



## **Apathy, Boredom, and My Christian Identity**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

- I. Apathy and boredom: A short definition and example of each word
- II. Christian teens today: a study of teens and their spirituality
- III. The remedy: the joy of the Lord
- IV. Be real: confront your own self
- V. Purpose in your heart: make a decision to break the mold of apathy and boredom



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- V. Purpose in your heart: make a decision to break the mold of apathy and boredom

Key text: “These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11).

Read also: John 15:1–11; Isaiah 51:11

Lesson in a sentence: Don’t allow apathy and boredom to steal your identity as a Spirit-filled child of God.

What you’re trying to get across: Because students don’t really know who they are in Christ and what they can do as Spirit-filled believers, they find themselves easily bored and apathetic. However, the fullness of joy is in the kingdom of God, and their identity can be linked to that. Your goal is to teach students how to pinpoint what is causing them to become apathetic and to show them, through God’s Word, how to live a Spirit-filled, overcoming life.

We live in a digital world, a world of iPod, wii, MySpace, and text messaging. Today’s teenagers are more technologically advanced than any other generation prior to this one. Today’s gadgets have been designed to keep teenagers hooked and wanting more. Industries spend billions in coming up with new and more exciting props to keep students from getting bored and apathetic about the latest toys. They understand that they need to put out something new every six to eight months just to keep teenagers’ attention.

It is no wonder why teens are so cold and uninterested toward traditional things such as prayer, Bible reading, and attending church. Let’s be real here: technology is great, but if students are allowed to wander in this unrestricted cyber world,



there will be a serious cost to pay. Boredom and apathy about things perceived as “old” and “traditional” will be a major battle with teens.

It is not realistic to advocate that we compete or even try to compete with this digital age; however, Jesus Christ can offer them something that the glitz and glitter of the world cannot—joy.

Object lesson:

Get the loudest alarm you can find (home fire alarm, bullhorn, siren, etc.). At some point just before you start your lesson, have another leader outside of the door turn the alarm on for 5–10 seconds (be sure to test it beforehand). Watch for the students’ reactions as the alarm goes off. After everything settles down, talk about the way they reacted. For example, Tim just sat there and was apathetically unresponsive toward the alarm, or Brittony responded by jumping to her feet and running out of the room.

Use this as an intro to relay the following CNN story, “Fire kills 62 after alarms ignored.” Throughout the lesson you can refer back to the alarm object lesson and how students responded. You can tie it in to the lesson by explaining how, when we are apathetic toward the alarms of God, we can cause a lot of damage not only in our lives, but also in the lives of others.

“Fire kills 62 after alarms ignored”—CNN.com reported on March 20, 2007.

MOSCOW, Russia—A night watchman ignored two fire alarms at a Russian old people's home where a blaze killed at least 62 people, emergency officials said. The man only took action when he saw flames at the building, in the Kuban region of southern Russia. Staff failed to unlock a fire exit and firefighters took nearly an hour to arrive from the nearest town. The disaster prompted new concerns about safety in run-down state institutions. It came the day after an explosion at a Siberian coal mine killed at least 100 people in Russia's deadliest mining disaster in a decade. Despite promises by central government of major cash investments, many health institutions are run down and fire regulations are routinely ignored. A fire alarm system went off in the building three times, but a watchman—at the site but outside the building—ignored the first two alarms and reported the fire only when he saw flames, Emergency Situations Ministry spokeswoman Veronika Smolskaya told AP. Staff were also absent from their posts, hindering attempts to find keys and open an emergency exit.



## I. Apathy and Boredom Defined

Let us take a closer look at what apathy and boredom are.

The American Heritage Dictionary says apathy is “(1) lack of interest or concern, especially regarding matters of general importance or appeal; indifference; (2) lack of emotion or feeling; impassiveness.”

In other words, apathy says “I don’t care.”

According to the Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, apathy is a psychological term for a state of indifference—where an individual is unresponsive or “indifferent” to aspects of emotional, social, or physical life. Clinical apathy is considered to be at an elevated level, while a moderate level might be considered depression. The physical aspect of apathy associated with muscle deterioration and lack of energy is called lethargy. Apathy can be object-specific—toward a person, activity, or environment. It is a common reaction to stress where it manifests as “learned helplessness.” It can also reflect a lack of interest in things one does not consider important.

Boredom is the feeling that something in particular is a waste of time. Most teens understand this term. It’s the feeling you get after you’ve beaten the X-box game a million times, and it’s no longer fun. It’s that friend who just won’t stop talking about that guy who’s really not all that interesting in the first place. We’ve all been there, you know ... boredom.

## II. Christian Teens Today

“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Matthew 24:12).

An April 23, 2002, George Barna report states that “more than three out of five teenagers say they are spiritual, [however] spiritual goals and life outcomes are not among the top-rated goals they have established for their future.”

Many Christian students exist in a perpetual state of indifference, for the joy of the Lord as found in Nehemiah 8:10 (“the joy of the LORD is your strength”) eludes them. They are unresponsive and indifferent to the emotional, social, and physi-



cal aspects of their Christian life. They have allowed themselves to stay in this state of “I don’t care” for so long that they have developed severe muscle loss and a lack of energy when it comes to the things of God, especially in the areas of praise and worship. This also is in direct contradiction to the joy of the Lord being our strength. Their apathy and boredom have become object-specific, often toward a pastor, parents, and particularly toward activities pertaining to worship. Developing “learned helplessness,” they no longer consider the things of God important; thus apathy and boredom are the cause of their increasing lack of interest.

### III. The Remedy

“Therefore the redeemed of the LORD shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away” (Isaiah 51:11).

God’s joy pushes back the apathy and boredom, and the way to retain it is to be in a continual state of worship and praise. Keep Christ at the center and stay busy with the things of God. Christ has called us to be proactive in our approach to living for Him. If you find yourself in that place of boredom, encourage yourself to get out the Word of God and read some of the incredible stories found there. Simple stories, such as David and Goliath, highlight young people who refused to embrace apathy.

### IV. Be Real

“So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:16).

