

Editorial: Remember who you are

June 27, 2018

If you ever forget who you are, you will be like a rootless tree.

Who are you?

The question seems simple, but when you begin to answer it, you discover how complex we as humans have become.

Which part of your identity is most important, primary, fundamental?

What is your primary identity?

The most fundamental question you can ask is: “What is my relationship to God?” This question is fundamental because your answer to it affects everything else.

Another way of asking that question is: “Do I identify with Jesus Christ?”

If you identify with Jesus Christ, how do you understand that identification? Do you understand Jesus to be the one to whom you submit all things? When you pray, do you commit to “not my will but yours be done”? Do you view your relationship in [John the Baptist](#)’s terms: “He must become greater; I must become less”?

If you answer yes to these questions, you probably claim “Christian” as a fundamental identity. Admittedly, to call yourself Christian based on answering yes to the questions above is a fairly narrow understanding of the name, an understanding with which others would argue. Despite such argument, this narrow definition of Christian is what I am working with

here.

What is your secondary identity?

If you identify as a Christian, who else are you?

Are you Republican, Democrat or Independent? Are you conservative, moderate or liberal? Are you a 1-percenter, middle-class or working poor? Are you red, yellow, black, brown or white? Are you city, country or suburbanite?

As important and integral as all other identifiers may be to your personhood, they are all secondary to your primary identifier. If you identify with Christ, if Jesus Christ is the one to whom you submit all things, then all other identifiers are secondary. All other identifiers.

Why your primary identity is primary

Stephen R. Covey made his name and fortune teaching people to put “first things first.”

Don't be distracted by all the good things; deal with the most important thing(s) first. Why? Because first things are primary things. Because everything else has a way of sorting itself out when the most important thing receives priority. Because if you try to deal with the secondary things first, you may never get to what is most important or you may find yourself like a rootless tree in a cyclone.

When chaos tests our primary identity

Anyone trying to keep up with current events knows the world feels chaotic—like a cyclone. Trying to decide which side of each issue you will

be on threatens to undo you if you forget who you are.

When the news is chaotic, bad or frightening, knowing your primary identity will put all other things into perspective. Being pulled in different directions won't move you if you are rooted and secure in your primary identity.

One reason the world feels chaotic is because so many do not know their primary identity and are tossed about by the winds. Those who identify with Christ can provide stability in chaotic times by remembering who they are, by remembering their primary identity.

Be strong and courageous, people of God

Let Trump do what he will. Let the Supreme Court do what it will. Let the economy do what it will. Let the whole world do what it will. None of it will change who you are in Christ.

Ah, but who you are in Christ won't let you stand idly by while all else tosses in the wind. No, knowing who you are in Christ will secure your feet as you respond to the actions of others and as you bring refuge in the storm by bearing Christ to others.

Take in the news so your branches know where to direct the water in the drought. Take in the news so your leaves know where to give shade in the heat. Take in the news, the noxious carbon dioxide of a dying world, so you can breathe out the Breath of Life so Christ may restore that same world.

Dear reader, if you ever forget who you are, you will be like a rootless tree.

But if you remember who you are and delight in the Lord who made you, you will be "like [a tree planted by streams of water](#), which yields its fruit in

season and whose leaf does not wither.” May it be so.

Eric Black is the executive director, publisher and editor of the Baptist Standard. He can be reached at eric.black@baptiststandard.com or on Twitter at [@EricBlackBSP](https://twitter.com/EricBlackBSP).