

“Discover Thee – Discover Me”

Psalm 139: 1-18

MORE: Finding Your Personal Calling and Living Life to the Fullest Measure

Week 4. My Unique Identity (BE)

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May 17, 2020

Two months of quarantine is causing many to make some incredible discoveries.

- Some are positive: Anyone else’s car getting 3 weeks to the gallon at the moment?
- Some are painful: Duct tape is NOT the solution to EVERY problem!
- Some are creative: Playing pool on your kitchen table with bananas and apples.
- Some are concerning: Day 10 of Quarantine – had the girls (mannequin heads) over for coffee
- Some show you are losing your money: Quarantine is going well but I’m pretty sure the cat is cheating.
- Some show you are losing your mind: Quarantine Day 20 – Today, I melted an ice cube with my mind just by staring at it. Took a lot longer than I thought it would.

A crisis uncovers crucial discoveries. CoVid19 is rocking the ground right where you live. The stones which form the foundation of your life – your job, your company, the economy, the government, your family, your marriage, your health – may suddenly be far less solid and certain. One or all could collapse. This is not a theory. We are seeing it happen every day on the news. So who can you trust in the core of your being?

God. The first important discovery in this crisis is I **Discover Thee**. I discover a God I can trust no matter what. In Psalm 139 King David writes,

O LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely, O LORD. (Psalm 139:1-4).

God sees and knows all of you. He doesn’t need Zoom, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or TikTok to see what’s going on in your life. Before a thought comes into your head or a word comes out of your mouth, He knows it. God watches over you when you sit down and get up, lie down and rise up, go out and come home. He’s not going to let you go. That’s not the case for this wife: “Returned from the grocery store with the hubby. Took masks off. It turned out it was the wrong hubby! Be attentive!” God’s not going to reject you as this child did: “Home schooling update - My child just said I hope I don’t have the same teacher next year.” What do I discover about Thee? God’s got a hold of me.

You hem me in – behind and before; you have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Psalm 139:5-6

The first discovery in the MORE series is our core identity: I am a Child of God and a Disciple of Jesus. This is true of me no matter what my come. If all else gives way, He never will. This is true of me no matter where I go. King David continues:

Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there ... your right hand will hold me fast (Psalm 139:7-10).

Few things have circled the globe like the coronavirus. For the first time in our lifetimes, all the world is fighting the same enemy. There's no place to go to get away from it. Yet no matter how far it spreads, God is already there. Fly above the sky? God is there. Race from east to west at the speed of light? He'll be waiting when you arrive. Journey to the center of the earth? He even descended into hell remember? In the darkest depths

...even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you (Psalm 139:10-12).

God will hold you and help you get through the night. When my children were little we would read them a Bible story, say our prayers and tuck them in bed. They had their favorite stuffed animals and blankies by their side. We kissed them, said, "Good night," and left the hall light on. Then, as I left the room I'd often hear a little voice say, "Stay with me." It was a request I rarely refused. So there, in the dark, I nestled close until they went to sleep. Are there worries keeping you awake at night? Remember there is Someone by your side through the night, Someone who's not afraid of the dark, Someone who will be up all night. "When I awake," David says to God, "I am still with you."

Discovering my core identity leads me to discover my unique identity. When I discover Thee, then I can **Discover Me**. David found the hands that hold him, are also the hands that mold him.

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. (Psalm 139:13-16).

The very fingers of God molded and made you. You are not an accident, an assembly line product and you are certainly not a mistake. You are a one-of-a-kind creation of God. So how can you discover your unique identity?

1. Read the Story of Your Life. David says,

All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be (Psalm 139:16).

The Author of Life is writing your biography. People review their life story with a counselor to find out what went wrong. That's important. Now reread your story to find out what went right. What are the positive memories, the pleasant moments, the times when you felt alive? Your life story contains clues which unlock your unique identity.

Todd Wilson, the author of MORE, shares the clues he found buried in his life story. From an early age he possessed a natural curiosity about how things work and how to make them better. When he was five he took the coffee table apart and, to please his parents, put it back together. In 7th grade, he was fascinated by a lesson on atoms. At age 13, his parents asked him to water the shrubs. Preferring to go play with his friends, he devised an irrigation system to do the watering for him. Instead of scolding him, Todd's parents affirmed him saying, "You are a natural engineer and problem solver."

