



IDENTITY CRISIS

Who Do Men Say That I am?



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INTRODUCTION

IDENTITY CRISIS

Fingerprints have a unique way of identifying us. That small seemingly invisible imprint that we often leave on surfaces can identify us as perpetrators of criminal activity or as a young couples in love who simply decide to make imprints in unfinished concrete.

Whether negative or positive, fingerprints have a special way of letting the world know that we were there.



As unique as fingerprints are, there have been accounts of "matching" fingerprints due to similar ridges in the finger tips. But there are still no two fingerprints that are exactly the same.

That is the identifying marker.

We each have a unique identity that can stand the test of time. In fact, if we were to scrape our finger tips, those initial ridges created in our mother's womb would grow back into the same original pattern and initial format.



Yet and still, even with all those wonderful attributes to consider, we have a crisis concerning our identity.

The climate that we currently live in has the ability to leave an impression on our hearts and minds that can change the ridges of our core being. Circumstances can slowly chip away at the original pattern that God created for us until, if not careful, we can ultimately become unidentifiable

But there is good news.



Just as finger tips get scraped only to grow back skin and return to their original pattern - we too can get scraped by the circumstances of life only to grow and return back to the original pattern that God created for us. Unfortunately, even though we all can - that doesn't mean that we all will.

In this book, we will find the place where practicality and spirituality intersect. Using Christ as the ultimate example of our sure identity, we're about to explore ways that we can leave His untarnished imprint in this world.



After all, none of us should be comfortable enough to leave this earth without leaving God's impression. We were born with His imprint - with his DNA. And if you're not sure of that, you can definitely become a born-again child of God today (Romans 10:9-10)!

Now you may be reading this book as someone who is not religious or spiritual. And that's perfectly fine, but I would simply ask you to consider one thing. When you leave your mark or your final impression in this world - what will that look like? Let's talk about it.



FIRST IMPRESSION

My first encounter with fingerprinting was at Yeager Elementary School in North Chicago, IL. I remember it like it was just yesterday. We all lined up in the hallway to enter into a room one by one to get fingerprinted. I had no idea why this was so important at the time but years later I would find out just how crucial that first little impression was.

To this day, that same ink is still being used to identify me.



And that may be a challenging concept for some people. To know that something will follow you for the rest of your life can be somewhat binding. But there is a positive flip side to that.

We live in a volatile and unstable world—especially right now. It helps to know that there is something that belongs to you and I that will not change. Our first physical impression will always be with us. But so will our spiritual imprint.

You have another identifying marker.



**God said, “Now we will make humans,
and they will be like us.**

We will let them rule..

**So God created humans to be like
himself; he made men and women.**

Genesis 1: 26a-27 (with emphasis)

The one thing that comforts me when I feel inadequate or incapable of doing this thing called life is the fact that God created me in His image or in His likeness. You see, God is not fickle like us. He won't change His initial imprint just because you try to scrape it off.



One day my old buddy Antoine and I were getting high as we stood outside of the trade school we were attending in Oakland, CA. While we were casually talking about nothing, a homeless man walked up to us and began to tell me that God had a plan for my life. I dismissed that incident in front of Antoine but I walked away pondering how that could even be possible - considering the kind of person that I was at that time. I didn't know that God's initial impression on my life was not conditional upon my current behavior.



There's an old testament passage that talks about the fact that God "knew" or was intimately involved in the purpose of a man's life before that man was even formed in his mother's belly (Jeremiah 1:5).

That's interesting because fingerprints are formed in the mother's womb as the baby reaches around touching their environment. That is the baby's first impression. But God is saying that He makes His impression before the child even reaches the womb. *So who's impression is the "first impression?"*



OVERWHELMING EVIDENCE

Recently, I woke up to the news that a young black man had been shot.

Unfortunately, that headline repeated itself in an entirely different case only days after the first headline. That news made an impression on me.

Even my wife was distraught and soon both of us were walking around the house saddened by the news. We couldn't hide it. If you would've been there you would have clearly seen that we were both impacted.



This Covid-19 era is already full of disturbing reports and bad news - then to add racism and murder - it can affect you in ways that you might not even be aware of. That's why it's so important for us to remember our first impression. The one that God made. Because, if we're not careful, we can absorb the current climate and become the very thing that troubles us.

For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power, love, and self-control.

2 Timothy 1:7 BSB



The impression that God gave us through Jesus Christ does not retreat to a corner in fear or act with no self control. God has given us (those who put their faith in Him) the Spirit of strength and love. We have to constantly remind ourselves of that.

I once heard an analogy that ships don't sink because of what's going on outside - they sink because whatever's going on outside somehow gets *on the inside*. In other words, God never intended for anything to make more of an impression on us than the one He initially made.



The two shooting deaths that I referred to at the beginning of this chapter are the recent murders of Ahmaud Arbery and Sean Reed - which can both be interpreted as modern day lynchings.

There is overwhelming evidence that my wife and I were traumatized when we first heard the news. But after the initial blow, we both had to come to terms with which impression we were going to embrace. We had to determine that we were not going to allow these things to change "God's inprint" on our lives.



A recent Kaiser Family Foundation poll sites that nearly half (45%) of Americans report that they have been mentally affected by the Corona Virus pandemic. Now add on all of the other traumatic events that people face on a daily basis. We have to share this message of hope. Our identities should not assimilate into this culture of dismay and discouragement. As my friends use to say when we were younger...

"We're cut from a different cloth."



DNA - RESULTS

And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?”

Mark 8:27 ESV (with emphasis)

If you know me then you know that I have to bring up the comedic genius of Maury Povich at this point. In his talk show he would often use DNA test results to prove whether or not a man was the father of the child in question. I would often hear, *“YOU ARE NOT the father.”*



Depending on the relational status of the couple - this could either bring extreme joy or unspeakable grief to the parent of the child. However, regardless of how much the baby favored the potential dad, both sides usually agreed that the DNA results were final.

Jesus knew a lot about this concept.

He once told a group of religious leaders that God was not their father because they did not exhibit the characteristics of God or His DNA.



But He did tell them who they favored
and who they were more than likely
related to.

You are of your father the devil, and your
will is to do your father's desires.

**He was a murderer from the beginning,
and does not stand in the truth, because
there is no truth in him.**

**When he lies, he speaks out of his own
character, for he is a liar and the father
of lies.**

Mark 8:44 ESV (with emphasis)



Sometimes I wonder if my characteristics match my God-given DNA. In other words, I'd rather be associated with the imprint that God originally gave me than to be compared with something or someone less than God.

When Jesus asked His disciples to tell him what people were saying about Him He listened to their responses but He didn't respond. People were saying that He was John the Baptist, or Elijah or one of the other prophets but Jesus was only concerned with one thing.



**And he asked them, “But who do you say
that I am?” Peter answered him,
“You are the Christ.”
Mark 8:37 ESV**

If I could summarize our little forensic
journey today I would simply say:

*It's not about what people,
places or things call you
- it's about what you answer to.*

Jesus focused on God's revelation and
not man's interpretation. In other words,
God's impression on your life is the only
one that really matters?

And that's the one that you should leave.