The first thing to do is be real and honest with yourself. Ask yourself, Why have I become so apathetic and bored toward the things of God? Why do I lack this fullness of joy? Why am I so cold? Don’t be afraid to dig deep inside your soul. Think about it like this: In a sense, apathy and boredom are like quicksand. The longer you are in them the deeper you’re stuck. If you are to survive, you must get out today. Tomorrow may be too late. Go against those dull feelings! Wake up and do it now! Be real! His joy is waiting.

### V. Purpose in your Heart



“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself ...” (Daniel 1:8).

You have got to purpose in your heart to be real and keep your connection with God open. Be sure to set indicators and alarms in your heart that will tell you when you’re slipping back into apathy or boredom. Connect with a leader and give him or her authority in your life, whether it is a youth pastor or another Spirit-filled adult, and ask him or her to be real with you and to tell you when they see you losing joy. Every time you frequent a church service, purpose in your heart that you will not allow the boredom and apathy mold to set in on your life, and purpose to break that mold every time it does. You’ve got to really want it.

“These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11).



**The Kingdom of God is Handicap Accessible**  
Daniel Blash



## **INTRODUCTION**

- I. Who gets to choose your identity?
  - a. What do you think of the statement: Discussion
  - b. Did you know? FDR
  
- II. “But we will remember the name of the Lord our God” (Psalm 20:7).
  - a. What do you think of the statement: Discussion
  - b. Did you know? Learned Helplessness
  
- III. Who gets to choose your identity?
  
- IV. Recognizing and Accepting Your Identity in Christ: Stuttering Allowed!
  
- V. Do not be afraid because of your limitations
  
- VI. So What’s really important?
  - a. What do you think of the statement: Discussion
  
- VII. So you think you can’t be used by God? Think again!
  - a. What do you think of the statement: Discussion
  
- VIII. My to-do list



I. Who gets to choose your identity?

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 49.7 million people in the U.S. age five and over have a disability— nearly one in five U.S. residents, or 20 percent of the population. That means it will be nearly impossible to go anywhere or do anything without coming into contact with this beautiful harvest field. It also means there is an army of hundreds of thousands within our churches who are Spirit filled and living with disabilities. In the U.S. Armed Forces, a disability might disqualify one for service, but in God's army there are no medical discharges. Everyone, no matter what disabilities you may have, is called into the field to help gather the harvest. God can and will use you for His service. He will make up any shortcoming you may have. Serving Him and giving Him your abilities is at the foundation of your apostolic identity. The fires of evangelism and the passion for reaching this generation must be at the core of your life's purpose.

A. What do you think of the statement: Many people with disabilities live within the shadow of the church, never enjoying the benefits of full inclusion.

B. Did you know?

Franklin D. Roosevelt: Assuming the presidency at the depth of the Great Depression, Roosevelt helped the American people regain faith in themselves. He brought hope as he promised prompt, vigorous action and asserted in his inaugural address, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." FDR is the only president to be elected to four terms. He is also the only American president to be confined to a wheelchair. Resolution is the ability to not allow limitations to get in the way of purpose.

II. "But we will remember the name of the Lord our God" (Psalm 20:7).

Spiritual amnesia is the inability to remember how God has delivered you in the past and thus being unable to have faith for the present. A person suffering from spiritual amnesia is also suffering from a spiritual identity crisis. In other words, the person is unable to draw strength from past deliverances and must face each new trial as if it were the first one. This was true of the children of Israel when they seemingly forgot about God's power to deliver and said to Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness" (Exodus 14:11-12).



The flip side of this condition is healthy spiritual identity that develops over time and produces unshakable confidence in God. Trials are faced with two understandings: first, that your abilities alone will never be enough to produce true deliverance; and second, that God will always surpass your efforts and bring deliverance. The same God who has given you the strength to live with your disability has empowered you with a message of hope that must be revived and then shared.

David, the young shepherd, leaned on his experiences with God and was able to draw strength for a new battle. When confronted with Goliath, he said, “Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee” (I Samuel 17:36–37).

A. What do you think of the statement: Only 14 percent of disabled Americans attend church regularly. Thus the church faces a real challenge. Unfortunately, this challenge can be easily overlooked because many people ignore three facts: the personhood, the hindrances faced, and God’s desire to use both the person and the disability for His glory.

B. Did you know?

Learned helplessness is what happens when people learn that it hurts more to try and fail, than not to try at all. They become comfortable in their state of apathy and discontentment. They feel convicted for not trying harder, but the pain of their conviction is easier to bear than the pain of failing—again. Learned helplessness produces mental and spiritual paralysis; it is to revival what water is to fire.

III. Who gets to choose your identity?

Your identity will be defined by one of two sources. Either it will be defined according to God’s view of you, or it will be defined according to the world’s view of you. Whoever determines your identity also determines your destiny. Think of Jacob from the Old Testament. His identity came from his name, and he lived up to every part of that identity. Jacob was physically and mentally whole, but he was morally bankrupt and spiritually crippled. After his encounter with God, Jacob walked with a limp that marked the touch of God on his life (Genesis 32: 24–31). In the eyes of men, Jacob was no longer physically whole, but in the



eyes of God, he was clean and pure—and finally ready for service.

Man looks on the outside appearance, but God examines the heart (I Samuel 16:7). The judgments of men are full of flaws and biases, but God's judgments are perfect all the time. So, who gets to choose your identity?

IV. Recognizing and Accepting Your Identity in Christ: Stuttering Allowed! God's definition of you was established before you were ever touched by a handicap or disability. The Lord told Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). This is the promise and spiritual heritage that is extended to all His people. How will you respond when God calls you beyond your limitation into the harvest field?

The prophet Moses struggled with his calling because God asked him to operate in an area where he had proven limitations. God handpicked Moses for the task of delivering Israel from Egypt and promised, "Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (Exodus 3:12). Moses responded by listing his inabilities, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant: but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Exodus 4:10).

A. What do you think of the statement: What can be done to accommodate (and include) those living with disabilities into our church community?

V. Do not be afraid because of your limitations God did not ignore the limitations of the prophet, nor did He marginalize them. God already had a plan, and His plan would more than compensate for all of Moses' shortcomings. Moses' outlook was based on his own ability, or disability, and the very thought of moving forward for the Lord produced feelings of fear and inadequacy. He was still operating from an identity of inferiority, as if he had to face the battle alone. In stark contrast to what Moses was saying, God proclaimed, "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say" (Exodus 4:11-12). God was detailing Moses' true identity, which is always connected to purpose. He is our perfect completer, so whatever you lack He makes up the difference.



