

Identity Crisis: Discovering Who You Really Are
“Who We Listen To Matters”
Part 1

Intro: The voices we all heard growing up had a major influence on what we believed about ourselves. Some people had very positive voices while others had many negatives voices. The voices we chose to listen to have shaped our lives. Our very identities have been shaped by which voices we chose to believe. Dorthy Nolte PhD. wrote a poem about this as it relates to children back in 1972 – share poem – What is true for the children is true for adults.

- So often our struggle with following Jesus is we listen and believe the wrong voices even after we give our lives to Him. We’ve trusted Christ, but we still identify more with the old voices and old tapes in our minds. For the next 3 weeks we are going to discover who we really are. Today, we begin our journey by looking at who we are listening to really matters.

1. What we believe about ourselves matters

Let me explain what I mean by this.

- Belief influences behavior
 - If you are convinced you cannot do something you don’t even try. Parenting is a daily example of this. (Story of taking training wheels off) She believed she would fall / couldn’t do it / there was fear – BUT belief controlled actions.
 - Once she saw she could do this, the belief changed as well as the actions. I couldn’t get her off her bike.
 - Our thinking is the most powerful influence upon our behavior. Of course emotions influence / circumstances influence / other people influence / but ultimately these other factors merely impact our thinking.
 - If we have a bad relational experience, (or a series of them) it can cause us to conclude that trusting people is a bad idea. We now believe that letting people see who we really are is not a good idea and therefore keep people at arm’s length.
 - Often it’s the circumstances and feelings that cause us to draw mental conclusions that can affect our behavior for decades. Belief influences behavior.
- Wrong belief will empower wrong behavior
 - This is why believing the right things are so important. Wrong beliefs empower wrong behavior. Most wrong behavior is not merely impulse. It is rooted in a belief somewhere.
 - For example, when someone says; “I have a very short fuse because I’m Irish”. What we’ve done is given a belief system to a bad behavior. “I have a temper issue that I can’t control because I am Irish.

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- Over the years we have been pummeled by wrong voices feeding us messages that are not true. We grow up believing many of these lies. The lies begin in childhood from our parents / teachers / coaches / peers / and from inside ourselves.
- These lies begin to create behavioral patterns in us. The reason so many people struggle with seeing God transform their behavior is often because they have never rejected the lie that is empowering the behavior.
- For example: Why would anyone throw away their family for the sake of a career? Why would anyone become a workaholic and destroy themselves physically and emotionally for a job? Because it is founded in a belief. The wrong belief drives and empowers the unhealthy behavior.
- This is why as followers of Jesus it is imperative we learn to listen to the right voice. We have a choice what we set our minds on. Even though we have the Spirit of God inside us, we still can listen to the voice of the flesh. The flesh is attracted to all these lies. It gravitates towards them. This is why the Apostle Paul penned these words.

Rom. 8:5-8 “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. ⁸ Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” (ESV) 5 times it talked about where to set our minds. WHY? Because where our minds are set will determine whether or not we can live in a way that pleases God. If our mind is set on the flesh and the lies that go with it, we live a very defeated spiritual life.

- Following Jesus is impossible without right belief

Here is a great story that illustrates this: Story of Jesus walking on water – summarize story.

Matt. 14:31 “Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. “You have so little faith,” Jesus said. “Why did you doubt me?” (NLT) “Why did you doubt?”

- Notice that Jesus connected belief to Peter’s ability to walk on water. Why did you doubt Me...why did you doubt what I encouraged you to do...why did you choose to believe you shouldn’t be doing this? Why did you have more faith in the circumstances than Me?
- We will never follow Jesus in to a supernatural existence unless we believe what He says about us. Our identities have been radically changed! If we do not fully embrace these truths we cannot follow Jesus fully.
- If we listen to the wrong voices, they will influence what we believe. Don’t let the wrong voices define who you are and what you can become.
- Illustrate: Share how both girls talk about hearing dad’s voice in their head. (Sometimes though, we can listen to the wrong voices)

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2. Identifying the wrong voice

Col. 2:8-10 *“See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. ⁹ For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, ¹⁰ and in Christ you have been brought to fullness...” (NIV)* The wrong voice will take us captive! In other words, the wrong voices become wrong beliefs and these beliefs can control us.

What does the wrong voice sound like? Sometimes these voices are so familiar to us we don't even question them. It's almost like they are a part of us. They have defined us. Let me give you some of the most common.

