

The background features a large, light blue puzzle piece in the center. To its top left is an orange silhouette of a person's head with curly hair. To its bottom right is a yellow silhouette of a person's head with long, wavy hair. The title 'WHO AM I?' is written in large, dark blue, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the puzzle piece. Below the title, the subtitle 'solving the identity puzzle' is written in a smaller, purple, serif font.

WHO AM I?

solving the
identity puzzle

Martyn Iles
Foreword by Ken Ham

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FOREWORD

The “Who am I?” question is wreaking havoc in people's lives in this generation. Without an anchor of truth or right and wrong, we are left to discover who we are by merely looking at ourselves, guided by our subjective opinions and emotions. As human beings under the curse of sin, when we look to ourselves for identity and truth, the result is confusion and chaos. Indeed, apart from God's Word, there is only chaos!

But God has not left us without an identity. We don't need to look inside ourselves to find who we really are; we need to look outside ourselves to the Word of the One who created us. It's there we find who we really are – and more than that, it's there we find our meaning, our purpose, and our hope for now and eternity.

Yes, the answers are in God's Word – actually, the answers begin in Genesis! As you read this book, you'll dive deep into Genesis and God's design for mankind. Martyn pulls out eternal truths that the church has long taught and known and applies them anew for a lost and confused generation. And he does so in a way that points to Christ and His completed work for us on the Cross.





We don't need to struggle and work to uncover who we are based on our feelings or the latest cultural fad. We look to Christ and to His eternal, unchanging Word. We find answers by first digging into God's design for mankind and then looking to the Cross, where Jesus laid down His life so that image bearers of God – both men and women – could come to Christ in faith and become new creations, re-made in the image of the Son.

I pray this work equips and encourages a generation of believers to find their identity in God's creation design and in Christ. And I pray this work is a challenge to unbelievers to turn from gazing inward to gazing at God's Word and Christ to find the answer to "Who Am I?"

**In Christ,
Ken Ham**

Founder CEO Answers in Genesis,
Ark Encounter, and Creation Museum



The Inward Look



Who am I? It's a question most people above a certain age never asked and never felt the need to answer. More recently, however, it's the concern that seems to be gripping an entire generation. It even comes in its own word – "identity." This once slightly obscure word is now the staple of everything from elementary school curriculum to political creeds across the Western world, prompting young minds to preoccupy themselves with this pressing new question – **who am I?**



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The question invites us to do something. Indeed, by the time the words have left one's mouth, we are almost instinctively doing it. Namely, we are looking at ourselves.

I asked a group of Australian primary school children what “identity” meant, and the (surprisingly articulate) answers came thick and fast: your sense of who you are ... your understanding of yourself ... your personal story ... self-perception ... how you feel ... your passions ... self-definition ... life experiences ... Any formal discussion of the word will make liberal use of the prefix “self.”

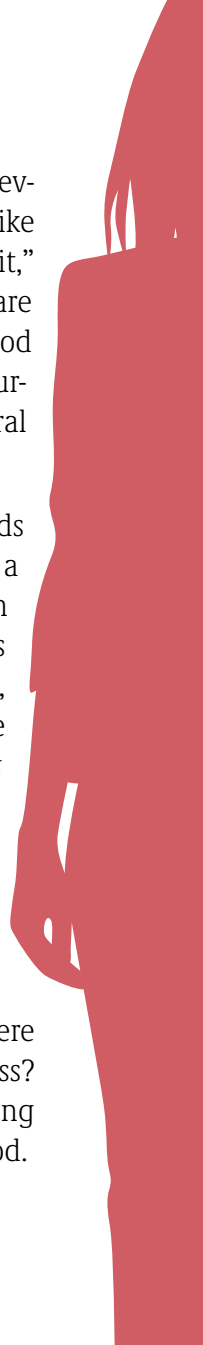
Actually, I didn't realize you could use it as a prefix quite so much until I started my research. Self-ideation, self-love, self-discovery, self-definition, self-perception, self-determination, self-narrative, self-image, self-concept, self-esteem ... All of these I have encountered in contemporary works on identity. This word has brought with it the age of the inward turn – the looking at the self.

To see how deeply this has affected our culture, we only need to consider the many, often subtle, ways the inward look at self has become integrated into the way we think and live. Consider popular notions like loving yourself, living true to yourself,

being your best self, following your heart, believing in yourself, living your truth ... or phrases like “you do you,” “you are enough,” “you’re worth it,” “you’re beautiful just as you are.” Such ideals are inescapable in our day, teaching us that the good foundation for one’s attitudes and actions is ourselves. I am sure you can quickly think of several other examples.

This self-talk has also started to change the kinds of things we hold up as virtues. Authenticity is a big one. The word “authentic” finds its root in the Greek word for self – *auto*. If your actions are true to “you,” then they are good for you, and they are therefore considered justifiable. The same thought is expressed in the idea of “doing what’s right for me.” It’s the same idea that makes it possible to say, **“My truth.”**

Notice how we justify ourselves, define what is right, and sometimes even what is “true,” based on how we feel and who we are, rather than appealing to higher foundations. Since when were we our own inventors of truth and righteousness? This is the most basic form of humanism – seeing ourselves as the ultimate authority instead of God.





