

## Change

What are you *becoming*?

I realize that's not the usual question. The common question is, who *are* you? What are you like? We're quite focused today on discovering our unique identity – and expressing it. If we numbered modern day “sins,” second on the list beginning with driving a gas guzzling Hummer, would be to deny who you or others are. One musician sings it well: “*Let me be who I am. That is all I need.*”<sup>1</sup>

### **A modern crusade**

Now respect for others and self-awareness are certainly good things. But we can take this perspective too far.

### **To become or not to become**

Let me suggest it's also too simplistic. Life is dynamic, either developing or decaying. Not even the stars stay the same. Change, someone said, is inevitable – except from a vending machine.

We're all in a process of *becoming*. It doesn't usual happen overnight. But one pensive day, you've got a quiet moment, and it hits you. “I can't believe it. I've become . . .” you fill in the blank.

### **Only a grumble**

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<sup>1</sup> Jason Nelson in “I Am”

It could go two ways, of course – for better or for worse. Let’s look at the ugly side first.

Over the course of our lives, we can get ourselves into rough shape. Not just physically, but emotionally and spiritually, too. People can become emotionally anemic or spiritually bankrupt. They can lose the ability to make wise choices. You see that with a serious drug addiction. Any obsession can do that. Sex, pleasure, power, money, all have the potential to destroy us.

In one of C.S. Lewis’ books he talks about a woman who was essentially addicted to finding fault with everything and everyone. In fact, it so consumed her life, that in the end, Lewis says, there was no woman left – only a “grumble.”<sup>2</sup>

### **A Deadly Spiral**

You find that kind of process outlined in the Bible, too. God tells us that sin not only has consequences for others – and that’s something we also like to ignore – it has consequences in our own lives, too. The choices we make can destroy ourselves.

One of the key places this is described is in the first chapter of the book of Romans. There the Apostle Paul describes a deadly spiral. It begins when we think we don’t need God. And God – this is scary – lets us have our way. He abandons us to ourselves – and we self-destruct.

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<sup>2</sup> from Lewis’ [Mere Christianity](#)

## **You are what you worship**

We were all made to worship – not just to love, but to be in awe, to give someone (or something) a love that is filled with wonder, even reverence.

We were given that ability in order to love and enjoy God. But when we reject the Creator, something else takes that place. Created things. Stuff, sports, music, money, even good things like relationships and family.

And that's a miserable life. Not only is it a lie – because we treat things as God that are clearly not – it also ruins us. Your life only rises as high as that which you worship.

When you worship money, you will become unable to think of much else. You become a human calculator, filled with nothing but numbers. You lose the ability to relate to others in a meaningful way. These sorts of things illustrate that what we give our hearts to in turn shapes what we become.

## **Mental mush**

Paul also describes how we can turn our minds into mush – and our lives quickly follow. At one point, Paul makes a pun which is tough to translate. Let me try to capture it. *“Since they did not regard it worthwhile to test and inspect the knowledge of God, God gave them over to an untested mind that would not pass inspection. And so they do what ought not to be done.”* (vs. 28)

## **How's your IQ?**

What Paul is saying is that rejecting God makes you slow in the head. Not intellectually, but morally. Like your moral IQ drops to 25.

Paul, in fact, cites the practice and acceptance of homosexuality as an example. Even nature tells us this isn't normal. But our inability to see this shows that our rejection of God has damaged ourselves. Reject God – and all of life, sadly, goes to pot. Lose God and you will lose your own humanity.

## **A Better Way**

But there is another way. A different road of becoming. That's what the gospel of Jesus Christ promises you and me.

Sometimes people think the Jesus and the Bible is about “going to heaven.” That's too simplistic. Even the gift of forgiveness is but the first step. The gospel is about *becoming*. Becoming the masterpiece of God's creation again. Becoming something glorious, like God himself! Not so much that our surroundings have changed – but that *we* have changed. We will finally be able to keep in step with God himself, walk with him in his ways, love him and enjoy him forever.

## **Show me the money**

How does that happen? Can we take the Bible seriously? Can the trend be reversed – so that instead of becoming something ugly, defined by our sin, our rejection of God, we become something wonderful, defined by God?

Let me show you this isn't just wishful thinking.

First, Jesus brings the world true worship. He shines the light of the glory of the true God in our darkness. Just look at the cross. There we see a God who is most gracious, faithful, holy, and angry (and rightly so). And we are brought to our knees in awe and wonder. How can we be loved so greatly – when we deserve such wrath? How could the very God we've sinned against come and die in our place?

In the face of God's greatness in Jesus Christ, we also find greatness again. Through him, humanity finds new life, new inspiration. Strangely, the more we are broken and humbled before the true God, the more we are restored and lifted up.

### **The Master**

Secondly, Jesus also gets busy in the lives of those who believe in him. This is his promise, his gift. He doesn't save us because we're good – he saves us to make us good. In fact, his goal is to make us like himself!

If anyone else promised change – I'd be skeptical. Talk is cheap. But look at the Bible. Jesus truly practiced what he preached. He knows love – love for God and others – like no one else. Just look at the cross. You would want to learn martial arts from the best. If you want to learn love, for God and for others, here's the master we need.

**Give me a knife!**

He also gives us some hard-hitting instruction. “*Whoever finds his life, will lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*”<sup>3</sup> He gave us his all – and he requires our all in return. What we hold back will only crumble in our hands.

He tells us to crucify ourselves, to put things like anger and hatred and lust and greed to death! Have you read a self-help book with a title like that? “Take a knife – to yourself!” Don’t stoke evil desires – starve them! We would prefer something less drastic. Where we can still keep part of our comfortable life of sin.

There’s also the positive. He tells us to clothe ourselves with things like compassion and kindness and gentleness. Clothe – something you do every day again. Even before we get dressed, we put on an attitude that thinks of others better than ourselves, we prepare to forgive as we have been forgiven by God, and more.

And all of this changes you, bit by bit, slowly but surely.

## **Two roads**

Christianity is not first of all about rules. The laws of God are only like a trellis that guide and anchor a new plant. It’s the plant that God has his focus on.

Alone, we would self-destruct. We would even become something hellish, constantly at war with God, with others, even with ourselves.

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 16:25

But the other way, the gift of Jesus, is as glorious as that one is awful. Back to C.S. Lewis. At one point he said that if you saw right now a Christian in their finished state, you would be tempted to worship them. That frail little old lady, that man you don't think much of, they will shine with the glory of God – the glory of his love, his righteousness, and more! Those who follow Jesus will truly be a divine masterpiece! Amen and, Thanks so much for listening.