



"Who am I?"

Andy Shudall

'I like you the way you are
when we're drivin' in your car
and you're talking to me
but one on one but you've become
somebody else round everyone else
you're watching your back like you can't relax
you're tryin' to be cool you look like a fool to me'

Avril Lavigne complicated

Imagine this likely scenario, you're at a party and someone asks you this question: 'Who are you?' What would your answer be? Certainly, there are lots of possible ways for you to answer the question. And it might be better not to say anything at all, if the only other option is to gush an impending identity crisis all over a perfect stranger. But think about it for a few minutes. Who are you? Is it a question that you ever really answer?

When we give our normal answer and perhaps reveal our name, educational history, choice of career or marital status it does indeed give the person listening some point of reference, but do any of these things really fully disclose who you are? Surely you could change any one of them and you would still be *you*? Granted, you might be a bit different, a bit rougher or smoother around the edges, but it would still be you. The 'Who am I?' question, which psychologists and philosophers call the 'identity' question is a deeply complex and challenging subject that most of us are baffled by.

We're also finding that the modern technology in our lives can bring the issue of identity closer to hand. It's easy to have several 'online' identities

where you can pretend to be someone you're not. Financial identities are stolen everyday so that thieves can achieve their wildest dreams with credit cards they won't be paying for. Everytime you turn on the radio/TV you find yourself bombarded with encouragements to put your identity into what you buy or aquire.

Through advertising many products are recommended to us on the strength of how they will enhance and improve our identity. These products offer us the possibility of becoming more sexy, attractive, sophisticated and intelligent etc. Thousands of shopping centres and high streets present thousands more shops, inside, row upon row of consumable product exude the fragrant promises that if we buy them, then we will be the kind of person that buys them. Marketing has changed in it's role to being something that just informs us about the benefits of a particular product, to something that informs us about the identity of the kind of person who would buy the product.

But is there a solid sense of identity, one that cannot be changed or stolen?

The Bible speaks of human beings not as a product of their immediate surroundings but rather as unique creatures in an amazing world, a creation much marred but the ruinous touch of sin but not without real value, real worth or real identity. There is one key aspect of identity that the Bible speaks of and it is solid. The key identity addressed and defined in the Bible is whether or not people know God. To know Him personally, through trust in Jesus Christ, is a solid and stable identity that does not fade or wear out, even in the face of death. 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!' (2 COR 5:17) Refusing this solid identity, which is rooted in God's very being, is a long and trying road which holds little if any hope and will always end in despair, meaninglessness and disintegration

Who am I? Who are you? These are questions that we face at every new introduction. Think: 'Is the answer I'm giving pointing to unchanging reality or shallow and transitory aspects of my life?'