VI. So, What's really important?

A quick Internet search of "important things in life" will provide list upon list of things that have been deemed as important. Topping the list is usually things like wealth, health, and education. Other lists include great accomplishments, lasting romances, and high-paying jobs. Most of the lists can be grouped into three categories: temporary pleasures, material possessions, and social status. So what is important, and who gets to decide? How many of life's "important things" are attached to your physical abilities and are thus out of reach? The answer, of course, depends on who gets to decide what is important. Whoever gets to decided what is important in your life will also decided your priorities.

A. What do you think of the statement: The things in life that are most important can be done from the confinement of a wheelchair. They can be accomplished by the lame, the deaf, and the blind. They can be achieved by those in every category of mental and emotional disabilities.

VII. So you think you can't be used by God? Think again!

Fanny Crosby is a name that will not be on the top twenty count-down anytime soon. However, in countless places of worship around the world, the words she penned are being lifted to the heavens. Tears have been shed in many nations as God's people, with lifted hands, have sung the words, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine." Over 6,000 songs of praise came from this humble, blind servant of God who knew that her God was greater than her disabilities.

Has God been speaking to you about doing something in particular for Him? Have you resisted, thinking yourself inadequate? Don't handicap yourself! Claim this ringing proclamation of the apostle Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

A. What do you think of the statement: Ministering to people who have disabilities is a two-way street. Don't assume you have to do all the giving and nothing to learn.

VIII. My to-do list:

. "But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14:13-14).

. "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the



poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind” (Luke 14:21).

. “My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly” (Psalm 119:167).

. “I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cause which I knew not I searched out” (Job 29:15–16).

. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live” (Luke 10:27).



## **Lost and Found: Reclaiming Your [His] Identity**

Jaime Morgans

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# IDENTITY THEFT

YOUTH WEEK 2008

## INTRODUCTION

- I. Introduce John Mark, a tale of identity issues
  - a. Mark 14:51–Garden of Gethsemane–unsure of his identity
  - b. Acts 12:25–First missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas
  - c. Acts 13:13; 15:37–Identity theft–leaves missionary journey
- II. How do you stop identity theft?
  - a. Know what happened and how it happened
    - i. Lost coin–careless
    - ii. Lost sheep–nature of the flesh
    - iii. Lost son–willful disobedience
    - iv. You have to basically reboot your life–repent
  - b. Make sure it doesn't happen again
    - i. Lifelock security systems
    - ii. Surround yourself with the right people
    - iii. Get accountable; build walls against predators
  - c. Reestablish a new identity
    - i. Develop a true love for real treasure–Jesus
    - ii. Prodigal–didn't know who he really was until he saw the face of his father–identity restored
    - iii. Reclaim His identity
    - iv. Study Jesus and His ways
    - v. Study how He reacted to people and situations around Him
- III. John Mark–identity reclaimed
  - a. II Timothy 4:11–Paul asks for Mark
  - b. Stop self–sabotaging
  - c. Be honest with yourself and with God
  - d. Choose to be a Demas or a Mark.



Four students stand on the stage with their backs to the audience. A student in a black shirt turns each student to face the audience one at a time. They say their lines, and the black-shirt student turns them back around. After the four say their lines, a student in a white shirt repeats the act for the identity reclaimed.

Disability: I can't do anything. I hate my life. All of my friends are perfect. They can wear whatever they want. I'm fat and nothing looks right on me. I have one leg shorter so I have to wear these stupid shoes. I look like a freak.

Rage: I could kill her. I would like nothing better than to take her head in my hands and squeeze it until ... Who does she think she is telling everyone what I said about her? Did she think it wouldn't get back to me? Did she think I'd let it go?

Guilt: I don't know why I even try. I'm always messing up. I try to live right. I want to, but every time I'm on the right track, something pops up and I fall for it: the wrong girl, the wrong friend, the wrong job. If there's a chance of going wrong, I'm gonna take it. I give up.

Boredom: There is nothing to do in this town. I'm sick of living here. My youth group never does anything fun. All I do is sit at home and do homework ... even more boring. MySpace is boring. I mean, how many pictures can I put up when I never do anything?

Disability: My body and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart. He is mine forever (Psalm 73:26).

Rage: A gentle answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger (Proverbs 15:1).

Guilt: I do not condemn you. Go and sin no more (John 8:11).

Boredom: I have come that you might have life in all its fullness (John 10:10).

Key Text: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are



passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17).

For thirty-two years Frank Abagnale has worked for the FBI. His sole purpose is to uncover banking crimes and security breaches. He educates people about ways to protect themselves from identity theft. His book, *Stealing Your Life*, is a practical how-to on doing just that. How does Frank Abagnale know so much about ID theft? Probably because he was one of the best thieves ever. His story began in 1964 when at sixteen, Frank ran away from home and began five years of the biggest con-artist crime spree in history. Frank basically fathered the idea of identity theft. He forged checks in twenty-six countries worth more than \$2.5 million, using at least eight identities. Frank posed as an airline pilot, a doctor for eleven months, and at nineteen he worked in the Louisiana Attorney General’s office as a lawyer. He even taught Sociology at a University.

The FBI caught Frank Abagnale after numerous creative escapes. He served five years in the federal pen and went directly to work for the other side of crime. Frank lost himself in numerous identities. As a teenager he battled many of the same things you battle. His parents divorced. He hated school. His father lost his job. He had to find new friends ... the wrong ones. Obviously, Frank took his identity theft to the extreme. It is hoped that none of you will don an airline pilot’s uniform to get a free plane ticket or forge a diploma to illegally practice law. We’ve discussed losing our identity in things like our disabilities, rage, guilt, and boredom. Tonight, as you saw your friends portray, we’re going to the “lost and found” to reclaim our identities. Make up your mind to leave with your true identity tonight.

The Bible provides us with the perfect tale of “identity lost and found.” Mark was a teenager who followed Jesus and His disciples. He witnessed Jesus’ miracles and heard His sermons. On the night Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, Mark was there.

