ 1 Peter 1:18

forgiven ~ Colossians 1:13-14

complete in Christ ~ Colossians 2:9-10

an heir of eternal life ~ 1 John 5:11-12

strong in the Lord ~ Ephesians 6:10

the confident recipient of mercy and grace ~ Hebrews 4:14-16

an overcomer ~ Revelation 12:11

healed ~ 1 Peter 2:24

being transformed ~ Romans 12:2

more than a conqueror ~ Romans 8:37

uncondemned ~ Romans 8:1-2

inseparable from the love of God ~ Romans 8:31-39

sealed by God ~ 2 Corinthians 1:22

hidden with Christ in God ~ Colossians 3:1-4

confident that God will complete the good work He started in me ~ Philippians 1:6

a citizen of Heaven ~ Philippians 3:20

growing unafraid, powerful, loving, and self-controlled ~ 2 Timothy 1:7

protected ~ 1 John 5:18

chosen and appointed to bear fruit ~ John 15:16

a minister of reconciliation for God ~ 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

seated with Jesus Christ in the heavenly realm ~ Ephesians 2:6

God's workmanship ~ Ephesians 2:10

Where Can I Go From Here?

If you have been enriched by this journey, you might want to consider some of the suggestions below for using or expanding the concept of identity.

- Enlist the short-term help of a Christian counselor to go over the material in this booklet with you.
- Put this booklet in a safe place and go over it again in a year or two. You may be surprised at your own growth.
- Continue recording the story of your life. You might use a journal, a photo journal or start a blog.
- Adapt some of this material to teach your children, especially teens, about their identity in Christ.
- Use your identity as a springboard to pursue or change your vocation or service. Your career and your other life roles should *proceed from* your identity rather than the other way around.
- Memorize your purpose statement.
- Have your purpose and values done in calligraphy and post them in your home or office.
- Write your values on a card, and put it in your wallet for easy reference when you are making life decisions in real-time.
- Call your church and ask them what service opportunities are available for someone with your spiritual gifts.
- Adapt some of this material to pursue your identity *as a family* or even *as a church*.
- Ask others to purchase their own workbook, and lead a small group on the topic of identity, helping others through the process you have been through yourself.
- Host a seminar or retreat on the topic of identity.

For more information or questions, please contact Louise Holzhauser by e-mail at LHolzhauser@orangewood.org or by phone at 407-619-2556.