- The voice that you're not good enough
Maybe you were told growing up by a parent or another significant adult in your life; “Why can't you be more like your brother / sister / your friend...” OR you received your grades and you were told; “What? You got a B?” A “B” is not good enough...but what you heard was that you were not good enough.
- The voice that you're unacceptable – not worthy of love / not worthy of acceptance / you are so internally flawed that you will forever be unacceptable. Maybe you internally believe that if people truly knew who you were they would reject you. WHY? Because you believe that the real you is unacceptable. That's why you wear a mask everyday.
- The voice of can't
You didn't grow up having people tell you that you can do it. You grew up with the voice of can't. You can't excel / you can't achieve / you can't graduate from college / you can't improve yourself / you can't make a difference / you can't have dreams and aspirations / What you hear every day is “I can't”.
- The voice of failure
This voice is a deep statement about who you are. It's not about an activity you failed at. It is a voice and a belief that you ARE a failure. Success – winning – overcoming is simply not in your DNA. You'll never have successful relationships / never be a successful parent / never be financially successful / never leave your old life and your past. Failure defines you.
- The voice of comparison
This voice is the twin of not good enough. Often we do not believe we are good enough because we constantly compare ourselves to others and as a result, devalue ourselves in the process. I did this for years. Sometimes I still hear this voice screaming in my head.
- The voice of performance

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This is the voice that connects our identity to our behavior. How can God love you if you struggle with that issue? How can God truly be happy with you unless you do this certain thing? You feel good about yourself when you perform well but then you beat yourself up when your performance is less than stellar. You are driven by the praise you get from others when you exceed expectation. You become a workaholic – you can't say no to others – high performance = acceptance in your mind. This is why you sacrifice relationships for the sake of performance.

- The voice of fear and insecurity

This is the voice that tells you not to trust God. This voice convinces you God will not come through for you. Never leave your comfort zone. Never leave what is familiar or what you can control. This is the voice of “what if”. This voice keeps us paralyzed unable to follow Jesus on the adventure He is asking us to follow Him in. This is the voice that eventually won out in Peter's mind as he walked on water. It is the voice that makes us all sink in our circumstances instead of rising above them.

- The voice of condemnation

This is the relentless voice that will not let you get past your past. It reminds you of your failures, flaws, how you have hurt and wounded other people every day. It is the voice that multiplies the weight of guilt and shame upon your soul. It creates a barrier in your relationship with God and in your relationships with others. It convinces you that your past mistakes define who you are today.

- The voice of hopelessness

This may be the most dangerous voice of all. It removes all light from our soul and makes us live in perpetual darkness. It convinces us things will never get better – they can't get better – We don't deserve them to get better. This voice can suffocate those who listen to its lies. Hopelessness keeps us from trying...keeps us from achieving...keeps us from believing...it keeps us from living.

The one thing all these statements have in common is they are all lies. Every one of them is a lie. These statements reflect the exact opposite of God's heart for you. BUT, the best way to prepare yourself for identifying wrong voices is not to study the counterfeit. It is to study the truth. If you know the truth, you will be able to spot what is false.

3. Believing the right voice

John 8:32 “And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (NLT)

- God cannot lie about you

- Because the statements that God says about us are so remarkable, we struggle truly believing these things. Because we struggle believing truth, this truth has no

impact upon our daily lives. We are not set free from the power of the lies we hear.

- When we reject what God says about us we are in essence telling God He is wrong; which is the same as calling God a liar. BUT, God cannot lie about you. He is not lying about you.
- When we gave our lives to Jesus our identities were changed. We became a “new creation”. In fact God’s word says “all things became new”.
- Our problem is we allow our past and our current struggles to define who we are instead of what God’s word says. We are no different from Peter. We put more faith in our failures and circumstances than Jesus. The result is we sink.
- The only way to be free from the influence of the wrong voices is to believe the right voice.

- Believing what God says will empower new behavior

When Jesus said, we will know the truth He uses a word that implies experiential knowledge. Intellectual knowledge does not set anyone free. It is when we experience the truth we are set free.

- In your bulletin – “Who I Am in Christ” handout.
- I want to give you a tool to begin this journey or possibly keep growing in this journey. I have handed this out many times over the years here at Foothills. It is worth doing it again. If you have seen this before, I simply want to ask you; do you truly believe it?
- If this is new to you, I pray you will read this list through twice a day – explain.
- Read through together.
- When you begin to hear the old lies, counter them with these truths. As you begin to believe these truths, your behavior will begin to change. WHY? Because who we listen to matters.

Prayer time

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