

March 5, 2017

Who are you?

"Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

Genesis 1:26-27

Who do you think you are? That's a tough question isn't it? But it is also a very important question, because who I think I am directly effects how I live my life. A lot of who I think I am was shaped and decided before I was born. And a lot of who I think I am is the product of my life experiences. Thus, who I think I am changes over time doesn't it? New borns have very little idea of who they are; probably no idea. But as we begin to grow and develop our concept of who we are begins to take shape.



Initially we see ourselves as part of a family. We learn that our family has a name and we begin to associate who we are with that family name. So, I learned that my family name was O'Rourke and that my family included my Mom and Dad and my two brothers. As I grew that family concept began to shape how I saw myself and who I thought I was. My Mom used to ask us quite often, "What will the neighbors say?" and I began to understand that my family had a reputation to uphold. At my beginning we lived on a dairy farm outside of Bozeman, not that I understood that or even cared. But as I grew we moved into Bozeman and eventually into my home until I graduated from high school, and I now saw myself as part of a neighborhood. The fifteen kids who lived on our block became a part of who I was and how I saw myself. They shaped my identity as I did theirs. I played little league baseball and belonged to Cub Scouts and did poorly in school. All of these things shaped my identity. Oddly, it was years before I learned that I was living on the wrong side of town and that we were not wealthy.

Eventually I went to Junior High and then on to High School and those events changed my understanding of who I was. I tried football but didn't much like it. I was asked out on my first date which terrified me. I joined the debate team. I began attending the Church of Christ on my own. Again all of these things changed how I answered that question. Who do I think I am. I became a believer and was baptised. Another major change in my identity.

Finally, I graduated from Bozeman Senior High. I went on to college; first in Texas and then in Nebraska and Arkansas. Those experiences changed my identity in major ways. I returned to Montana and now I was a 'preacher', but some negative experiences changed that and I went back to college in Bozeman and became a teacher. I got married and that really changed my identity. We had children. I continued to teach. We moved and moved again. We bought a house, and then another house. I went back to school and became a counselor. Another major change. I left education and we left our home in Billings.

I began to preach in Anaconda. My kids grew up and left home. They got married. We have grand children. My mother passed away. Each and every one of these events has shaped my answer to this question; Who do I think I am?

Think about your life. How have the events of your life changed your concept of who you are; your identity? How does who you think you are affect how you act, how you behave, what choices you make?

Every experience, every association with another person, changes our identity; sometimes in small ways and sometimes in major ways. And, that identity, the one we really own, influences everything else, doesn't it? My real identity decides how honest I am, how forgiving I am, how trusting I am.

If my true identity is tied to God, because I have chosen to have a relationship with him, then that identity will ultimately change everything about me as well. If I understand that I am the product of intentional design, made in God's image, then my identity will be shaped by that belief. It has to. In the same way if I decide that I am the product of a cosmic accident, a 'big bang', then that will also change my identity. So, who do you think you are? And how does your answer affect how you live day to day?