

When You Have an Identity Crisis

Don't you just LOVE it when God hits you right between the eyes with truth?

I'm not being sarcastic ... truly.

The other night at my Bible study we were talking about finding our identity in Christ—a topic I have explored often and tried to grasp continually.

I have spent the last several years pretty consistently reminding myself of who I am in Christ.

Apparently, I need A LOT of reminding. I seem to always be forgetting ... losing sight of it.

So our very dear leader gave each of us a visual about where we find our identity. Listed around the edges were possibilities of things that we might find our identity in rather than Christ.

The usual was listed: family, accomplishments, job, home.

I looked at the options and realized I don't find my identity in any of those things ... I don't want to.

But not for the good reason.

Rather because I feel like I'm failing in everything. ... all of them.

Every. Last. One.

It sunk in deeply. All of sudden, I realized my struggle.

I realized why I simply can't seem to get myself to a better place. Why no matter how much I stick my face in Scripture and

pray ... I'm still holding on to my false identity.

And then my sweet leader said that she struggled with finding her identity in her failures.

Failures?

Seriously, finding our identity in our failures?

Oh my goodness. That's me.

I have been wallowing in my real and perceived failures.

I look at myself as a failure ... every day.

God looks at me as His dear daughter ... every day.

Why can't I grasp that?

I was so impacted by the lesson ... I didn't say a whole lot because I was trying to process what this all meant. How was I going to change this identity crisis?

I was really excited when I got home. I shared with my kids how the Bible study had so deeply impacted me.

And then ...

Then I went upstairs to get little girls ready for bed ...

And I lost my mind.

I was my feeling-like-a-failure, fussy, frustrated self. I was impatient, unkind, irritated, and spoke words that I regret. My tone was not kind. My mood was not good.

How had I gone from convicted to crazy?

How had my heart-searching, mind-opening experience at Bible study worn off so fast?

I felt like even more of a failure—if that was even possible.

Apparently, it was.

Oh Lord, why? Why can't I be better?

Then it hit me ... well, it's still hitting me.

I can't be better without Him.

As long as I'm focusing on my own issues, I can't find my identity in anything but me ... and I'm a mess.

It is all about my righteousness ... my ability to live right, to be right, to speak right, to act right, to know right.

Unfortunately, I can't seem to do any of those. Maybe it is because when I say "right," I really mean "perfectly".

I know I can't be perfect. I am oh so aware of that.

Why must I constantly set myself up for failure by assuming that I can be perfect? It's not like I really believe I can be. I just want to be. I expect myself to be.

I want to be the best mom for my kids. I believe right now I'm barely passable as a mom.

I want to do my job well, inspire my students and have great relationships with my coworkers. I'm so tired, overwhelmed, and disappointed that I find myself struggling to be a positive and encouraging person at work.

I want to be a good friend, daughter, and sister, but I don't seem to have time to invest or bless.

I want to have a perfectly ordered home. At this point I'd settle for not tripping over something everyday.

I long to have time to rest, write, read, and simply hang out and watch TV or play a game. I barely have time to brush my teeth before I fall asleep at night.

I feel like my lack of time, lack of patience, lack of sleep, lack of joy in work, lack of fellowship, lack of order is all and completely my fault.

BUT when I take a step back ... look at things from a different perspective. I see that my expectations are ridiculous.

RIDICULOUS.

The other day someone said, "But you are single working mom ... you remember that right?"

Yeah, how can I forget?

I am where God wants me.

How I wish He wanted me in a cabin somewhere ... with a roaring fire, a good book, and some good friends surrounding me.

But that isn't where I'm to be right now.

I'm to live here and now.

As is.

I'm to focus on life with Him ... life as His daughter. Life as the woman he has made me to be ... not the woman I think I should be.

Even as I type that I wonder ... but isn't there a woman I should be ... shouldn't I aspire for more?

Yes ... and no.

Yes, it is a good thing to aspire to be better ... to live better.

No, not if it is my identity.

My identity rests securely in the fact that God has redeemed me ... called me by name ... I'm HIS (Isaiah 43:1).

Sometimes I look at this list I made a few years ago and remind myself again ... who I am.

I am a new creation (Colossians 3:9-10); **God's workmanship** (Ephesians 2:10); **loved** (Ephesians 2:4, 1 Thessalonians 1:4); **precious in God's eyes, honored and loved** (Isaiah 43:4); **redeemed** (Isaiah 43:1); **Called by name** (Isaiah 43:1); **free from condemnation** (Romans 8:2); **forgiven** (Ephesians 1:7, Colossians 2:12); **a child of God** (1 Peter 1:23) **Christ lives in me** (Galatians 2:20), **a friend of God** (John 15:15), **blessed with every spiritual blessing** (Ephesians 1:3); **chosen** (Ephesians 1:4, Colossians 3:12); **holy and beloved** (Colossians 3:12, Ephesians 5:1); **righteous** (2 Corinthians 5:21); **have a reason to be joyful, prayerful and thankful** (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18); **filled with the Holy Spirit and all His fruit** (Galatians 5:22); **saved by grace** (Ephesians 2:8-9); **reconciled to God** (Romans 5:6-11); **more than a conqueror** (Romans 8:37); **free** (John 8:36, Galatians 5:1) **an ambassador** (2 Corinthians 5:20); **holy and blameless before Him** (Colossians 1:22); **called out of darkness into His glorious light** (1 Peter 2:9, Colossians 1:13); **an overcomer** (Revelation 12:11); **a temple of the Holy Spirit** (1 Corinthians 6:19-20); **the light of the world** (Matthew 5:14); **not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls.** (Hebrews 10:39). And even if I am afflicted in every way, I am not crushed; perplexed, I will not be driven to despair; persecuted, I will not be forsaken; struck down, I will not be destroyed (2 Corinthians 4:7-10).

Sometimes it helps to remind myself that I am so much more than I think I am.

I am not defined by my successes or my failures.

Say it again.

I am not defined by my failures.

I am not defined by what I accomplish, what I say, what I

don't say, how I parent, how I teach, how I take care of my home, how much I read or pray or study or speak or write, how many friends I have, how much time I spend doing anything or everything ... I am defined ONLY BY HIM.

I think right now my favorite definition of me is precious. That has been my favorite for a long time.

Maybe it is because I felt so "unprecious" when my husband left. In his eyes I was not an excellent wife.

"She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire are not to be compared with her" (Proverbs 3:15).

"Who can find a virtuous woman? For her worth is far above rubies" (Proverbs 31:10).

Maybe it is because I feel unworthy of being precious to anyone.

Not that God hasn't put people in my life who treat me as precious. He has. Definitely.

Why do I feel so unworthy of being considered anything good? Why does it feel like a sham?

... and yet God ...

God says I am.

I am precious.

"Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honorable, and I have loved you" (Isaiah 43:4).

Precious.

Honored.

Loved.

Those aren't words that define a failure.

But they do define me.

Logically, that must mean I'm not a failure.

I am defined by who I am in Christ ... not who I am in my mind.

Yet another area that I need to focus on Christ not myself.

I'm so thankful for the two-by-four of truth that God gave me the other night. I'm so thankful that He never seems to tire of telling me again and again and again who I am ... that I am His.

I'm so thankful that I am not defined by what or how I feel, but rather by who He is.

I am His.

I am precious.

I am all that He says I am.

"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10).

Sue Birdseye is an author and single mom of five kids. Her book, *When Happily Ever After Shatters* (Tyndale House) is in bookstores. This is adapted from her blog,