

SUMMER SERMONS

GENESIS 1:26-27

WHO AM I?



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

Lifelock, Identity Guard, Protect my ID, ID Watchdog, Trust ID. All names we've become painfully familiar with through endless commercials on radio and television. Their ads follow us around the Internet, popping up here and flashing there, constantly reminding us that we are at terrible risk of identity theft, of someone stealing enough personal information about us to damage our finances and ruin our reputation.

The truth is that it's even worse than the Identity Theft Protection industry portrays. Russian phishers, rich Nigerian widows, and Chinese hackers are the least of our problems. There are far more dangerous identity thieves that are far more difficult to detect, and they are tracking us from the moment they are born – pride, commercials, Hollywood, social media, parental pressure, success, failure, friends, the devil, and many others have been far more successful at stealing our identity than any online thieves.

Why is identity theft so terrible to experience? Because it steals the answer to the second most important question in the world. If the most important question in the world is "Who is God?" the second most important is "Who am I?" Our answer to that question about our basic identity impacts and influences everything in our lives: our self-image, health, spirituality, ethics, roles and relationships, careers, and our view of the past, the present, and the future.

I want to help you recover your God-given identity, and equip you to help others do the same. To do that, we need to go back to the first man and woman and their original identity in Genesis 1:26-27. We're going to look at other verses too. But first, let's think about ways in which our identity can be stolen from us.

NB. This sermon does not address the extremely rare physical condition of Intersex where there is genuine physical and biological confusion.



How do I know if my identity has been stolen?



1. IDENTITY THIEVES HAVE MANY DISGUISES

The best kind of theft is the one where people don't even realize something's been stolen. I remember seeing a movie in which an art thief stole priceless paintings but he left a copy, a counterfeit, in its place so that people didn't even know it had been stolen. That's usually what happens with identity theft. Our identity is stolen and replaced with a counterfeit, and we don't even realize it's happened.

So how do we know if we've had our identities stolen and replaced with a false one? We can answer that question by asking another. **What's the first word you think about when you think about yourself? What do you answer when you ask yourself, 'Who am I?'** If your answer is any of the following, then you're a victim of identity theft.

I am my body: Do you define yourself by your body? Nine out of ten teen girls are unhappy with their body. "I'm fat...skinny...tall...small...ugly...beautiful, etc."

I am my grades/job: Do you get your sense of worth from your performance at school? If you get good grades, you feel good about yourself and look down on others. If you get bad grades, you are a failure, and are jealous of others.

I am my friends: Do you build your identity around having friends – online or real life? The more friends you have, the better you feel. Or is your life worthless unless you have a boyfriend or girlfriend?

I am my sin: Is there a sin in your life that dominates your thinking? You cannot think about yourself without thinking of that sin, that habit, that incident?

I am my sport: If you win, or your team wins, you feel great. If not, life's not worth living. Your mood is determined by medals.

I am my problem: Have you let your divorce, illness, anxiety, or depression define you? Is that all you see when you see yourself?

I am my past: Maybe you've been the victim of abuse. I'm so sorry. It was not your fault. It should not have happened to you. It was wrong. But are you allowing that abuse to ruin the rest of your life by letting it dominate define who you are?

I am my sexual desires: God created us so that sexual desire, intimacy, and enjoyment would be part of human experience. Sin, however, has distorted this good gift, with the result that what God designed to be a part of us can become the whole of us. We're especially vulnerable to this in our teen years when sexual desire awakens. This can become so powerful that we allow it to define us at times. However, it's a big mistake to let extreme, confusing, and temporary feelings define us for the rest of our lives.



I am who I feel I am: My emotions or self-perception determines my sense of self and sexual orientation. Gender becomes a spectrum that one moves along as one feels and chooses. But psychology (feelings) cannot change ontology (being).

What's so bad about all these identities? Some are simply false; they just aren't true. Others are based on factors that are constantly changing. Some of them give power to other people to define us. Others are given first place when they don't even deserve tenth place. And all of this creates a lot of mental and emotional confusion and distress.

♥ Write down what first comes to mind when you ask, "Who am I?" What words do you first think of and why? Where are these words coming from? Who or what has inserted them in your mind and heart? Where are you getting your identity from? How can you help others see they have a false identity?

