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Can You Identify Yourself?

(The following is from my wife's blog. Mikki is a very gifted writer and always challenges us to go deeper.)

A young man drove into the bank's drive-thru to withdraw some money. "Can you identify yourself?" asked the cashier. The man looked into his rearview mirror, paused, and said "Yes, it's me alright!"

Okay, I admit it. This joke is always told about a young woman instead of a man, but I think that is gender bias so

I tweaked it a bit!

Identity has become a huge concern in our world today. We have identity crises. We have identity security. We

have identity theft. My only problem so far is that no one has wanted to steal my identity!

Well, seriously, every aspect of our lives requires that we identify ourselves. Whether we are traveling through an

airport or checking out at Wal-Mart, we are constantly being asked to identify ourselves.

It seems that from the moment we become deeply involved in our worlds, we are always seeking to identify

ourselves in some ways. Often we try to be someone we are not because someone else's identity seems so

much more desirable than our own. During our school days, we long to be in the popular crowd. We long for

acceptance and often act like a chameleon so that some one will just accept us. How deceived we are for what

good is acceptance when it is based on inauthenticity? Tragically, our opinions and values sometimes change

moment by moment depending upon who we are with and how dominant their personality is.

Buying your clothes at Parisians, the local upscale anchor store in our mall, was a status symbol during my high

school days. And buying your jeans at the “in” store in Decatur, Alabama, somehow made you more important.

Funny thing is that now I can't ever remember the name of that store, and I don't think it is even in existence

any longer.

I think of how part of the fun at Christmas for my family is the guessing of the name brand which will be in the

box they open at my mother's house. The one-up-man-ship is a joyful delight as the kids compare who got what

brand name and lay claim to the imaginary planting of their flag on name brand land.

Why is it that we struggle so with our identity? Why do we so desperately need others' acceptance in order to feel

at peace with ourselves?

One of the things we learn as Christians is that being "in Christ" is supposed to lead us to being authentic. And

yet, we try to make ourselves and our churches into the most acceptable, desirable models of the current times.

(Don't throw rocks at me; I do understand the need to be relevant, but increasingly I find the true need is to be

real!)

The dictionary says that the meaning of "authentic" is -to establish as genuine;-to make valid;-to establish the

authorship or origin.

I think of a great man I know in his eighties who is still seeking to “authenticate” himself. From his early years,

his parents were unable or unwilling to validate him with his unique gifting because it was so different from their

own. Here he is, an extremely gifted man, still seeking to find a place of complete peace inside his own skin. It

deeply saddens me and at the same time, I find myself on the same journey.

My online university always tells me I must authenticate myself. If I am inactive for too long on the site, I am

asked to reauthenticate myself. At that point, I always have this inner pondering at what I am being asked to do.

How do I reauthenticate myself? How do I prove who I really am?

I have a notebook on my computer desk with a 5 page list of passwords for websites and accounts. I used to

keep it on a computer file but then my computer crashed! I don't even write down the most important ones in

order to “protect” myself.

And there, perhaps it is, the answer to our identity struggle. The need to protect the most intimate parts of our

hearts. The parts that are too vulnerable. The parts that, if violated or invalidated, would crush our hearts.

Yet as we grow in this journey to be authentic, this journey of identity, the journey to be comfortable in our own

skin, we find that this sharing of our true identity is required to live deeply. As we experience this deep level of

living, deeply engaged in the hearts and lives of others, our worst fears are actualized. We are rejected. We are

hurt. We are misunderstood. Our temptation to once again throw up a mask and hide returns like a roaring lion.

And then we find ourselves involved in a struggle of paramount proportions. Having lived authentically, if even for

a short time, ruins us for anything else. Now the shallowness doesn't only feel empty; it feels despicable.

I've decided it is a set up. God sets us up. He challenges us to identify ourselves. Yes, in Christ, but on another

level, as the unique person he created. Sometimes we Christians get so tangled up. Well, okay honestly, we

always get tangled up. I think life is a great big journey to get untangled!

Sorry for that diversion. Back to my point. Not only are we humans who identify ourselves as being “in Christ”,

but we are Christians who need to identify ourselves as humans.

The longer I live, the more I see it. God designed us as humans, not only to know Him for the hereafter, but to live

in the here and now, experiencing Him and other people in our humanness.

Sometimes I feel Him saying "Would you please reauthenticate yourself?" The challenge of being true to who

we are – the realization that no one else's skin will really fit on our body – the inner knowing that we are loved

by God and others for who we are. Could a God who knows all really be satisfied with relationship with us when

we are less than true to who He created us to be? Could He deeply interact with us when we try to relate to Him

through our facades? He, after all, is the One who really knows we are faking it.

I may have lost you on this thread of thought. I find that my writing is primarily for myself. It is my journey to

authenticate. So if you think this topic is totally confusing, just love me anyway. Or not. I am getting somewhere. I

am becoming. I am learning what it means to be an authentic Mikki. Not swayed by anyone else's opinions.

Experiencing what might look to be a woman balancing herself while standing on top of a ball. Teetering here and

there and learning that it requires my whole self to find balance.

And finding that authenticity is a gift. A gift to others. A gift to God. A gift to ourselves. David Benner calls it the gift

of being yourself.

Journey on, my fellow pilgrims. But not only for the day we find ourselves in heaven, but perhaps more

importantly, for the days here on earth for those are the only days we have to influence others. One thing I have

found about lost humanity is that they are seeking to fill the void inside themselves. And most people quickly

reject our offer to fill it with anything less than an authentic experience. If we really expect people to desire to

experience life in God, perhaps we better find out what really means ourselves and then I have this inner

knowing that it will be irresistible to those who are seeking.

If it ain't living water, don't offer it and don't drink it. The sad fate for all of us is to face Him one day and for

Him to say "I don't recognize you". The time for fumbling around to guess the password will be over. Hey, I'm not

even talking about salvation. I'm talking about the lost opportunity to live the life we had as an authentic follower

of Christ who knows that He wants us to be an authentic one-of-a-kind human being.

Can you identify yourself?

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