The Inward Look

The virtue of self-belief is also a staple these days – no motivational speech or life advice seems complete without it – conveying the idea that the resources we need for our own achievements and character are found in our attitude to who we are.

Scripture affirms those who believed God, but we live in times when we increasingly seem to affirm those who believe in themselves. Many of the traditional virtues (which were based on God's Word) are being redefined too. For example, to be “loving” means something like “doing a thing in a way that makes the other person feel good.” We seem to have lost the higher standard by which love is measured, grounding it in people's subjective feelings instead.

Meanwhile, at the cutting edge of our culture, we see that things have gone so far as to redefine “pride” from being a wicked sin to being the new virtue. This crosses over the line from self-acceptance and self-belief into self-celebration and, in fact, self-worship.

It makes perfect sense, therefore, that this is the age of the personality. From personality tests by Myers-Briggs® and Enneagram and Jordan Peterson’s “self-authoring” programs, we are ... well ... a little obsessed with ourselves. I always smile in conversations about such things. We are told that these tests should help us understand each other, but people are typically far more interested in telling you about their result than they are about hearing yours!

Psychology is increasingly the discipline we look to for answers. At one time in our history, the Church played that role. More recently, the natural sciences seemed to have the answers. Now, we look to the experts who can tell us who we are: the psychologists.

This summary only lightly scratches the surface, but it is enough to raise a concern that our culture is taking on a distinctly narcissistic flavor. It is the age of the inward look. The age of identity.

There are many explanations of “identity” in everything from academic journals to children’s books. They tend to include a few key points.

First, they explain that identity refers to those characteristics, traits, beliefs, values, and experiences

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that define who a person is and how they perceive themselves. So, it's quite a big deal. Identity defines who I am. Hence, the title of this book – **Who Am I?** How many questions can a person have that are of greater significance than that one? There are some, but not many.

Second, any contemporary definition is likely to stress the notion that “identity is subjective.” Some will add that it is “fluid.” In other words, it is defined according to my personal feelings, perceptions, desires, opinions, and so forth, and it changes according to those same feelings. It is not the sort of thing that is defined according to some fixed standard that exists apart from me. It's not about “the” truth – rather, “my” truth is the relevant standard. As for any standard God may have, well ... that's obviously discounted by definition. In this humanistic philosophy, it's as if God did not create me, but I create myself. I do that by way of the inward look and my own feelings about my sense of self, my values, experiences, traits, introspection, emotions, desires, thoughts, self-perception, and so on.



But the **“Who am I?”** question of identity is bigger than this. It is not merely something that stays in my head. Once I’m answering the question, I am building a foundation from which I can live my life and interact with the world. It is a whole *philosophy of life*.

Consider some of the usual attributes that come up when considering one’s identity: gender, cultural heritage, race, sexuality, psychology, personality tests, interests, beliefs, and so forth. If I feel I am an introverted trans-woman of Latino heritage, this is not merely my truth about who I am – it is also my purpose in life.

My well-being requires that I must pursue these attributes and others must respect them. If I do not pursue them, then I am engaging in self-phobia, or internalized oppression. Indeed, I must reach that point of “pride” – I must be proud of my identity. This is why we have Pride Month. If others do not respect my identity attributes, then they are “toxic” people who are actively harming me and erasing my existence. They won’t see me, hear me, or acknowledge me. They hate me. They’re bigots.

Oh, and speaking of bigots, this is not merely personal and social – it is also political. Identity

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politics make my identity attributes into my political mission. It shows me the various ways in which the “culture” and “society” are oppressing me. In this case, that would be things like transphobia, xenophobia, racism, and normalized extroversion. These evils are everywhere. Others can’t tell because they’re not awake, but I am.

Also, they don’t have the relevant lived experience to expose them to these truths. But I do. My reform agenda is clear: LGBTQ pride, refugee rights, fighting institutional racism, and visibility for the socially anxious.

You can see how the issue of identity begins with one of the biggest questions a person can ask and answers it in such a way as to provide an entire life and worldview, founded in self.





