

IDENTITY MANIFESTO

A sailor woke up on his ship drifting in the ocean. He didn't know where he was. He didn't remember how he got there. He couldn't recall where he came from. He had no idea where he was going.

He did have a knowledge of sailing. All directions looked the same to him, so he continued to sail in the direction he was already going. He eventually found land and settled there, adopting the customs of the native culture. However, the feeling that he didn't belong never left him for the rest of his life.

I am this sailor. Could this sailor be you, too?

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An experienced sailor uses the sun, a fixed object, to navigate the ocean. He positions his ship so the wind can push it.

Without a relationship with God, I'm like a sailor without the sun and wind. Without an identity I'm like a sailor without a ship.

I need to stop and examine the course I'm setting with my life. Am I moving in a direction on purpose? Or do I only let the ocean currents take me further out to sea?

If you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there.

—Lewis Carroll

If my only goal is to not be where I am, then why should I waste time trying to pick the best direction? If I want to get away fast, why should I bother analyzing my options? I can just pick any direction and go.

Drifting along in life is the only option when I have no clue who I am. But drifting without a systematic mapping of my journey is foolish.

If one does not know to which port one is sailing, no wind is favorable.

—Seneca

If I don't care where I'm going, why would I care which way the wind is blowing? If I don't have a goal or destination in mind, no help exists for me. Nothing would improve my situation.

Immaturity is drifting along without paying attention to where I've been. But I want to live with purpose and meaning. Maturity is growing in the knowledge (experience) of who God is and who I am. I don't want to be a drifter.

I'm ready to be more intentional about my journey. Could you be ready, too?

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I. THE BAD NEWS

◀— I'm Lost at Sea —▶

I don't know who I am. Sure, I know my hair color and favorite food. But do I know exactly why God created me?

A lack of identity is at epidemic proportions today. Too many people search fruitlessly for comfort and meaning without considering and connecting to God, who seems distant or non-existent.

I'm Empty and Hungry

I hunger for fulfillment deep within my soul. Without God, I feel an ache that will never be filled.

I Desire to be Full

- When I'm hungry, I want to be full.
- When I'm sick, I want to be healthy.
- When I'm depressed, I want to feel encouraged and motivated.
- When I'm anxious, I want to feel calm.
- When I'm lonely, I want to feel connected.
- When I'm broken, I want to be whole and complete.

I Don't Know How to be Full

I attempt to fill myself with creation. My efforts fail because creation can't meet my deepest longings. Not using creation the right way is idolatry, which results in moving away from God and toward developing an addiction. Failing to use creation the right way, like drinking salt-water, only creates more desperate thirst.

John 4:17-18

Nothing in Creation is Ever Going to Completely Satisfy

Creation will always fall short, even when I use it the right way. I'm spiritually hungry but I can't seem to experience spiritual satisfaction. Whether I realize it or not, I ache for a connection with God.

John 4:15

I Have a Spiritual Enemy Who Wants Me to Suffer

The devil's goal is to obscure the truth. He uses confusion and deception to hide the truth about me, creation, and God. He wants to increase my suffering.

John 10:10

There's No Way to be Completely Free of Suffering

There will always be something (the curse, my sin, others' sin) to interfere with my desire for peace and enjoyment. As much as I try to find contentment, in this life there's nothing I can do to make my suffering go away completely or permanently.

I'm Full of Wrong Information

There are three main reasons I struggle with low self-esteem:

1. I'm empty. Even Christians don't completely understand who they are. I don't know who I am. I don't know where to look to find my true value. I look in the wrong places, or I don't look at all.

2. I've had negative experiences. I've not always received what I need. I've sometimes received what I don't need. I lose sight of the good because of ongoing emotional pain.
3. I have an inaccurate self-image. Life is tough. I don't know how to experience myself in a positive way. I hold onto negative beliefs about myself which obscure the high value God places on me.

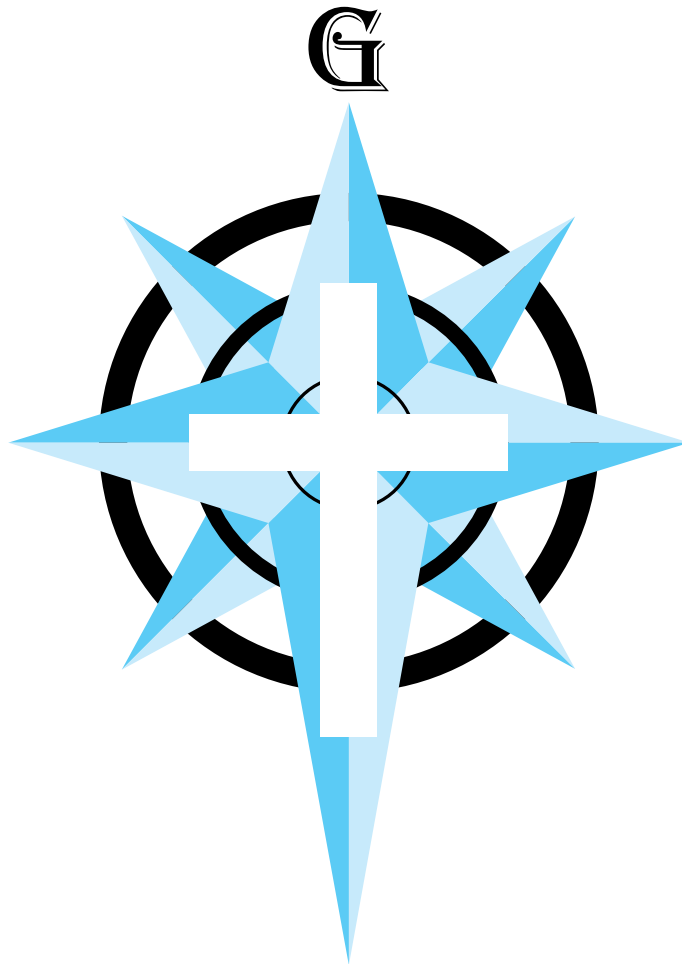
I Sabotage My Progress

Everyone is capable of hurtful and destructive behaviors. I hurt myself and allow others to continue to hurt me when there are options to stop the pain.

