

How Do You “Define” Yourself?

I didn't ask how you “identify” yourself, for that has to do more with how you *present* yourself to others. One may *present/identify* themselves to others as “*beautiful*” and yet, like a “*whitewashed tomb*,” be “*full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness*” on the inside, cf. Matt.23:27. Instead, how do you “define” yourself; especially to yourself? In your way of thinking, what makes you, “you”? **Do you “define” yourself by:**

- **Gender?** Though God made *separate* genders (Gen.1:27), and assigned *separate* roles to each of them (cf. Titus 2:1-8), He doesn't “define” or discriminate based on them, “...*there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus,*” Gal.3:28c.
- **Race or Ethnicity?** Though He separated us into various *rac*es/*ethnicities* (cf. Gen.11:7ff) God doesn't “define” us by *race/ethnicity*, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek... for all are one in Christ Jesus*” Gal.3:27a.c. Peter affirmed that “*God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him,*” Acts 10:34b-35.
- **Status?** Are you from the “right” or the “wrong side of the tracks?” Are you “management” or “labor,” “employee” or “employer,” “middle-class” or “upper-class,” “high society” or “backwoods”? We may define ourselves in these ways, but God doesn't, “*there is neither slave nor free man... for all are one in Christ Jesus,*” Gal.3:27b,c.
- **Occupation?** We often “define” ourselves by what we do for a living. “I'm a lawyer, doctor, plumber, teacher, nurse, etc. Or if not by our vocation, sometimes we define ourselves by our avocation like “golfer” or “fisherman” or “musician” or “gardener” or “artist” etc. Though we may define ourselves in these ways, God doesn't- Jesus chose *fishermen, a tax-collector, a skeptic, a political terrorist, and even a cowardly thief* to be His disciples, cf. Matt.10:2-4. Instead of what these men did (formerly), He saw what they could become, *disciples* (followers) and *apostles* (one sent).
- **Marital Status?** It not only matters a great deal to some whether they are “married” or “single,” they define themselves this way, God doesn't. Though He gave both rights and responsibilities to us based on these things (cp. Eph.5:22-31; 1Cor.7:1-5; Matt.19:12), He does not define us by our marital status.
- **Family Relationships?** Some people define themselves by “family relationships.” Thus being part of a family as a father/son, mother/daughter, brother/sister, aunt/uncle is everything to them... but not to God, for He doesn't define us in such ways. Note what He said of Melchizadek in Heb.7:3, “*Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he abides a priest continually.*”
- **Personality?** In recent years, it has become common- if not popular, to define oneself by *personality traits*- “Type A/B” or “Extrovert/Introvert” or “Funny/No-Nonsense” or “Optimistic/Pessimistic” (and/or Sarcastic)” or “Life of the Party/Party Pooper” or etc. etc. etc. But God doesn't define us in these ways. Look again to the list of those chosen to be the *apostles* of Jesus- Peter was *impetuous*, James and John were called “*sons of thunder*” for a reason, Thomas was *skeptic*, and Judas was *cowardly*, and yet He chose them all, cf. Matt.10:2-5; Mark 3:17.

No matter what standards, statuses, relationships, occupations, passions, or personalities with which we may seek to “define” ourselves, **God uses His own**. They are vital to our understanding not only of Him, but ourselves:

- God created everyone, therefore all belong Him, Acts 17:28;
- God loves everyone, John 3:16;
- God wants everyone to be saved, 1Tim.2:4;
- God made provision for everyone to be saved, 1John 4:10; therefore,
- God wants everyone to be “*in Christ Jesus*,” Gal.3:27.

You see, God “defines” us as either “*in Christ Jesus*” and therefore **saved**, Eph.2:13; or **out of** / “*separate from Christ*” and therefore **lost**, Eph.2:12. Everything else may matter to us, but this is what matters to Him. So by God’s standard, are you (or will you be) defined as “**in**” or “**out**” of Christ? (Philip C. Strong; Viking Drive Church of Christ; 3791 Viking Drive, Bossier City, LA; online at vikingdrivechurchofchrist.com; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)