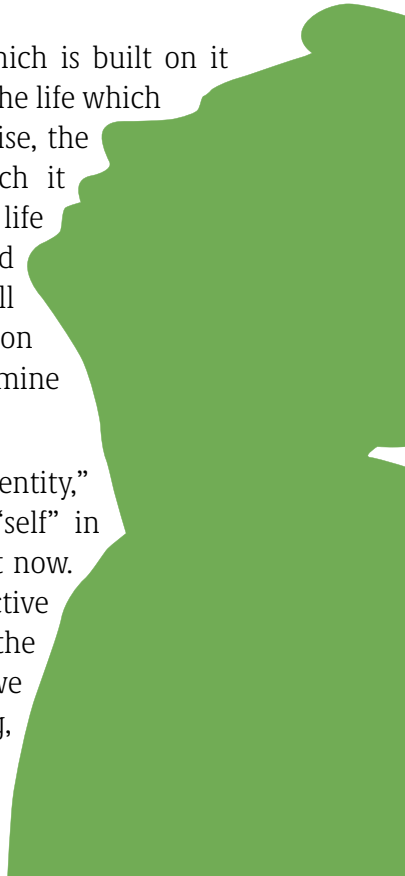


The Big Mistake

There is an obvious question which arises from all this. Namely, is this identity theory of life a good one? There is an extremely easy way to work that out. Let me explain. Remember, this all began with that simple question, “Who am I?” and the invitation it presents, to look within at the self. So, it all depends on whether this thing called “self” is good or bad.

If self is good, then the life which is built on it will be good. If self is bad, then the life which is built on it will be bad. Likewise, the quality of the worldview which it creates – informing my social life and political creed – will depend on this same question. They all come back to the same foundation of self. We must therefore examine that foundation.

Scripture never uses the word “identity,” and it seldom uses the term “self” in the way we’re thinking about it now. It tends to refer to our subjective insides as “the heart.” That is the place of passion, desire, what we feel, our emotions, our wanting,



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and the subjective impulses. Scripture has a lot to say about the heart. So does Jesus. In Mark 7:20-23, He warns us how we should think about it, and it's quite shocking:

...“What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

The prophet Jeremiah (in 17:9) echoes the same warning:

The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? (NKJV)

Oh my! Many a Christian reader may even cringe at that or find themselves searching for other Scriptures which might soften the blow. But there are none – quite the opposite, actually. And if we were familiar with our Bibles, we would know that.

I recall my days leading a youth group – I told the kids, “Nowhere will you find negative feedback about yourself like you do in the Bible.” From the Fall of mankind into sin in Genesis 3 onwards,

the diagnosis of the human condition is profoundly miserable and desperate. We are dead (Ephesians 2:1), deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9), unrighteous (1 Corinthians 6:9–10), reprobate (Romans 1:28), children of the devil (1 John 3:10), and at enmity with God (James 4:4). And that's just the beginning. I challenge any reader to find me positive feedback on the human condition, outside of Christ, after the Fall, anywhere in Scripture. If there is any, it is overwhelmed in an avalanche of deadly serious reality checks. And the reality is, you and I frequently do the wrong thing because our hearts are corrupted by all kinds of sin. That has always been the human predicament.

So, here's the thing: self is bad, not good. It is a corrupt foundation. It leads to a corrupt view of self, a corrupt social life, and a corrupt political creed. It creates a corrupt life and worldview. And if self is this bad, it means the identity theory of life is not only wrong, but it is exactly wrong. That is, it is as perfectly wrong as anything could ever be. It's the opposite of right. It teaches an anti-gospel. So, is the identity view of life a good one? No!

Since self is as bad as the biblical warnings say it is, then this identity theory of life should be yielding

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some very bad fruit because it traps people in self. Let's check that out.

The first thing to note is that we are trapping a generation in their sin. Because the thing they are looking at – their subjective insides, which the Bible calls their heart – is a petri dish of sin. If this is true, we should be seeing an explosion in the sorts of sins that Jesus said live in our hearts and defile us.

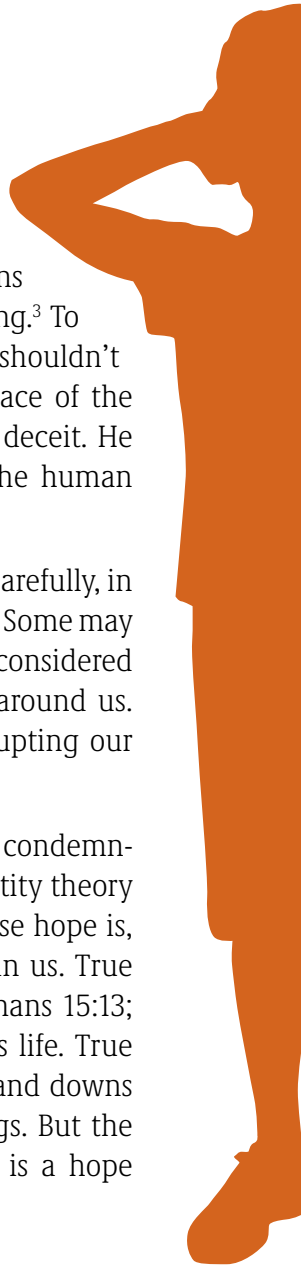
For example, an explosion in sexual immorality, adultery, and sensuality. Have the problems of pornography, unfaithfulness, and the elevation of every sensual thing ever been worse? I could give endless examples, but if I did, they'd be out of date by the time this book is published – such is the avalanche of new sexual deviancy in our day. The statistics speak for themselves, though. For example, only **12%** of American teenagers think that couples living together before marriage is a bad thing.¹ And only **20%** strongly believe homosexuality is morally wrong.² As a pastor friend of mine once said, “If God does not judge the West, He is going to have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.”

