

INTRO

- Share a highlight from the summer.

In Search Of addresses the universal quest for identity, belonging, purpose, transcendence and freedom. Today's focus is on the search for identity and the prevailing narratives that influence how we see ourselves.

READ

Psalm 8

REFLECT & RESPOND

Identity is shaped by a sense of self (how I *see* myself) and a sense of worth (how I *feel* about myself). Often, we are unaware of the sources that influence how we see and feel about ourselves. Consider some of the prevailing narratives around identity in society, such as:

- "I am what I have"
- "I am what I do"
- "I am what others expect of me"
- "I am my image"
- "I am whatever I say I am"

Qu: do any of these resonate with your personal experience? Which of these have you found to be most challenging and why?

There are typically three pathways to finding yourself:

1. Those who look OUTWARD

Traditionally, this was how our identity was primarily formed: tied to your name, family, vocation, role in the community, your religion, or nationality. The question of "who am I?" would be a strange one.

2. Those who look INWARD

Today, in Western culture, expressive individualism is the modern pursuit of identity and is the idea that being true to yourself means discovering and expressing your unique feelings and identity without traditional influences.

Qu: what is potentially helpful and harmful by pursuing this path?

3. Those who look UPWARD

Psalm 8 invites us to relocate our glory from others or ourselves to God. In other words, since God created us in His image, our identity is a gift from God to be discovered, not self-constructed; to be received, not achieved.

Qu: what does it mean to find your identity in God? How does God creating us shape your self-worth?

Reflect on the idea that identity is not achieved but received as a gift from God:

Qu: what practical steps can we take to shift our focus from the narratives imposed by society to the identity offered through faith in Jesus Christ?

Qu: how can the church community play a role in helping reinforce your God-given identity?

Qu: how should the biblical understanding of identity help us see and act toward others around us?

RESPOND & PRAY

- Thank God for his love and care, and pray that He would remind each one of their identity rooted in Him.
- Pray for the discernment to reject false identities and the courage to embrace the truth of who they are in Christ.