

## **Seeking an Identity—How to Find Out Who You Are**

### **By Bob Young**

People are seeking identity. Tests that reveal one's heritage are popular. A more important question than our physical background and identity is our spiritual identity.

#### **Your spiritual identity: three questions, a challenge, three more questions**

Three questions: Who do you think you are? Who do others think you are? Who does God think you are?

Here's a helpful but challenging exercise: sum up your life in one word. Or two words, or perhaps a short phrase. Capture the essence of your life. What is your life about? Why are you here on this earth? This summary will reflect your view of your mission or purpose in life.

Three more questions: Does your summary reflect God's presence in your life? Can you see an awareness of God's will, God's guidance, and God's opportunities? What is God's view of the mission of your life?

All of this to ask, "Are you in touch with God's calling in your life?"

#### **Three ideas to get in touch with God's calling on your life**

##### **→Identify the center, the focal point, of your life.**

What is your "one thing?" Something controls your life. You are giving your life for something. A summary of my life could go something like this: my life has been dedicated to advancing the gospel and building up local churches.

##### **→Recognize that your strategy can change.**

What you emphasize as you answer God's calling can change. For about 25 years, my strategy for advancing the kingdom was centered in local church ministry. During those years, I focused on and wrote about different aspects of ministry—preaching, evangelism, adult education, small groups, church dynamics, small church, Baby Boomers, leadership, and spiritually healthy leaders—to name just a few of the topics that grabbed my attention. Through those years, at lectureships and various church gatherings, I presented seminars and taught classes on all of these topics.

In the next phase of my life, I spent a dozen years in the university where I focused on training young people (and some older folks) for Christian service, ministry, and missions.

Although some now say that I am focused on leadership, I am trying to focus on developing healthy, evangelistic, multiplying churches. Some people say that I am overly focused on evangelism. Because of my seminars and materials in Spanish, many people see my primary focus as Latin America, but I also work with English-speaking churches in the U.S. These topics show how strategy can be adjusted to reach toward the goal.

##### **→While life is lived in stages, ideally all of those stages point in the same direction.**

In evaluating your life, you should be able to identify a primary focus and the strategies you have used. In my case, the primary goal of advancing the kingdom, local church ministry, my commitment to academics, my current commitment to missions, and the various specialized areas of study are all connected. They show different aspects of God's calling on my life, the opportunities God provides, and the doors God opens.

#### **Final Words of Encouragement**

I have given personal examples, but this article is about you. First, what God thinks of you is beyond comprehension. You are his creation; you are his treasure. He has confidence in you, he wants to bless you, he wants to bless others through you. He has done everything necessary to include you in his work.

Second, what people think of you and how people see your life is influenced by various factors: (1) what you know about, what you have studied, what you read, your expertise; (2) what you talk about, the priorities of your life; (3) the things you teach or preach about; (4) the things you "push;" and (5) what you do.

Finally, how you see yourself is reflected in the five points listed above; it is also based on your awareness of your passion, your talents and giftedness; and what you believe you can do to make the world better.

In my retirement, I have had the opportunity to ponder another question. Perhaps it will also help you. "What would you be willing to do for free, if no one paid you?" Aligning God's view of your life, how others describe you, and how you see yourself will help you discover and live out God's mission in your life.