♥ Jesus calls the devil a thief who comes to steal, kill, and destroy (Jn. 10:8-10). He has many identity thieves working for him too, and they usually steal and kill with lies (John 8:44). If the Devil can get you to believe a lie about your identity then he is slowly killing you. Ask God to deliver you from this liar and killer.

**A FALSE SENSE OF SELF
WILL KILL YOURSELF**



If my identity has been stolen, how do I get it back?



2. A STOLEN IDENTITY CAN BE RECOVERED

The good news is that a stolen identity can be recovered, and a false and shaky identity can be replaced with a true and strong identity from the God who made us.

Step One: I am an image-bearer of God (Genesis 1:26-27)

God made us to bear his image, to show who he is to the world. That's our fundamental identity and purpose. Therefore, before we even answer "Who am I?" we need to find out "Who is God?" Often we go wrong on the "Who am I?" question because we've gone wrong on the "Who is God?" question. God displays his image in two different, complementary, and equal sexes of male and female. Every cell has male or female written in it.

Step Two: I am a sinner (Genesis 3)

Although God originally made us to carry and show his image to the world, because we inherited our first parents' sin, we are now sinners and our sin has distorted God's image to us and in us. That's why we need the Bible, to show us who God is and who we are.

Step Three: I am a Christian (1 Corinthians 15:10)

To fully recover our God-given identity and replace all false identities, we need to become a Christian through faith in Christ. Faith in Christ gives us a new identity in Christ. Think of all that becomes true of you when you can truly say, "I am a Christian."

I am loved by God: God has loved me from eternity past and will love me forever (Jeremiah 31:3). Therefore, who else loves me, or doesn't love me, matters much less.

I am a child of God: It doesn't matter who my natural family is if I am a child of God. As part of God's family, I need never be lonely as I have family all over the world (Romans 8:14-17).

I am accepted by God: I may be rejected by others, but God accepts me 100% (Eph 1:6).

I am forgiven by God: Yes, I am a sinner, and I have committed terrible sins, but Christ's blood washes and cleanses me from all sin, and makes me clean in his sight. I am white as snow (Isaiah 1:18).

I am the body of Christ: If my body is a member of Christ's body, what more can I ask for? It may not be the most attractive or desirable body to others, but Christ has shed his blood to make my body part of his body (1 Corinthians 6:15).

I am a joy to God: God doesn't just tolerate me; he enjoys me and sings songs over me and about me (Zephaniah 3:17).

None of these things ever change if you are a Christian. They don't depend on your feelings or on other people. You are not defined by your body, your grades, your friends, your enemies, your sin, your sports, your successes, your failures, or your sexuality. No, you are defined by God, and with this God-given identity in hand you can defy every other attempt to define or identify you.



Step Four: I am unique (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:21-27)

Steps 1-3 are equally true of all God's children. However, that doesn't mean that God just turns out Christian clones, lookalikes in every respect. No, God has made each of us different with unique personalities, characters, gifts, graces, and callings.

We make a big mistake if we make our uniqueness the most important thing about us. However, we also err if we ignore or downplay our God-given uniqueness. That's why we come to God and ask him – not our parents, our culture, nor our friends—“Who do you want me to be?” If we get this answer right, so much else will be right.

♥ This isn't a once-and-done, I'm afraid. It's a daily battle to identify counterfeit lid's and also to recover and rebuild our God-given identity. We have deep defaults and a persuasive devil to fight. We need God's voice of truth speaking into our life to silence or drown out all the other voices

♥ Lord, I confess that I have many false identities. Let me be defined by you Enable me to get my identity from you and to rejoice in it. When others try to steal my God-given identity and replace it, help me to fight for truth and say, “No, by the grace of God, I am what I am.” Amen.

Research Findings on LGBT Health Outcomes

We acknowledge the pain and distress of gender dysphoria and SSA. We sympathize with all who suffer painful feelings of disconnection and unwanted desires. We condemn bullying and discrimination. But, we must also speak the truth and share important facts.