They were all praying and falling asleep in the garden. Jesus was sweating drops of blood as He prayed and kept asking His followers to pray with him. Mark was there. When the soldiers arrived to arrest Jesus, instead of standing with Jesus, Mark freaked out. Mark 14:51–52 tells us that he was wearing a linen cloth, and when they tried to grab him, they got his robe, and Mark ran off naked. As a young person not sure of who he was, it was easy for Mark to let his identity be snatched as he ran back toward the safety of his old life at home.



At some point Mark got his act together and reclaimed his identity. In fact, at the end of Acts 12, Paul and Barnabas chose Mark to go to Jerusalem with them and on their first missionary journey. This was a huge vote of confidence from two great ministers. Mark did well with them for a while, but he got distracted and careless. For whatever reason, Mark deserted Paul and Barnabas and went back to Jerusalem. His identity was stripped from him again.

Yet many people saw something salvageable in Mark. They saw an identity worth investing in. They might have seen him as a budding author, a prayer warrior, or soul winner. Maybe he was an amazing travel organizer or had a knack for drawing a crowd. The point is that Mark didn't see it himself. He didn't get it. In fact, Paul got sick of Mark's unreliability and told Barnabas they weren't taking him with them again. Mark had to reclaim his identity before people would believe in him.

To reclaim something lost, you need to know what happened and how it happened. With identity theft, you must find out how someone stole your information. Were you being careless buying items from unsecured sites? Were you ignorant of the devices thieves use? Was your wallet stolen? The list is endless, but it's essential to trace the theft back to the source.

Through three stories, Jesus tells how our spiritual identity can be stolen. The first story is about a lost sheep. It wanders away. The shepherd must leave ninety-nine other sheep to search for it. Sheep wander. If there's not a shepherd telling them where to go, they'll get lost. We're the same way. Think about it: if you don't go to church for a while, you're watching a ton of TV, you're listening to more secular than Christian music, and not being guided by anyone spiritual, you're bound to stray from the youth group. You end up feeling guilty about not going to church and not living for God at your highest potential, and it's easier not to go. It's your nature as a sheep. Pretty soon, you're like, "Uh, I'm a little lost here. Hey, I need some help over here, buddy." It may not be intentional. It happens when we let guilt and failure rule us and don't focus on the Shepherd. The second story is about a woman who loses a coin in her home. Her home is dark and dirty. To find the coin, she must turn on some lights and sweep out the house. We can lose our spiritual identity through carelessness. We can let apathy and "don't care" attitudes clutter up our spiritual house until we lose what is most precious—Jesus.



The last story is about a lost son. This son chooses to leave his father, lose his identity as part of the family, and take on a new identity. He ends up broke, feeding pigs, and thinking about eating pig leftovers. The whole thing is a mess, but it's his fault. He allowed his identity to be stolen. We too can do this in lots of ways: rage, anger, bitterness, and choosing to let our disabilities define us. It's called willful disobedience.

After your life is stolen through identity theft, you have to "reboot." To us tonight, that means repentance. You have to clean out. For some identity theft victims, this process takes weeks or even years. They have to cancel all of their credit cards, make calls to credit bureaus, and sometimes get a new social security number. With God, it takes moments. This isn't for the lazy. Repentance means changing your old habits. If you go right back and shop at the same site where your credit card information was stolen, you're asking to repeat the cycle. Repentance is starting over and reclaiming your intended identity—His identity. You need to make sure your identity is not stolen again. Lifelock is a company designed to protect people from identity theft. Lifelock puts 24/7 protection on your identity, calling immediately if anyone tries to open a line of credit using your name. It constructs walls around your identity, keeping out predators and keeping your good name intact.

Lifelock ... sounds like a God idea to me. It's time to build some walls against the devil, whose main goal is to steal your identity, kill, and destroy you. Surrounding yourself with friends who are strong enough to sound the alarm when you're getting off track is a lifelock. Getting accountable to someone who is older and spiritually stronger than you is a lifelock.

Once your identity is stolen, you must reestablish yourself. People don't immediately believe it when you say, "I didn't spend \$30,000 on electronics. My identity was stolen." It's a ton of work to clean up your name. It also requires you to be careful with the way you live your life.

We must pursue a love for real treasure. The name we've been given is Jesus. He is that treasure. We've got to decide, "Who is Jesus?"

If we are to find our identity in him, we must see Jesus for who He is. The lost son found himself repenting in a pigpen. He realized his father's servants were living better than he was. He could be a servant. The son couldn't see himself for whom he was until he saw the face of his father. His father put a robe and ring on him and called him "son." His identity was restored.



To reclaim His identity as our own, we must study Jesus. How did He react to people and situations around him? Did He let rage take over? No, He wept over those who persecuted Him and wished He could gather them in. Did He let the woman caught in adultery wallow in her guilt and failure? No, He simply said, "Go and sin no more." When you study Jesus and learn His identity, it's a guarantee you'll find yours.

Our friend Mark did just that. He stopped self-sabotaging and figured out who he was. In II Timothy 4:11, the apostle Paul noticed the change in Mark and asked for him to come, saying that Mark was helpful to him in the ministry. This isn't difficult. It's a lot less complicated than real identity theft. Reclaiming your spiritual identity is about being honest with yourself and with God. Know yourself. Know Him. When we sabotage ourselves with false identities, we're fooling no one. We have to strip it all away, layer by layer, and show God who we really are. He's not going to reject us. He wants us to know Him. It's simple. If we truly know him, we won't be tricked into believing a lie.

In the same letter that Paul asks for Mark he mentions that he's all alone. He says, "Demas left me because he loves the world." We never hear about Demas again, while Mark authors one of the four Gospels. You have a choice tonight to be a Demas and lose your identity in this present world or to reclaim it like Mark. This altar is the "lost and found." Somewhere up here is your identity. Come and reclaim it.



# Rage

Nathaniel Rios

**Rage**

**SET-UP**

Set up monitor(TV)/gaming console; “Rage” media clip; pens/pen-cils. Make copies of “Action Moment” handouts for entire class.

**STARTER-4 minutes**

Get two students to participate in a discussion drama:

- \* 2 Students begin to play video game
- \* Student 1 begins to beat Student 2 at video game
- \* Student 2 gets mad at Student 1
- \* Student 1 laughs at Student 2
- \* Student 2 hits Student 1 with controller and goes crazy

**THINK MOMENT-4 minutes**

Show “Rage” clip.

