

Important Words:

IDENTITY

Meanings of the Words We Use

OPENING PRAYER

Lord God Almighty, You bless Your servants with various and unique gifts of the Holy Spirit. Grant us grace to use these gifts always to Your honor and glory. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

1. How is the word “identity” used in daily life? What do people refer to when they use the word “identity”?

The word “identity” is used in terms of being oneself or knowing oneself. This is discovered or known primarily, and maybe only, by the individual. The word identity itself isn't used all that often, but people will say things along the lines of “be true to yourself” or “you do you.”

2. What is your definition of Identity?

Answers will vary.

3. How do people in our culture speak of knowing or finding one's Identity?

In our society, identity is something that people are left to figure out by themselves. Because of this, an individual's identity can be whatever that person wants it to be. While there has often been some freedom when it comes to identity in terms of one's work or the person that one chooses to marry, our society has taken this point to the extreme. If you don't like your parents, emancipate yourself. If you don't like your whole family, change your name. If you don't like your biological sex, well, something can be done about that, too. Other people simply feel that one must be who they feel they are at any time. This study will go on to show that a proper understanding of identity will help us to discover who we *really* are.

4. What's the dictionary definition of “identity”?

One definition for “identity” at *Merriam-Webster.com* is:

- the distinguishing character or personality of an individual: INDIVIDUALITY

5. What does God's Word teach us about identity?

Read Genesis 1:26–27 and Romans 6:3–4.

Genesis 1:26–27 says, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” God's Word shows us how our identity begins with our first relationship, the one with our Creator. Therefore, our first identity is that of being someone made in the image of God.

Romans 6:3–4 says, “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.” In addition to this universal start to our identity as God's creation, Christians have another identity mark as well. Our second identity is that of being a baptized child of God, connected in Baptism to Christ's death and resurrection.

6. What implications does this have for how we think of ourselves? Read Isaiah 29:16.

Isaiah 29:16 says, “You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, ‘He did not make me’; or the thing formed say of him who formed it, ‘He has no understanding?’” If we are creatures of a Creator, then our identity isn’t subject to our choices or feelings. We are who God has made us to be. To choose an identity other than our God given ones robs God of His role as Creator. Again, if we do not hold fast to our identity as baptized children of God, we are not taking seriously the work God did in Baptism.

7. How then should we consider our identity? Read 1 Corinthians 7:17a.

1 Corinthians 7:17a says, “Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him.” Since we are created, we should consider our identity in relationship to our Creator. We’ve been made in a particular way for a particular purpose. Listening to God, we come to realize also that our identity is lived out in relation to others. We aren’t to think of our identity as isolated from other people, but in connection to the people in our homes, congregations and communities. This will teach us much about who we are and what we should do. Furthermore, our connection to Christ in Baptism helps us see that these ordinary connections are part of how God manifests his kingdom in this world.

CLOSING PRAYER

Merciful Father, through Holy Baptism You called us to be Your own possession. Grant that our lives may evidence the working of Your Holy Spirit in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, according to the image of Your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.