What of the sin of pride? We no longer even regard it as a bad thing – we've named a month after it!

Indeed, a month in which Western nations raise their voices to declare they are proud of their sin. It is small wonder, then, that only **34%** of young Americans strongly agree that lying is morally wrong.³ To me, that was a surprising statistic, but it shouldn't have been. Jesus told us that our embrace of the self would only lead to an explosion in deceit. He names it among the sins that live in the human heart and defile us.

Consider all of those sins He mentioned carefully, in turn – is this not our problem right now? Some may have read His diagnosis of the heart and considered it too harsh, but surely the proof is all around us. We are gazing at our sin, and it is corrupting our entire life and worldview.

The second thing to note is that we are condemning a generation to depression. The identity theory of life is incapable of giving hope because hope is, by definition, beyond us and bigger than us. True hope is given by God and eternity (Romans 15:13; Titus 2:12–14), things that transcend this life. True hope is objective – it survives the ups and downs of our lives. It is not beholden to feelings. But the best “hope” that can come from “self” is a hope





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that I will feel good in myself and about myself.

So, what happens when I just don't? Indeed, only **45%** of young American people say they feel in good mental health⁴ – less than half. That means many of them, having been thoroughly steeped in the identity theory of life, have lost hope.

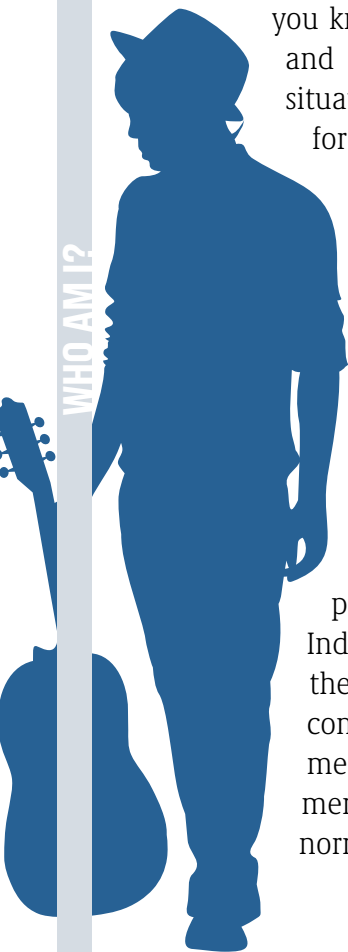
Of course they have – they have nowhere else to look! The results are tragic. Thirteen percent have had a serious psychological event in the last month. Thirteen percent have had a major depressive disorder in the past year. At least **10%** have thought of suicide in the past year.⁵ Forty-two percent have been diagnosed with a mental disorder.⁶ From 2007 to 2023, there has been a **56%** increase in suicide rates among young people.⁷ Indeed, all these statistics have increased drastically over the past 15 years – and the rate of increase is getting faster. It is the most depressed generation the West has ever raised. Strangely, while life has never been better, materially speaking, Westerners have never felt worse.

The third thing to note is that if your entire view of self and life is subjective, then it is inherently

unstable and uncertain. Is there anything less stable than a teenager's feelings? Consider an analogy.

Maybe you've been stuck in a situation in life where you can't trust anyone. If you have, you know it has a profoundly confusing and destabilizing effect on you. It's a situation you need to get out of, quickly, for your own sake. Now, consider having an existence where you have nothing trustworthy to rely on. Where there is no firm foundation for who you are. Where the foundations you're looking at are entirely changeable, fickle, and uncertain. That destabilizing feeling must be overwhelming.

This is one reason why anxiety is at epidemic rates among young people and increasing rapidly. Indeed, it's almost enculturated in the generation – that is, accepted as completely normal. Many an internet meme or TikTok™ video is a commentary on “my anxieties” as if it's a normal way to live.



WHO AM I?

The Big Mistake

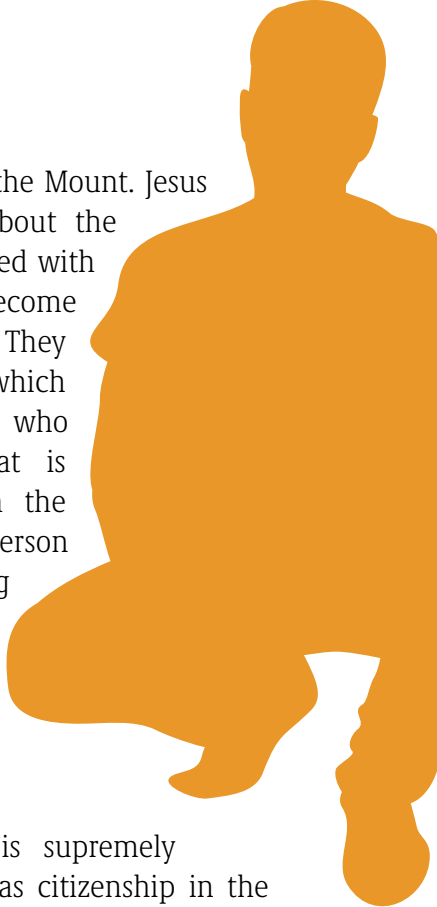
All of these outcomes should have been predicable. Trapping a young person in their self is akin to trapping them in sin and uncertainty. It also cuts them off from real hope. Indulgence in sinful behaviors with no conscience or conviction, accompanied by spiraling depression and anxiety, was always going to be the result. And these problems are rapidly getting worse. Those that are not yet out of control threaten to become so, and soon.