**INTERACTION MOMENT-7 minutes**

Ask the questions below and get the students involved.

1. What is rage?
2. What causes us to reach the point of rage?
3. How does rage affect our relationships?
4. What could be some consequences of letting ourselves reach the point of rage?
5. What kind of outlets are needed for young people to release the things that lead to rage?

**DISCUSSION MOMENT-9 minutes**

It’s an epidemic in young people everywhere. Abuse and neglect have led to anger and mistrust, anger that stems from questions such as, “Why me?” or “Is this all I’m worth?” This epidemic is leading us to a generation of adults that has held on to anger and now their rage is the motivator behind many unimaginable, tragic crimes committed in our world. Although a few in this world have used their rage to motivate them to be better, to rise above their circumstances, they fade in comparison to the overwhelming statistics that tell us we are losing a generation of young people to the god of this world, Satan.

We ask ourselves, “What causes rage?” We have all been angry or hurt at one time or another. It’s life! It’s okay to have those feelings and emotions in times of hurt, pain, or misunderstanding. What you must realize is that anger, if

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harbored, will eat your soul alive. It will affect your relationships with God, family, and friends. You will find it taking over your ability to make rational decisions. Your life will begin to be steered by the once small emotion of anger that has now grown into a consuming, gigantic rage. So let's talk about what society is saying.

"We're Ruder Than Ever, Poll Finds ... 'It's about the daily assault of selfish, inconsiderate behavior that gets under people's skin on the highways, in the office, on TV, in stores and the myriad other settings where they encounter fellow Americans.' "

No matter who does the study, the results seem to be the same. Here, 79 percent feel that people are ruder to each other now than just ten years ago; 42 percent say they encounter rude behavior every day.

We're all under a lot of stress and feel pushed to the edge: one study shows that nine out of ten of us are highly stressed most of the time.

What's going on? We're rude and we're mean: there's road rage, air rage, cell phone rage, checkout rage, bike rage, sports rage, parking rage, rail rage, bank rage, roller rage, boat rage, desk rage, car alarm rage, and drivers who even honk at people on crutches. And according to one expert, there's also "funeral rage"—people actually flip the bird and cut off funeral processions.

Most of us all realize that anger is contagious. The "desk rage" survey tells us that 34 percent of respondents had suffered insomnia because of a stress-filled or anger-charged workplace; 11 percent said they consumed excessive alcohol, and 16 percent smoked too much for the same reasons.

Approximately 250,000 people were killed and 20 million motorists injured in traffic crashes between 1990 and 1996. Federal officials have reported that two-thirds of the fatalities on the roads in the U.S. are attributable to aggressive driving.

Sports stars publicly display anger and violence on and off the court—these are role models? They beat each other, run each other down with cars ... and how about spitting in a baseball umpire's face, head-butting a basketball referee, choking a baseball coach, bat-throwing, ear biting, and worse. ... Attacks at sporting events for children are so prevalent, that the National Association of Sports Officials now offers assault insurance to members.

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Violence affects the quality of life of young people who experience, witness, or feel threatened by it. In addition to the direct physical harm young victims of serious violence suffer, such violence can adversely affect their mental health and development and increase the likelihood that they themselves will commit acts of serious violence—youth ages twelve to seventeen are twice as likely as adults to be victims of serious violent crimes, including aggravated assault, rape, robbery (by force or threat of violence), and homicide.

By age eighteen, the average American child will have viewed about two hundred thousand acts of violence on television alone.

Our society is experiencing these high amounts of rudeness and rage because of the retention of accumulated amounts of anger. So, let's talk about what God says!

**BIBLE MOMENT—11 minutes**

We have analyzed what the world says about our problem, but let's talk about what the Bible says about how to deal with it. In order for us to effectively deal with rage we must identify it and resolve the truth behind it. Rage's root system is heavily composed of anger and the ways we deal with anger. If we can understand anger and how we should deal with it, then we can successfully keep rage out of our life. It is like this: if we don't plant the seed, we won't get the fruit. If we expose anger in our life and not let it take root, the fruit of rage cannot ever steal our identity and cause us to become a rage-filled someone we never intended to be.

**BIBLE TEXT:**

"Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, 'It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer," but you have made it a "den of thieves." ' Then the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and He healed them" (Matthew 21:12-14, NKJV).

The Bible story begins by Jesus going into the Temple and noticing that something is not right about the current situation. The Temple has been turned into a massive flea market. Then Christ displays an obvious element of anger as the Scripture paints a picture of Him driving people out and overturning tables and chairs. This kind of behavior could probably be classified as a non-passive dis-

**Rage**

play of emotion. It is clear by Jesus' reaction that anger is not always a bad thing. So let's discuss anger:

What is anger?

- Anger is a strong feeling of annoyance, displeasure, or hostility.
- There is nothing wrong with being angry.
- Anger is one of the most misunderstood and overused of human emotions.
- Anger is a reaction to an inner emotion and not a planned action.
- Anger is easy to show; everyone gets angry.
- The feelings underlying the angry reaction make us feel vulnerable and weak; anger itself makes us feel, at least momentarily, strong and in control.
- Angry behaviors are learned over a lifetime and therefore can be unlearned and replaced with healthier patterns of contending with difficulties.
- Anger can be an immediate reaction to an isolated event, or it can be a response after numerous events.

Repressing anger is unhealthy, yet expressing it impulsively—as we so often do—may give momentary relief but inevitably will incur negative consequences. To alter our angry responses, we need to understand where anger comes from.

**ACTION MOMENT—5 minutes**

\* Hand out work sheet to students

**FOCUS MOMENT—12 minutes**

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Now that we have concluded that rage cannot exist in our life without anger, let us talk about what to do to keep rage from stealing our identity.

What is rage? Rage is violent, uncontrollable anger. Allowing unwanted emotions to be retained in our bodies will result in uncontrolled emotions.

How do I deal with rage?

Release the situation.

“Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves” (Matthew 21:12, NKJV).