Earning a degree in nuclear engineering, Todd pursued a successful career at the Division of Naval Reactors. Then God called him to ministry. Now you may think a Nuclear Engineer would be as good at ministry as...a Minister would be at Nuclear Engineering. Todd himself wondered why God called him. Then he discovered his unique identity is true no matter what job he pursues.

My unique identity is not something I can turn on and off. It's always with me. Whether I'm sitting in meetings, coaching a sports team, surfing the Internet, or cutting my grass, I'm dreaming up new ventures and plotting strategy for existing ones.

Todd's hunger to know how something works, his ability to see how it can work better and his talent for designing a plan to make it happen all translated over into the church. In fact, every identity created by God can be used to spread His kingdom.

I want to help you find the clues for your unique identity. Review your life story by responding to these questions on the handout.

1. What you are passionate about? (things you love doing so much you lose track of time)
2. What age or type of people do you love to work with?
3. What ministries, issues or needs excite or concern you?
4. What jobs have you done and skills have you developed?
5. What makes you feel close to God?
6. If you knew you could not fail and money/time were not an issue, what would you like to do in the near future?

It can take as little as fifteen minutes to answer these. That leads to the next step.

2. Summarize Your Unique Identity in a Few Words. David writes

How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!
Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake, I
am still with you. Psalm 139:17-18

Imagine all the thought God invests in making His creation including each one of us. It's impossible to count or calculate all His ideas. Yet God is able to create wonderfully complex beings using the four letter code of DNA. What is the DNA of your unique identity? What are the basic building blocks – two, three, four words – which describe who you are? You will likely find them in the clues from your life story. Are there patterns, frequent phrases, key terms? Todd Wilson discovered he is an Entrepreneurial Engineer. You might be a Creative Storyteller, an Encouraging Coach, a Restorer of Broken Relationships. It takes time to discover the keys words which summarize your unique identity. This is your opportunity to get started. These are the descriptions which are true of you no matter what you are called to do and where you are called to go.

3. Try a Personality Assessment. David concludes Psalm 139 with this prayer.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm
139: 23-24).

David asks God to search him, know him, test him and lead him. Often, we need someone outside us to help us see what we cannot, to understand what's going on. Personality Assessments are a way to get a handle on who you are. They identify your strengths, your preferences, your passions. There are many insightful tests: DiSC (4 Types), Myers Briggs (16 Types), StrengthsFinder (34 Themes), APEST (5 Types). I listed websites where you can take the test. There is some modest cost but it is worth it if it helps you understand yourself. APEST is a Christian assessment based on these verses.

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and the teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up. Ephesians 4:11-12

Five roles are listed here: Apostle (Pioneer and Extend), Prophets (Know and Challenge), Evangelists (Inspire and Recruit), Shepherds (Nurture and Protect), Teachers (Understand and Explain). Every organization needs these roles – especially the Church. They are not reserved for ordained leaders. God's people have one or more of these roles. By taking this test you will find which role or mixture of roles you have. The words which summarize your life story and the roles revealed in these personal assessments will get you on your way to discovering your unique identity.

His journey of discovery started with a job at the CIA. At night he taught computer science courses at the University of Maryland. Eventually his gifts won him a job at the cutting edge research facility of Bell Laboratories where he eventually moved

up into senior management. He was successful by the world's measurement. Yet he felt God had more in store for him. When he and his wife retired in their 50s they had the opportunity to explore what God's calling might be.

When we retired early and moved to Albuquerque, NM, we decided it was time to do some payback. It took us 6 months to explore and decide upon those ways to serve others which would use the talents which God had given us. What I didn't realize at the time, is for those 6 months we were each working at defining our own unique identity and calling.

Looking back over his life story he noticed a love for teaching and mentoring others, a passion for rooting out racism, and a gift for speaking to groups. Key words which summarize his life story are: analyze, inspire, teach, promote, encourage, hands-on.

Today Tom Spacek mentors prisoners, preaches and leads worship services in jail and helps inmates adjust to life outside. He's been on two Dominican Republic trips with Woodside and gave a sermon during a service. He loves to prepare and share God's Word. He also works with Cast Your Cares and Family Promise. "As I've grown closer to Jesus, evangelizing has fit perfectly into the equation. My main love in these missions is to talk with, encourage, and pray with people."

Tom started in the CIA – a world of secrets. But today his unique identity and calling are no longer secret. He's living it.

It's time to discover your unique identity and start living it.