But I want to take care not simply to focus on the costs to psychological and personal well-being. Many are content to stop here because it is the focus of this age. But there is a cost that is far worse than anything I've mentioned so far, and it is the cost that should grieve us the most. See, the greatest cost of this "age of self" is spiritual.

I've already mentioned that this identity theory of life is not only false, but it is exactly false. It is the opposite of the truth. It is as wrong as anything could ever be. What is the real reason I said this? I said it because the gospel starts from the opposite position. God's Word to the human race is a word that starts with the opposite truth (the actual truth, that is!).

Let's start in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was teaching the people about the kingdom of heaven. He opened with a list of sayings that have become known as the Beatitudes. They are eight character traits which emerge in the lives of those who are supremely blessed (that is what "beatitude" means in the Latin). But what makes a person "supremely blessed" according to God? Is it a good feeling? Happiness? A prosperous life? Freedom from pain and trouble? A fit body and a pretty face?

Actually, the person who is supremely blessed is the person who has citizenship in the kingdom of heaven. In other words, the person in whom God has done such a work that they serve Him in this life and are destined to live for Him and with Him in His eternal realm forever. He is their King, now and forever. The blessings of His kingdom are theirs, now and forever. That's a very long way of saying it's the person who Christians might say is "saved." These are the people, Jesus says, who



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know real and ultimate blessing. And it all begins with the first beatitude, **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”** (Matthew 5:3).

Notice that this privilege has come to people in whose lives a certain character is evident. Not other people! Only these people. Which people? The poor in spirit. “Poor in spirit” means what it says. It speaks of a person who knows that in themselves – in their spirit – they are poor. That is, they have nothing of value. They are more or less broke. There is nothing of worth to be found in the self. Their identity, by itself, is destitute.

They say, with the Apostle Paul, **“in my flesh nothing good dwells; ...”** (Romans 7:18; NKJV). Or, with Isaiah, **...“Woe is me! For I am lost;”** (Isaiah 6:5). Or, with Peter, **...“Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord”** (Luke 5:8). Or, with Abraham, **...“Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes”** (Genesis 18:27). Or, with Job, **“Behold, I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth”** (Job 40:4).

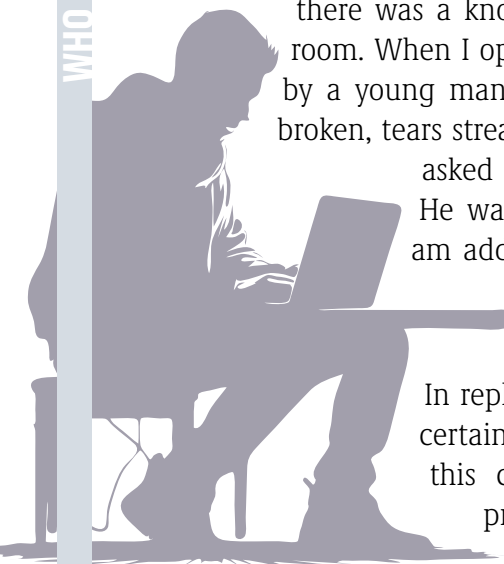
They are those who feel the weight and sadness of that Scripture I mentioned earlier, **“The heart is deceitful above all things And desperately wicked;**

Who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9; NKJV). Or that "all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment" (Isaiah 64:6). They know that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and "... None is righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). These are just a few of the selections I can draw on from Scripture. It speaks with one powerful voice on the matter. We are truly sinful, and that is a tragedy.

Some years ago, I was speaking at a school camp. I had just completed a talk about the life of Joseph, including his resistance to sexual sin. Afterward, there was a knock at the door of my room. When I opened it, I was greeted by a young man who was completely broken, tears streaming down his face.

I asked him what was wrong. He was able to blurt out, "I am addicted to pornography, and I don't know what to do."

In reply, I said, "I am almost certain there are others at this camp with the same problem. And yet you're



The Big Mistake

the only one standing here, torn up about it in response to today's message. Why is that?" The truth is, he was under conviction. He was experiencing the weight of his guilt. He was confronted with his sinfulness.

