

Identity Anchored in Truth

by Marian Christopherson

Setting: high school Sunday school class

Characters: teacher and 2 high school students

Teacher: Before we close our class today, let's recite together our memory verse from 1 John 4:11.

Class: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

Student 1: I sure failed at *that* yesterday! Some people are *very* hard to love.

Teacher: What do you mean?

Student 1: Cory keeps making fun of me because I like hockey. He says girls should be in art and music, not hockey. He makes me so mad! Yesterday I wanted to hit him! Who is he to tell me who I should be?

Teacher: You're correct that he has no right to define who you are. Our identity doesn't come from other people's opinions.

Student 2: Does that mean we should be whoever *we* want to be? A girl in our class says she's transgender. Does that mean she's a he because that's how she feels?

Teacher: Let me ask a question. Why do you think our culture says people can be whatever gender they want?

Student 2: Maybe because people want freedom to do what they want?

Teacher: That's certainly part of it. We all naturally want to follow our own desires and feelings. But Scripture teaches us that feelings are not always reliable guides because our heart is not reliable. Do you remember what we learned last week about our hearts?

Student 1: I do! Jeremiah 17:9 says that our hearts can be deceptive. Desperately sick, it says!

Student 2: Oh, yeah! And Ephesians 4:18 says that sin has darkened human understanding.

Teacher: Good memory! With gender, the world often says that if your self-image doesn't match your body, then the body is wrong. Feelings are real and powerful, but they do not always tell us what is true.

Student 1: So, feelings don't determine who we are?

Teacher: That's right. Feelings come and go. They are not a reliable foundation for identity. If I feel like a cat, that doesn't make me a cat. If I feel like I can fly, that doesn't make me a bird. Likewise, enjoying sports doesn't make someone a boy, and enjoying art doesn't make someone a girl. Hobbies and interests are part of our lives, but they do not define who we are either.

Student 2: Some of my friends say gender is just how you feel, not how you were born. How can I know who I really am?

Teacher: God's Word teaches that your identity is anchored in His unchanging truth, not in cultural trends or other people's opinions.

Student 1: Sometimes I'm confused about who I am. There are so many pressures from social media and at school. I feel overwhelmed!

Teacher: That's a common struggle in a fallen world. Sin has affected *every* part of creation, including our minds and emotions. As Christians, we don't need to build our identity on the approval of others, on popularity, appearance, or achievements, or look inside ourselves to discover who we are. Scripture says that our identity comes from outside ourselves—from God.

Student 2: I don't get it. What do you mean?

Teacher: Genesis 1:27 teaches that God created human beings in His image. From the beginning, He created them male and female. Our worth, dignity, and value come from God.

Student 1: Oh, I was reading Psalm 139 yesterday in my devotions. It's amazing how God crafted each one of us before we were born. God created me to be who I am. I do not need to try to be like *anyone* else.

Student 2: . . . or try to change myself *into* someone else, right?

Teacher: Exactly. Psalm 139 teaches that we are fearfully and wonderfully made! God *intentionally* created each of us, and our fundamental identity is a *gift* from God.

Student 1: I know!—we are children of God. (1 John 3:1)

Student 2: Well, *I'm* an heir of the King! (Romans 8:17)

Teacher: Our identity in Christ is secure and complete. We are redeemed and loved. We are God's handiwork (Ephesians 2:10). These truths do not change when our feelings change.

Student 2: What if people call me intolerant or a bigot because I disagree with them about what determines my identity?

Teacher: That's an important question. Sometimes it helps to ask what they mean by those words. Tolerance does not require agreement. It means treating others with dignity and respect even when we disagree. You can explain that disagreeing with someone is not the same as hating them.

Student 1: I disagree with Melissa *ALL* the time, and sometimes I am not very nice about it. Last week, I even yelled at her.

Student 2: And how did *that* work out for you?

Student 1: Not very well.

Teacher: When truth is spoken without love, people are less likely to hear what we're saying.

Student 2: *That's* for sure!

Teacher: God calls us to stand firm in the faith in 1 Corinthians 16:13, and the very next verse reminds us to do everything in love (1 Corinthians 16:14).

Student 1: "Speak the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). That was in our lesson today too!

Teacher: As Christians, we're called to love *every* person because every person is created in God's image. We can respect and show compassion to people while patiently disagreeing with *ideas* we believe are contrary to God's Word.

Student 2: *That* is not going to be easy!

Teacher: You're right, it's *not* easy. But we can ask for God's help! Let's say our memory verse together one more time before we go.

Class: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." 1 John 4:11.

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