Jesus did not walk into the Temple, look around, then walk out and just keep what He saw to Himself. He expressed Himself in a way that He felt was reasonable. He took some form of action that was appropriate for the situation at hand. We cannot harbor feelings of unrest or they will turn to rage. We must

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respond!

Express your situation to God first. You must establish a safe point of vent-ing.

**WHAT DOES GOD SAY?**

\* Have student read Scripture.

Ephesians 4:26

Review the situation.

“And He said to them, ‘It is written, “My house shall be called a house of prayer,” but you have made it a “den of thieves” ’ (Matthew 21:13, NKJV).

Jesus had already evaluated the situation and come to a clear level of reason for His response to the actions of the Temple. There was logic to His mad-ness, and this is what He expressed. We must understand that not everything that happens is our fault, and not everything that happens is somebody else's fault. We must evaluate our surroundings before we take action, and then, after things unfold, we must review why they happened.

Take responsibility first before blaming someone else.

Ask the big questions:

- What was my part?
- What was their part?
- What did I do wrong?
- What did they do wrong?
- How do I change my attitude?
- How do I change my surroundings?
- How do I learn from this situation?
- What do I put in place to keep this from happening again?

**WHAT DOES GOD SAY?**

\* Have student read Scriptures.

Ecclesiastes 7:9; Matthew 5:22

Revive the Situation

“Then the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and He healed them” (Matthew 21:14, NKJV).

Jesus sought to do what He could to let His anger change His environment.



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Christ's actions took a hateful and cheating platform and turned it into a safe and healing presentation. We can safely conclude that Jesus expressed His anger in a reasonable fashion because the Bible points out that the blind and lame came to Him in the same environment in which He had taken action. If Jesus had been full of rage, those hurting people would have avoided Him out of fear that He might hurt them too. Hurting people don't want be hurt again; they are looking for someone to revive the current situation and bring healing to their surroundings. Jesus used His situation to help others. We need not let our situation steal our identity by becoming filled with rage. However, we need to let our situation bring the hope to others that His peace is able to heal and restore anything. We must not let anger drive us to rage but let it consume us with compassion for others. Our anger must be toward that which compels us to take action that produces acts of love.

How do I keep rage out of my life?

- Don't let things get to you.
- Don't let people get to you.
- Don't hold on to the past.

Communicate your feelings to

- parents
- pastor
- student pastor
- spiritual leader
- close friend
- someone you trust.

When something bad happens:

- Say "love of God" eight times fast.
- Think happy thoughts.
- Pray for peace in your life.

**ACTION MOMENT HANDOUT**

1. How am I feeling right now?

- \_\_\_ Anxious
- \_\_\_ Worthless
- \_\_\_ Hostile
- \_\_\_ Depressed
- \_\_\_ Mean/evil



**Rage**

- \_\_\_ Revengeful
- \_\_\_ Bitter
- \_\_\_ Rebellious
- \_\_\_ Paranoid
- \_\_\_ Victimized
- \_\_\_ Numb
- \_\_\_ Sarcastic
- \_\_\_ Resentful
- \_\_\_ Frustrated
- \_\_\_ Destructive

These are some of the names that we give to our feelings of anger. There is no cure for any of them. The first step in resolving our anger problem is to identify it as anger. The purpose of this step is to make our anger more specific. No one can manage anger that is vague and covered up with euphemisms.

**2. What happened to make you angry?**

If we can focus on the specific incident that triggered our anger, our anger becomes more understandable and easier to manage.

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**3. Who am I angry at?**

- \_\_\_ My own self
- \_\_\_ My boss
- \_\_\_ My siblings
- \_\_\_ God
- \_\_\_ The human race
- \_\_\_ My life
- \_\_\_ All men
- \_\_\_ Women
- \_\_\_ Other races
- \_\_\_ Miscellaneous

Our anger usually will involve five general areas: (1) our anger at others; (2) oth-



**Rage**

ers anger at us; (3) our anger at self; (4) residual anger from the past; or (5) abstract anger. If you can identify the specific facets of your anger, you will be in a better position to put your anger into a more moderate and more manageable perspective. You can do this by asking yourself a series of fo-cusing questions.

4. How did the situation make me feel besides angry?

(Example #1: I resented being forced to give in to them all the time. It made me feel powerless.)

(Example #2: His criticisms of me made me feel unappreciated and good for nothing.)

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Now that you have pin-pointed the feelings underlying your anger, you are ready to put your anger in a clearer perspective. The next step is to "peel" your anger down to the next layer.

5. What about this situation angers me the most?

For example, if you have established the fact that the above situations made you feel powerless, unappreciated, or good for nothing, you are ready to take a closer look at these feelings underlying your anger. What is it about being made to feel powerless that angers you the most? Below are some examples of what you might find upon deeper analysis.

- "There is nothing that I can do about it."
- "I feel so stupid!"
- "I feel guilty for allowing it to happen."
- "I feel inadequate to cope with this situation."

There is a variety of factors that increases the probability of a rage reaction.

- If we have seen our parents get angry first and resolve an issue after, we are more likely to use the same approach. Thus, types of anger are learned.
- If we are frustrated and feel stressed, we are more likely to react with anger.
- If we are tired, we are more prone to react in an angry fashion.
- If we tend to hold our feelings inside rather than talk them out, we are more likely to have an angry outburst as the pressure increases, much like a pressure cooker.



**Rage**

Anger Check List-How Is Your Anger?

- \_ People tell you that you need to calm down.
- \_ You feel tense much of the time.
- \_ At work, you find yourself not saying what is on your mind.
- \_ When you are upset, you try to block the world out by watch-ing TV, reading a book or magazine, or going to sleep.
- \_ You are drinking or smoking marijuana almost daily to help calm yourself.
- \_ You have trouble going to sleep.
- \_ You feel misunderstood or not listened to much of the time.
- \_ People ask you not to yell or curse so much.
- \_ Your loved ones keep saying that you are hurting them.
- \_ Friends do not seek you out as much.

Scoring:

- 0-2 = MANAGEABLE: you could benefit from relaxation training.
- 3-5 = MODERATE: you need to learn more about what stresses you and learn stress management techniques.
- 6 + = OUT OF CONTROL: you have an anger problem that could benefit from learning anger management techniques.