He was reaching the same conclusion about himself that each of those biblical examples I just mentioned had reached. This is not a bad thing! Indeed, this is a very good sign. This was the hallmark of God's work on his life – as Jesus Himself said about the Holy Spirit, “... **he will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgement**” (John 16:8). The Spirit of God was at work on this young man's soul. In fact, that feeling of conviction of one's own sin is the surest sign that you are drawing nearer to God.

A television reporter once challenged me that it was hateful to assert that a sinner would go to hell, to which I responded, “The day I found out I was a sinner going to hell was one of the best days of my life.” And it was. Because it turned me, once and for all, away from the false foundation and slavery of self, in all its poverty and corruption. It made me hate the sin that lived within me. It made me look outside myself to another foundation. It made me crave the righteousness of God.

In today's world of self-esteem and self-love, we rush to assuage a person of negative feelings like guilt, believing we are doing them a favor. But guilt is not a bad thing. Guilt is a very good thing if we respond to it rightly. It is the impulse that the Spirit of God uses to turn us out of ourselves to seek God.

Remember, " ... **theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**" It is not for other people – it is exclusively for these people. That tells me that nobody ever got converted without a real conviction of their own sinfulness. Nobody ever became a Christian without a knowledge of their guilt, their internal poverty, their sin.

It is a grave concern to me that in the midst of this generation of self and identity, when such realities are resisted, I seem to be hearing more and more Christian testimonies that make no mention whatsoever of sin and repentance. This should not be so. I understand that a person may not express the details of their experience articulately – that is one thing. But it is another thing to actually claim to be saved without conviction and repentance. That is a salvation that does not come via the Cross of Christ, which was the towering cost of my sin, in all its perversion and wretchedness. It is no salvation at

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all. This is a person whose view of themselves has never been torn free of the false gospel of trusting in our identity that pervades our culture.

Through the prophet Isaiah, God declared that He dwells in two places – the holy realms of heaven, and the hearts of the lowly and the contrite. That is, those who see their own poverty and repent. Of course, that is where the ultimate blessedness of which we spoke comes from. When we are being emptied of self, we may receive from His fullness.



*For thus says the One who is high and lifted up,
who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:*

*"I dwell in the high and holy place,
and also with him who is of a contrite
and lowly spirit,*

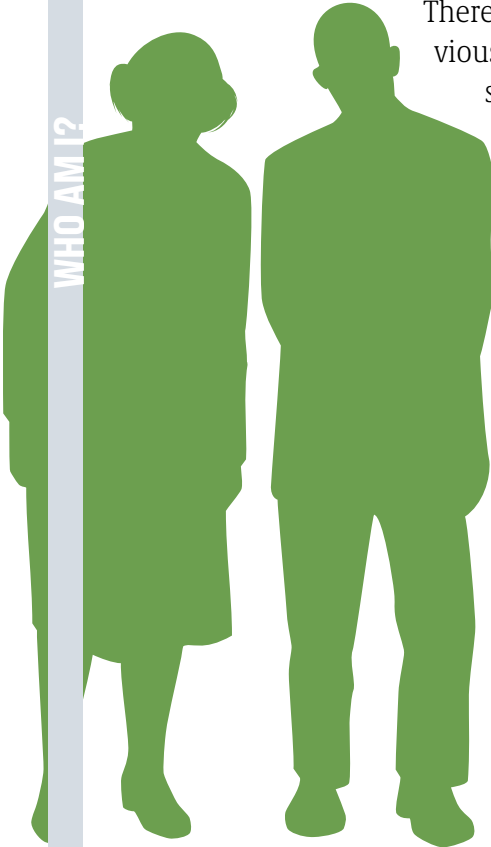
*to revive the spirit of the lowly,
and to revive the heart of the contrite."*

(Isaiah 57:15)

Can you see the real, awful cost of this age of identity and self? It is immunizing a generation against a sense of their sinfulness and desperate need

before God. It is telling them to take that for which Christ had to die – their “true selves” – and to embrace it, live by it, and be proud of it. This is a message that ensures people will never get over the threshold of God’s kingdom because they will never be poor in spirit. It is condemning a generation to hell.

There is an insult from a previous generation – “You’re so full of yourself.” I am not sure if it would pass as an insult today. It almost reads like a self-help quote! But it was once very shameful to have this said of you because it pointed out a grave character flaw. It is indeed an insult, not a compliment. To take it as such is to receive good life advice, and even better spiritual advice.