1. Maleness and femaleness is a biological reality established at conception and cannot be changed by feelings, surgery or drugs. They can only masculinize or feminize outward appearance.
2. Transitioning usually increases distress. The best studies have found that it brings no meaningful improvement in life." In Sweden, where there is strong cultural support of the transgendered, the suicide rate of those who had undergone sex-reassignment surgery rose to twenty times that of comparable peers within ten years. The Guardian's summary of 100 studies of post-operative transsexuals found no conclusive evidence that gender reassignment is beneficial for patients.
3. The vast majority of gender-confused children grow out of their gender-confused feelings with no intervention at all. The best scientific studies available show that about 80 percent to 95 percent of these children “will eventually come to identify with their bodies—if they aren't socially and medically encouraged to maintain a transgender identity”
4. Sixty-three percent of transgender people have some type of co-existing psychiatric disorder, such as depression, phobias, PTSD, etc. which if treated can reduce dysphoria.
5. It's our feelings that need to change, not our bodies or our clothes. As Sam Alberry said, "Our culture says, “Your psychology is your sexual identity—let your body be conformed to it.” The Bible says, “Your body is your sexual identity—let your mind be conformed to it.” They need counsel to change sense of self not their body.
6. After his sex-reassignment surgery, Einar Wegemen (the eponymous ‘Danish Girl’ of the 2015 film) triumphantly declared, ‘I finally am who I am.’ The evidence suggests that that euphoria is short-lived. But one day all who are in Christ will say those words as they are made perfect in holiness and their souls are reunited to their imperishable, glorious, powerful resurrection bodies from which every last trace of dysphoria has been eradicated forever: ‘I finally am who I am.’

CHANGE YOUR BODY WITH SURGERY AND DRUGS OR
CHANGE YOUR FEELINGS WITH FAITH AND REPENTANCE.



CONCLUSION



FURTHER STUDY

Online Articles

- [Articles by Walt Heyer](#) (author who transitioned to female and then de-transitioned to male).
- [Articles by Mark Regenerus](#) (sociologist) on transgender, gay adoption, etc. See other Regenerus essays [here](#).

Books

- [Transgender](#) by Vaughan Roberts.
- [Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity and Union with Christ](#) by Rosaria Butterfield
- [God and the Transgender Debate](#) by Andrew Walker
- [When Harry Became Sally: Responding to the Transgender Moment](#) by Ryan Anderson

Discussion Questions

1. Name some other identity thieves.
2. How does the question “Who is God?” influence your life? And how does “Who am I?” influence your life
3. How does your identity influence your appearance, your friendships, your career, your family, your faith?
5. What did you learn from using the four steps to rebuild and re-create your identity?
6. How would you help someone who was confused about their sexual orientation or their gender?
7. How can we communicate love and sympathy to those who identify as LGBT while also speaking the truth into their lives?

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GENESIS 1:26-27

WHO AM I?



Identity Theft

- Identity influences everything
- Identity is easily stolen

Biblical solution?



Identity thieves have many disguises

- Body
- Grades
- Friends
- Sin
- Sport
- Problem
- Past
- Desires
- Feelings

A FALSE SENSE OF SELF
WILL KILL YOURSELF

Recover my ID?



Embrace your God-given identity by believing what the Bible and biology say rather than your feelings or the culture



A stolen identity can be recovered

- I am an image-bearer
- I am a sinner
- I am a Christian
- I am unique

CHANGE YOUR BODY
WITH SURGERY AND DRUGS OR
CHANGE YOUR FEELINGS
WITH FAITH AND REPENTANCE.

Action?

80 PERCENT TO 95 PERCENT OF GENDER-CONFUSED CHILDREN "WILL EVENTUALLY COME TO IDENTIFY WITH THEIR BODIES—IF THEY AREN'T SOCIALLY AND MEDICALLY ENCOURAGED TO MAINTAIN A TRANSGENDER IDENTITY."

IN SWEDEN, WHERE THERE IS STRONG CULTURAL SUPPORT OF THE TRANSGENDERED, THE SUICIDE RATE OF THOSE WHO HAD UNDERGONE SEX-REASSIGNMENT SURGERY ROSE TO TWENTY TIMES THAT OF COMPARABLE PEERS WITHIN TEN YEARS.