

Who We Are

Introduction

Psalms 139:14 I will praise You, **for I am fearfully and wonderfully made;** Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.

- 1. A human being is an amazing creature!**
- 2. Only we are capable of having an “identity crisis.”**
 - A. A human being is a who and not a what.**
 - B. We are not only conscious beings, we are self-conscious.**
 - C. We can not only think, we can think about our thinking.**
- 3. Among the things we need to think about, these are important:**
 - A. The quality of persons we have become.**
 - B. The quality of persons we would like to be, ideally.**
 - C. The influences that have contributed to our being who we are right now.**
 - D. The influences that are taking us into our future.**
- 4. These issues have to do with our self-understanding and our character.**
 - A. Too often, we get both of these from the “social mirror.”**
 - B. And too often, the results are not very satisfactory.**
- 5. God has something better for us.**

Who We Are

1. We need to think consciously and carefully about who we are.
 - A. The inscription at Delphi in ancient Greece said: Know thyself!
 - B. Socrates said, "The unexamined life is not worth living."
 - C. Our actions spring from our character — what we do results from who we are.

Proverbs 23:7 For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. "Eat and drink!" he says to you, But his heart is not with you.

Matthew 12:33-37

Mark 7:20-23

Proverbs 4:23 Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.

2. Various elements are a part of who we are.
 - A. Our family. Like it or not, a connection to those who gave us birth is carried in every cell of our bodies.
 - B. Our physical characteristics. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
 - C. Our conduct (words and deeds). (Colossians 3:17)
 - D. Our thoughts. (Philippians 4:8)
 - E. Our values. (John 7:24; 1 Corinthians 3:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:16)
 - F. Our character. (2 Peter 1:2-7)

3. The more outward elements of our identity tend to be less under our control and less important — it is the inward person that is most significant.

1 Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, **but the LORD looks at the heart.**"

A. It is the "hidden person of the heart" that matters most.

1 Peter 3:4-5 rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with **the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit**, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands,

Romans 2:28-29 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew **who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart**, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

- 4. No two human beings have exactly the same combination of qualities in the various areas that were mentioned.**
- 5. Regarding those attributes that involve some degree of choice, the question is: how did we each get the unique mix that makes us who we are?**
- A. Could it be that our identity be like our bedroom closet: a jumble of haphazard accumulations?**
- B. Or are we who we are because of careful choice and decision?**

Taking Responsibility for Who We Are

1. **Our society tends toward a deterministic view of human behavior.**
 - A. **Genetic determinism says we are controlled by our genetic makeup: it's our ancestors' fault.**
 - B. **Psychic determinism says we are controlled by our early childhood experiences: it's our parents' fault.**
 - C. **Environmental determinism says we are controlled by what happens around us: it's everybody else's fault.**
2. **The Bible, however, teaches that we are created with freedom of the will.**
 - A. **We are, basically, what we choose to be!**

Luke 10:42 But one thing is needed, and **Mary has chosen that good part**, which will not be taken away from her."

Joshua 24:15 And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, **we will serve the LORD.**"

1 Kings 18:21 And Elijah came to all the people, and said, "How long will you falter between two opinions? **If the LORD is God, follow Him**; but if Baal, follow him." But the people answered him not a word.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Colossians 3:1-2

- B. We are not merely acted upon — we are free moral agents who act.**
- C. The freedom to choose is the basis of our accountability to God.**

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

- 3. We are responsible for who we are.**
 - A. Responsibility = response + ability. We are able to choose our responses!**
 - B. We cannot always choose what happens to us, but we can always choose what we do about what happens to us.**
 - C. History is a record of the encounter between character and circumstance.**
- 4. Much more than the world would have us think, we are able to choose:**
 - A. Our thoughts, decisions, and emotions.**
 - B. Our knowledge, aptitudes, and skills.**
 - C. Our beliefs, attitudes, values, and ideals.**
 - D. Our personality, reputation, and character.**
 - E. Our eternal destiny.**
 - F. Our happiness.**
Ecclesiastes 11:9-10

5. **We need to take responsibility for ourselves.**
 - A. **We cannot afford to just “go with the flow.”**
 - B. **We must write our own scripts, program our own computers, run our own brains.**
 - C. **We must be proactive, rather than reactive.**
 - D. **We must live by decision, rather than by default.**

Being Who We Are

1. **Happiness and joy come from integrity: alignment between our values and our conduct.**

John 13:17 If you know these things, **blessed are you if you do them.**

James 1:25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty **and continues in it**, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

James 4:17 Therefore, **to him who knows to do good** and does not do it, to him it is sin.

2. **It is not always easy to discipline ourselves to live consistently with who we are.**
 - A. **But life offers us a basic choice between two pains: the pain of discipline or the pain of regret.**
3. **The old advice is good: To thine own self be true.**
4. **Whoever “we” are, we need to be the very best “we” can be!**

Conclusion

1. We need to pay the price to figure out who we are, to do the hard work necessary to learn what is most important to us.
 - A. **"If a man hasn't discovered something that he will die for, he isn't fit to live"** (Martin Luther King, Jr.)
 - B. If we are going to have to answer to God for ourselves, why would we let those around us make the decisions we are going to be held accountable for?
2. Figuring out what is most important to us and taking responsibility for our own values does not mean refusing to listen to anyone else.
 - A. It does mean being very careful about our values.
 - B. It means getting the help we need from sources God would approve of.
 - C. It means making up our own mind about who we are — based on **what is right and good!**
3. It is wise to consider who we want to be later in life — we need to "begin with the end in mind."
 - A. Consider this poem by Thomas S. Jones, Jr.:

Across the fields of yesterday
He sometimes comes to me,
A little lad just back from play,
The lad I used to be.
And yet he smiles so wistfully
Once he has crept within;
I wonder if he hoped to see
The man I might have been.

B. Walt Disney used to ask: "Would the little boy you were be proud of the man you are?"

4. Solomon advised:

Ecclesiastes 12:1 Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them":

5. Now is the time to CHOOSE our convictions and our character!

A. Tomorrow — WILL BE TOO LATE!