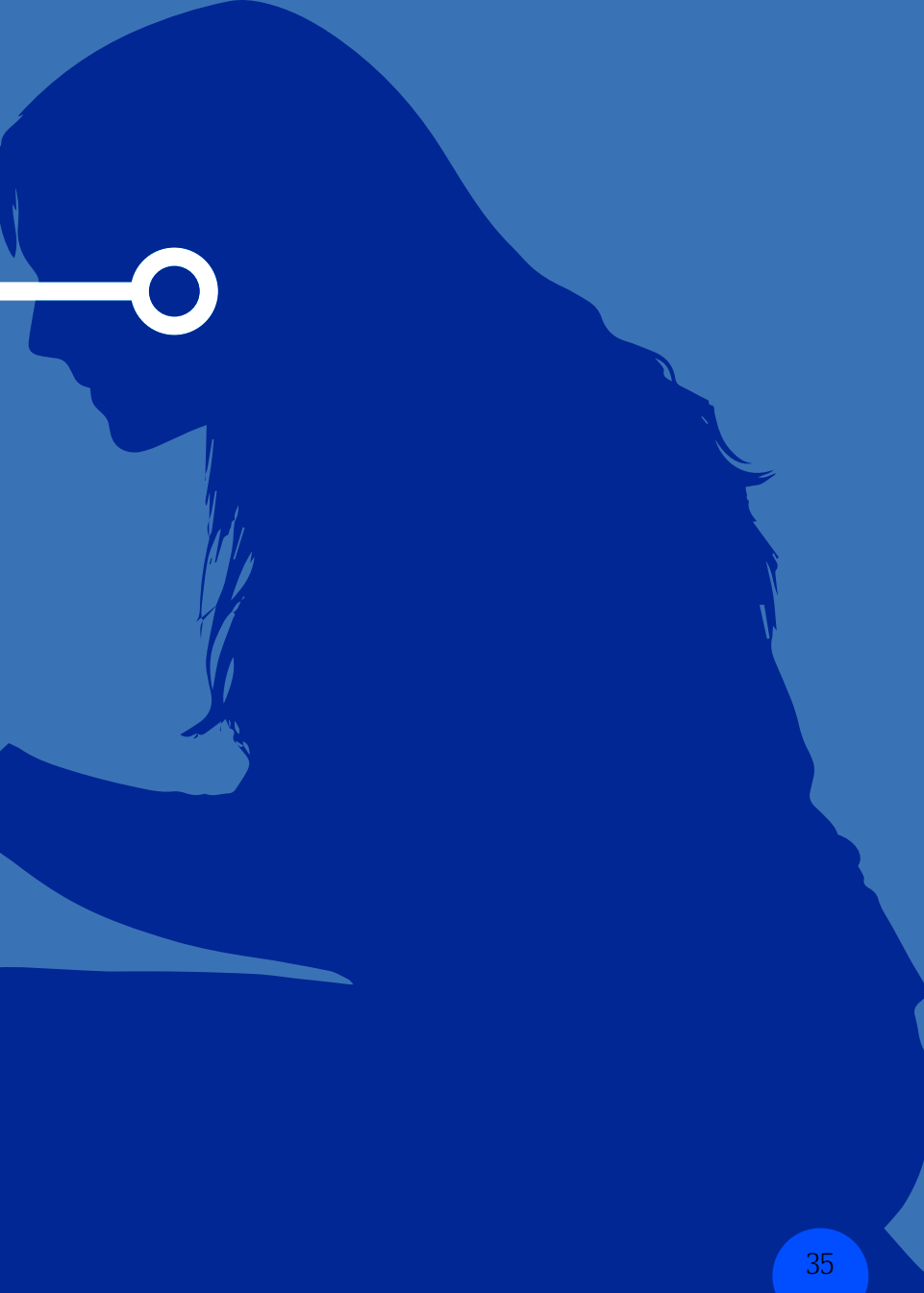
The Big Mistake

Surely, we have erred greatly in relation to the identity question. But there is a better answer. There is a right answer. That answer comes not from the foundation of self, but from somewhere else entirely.



The image features a dark blue background with white silhouettes of children and hands. A large, white, circular outline is centered on the page, framing the text. The text is in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The silhouettes include a child's head and shoulders on the left, and several hands reaching out from the right and bottom right. The overall composition is simple and symbolic, representing a group of children and their interaction with a central figure or concept.

**In the
Beginning,
GOD**



My parents named me after the great Welsh preacher, Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. He was very wise concerning the human condition and delivered a series of sermons on the subject of “Spiritual Depression,” for which he subsequently became famous.

He later remarked that despite the somewhat miserable topic – “the mumps and measles of the soul,”⁸ as he called it – his congregation thoroughly enjoyed the series. Why? Because they were talking about themselves. They were contemplating their own psychology and diagnosing their own problems. The human being never tires of such things. Lloyd-Jones went on to note that his next series, which began with a discussion of the glory of God, was not met with nearly so much enthusiasm or curiosity.

I feared the same problem with this book. In my first outline, the whole thing began with, “**In the beginning, God ...**” But I realized what a change of gear that would be for a reader to see a book about identity, only to



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open it up and be met with a disappointing bait-and-switch. Rather than reading about themselves, rather than enjoying that inward look, they would find themselves reading about God – in whose image they are made.

This is a sad reality. Content on psychology is infinitely more sought after and popular than content about God. We are trapped by a morbid obsession with self, personality, well-being, and the unending quest to find out what makes us tick. To put it bluntly, this tells us how little we know God, because if we knew Him well, we would be craving more. There is no greater, more exhilarating subject in the entire cosmos.

