

TRADING FACES

Removing the Masks That Hide
Your God-Given Identity

DISCUSSION GUIDE

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The Elusive Search

Discussion questions

1. What was the first identity you can remember trying on as a child? What identity did you select as a teen? How did those identities influence your life?
2. Do you struggle with negative self-talk? What are the recurring messages that you tend to speak to yourself? What are the true messages that God speaks over you?
3. Who or what (other than God) do you tend to lean on for your safety and security?
4. What role (eg. spouse, parent, vocation) gives you most happiness?
5. What role creates the most anxiety in your life?
6. When was a time you realized you had a false identity that was built on the sand? What happened?

Call to action: take the Trading Faces quiz. Spend some time asking God to reveal the ways you speak lies over yourself. Repent of the lies you know you condemn yourself with and ask God to give you the faith and trust to believe what he says about you.

Shame

Finding Worth as an Image Bearer

Discussion questions

1. Who do you compare yourself to the most? Why do you think that is?
2. How has the pain of your past connected to the voice of shame in your life today?
3. What is the most frequent phrase the voice of shame speaks to your heart?
4. If people really knew you, what would you be most afraid of them finding out?
5. How does shame alienate us from others?
6. In what ways are you God's masterpiece?
7. How does the cross undo our shame?

Call to action: Make a list of all the ways you have identified yourself in your shame. I am (fill in the blank). Find a trash bin (even better a fire pit!) and imagine yourself at the foot of the cross. Cut up your shame language into strips of paper. One by one, repent of the lie and "leave it at the cross" as you watch it burn, confess to the Lord, and listen to and receive his voice of truth over you.

Good Works

Finding Acceptance as a Redeemed Sinner

Discussion questions

1. What was something that you strived for and achieved that you thought you would find peace in once you attained? What happened when you actually achieved it?
2. What are the benchmarks in your life that you use to measure how good you are?
3. In what ways do your desires reveal that you are sinful?
4. What or who are you tempted to blame for your sin?
5. How does Jesus's sacrifice on the cross change the way you look at your sin?
6. How is the goodness Jesus gives us at the cross different than the goodness we try to earn on our own?

Call to action: God made you for good works. He ordained the good works he made just for you before the foundation of time (Eph 2:10). Take some time to repent of the ways you have sought to depend on your good works to define who you are. Then ask Christ to reveal to you the good works that he has in store for you. Pray that daily you would step into the good works God designed you for out of the overflow of his power and as his means to be his agent of light in this world.

Independence

Finding Freedom as a Servant

Discussion questions

1. What is your first memory of declaring your independence (choosing your own outfit, going your own way, etc)?
2. How has your ethnicity or culture impacted your relationship with independence?
3. How has your view of Christianity been impacted by your cultural assumptions about dependence or independence?
4. What do the biblical authors mean when they refer to followers of Jesus as servants?
5. Where do you struggle with being a slave to righteousness?
6. Have you ever felt freedom in being a slave to Christ? What did that look like?

Call to action: As followers of Jesus, we are servants. This isn't an identity that calls us to intermittent yearly, monthly, or even weekly action. It's an identity that calls us into daily service. Where are you best living out your identity as a servant? Where do you tend to struggle with being a servant? Where might Christ be calling you to serve? Would you pray that Christ would give you the courage to serve in that capacity and then take a step in committing yourself to that service? May our daily intentions be those that aspire to serve because we represent the Great Servant himself.

Individuality

Finding Rest as a Sheep of the Good Shepherd

Discussion questions

1. What is your Myers-Briggs or Enneagram (or your favorite personality quiz) type? How has it been helpful for you in understanding yourself?
2. Every one of us *is* unique, but why might focusing on what sets us apart wear us out?
3. Do you tend to feel like your worth is tied to how much you get done? If so, how has this negatively impacted your relationship with Jesus?
4. What is the most comforting thing to you in knowing that the Lord is your shepherd?
5. If the Lord IS, what anxious thoughts is the Lord inviting you to trust fully to him?
6. In the past week, how many times have you stopped to pause and just be with Jesus?

Call to action: Find a quiet place and read Psalm 23 out loud to yourself. Read it a second time and offer prayers of repentance for each way you have fought the Shepherd's care in your life. Read Psalm 23 a final time and pause and offer a quiet prayer of thanks to your shepherd after each phrase.

Desires

Discussion questions

1. What object, relationship, or thing would make you happiest if you received it (“spiritual” answers aren’t allowed!)?
2. What are you most afraid of losing right now?
3. Why did God make us with such strong desires?
4. What is God’s purpose for our sexuality?
5. How have your desires harmed you or others?
6. Why do the New Testament authors refer to Christians as “saints” so frequently?
7. Where is God calling you to entrust your desires to him and shine his light as his saint?

Call to action: Spend some time asking God to align your desires with his desires for you. What ways have you seen God change you since you became a Christian? If you struggle to answer that, ask a good friend to help you. Remember God made you for his glory and knows what is best for you. Consider that you are bought by Jesus’s life and have been made pure through his blood. Submit and surrender your desires to him trusting he knows best for you. Wait and watch, transformation is coming.