# **Indicators of Identity Theft**

Brandon Shanks

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# IDENTITY THEFT

YOUTH WEEK 2008

## INTRODUCTION

Key Text: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (I Peter 2:9).

Opening Illustration: Earthly ID

- I. Crazy in Love
  - a. Psalm 139:13–15
  - b. You Are Valuable to God
- II. Bourne Identity
  - a. Colossians 1:16
  - b. Where do you find your identity?
- III. The Predator
  - a. Identity Theft Facts
  - b. John 10:10
  - c. I Peter 5:8
- IV. Indicators of Identity Theft
  - a. Old Accounts Left Open
    - i. II Corinthians 5:17
  - b. Mail Not Guarded
    - i. Psalm 119:5
    - ii. Philippians 4:8
  - c. No Safe Place
    - i. Psalm 134:2
- V. Get it back
  - a. I Peter 2:9



Key Text: “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (I Peter 2:9).

Opening Illustration: Earthly ID

Introduce the lesson with an illustration: Does anyone have their social security card on them now? If you do not have it on you, do you have your number memorized? Why is that number important to you? The answer is that the number represents where you were born, who your parents are, what schools you attended and the grades you received, your name, your age, and every job you have had. That number holds your identity.

Why are you careful not to give it out to just anyone? You are careful because your identity has value. Why does your identity have value? Your identity has value because you were created by God.

I. Crazy in Love

“For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth” (Psalm 139:13–15).

God thinks you are wonderful. He loves you so deeply. From the moment you were born Jesus has been there every step of the way. He is crazy in love with you. While you were taking your first step and all through your first day of school, He was there through the good and the bad. If you came from a broken home, He was there walking beside you. If you lost a friend or a member of your family, He was there sharing your grief. He is crazy about you.

We live in a generation that says you are not valuable unless you have certain things or do certain things: the perfect body, the right amount of money, go to the right parties, or drive the right car. But you are valuable to God not because of anything you do, but simply because you are you. You are His creation

II. Bourne Identity:



“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him” (Colossians 1:16).

Where do you go to find your identity?

Robert Ludlum writes of a CIA operative with something inherently missing. Jason Bourne was missing his identity. Jason stops at nothing to uncover his past and to find out his true identity. His name tells it all. He was Bourne with an identity. Like Jason, you are created with an identity that points back to your Creator. You were not only created by Him, but you were created for Him. The story tells of the reality that all of us are searching for our identities. The question is where do you find yours?

Object Illustration:

Bring out some objects that represent places where students find their identity: basketball (sports), clothes (fashion); poster or life-size cutout of a movie star (fame); a Hot Wheels car or a Big Wheel (possessions); CD of some popular music (entertainment); and a Bible (the only place to find our true identity).

The Scripture says you are  
created in God’s image (Genesis 1:27)  
beautiful and wonderful (Psalm 139:14)  
a masterpiece (Psalm 139:14)  
complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10)  
born of God (I John 5:18)  
a child of God (John 1:12)  
an ambassador (II Corinthians 5:20)  
a royal priest (I Peter 2:9-10)  
an heir with Christ (Romans 8:17)  
purchased by Christ’s sacrifice (I Corinthians 6:19-20)  
adopted as God’s child (Ephesians 1:5)  
forgiven of all sin (Ephesians 1:7)  
delivered from destruction (Psalm 107:20)  
set apart for a purpose (Leviticus 20:24)  
a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20)  
Christ’s friend (John 15:15)  
never alone (Hebrews 13:5)



in God's thoughts (Psalm 139:17)  
pressed ... you are not crushed  
perplexed ... you are not in despair  
persecuted ... you are not abandoned  
struck down ... you are not destroyed (II Corinthians 4:8-9)  
created to worship (Psalm 150)  
chosen by God (John 15:16)  
alive in Christ (Colossians 2:13).  
That is why your identity is valuable; it comes straight from your Creator.

### III. The Predator

Identity theft is a crime in which impostors obtain key pieces of personal, identifying information, such as social security numbers and driver's license numbers, and uses them for their own personal gain. This is called ID theft. It can start with lost or stolen wallets, pilfered mail, a data breach, computer virus, a scam, or paper documents thrown out by you or a business. This crime varies widely and can include check fraud, credit card fraud, financial identity theft, criminal identity theft, governmental identity theft, and identity fraud.

In a widely publicized account, Michelle Brown, a victim of identity fraud, testified before a U.S. Senate Committee Hearing on Identity Theft. Ms. Brown testified that "over a year and a half from January 1998 through July 1999, one individual impersonated me to procure over \$50,000 in goods and services. Not only did she damage my credit, but she escalated her crimes to a level that I never truly expected: she engaged in drug trafficking. The crime resulted in my erroneous arrest record, a warrant out for my arrest, and eventually, a prison record when she was booked under my name as an inmate in the Chicago Federal Prison."

The reality is that there is a predator that is more vicious than any predator you could ever meet. There is someone who wants to do more than just steal your earthly identity. He wants to steal the identity of your soul.

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

The most vicious predator in our world today is Satan, and he is in the business of stealing your true identity. The Scripture says this of him: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking



whom he may devour” (I Peter 5:8).

You don’t have to be devoured. The Scripture says that he is seeking whom he may devour. You need to make up in your mind right now that you are not going to let Satan devour you.

#### IV. Indicators of Identity Theft

The most dangerous thing about identity theft is that most times those who are having their identity stolen do not even know it until it is too late.

Let’s look at some indicators that you are at high risk of identity theft.

##### A. Old accounts left open

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17).

Leaving your old accounts makes you vulnerable to the thief who can then use your past to wreck your future. When you begin to live for God, there will always be a temptation not to cut the ties from your old life: listening to the old music that you used to listen to before Jesus changed your life and going to the same parties you used to frequent. When you are filled with the Holy Spirit, you have a new account, a new address, and a new home. You are born again. Some students here need to close some old accounts today. You need to tell your old friends you cannot go with them anymore because you have a new identity. You need to tell the old accounts that you are not doing business anymore.

##### B. Mail not guarded

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psalm 119:105).

Every day each of us are bombarded with information. Mail is delivered to us through our friends and through media. If you don’t guard the information that comes your way, the thief can use false information to steal your identity.