II. THE GOOD NEWS

◀— Learning My Identity is My Compass —▶

As I journey through life, God is my true North. God wants me to map my experiences and make increasingly educated decisions about my life direction and goals. My identity allows me to find my way. Knowing my identity defines the meaning of my life. As I understand who I am, I'm able to move with confidence and purpose.



Every Christian Should Learn Their Identity

Identity is what something *is*, as distinguishable from everything else. *Confidence* is the assurance of something. To have a confident identity means I'm living with the assurance of knowing who I am. I know myself and I'm not ashamed. My identity is not nearly as relevant when it is hidden, nor when it's discovered but not appreciated, embraced, and put into play. I function with my confident identity as I achieve awareness and acceptance of my true identity, resulting in a unique set of actions that ultimately further God's kingdom.

I'm Learning: I'm a One-of-a-kind Unique Creation

God doesn't make duplicates. Instead, he crafts each individual for a specific purpose.

Identity is:

- Who I am according to God. God created me with intention and His definition is my true identity.
- The set of characteristics by which I am definitively recognizable. I am easily distinguished from others.
- My unique characteristics held by no other person. I have something that no one else will ever have.
- What remains the same, constant, persisting over time, under varying circumstances. Whatever is part of me is permanently mine, or else it really isn't part of me.

I'm Learning: Becoming a Christian Enhances My Distinctiveness

When I became a Christian, I identified with Christ, but I didn't become Christ. Jesus has His identity as God and human. I can't have His identity. I can't be God. I can't be an anonymous, indistinct participant in God.

My goal in life isn't to become a Jesus clone. I shouldn't mimic Jesus's personality. Instead, God wants me to be a distinct personality that demonstrates the same character as Jesus.

I'm Learning: I Experience and Exhibit God in Ways Like No One Else Can

I'm irreplaceable. Others will appreciate Jesus more when they see a distinct person exhibiting His character than if they see a generic person trying to show love. God wants co-operation, diversity, and unity. God gets all the glory, but He delights in seeing Himself reflected in the many different identities of His people.

I Use God and Creation the Right Way

The surest path to closeness with God is to allow God to restore me to His intentions. I can be authentic to God's original design. When I align myself to my creator's intent, I maximize my potential and my life satisfaction.

I Shouldn't Put My Identity into Anything I Can Lose

I can't lose my identity. If I can lose it, it's not part of my identity. My identity doesn't consist of my job, possessions, or relationships.

I Enjoy Creation

God created and called His work good. He wants me to enjoy what He has provided. I can freely pursue pleasure as long as it doesn't interfere with building God's kingdom.

I Accept Jesus's Sacrifice

I can't become Christ, but I can accept His sacrificial death to enable me to become all God made me to be. I can base my value on Jesus's sacrifice.

I Accept the Holy Spirit's Presence and Help

I have a God-shaped hole in my heart. As a Christian, I have God the Holy Spirit living within me. The Spirit enables me to grow spiritually and exhibit Christ-like behavior.

I Continuously Discover and Pursue My Identity

I'll never completely know all of who God made me to be in this life, so I must persistently pursue growing into exactly who God made me to be.

I Receive and Grow, Then Help Others

God calls me to mature and serve others. However, I can't accomplish this until I receive first. I can't sustain giving from a place of emptiness. I must constantly invest time and energy into seeking my healing and forgiving myself and others.

III. YOUR DESTINY AWAITS

◀— Commit to Living Your Authentic Identity —▶

I'm committed to living my authentic identity.

Would you like to join me on the quest of a lifetime — to live the way God intended you to live?

Invest in God's Kingdom

Moving forward with God's great commission (Matthew 28:16–20) requires a long-term plan. If every Christian disciples and helps mature 10 people in their lifetime, and those 10 people also disciple 10 others, and this continues, the entire population will be reached in decades, not centuries.

As all Christians grow in their identity, the time will pass quickly as God's plans come to fruition. Then, we'll all be together in heaven, fully knowing each other and fully knowing God.

To be effective for the kingdom of God, you need the ability to:

- Prioritize healthy desires
- Respond well to reality
- Find contentment in your identity

Invest in Your Care and Growth

Commit to discovering and using your identity for God's purposes and glory. As a Christian you can fulfill the destiny God has planned for you by committing to these four goals:

1. Know yourself better.
2. Know God better.
3. Participate in Christian community to pursue knowing yourself and God.
4. Help those outside the church to know who they are and who God is.

You'll only be genuinely fulfilled as you discover and act on exactly who God made you to be. To know yourself better, learn your spiritual identity as well as your unique personality.

Join together with other Christians to grasp the full significance of your identity. Help other Christians to know themselves and God and allow them to help you to know yourself and God.

Here are two questions to begin your journey, find a direction, and stay on course every day:

1. How are you not being your authentic self?
2. In what way can you grow toward your authentic self?

Your authentic self is your God-given identity. Your identity is God's greatest gift to you, only when you open it up and discover who you are.

What Next?

What you believe is what you'll act upon. What do you believe about identity?

If you made a decision to seriously pursue your identity, let me know so I can celebrate with you.

What unanswered questions about identity do you have? Are you interested in joining a community of other like-minded people to learn your identity?

You can contact me at mpavlik@nrcounseling.com.