

Don't Let Labels Dictate Who You Are

Been thinking about labels lately. How we assign them to ourselves and to others.

Of all the seasons of my life, junior high school was the most painful. Labels ruled and cliques reigned. You were labeled if you belonged to a group and labeled if you didn't.

Smart. Stupid.

Pretty. Ugly.

Jock. Nerd.

Popular. Loser.

Adults used to be subtler about the use of labels. Not anymore. The words are often spit out with venom usually reserved for the lowest of the low.

Liberal. Conservative.

Democrat. Republican.

Intellectual. Religious fanatic.

This week, I came face to face with another label. It happened in a doctor's office as I completed one of several forms.

The first 20 years of my life I was "single."

Then I spent the next 40 years "married."

Now I'm face to face with a new label: "widow."

Single. Married. Widow.

Who knew that checking a box on a form would cause me to

rethink my identity? And yet it did.

But is that really my identity? Or is it simply a description of my status?

The last two months have given me the opportunity to consider who I am. What is my primary identity?

I was an executive ... and now I'm not.

I was a wife ... and now I'm not.

I'm an author now.

I'm a teacher now.

I'm a widow now.

My employment status and my marital status are subject to change. But one thing will never change. One label describes me now and for all eternity.

I am a Christian.

That means I'm a child of God. A daughter of the Creator of the universe.

I have:

- A living hope (1 Pet. 1:3).
- An imperishable inheritance (1 Pet. 1:4).
- The seal of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14).
- Eternal life that has already begun (John 5:24).

Checking a box on a piece of paper describes my circumstances. But it doesn't come close to describing who I am ... and who I always will be.

Priscilla Shirer says it better than I can:

Who are you? {eoa}

Ava Pennington is a writer, speaker and Bible teacher. She writes for nationally circulated magazines and is published in 32 anthologies, including 25 Chicken Soup for the Soul books. She also authored Daily Reflections on the Names of God: A Devotional, endorsed by Kay Arthur. Learn more at .

This article originally appeared at .