Of course, this is the entire problem with the **“Who am I?”** question. It provokes our natural instinct to look at ourselves. As we have seen, that’s exactly the wrong move. In fact, what if I told you that you could never actually know yourself until you first understood who God is?

If I achieve nothing else with this book, I pray that I help us to correct that error. Rather than following our instincts, or the way of the world, by beginning with self, I pray that we would train ourselves to

begin where Scripture begins. Before the Bible discusses any part of reality at all, it frames everything with this statement: **“In the beginning, God.”** Those are the very first words of Scripture. Those are the first words of everything God has to say about everything – it is His foundation. It is as opposite to the foundation of self as anything ever could be.

“In the beginning, God” is a statement of reality. Because all things did indeed begin with God. He made them. Therefore, He gave them their place, their order, and their meaning. And He continues to do so, as the Creator who sustains all things. He is the only proper foundation from which to understand any reality. This includes the reality of the human person.

This is why **“In the beginning, God”** is the reality that holds the key to wisdom. Consider Proverbs, which tell us, **“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding”** (Proverbs 9:10; NKJV). This is not just a nice sentiment – it is true! Because all things truly did begin with God, so when we raise our perspective to His perspective, we see them truthfully and know how to deal with them wisely. Indeed, to train ourselves to see a thing from God’s perspective is to unlock

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all the blessings of wisdom. It will teach us how to live.

This is extraordinarily countercultural in an age where so many answers to important questions are framed with the phrase, “I feel like ...” We speak out of ourselves and our own authority, not from God’s authority. If a modern man on the street were to write the book of Proverbs, he might prefer something approximating, “To follow your heart is the beginning of wisdom.” That seems to be much more aligned with the world’s wisdom on how to live. Again, it builds a life philosophy on the false foundation of self and looks at things from our own perspective ... which is exactly the wrong perspective.

But when we return to that glorious framework, “In the beginning, God,” we raise our eyes to His level, put aside ourselves, and stand on the threshold of wisdom.

On so many matters, God takes us back to their beginning, because it is there that we find out how and why He made things. We get a very clear insight into this logic when Jesus is asked about divorce. He not only raises our perspective to God’s per-



spective, but He also takes us back to the beginning, when God created marriage, and what He said about it at the time. He frames His answer by saying, ...**“Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?”** (Matthew 19:4–5). That is all quoted from Genesis 1 and 2.

Jesus then uses this foundational blueprint of truth about marriage to answer the question at hand, about divorce: **“So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate”** (Matthew 19:6). That is the wisdom on the matter, drawn from God’s perspective, from the beginning. He did not say, “Do what’s right for you,” or “Be true to yourself,” which has justified many a modern divorce, not to mention many marriages! He said the opposite!



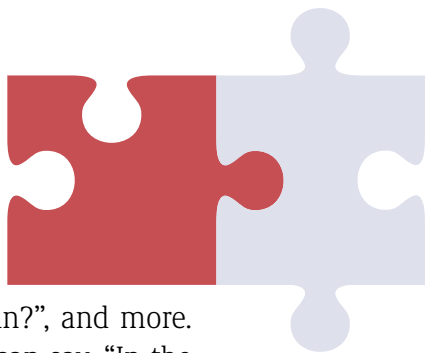


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We see this same approach at other times throughout Scripture, on so many creation issues. But why? Because all that God created and ordered before the Fall He called “**very good**” in Genesis 1:31 and assured us that “**His work is perfect**” in Deuteronomy 32:4 (NKJV). The blueprints that we find there are God’s very good ideals. The very good ideal for marriage is that God intended to join a man and a woman such that they become one perfect whole, whose unity is, in turn, incarnated in their children.

Once we understand truths like this, we can start to apply the principles in our own lives and live up to God’s plan. In other words, we live in wisdom. This is a logic that applies to all manner of current issues, concerning which

there is great confusion today – race politics, abortion, climate change, sexuality, gender, truth, family, animals, “what is a woman?”, “what is a man?”, and more.



About all these things we can say, “In the beginning, God ...” We can take His perspective and go back to the start. In this, we find great blessing. This is the discovery of wisdom – it is the secret to how to live.

Identity is also a creation issue. We can go to God’s perspective, and He will take us back to the very beginning, where there are answers. When you read, you begin with A, B, C. When you sing, you begin with do, re, mi. When asking **“Who am I?”** you begin with Genesis 1, 2, and 3! (Sorry, I couldn’t resist!) When we do this, we will find that the answer is not given all at once. It comes to us in pieces which we must collect and assemble together to get the big picture. It’s a little bit like an identity jigsaw puzzle. It is only when we have all the pieces together that we will have clarity about the answer to **“Who am I?”** – that is, the identity question.

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The rest of this book is dedicated to collecting each of these pieces from the Word of God, from the very beginning.