Marriage

Finding Wholeness as the Bride of Christ

Discussion questions

1. Who was your first crush? What did you like about them?
2. What were your assumptions about what marriage was supposed to be when you were growing up?
3. Do you think there are more pitfalls to arranged marriages or to modern western marriages that are driven by a more romantic view of love?
4. How do you define the purpose of marriage?
5. Why do you think we tend to downplay the cosmic bride and groom story in the Bible?
6. In what ways has your faith been more focused on your personal relationship with God than your participation in a community?

Call to action: Write down five benefits to being part of the collective bride. Write down five ways that being part of the bride of Christ informs who you are. Write down three ways you can grow in your commitment to your local church. Pray for God's blessing on your local church.

Parenthood

Finding Belonging as an Adopted Son

Discussion questions

1. Did one of your parents tend to derive their identity from being a parent? How did that impact you as a child?
2. If you are a parent, share the story of your first child's birth and how it impacted you.
3. If being a parent is such a good thing, why might it be risky to place your identity in being a mom or dad?
4. How does releasing your identity as a parent free you to love your children better? How might it change the way you communicate with your children?
5. Why does God call us his sons (and not sons and daughters)?
6. Which of these benefits of being God's son speaks most profoundly to you? His inheritance? His attention? His care? Or being part of his family?

Call to action: Write down five things you fight for control with your kids. Identify and repent of the ways you have filtered your worth through the lens of your children's behavior. Imagine taking your kids and placing them into your Heavenly Father's arms. Write down the five most meaningful benefits of being God's son. Spend time in repentance and thanking God for his fatherly care for you.

Ideologies

Finding Humility as Jesus's Friend

Discussion questions

1. Did your parents explicitly or implicitly tell you not to spend time with those who were on the other side of the political aisle?
2. Have you ever been ghosted by someone because of political beliefs? How did that feel?
3. Why do political views seem so much bigger than other opinions? Have you ever been tempted to cut off a friend because of their political views?
4. Do you struggle more to think of Jesus as your Lord or as your friend? Why do you think that is?
5. When was the last time a friend lovingly confronted you? How did it impact your friendship?
6. What do you think Jesus likes best about you?
7. What do you like best about being Jesus's friend?

Call to action: Ask Jesus for forgiveness for keeping him at arm's length. Ask Jesus to help you accept that he doesn't just love you, he likes you. Ask God to reveal where you need to receive his loving confrontation as your friend. Pray that God would help you see him more as his friend and receive his joy over you.

Career

Finding Purpose as a Gifted Member of God's Family

Discussion questions

1. Growing up, what vocation did you aspire to? How did that form your identity?
2. When was a time that failure at work impacted your self-worth? When was a time that success at work impacted your self-worth?
3. How does our dominion reflect God's image?
4. What are your spiritual gifts? Ask three close friends what they think your top three spiritual gifts are.
5. How are you using your spiritual gifts?
6. What are the obstacles that are in the way of using your spiritual gifts?
7. Which of your spiritual gifts is getting used the least?

Call to action: Pretend as though you are your church's senior pastor. Where could you make the most impact at the church? What is the biggest obstacle to you using your gifts as God intended? Fear? Busyness? Something else? Commit to send a text or email to a church leader this week to take the next step in serving as God has called you to.

Patriotism

Finding Boldness as an Ambassador of Christ

Discussion questions

1. Are you proud of your country or ethnicity? What are the things you are most proud of about it?
2. If you were forced to re-patriot, which country would it be hardest for you to be a citizen of? What are three things you could learn to love about that country?
3. Which right that your nation grants you is dearest to you? Why?
4. How does belonging to the eternal kingdom change your view of your earthly citizenship?
5. Do you struggle more to love your earthly home or to identify with your heavenly home? How can you grow in that area?
6. How has God gifted you to reflect his eternal kingdom?

Call to action: Repent for how you the places you haven't had your identity rooted in being a citizen of heaven and an ambassador. Repent for places in your heart that you haven't loved the place God had called you to dwell in well. List your fears about the direction of your nation. Pray for the King of Kings to care for your country. Pray that God would use you as an instrument of peace and unity that the church may demonstrate our God's love for all people in a divided world.

Now What?

Discussion questions

1. After reading the book, which false identity do you think you need to do the most work in taking off? Where is God asking you to repent and release control?
2. Which of the four categories of identity—“born as,” “transformed into,” “included in,” and “called to”—have you most often neglected in understanding your identity?
3. Which three of our identities in Christ (see the appendix) are most natural for you to see yourself as? Why?
4. Which three identities in Christ are most difficult for you to see yourself as? Why?

Call to action: What ongoing habits is Christ calling you to in order to continue to grow in understanding your identities? List three ways you can incorporate identity language in your prayer life and self-talk. Who is one person God might be inviting you to share *Trading Faces* with?