All of us wonder about the questions of life. It is normal to have questions. Some say that it is dangerous to ask questions, but questions themselves



are not dangerous. The places we often look for answers are dangerous. The Bible is the only place that we can find true answers to the questions of life. It is the light for our path. It is the illuminating lamp that allows us to distinguish our way through a dark world. You cannot trust just any information that comes your way. The Scriptures must be your truth indicator.

In e-mail there is something called junk mail. It used to come to my inbox all the time until I began to use the wonderful folder called the "junk mail folder." This folder detects incoming junk mail and puts it automatically into my junk mail folder. I do not want to waste any time reading junk mail; I want to focus on truth. The Scripture say this about what we should focus on:

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

Tonight some students need to put some stuff in the junk mail folder. The more you study God's Word, the more automatic it becomes for you to sort out truth from junk.

#### C. No Safe Place

"Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD" (Psalm 134:2).

The word "sanctuary" is mentioned in the Bible over three hundred times. In nearly every instance it refers to the house of God or the church. The word "sanctuary" simply means "a place of refuge." Have you ever thought of church in that way? When you come to church, you are coming to a place of refuge. The word "refuge" means "A place of safety where everything is in your favor." You live in a generation where the odds are not in your favor as a student. However, the church is a place where you can find safety. It is a place that is in your favor.

Without a place to safeguard your identity, the thief can easily come and take it from you. You need to make a habit of being in church. Every time the doors are open you need to make sure that you are in the safety of the sanctuary. Every time your pastor preaches you need to be there to hear what God is



saying to you through him. By doing this, you will ensure that your identity is kept in a safe place.

V. Get it Back

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Maybe you look at yourself today and you say, “I have lost my identity as a child of God.” You have an opportunity right now to trade back your identity. You are chosen. You are royal. You are holy. You are peculiar. Don’t live in danger of losing your identity. Get your identity back!



**Guilt, Shame, and Failure**  
Andy Smith



Guilt, Shame, and Failure  
Andy Smith

#### I. After is more devastating than before

Although guilt, shame, and failure affect people who are coming to God for the first time, these three plagues of the human spirit may be more of a stealer of identity for those who already have a relationship with God. Even though we are jars of clay, He places within us an invaluable treasure—His Spirit.

We all have a past that has a moment or two we'd like to undo. Sometimes that past is even after we've become a believing child of God. We're in good company, as evidenced by the following list:

- Noah got drunk after the deliverance in the ark.
- Abraham lied about Sarah being his wife after he started his journey. He took matters into his own hands after the Lord gave him the promise.
- Elijah fell into deep depression and entertained the idea of ending his life after the miraculous victory over the prophets of Baal.
- David was a train wreck. After all God had done, all the victories, and all the patience of waiting for the crown, he got involved with Bathsheba and had her husband, Uriah, killed. The prophet Nathan confronted him, and David was shamed.
- John the Baptist questioned Jesus' place as Messiah after the annunciation and baptism.
- Peter denied Jesus even after he was told what would happen before morning.
- Paul failed to practice what he preached ("Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness" Galatians 6:1) and gave up on John Mark. Good thing Barnabas was there, or we might have only three Gospels!
- Sarah lacked faith.
- Esther was fearful and questioned.
- Moses was a murderer.
- Gideon was a vigilante.
- Samson dated prostitutes.
- Jephthah was an illegitimate son.



Like us, all of these Bible characters were jars of clay, all with a questionable scene or two in their “ministry.”

However, many of these names made it to the Hebrews 11 “Hall of Fame” because they rose above their shame and failures. (O guilt, where is your victory?) They stayed connected to God, came back to Him, or never really left. They let God love them.

II. Jesus is willing to save, but are you willing to respond?

There is no question that Jesus is able to save; not just able but willing to save. He is the Redeemer of our shame.

Ask the woman at the well. She was a living, breathing trophy of shame. This woman came to the well at noon because the heat of the noonday Galilean sun was easier to bear than the heated stares of the more respectable women—the married ones. Jesus walked miles out of His way to sit with this woman. He gave this five-time failed marriage, fornicating woman the first recorded glimpse at the revelation of indwelling Water. So I ask you: Is He willing to talk? Is He willing to accept you ... as is? Jesus is not only willing to talk to the failures; He has something important and profound to say to them.

Ask the thief on the cross. The one that was brave enough to look past his own life of failure and, realizing he had nothing to offer this Messiah, take a shot at having a good eternity. When asked if he could be remembered in the coming kingdom, Jesus said okay—no lectures, no résumés, no applications. Jesus simply accepted the man ... as is.

By the way, don’t ask the other thief. Arrogant and short-sighted, he railed on the dying Messiah. The tragedy is that he heard the dialog between the other two men and still refused to humble himself and ask. Both of these men would be in eternity before nightfall, but only one would be with Jesus.

A. Pride prohibits response to God

This is the problem. Pride feeds shame. It wouldn’t seem that people feeling bad about themselves would be dealing with pride as the primary problem, but many times—especially for Christians—it is. We feel bad about ourselves, our behavior, and our witness. Ironically, it doesn’t get any better the longer we live for God. The longer we live for Jesus, the more we realize that we should know better.



Remember, we have this spiritual treasure in earthen vessels—jars of clay. That won't be changing anytime soon.

**B. Humbleness permits response to God**

What safeguards our identity is humility to recognize that we are broken. When Satan accuses us before God (Revelation 12:10), he probably doesn't have to make up too many lies. We are broken and fallible and prone to sin. God saved us that way. Many times it is our pride that keeps us from kneeling and acknowledging our need for a Savior. Peter's failure was worse than Judas's failure. Peter was given a direct "heads-up" about what would occur before the morning. Judas was just one of the twelve dipping bread in the gravy. But while Peter wept bitter tears, Judas threw the money on the ground. Both were so guilty, so sorry for what they had done. Broken Peter came when a resurrected Jesus called for him. Judas never gave Jesus the chance. Peter got keys; Judas got a rope.

Thinking that our behavior or decisions somehow cut us off from the mercies of God—from His forgiveness—is like food for the monsters of shame and failure and guilt. Remember the words of the old hymn: "[Jesus' blood] reaches to the highest mountain. It flows to the lowest valley." Don't just remember it; believe it and respond to Him in faith.