

Identity Theft

By Marsha Inman

The following devotion was given to a ladies' group of prayer warriors whose main interest is to see significant changes in our attitudes as we humble ourselves and pray for an anointing throughout our land. Sherry and I feel this wonderfully written and spirit anointed devotion is very relevant and pertinent as a call for "the Church" to pray consistently...and with fervor. The message challenged our hearts. We hope it will yours.

How often do we hear about identity theft today? It seems almost daily, we hear of someone – sometimes within our own family or circle of friends – who had their credit card number compromised and charges run up, or whose computer email was hacked and everyone in their address book received an email, asking for money to get them home from some faraway land. It's in the nightly news that cybercrime and spying has reached new heights, and some even worry about the security of our electrical grid. One morning will we wake up and have no electricity and no idea when it might come back on?

In the past 6 years, identity thieves have stolen over \$107 billion dollars. To try and protect consumers, everyone recently received new credit cards with a special chip that was supposed to make our information more secure. However, thieves can still trick us with phone scams, mail pleas, and even emails that lure us into giving access or privileged information to those who seek to do us harm.

We end up spending money and time trying to inform ourselves and protect our assets. We read articles that share about the hackers' most recent scams and try to remember to always keep our credit cards within sight as the waitstaff processes our bill. We are aware that skimmers exist on some gas pumps and are cautious when we put gas in our cars. Special purses and wallets are now available for travelers to protect their credit cards from radio waves that can scan their cards while still in their purse or pants. When we donate online, we make sure that the website is labeled secure (https) before we key in our information. There are all kinds of expensive software programs to monitor our credit, and secure our computers from malicious viruses. Caution is good and Jesus encouraged his disciples to be as "shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matt. 10:16), but these thoughts can certainly dominate your life if you let them.

Why have I spent this time talking about such a secular subject as we prepare to pray together? Although the subject of identity theft has a secular meaning, I think it has a much stronger spiritual application, and one that each one of us encounters multiple times each day.

God has given each of us an identity, a birthright if you will, that we often spend little or no time pondering or guarding. Genesis tells us that we have been individually created by a personal God, not by impersonal forces from an inanimate universe. That same God has “seen my unformed substance; and in (His) book were all written the days that were ordained *for me*, when as yet there was not one of them.” (Ps. 139:16) Mankind in general is given a stature that is described as being “...a little lower than the angels...” (Ps. 8:5a), not just an especially developed animal in the evolutionary chain. To those of us who know Jesus as Savior, He has bestowed the unbelievable honor of being called His children. I John 3:1 tells us “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are.”

It is really as serious as having our identity stolen if we do not know and live out of the identity that God has given us? Actually, it can be much more serious. Money and things can be replaced. Years spent living out of a false identity can rob us of our joy, our peace, our testimony, and sometimes even prevent God from blessing us because of our disobedience to listen to His intentions for our lives.

Any identity that can be taken away from you is not your ultimate identity. How do you define yourself? Each of us women have been daughters, some of us are wives, mothers or grandmothers. We can be career women or homemakers. Each of those identities will eventually go away. Who are we then? When we meet people for the first time, how do we describe ourselves to them?

So often we live as if we are orphans, not children of the Living God. When we are consumed with worry and fear of the future, we are forgetting that God has good plans for us, not for calamity, to give us a future and a hope. (Jer. 29:11) When we feel lonely and rejected, as if no one cared for us, we are not living out of the truth of John 3:16 – that He loves us so much that He sent His only Son to die so that we might be reconciled to Him. When we feel as if no one has seen our sacrifices and that our ministry efforts have been fruitless, we act as if Jesus didn't tell us three separate times in Matthew 6 that “...your Father who sees *what is done* in secret will reward you.” When the confusion of today's culture begins to make us wonder if gender identity is multifaceted and subject to one's own choosing, we deny that God “made them male and female” (Gen. 1:27), that He “...formed my inward parts...wove me in my mother's womb...and (that I) am fearfully and wonderfully made...” (Ps. 139:13-14). When we struggle with a persistent sin, and become filled with shame, afraid that we are in danger of being disowned by our Heavenly Father, we forget that our God is the Prodigal dad, who rejoiced to see his estranged child coming at a distance. He ran to welcome him and restore him to all the rights and privileges of his inheritance.

We have such a rich inheritance as God's children. Know what your identity is and live out of that truth. Weigh what you believe about yourself and see if it lines up with Scripture...or has the enemy of our souls stolen your identity for even a brief period? When you are not operating out of the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, you are operating out of a false identity. Why would we exchange peace of heart, soul and mind as if we did not have God's Riches at Christ's Expense...otherwise known as GRACE? Let's not waste another day – or another minute – forgetting who we are, and whose we are.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, please forgive us for our amnesia or our ignorance about who You have made us to be, and the new identity you have given us in Christ. Keep our eyes and our minds on Christ and who we are in Him. Make us sensitive to the Holy Spirit so that when we drift away from those truths, we feel the tug of Your anchor pulling us back close to You. Ground us in Your Word...help us to be hungry and thirsty to absorb all it has to teach us about who You are, and what that in turn teaches us about who we are in You. We praise You for Your patience, and lovingkindness to us as we walk erratically in our new identities. May we keep moving forward more and more into that freedom in Christ for which we were born, and born again. In Jesus' name, amen.

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