

You Do You – Expressive Individualism

- 1) 'Be true to yourself'. What do you understand when you hear people use this sentiment or something similar? How might someone from a generation different to yours understand this?
- 2) Read over these characteristics of expressive individualism (self-made identity). Do you subscribe to these beliefs? Just some of them or in part? Why or why not?
 - a) The best way to find yourself is to look inward.
 - b) The highest goal in life is happiness.
 - c) All moral judgements are merely expressions of feeling or personal preference.
 - d) Forms of external authority are to be rejected.
 - e) The world will improve dramatically as the scope of individual freedom grows.
 - f) Everyone's quest for self-expression should be celebrated.
 - g) Certain aspects of a person's identity – such as their gender, ethnicity, or sexuality – are of paramount importance.
- 3) Which aspects of expressive individualism does the Bible affirm, in full or in part? (E.g. Gal 3:28; Rom 12:3; Joshua 24:15)
- 4) Read Genesis 3:1-5. How does Adam and Eve's story illustrate the temptation to establish an identity independent of God?
- 5) Read Matthew 4:1-11. Compare the temptation experiences of Adam & Eve with Jesus' temptation. How does Jesus maintain his identity as the son of God throughout the temptation?
- 6) What can you learn from Jesus as you hear messages encouraging you to find your identity apart from God?

Pray together

Pray for each other as we understand our culture through the lens of your word. Pray for wisdom and discernment in a world focussed on identity apart from God.

Going Deeper

Brian Rosner, *How to Find Yourself: Why Looking Inward is Not the Answer* (Chapters 1-5)

Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism and the Road to Sexual Revolution*

Timothy Keller, *Culture and Identity* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=beU69JYkqP0&t=2s>)

David Brooks, *The Road to Character*

You Do You – Made for Community

1. Think about your relationships. Which groups and individuals have influenced who you are today?
2. Read 1 Peter 2:1-10. What does it mean to be 'living stones, being built into a spiritual house....a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession (v 5, 9)?
3. It is easy to follow our culture and do Christianity on our own or seek to create a Christian community around us on our own terms. What does scripture have to say about relationships in the community of God? (See 1 Pet 2: 1-2; Jn 15:17; 1 Cor 12: 12-13, 21-26; Eph 4: 2-6)
4. Read each of the following statements. Do you agree with them? Do you find them hard to swallow?
 - a. 'You are largely formed by your parents.' How can we honour our parents? As Christian parents (or grandparents) how can we positively influence the identity formation of our children?
 - b. 'Your thoughts and mind are not entirely your own.' What cultural influences impact our thinking? What does the Bible suggest (Rom 12: 2)?
 - c. 'Your behaviour is shaped by the company you keep.' Who knows you best and how does that make you feel around them?
 - d. 'You don't know yourself that well.' If you are not familiar with it check out the Johari Window (<https://www.mindtools.com/au7v71d/the-johari-window>).
5. What is the ultimate purpose of relationships in Christian community (1 Pet 2: 9b)? As a Life Group how might you improve your relationships together so that together you grow up in your salvation (1 Pet 2:2)?

Pray together

Pray for each other as we understand our culture through the lens of scripture. Pray for love and unity in your Life Group and church community.

Going Deeper

Brian Rosner, *How to Find Yourself: Why Looking Inward is Not the Answer* (Chapter 6)

You Do You – Made for God

- 1) We are created in the image of God (See Gen 1: 26-27). How does knowing God help us to know ourselves?

Read together Gal 4: 4-11

- 2) There are two senses of knowing someone, knowing about them and knowing them relationally. What does it mean to be known by God? (Gal 4: 9)
- 3) How does being known by God affect your identity? [Hint: think about the parent/child relationship.] (See Jer 1:5; Psalm 139: 13-16)
- 4) Expressive individualism believes the best way to find yourself is to look inward, all forms of external authority are to be rejected and individual freedom is important. What does the Bible suggest about our personal freedom? (Gal 4: 8-9; Rom 6: 5-6; Luke 9: 23-25)
- 5) What does it mean to be children of God? (Gal 3: 26-27; Gal 4: 4-7; John 1: 12)
- 6) Have you ever experienced peace and strength through challenging situations knowing you are known by God, you are a child of God?

Pray together

Pray for each other as we understand our culture through the lens of scripture. Give thanks that through Christ you are a child of God, you are fully known by God. Pray that truth will strengthen and encourage you as you live your lives worthy of being a child of God.

Going Deeper

Brian Rosner, *How to Find Yourself: Why Looking Inward is Not the Answer* (Chapter 7)

Christopher Watkin, *Identity: New College Lectures 2023*

(<https://www.thinkingthroughthebible.com/new-college-lectures-at-the-university-of-new-south-wales-a-biblical-critical-theory/>)

Timothy Keller, *Christ and Identity* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FfuHLbHXWuQ&t=308s>)

You Do You – Made for Story

1. *Our life stories are who we are. They are our identity* (Jonathan Gottschall) Take time to share (no more than 5 mins each) a defining experience or time in your life and faith story that makes you who you are today.
2. Some of the dominant stories in our western culture today are:
 - a. Enlightenment progress (reason and enlightenment will lead to personal freedom and progress)
 - b. Sexual revolution (Hope for the authentic expression of the true sexual self)
 - c. Consumerism (Material comfort and happiness is all that matters)
 - d. Social justice (the belief that the world will improve dramatically as the scope of individual freedom grows)

What are the problems with these stories and what does the Bible say to put them in perspective?

3. *Should you be true to yourself? Be true to your new self!* What does the Bible mean by your new self? How is your story tied to Jesus' story? (Col 3: 1-4)
4. *Should you do you? You do your new you!* What should life in Christ, the new you look like? (Col 3:5-14)
5. We live in an unfinished story, a story that is ongoing. What is our hope for the future? (John 3:2)

Pray Together

Pray for each other, giving thanks for God's work in your lives and praying for his grace at work in the challenges of living out your new identity in Christ.

Going Deeper

Brian Rosner, *How to Find Yourself: Why Looking Inward is Not the Answer* (Part 3 & 4))

Timothy Keller, *Moving Forward* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dIN9DK7yjCs>