



LIFEGROUPS

Series: *Identity*
Message: *Before the Beginning*

Scripture: *Genesis 1:1-3; John 1:1-3; 10-14*

Date: January 4-5, 2020

—[LET'S START]—

The question of identity is a big question in our culture today. Questions like, “Who am I?” “What does it mean to be a person?” and “Why are we here?” aren’t new to our generation. They are questions that people have asked throughout the ages. As we start this new series, how would you define yourself?

—[LET'S TALK]—

1. **GRATITUDE AND PRAYER:** What happened last week for which you are thankful? What challenges do you see in your life? Your family? The World? Thank God for the beautiful ways that He has been at work. Pray for the challenges that those in your group are currently facing.
2. Read Genesis 1:1-3. Pastor Dale spent a good deal of time this week unpacking the idea that, “In the beginning there was a God!” Take some time to reflect on this statement. What implications does God’s eternal existence have upon our lives? (If you need a refresher on some of the ways that people view the world, see the sermon notes on the next couple of pages).
3. Dostoyevsky the Russian philosopher and orthodox Christian said, “If there is no God, everything is permissible!” Do you agree or disagree with this statement?
4. Pastor Dale said that the problem with much of the world’s philosophies is that they fail to recognize that there is a sense of right and wrong that is hard wired in us as human beings. How have you seen this to be true?
5. Read John 1:1-5. What do these verses teach us about God? What do they teach us about ourselves?
6. If we want to discover who we truly are, Pastor Dale encouraged us to find it through the Word of God and by praying in the Spirit of God. What do 1 John 3:1-2, Jude 1:20, and Colossians 1:15-17, and 1 John 4:8 have to teach us about who we are?
7. Pastor Dale concluded his message by teaching about the darkness that is found apart from God. Read Colossians 1:15-20. What does this passage have to say about what God has done for us through His son, Jesus?

—[LET'S ACT]—

Let's end our time today by praying that we might build our identities on the Solid Rock of Jesus Christ. Let's pray that God would use this new series to impact each one of us to live the life that God has called us to live, seeing things through the lens of Scripture and living in the power of the Holy Spirit.

—[SERMON REVIEW]—

- It's important to understand what is happening in the culture to cause people to question their selfhood.
- Relativism is the denial that there is any one right way to understand the world.
- We live in an increasingly post-Christian culture. It is impossible for any society to not have some form of morality govern it. So the question is: what form of morality will prevail and where will it come from?
- Radical individualism says that we each write our own script.
- Gnosticism is actually an ancient philosophy that is continuously being rebranded. It teaches that our bodies are different from our true selves and therefore can be used, shaped or changed to match how we feel.
- The sexual revolution taught that your body is your own to use and enjoy at your own pleasure. Sexual freedom is the highest standard for personal freedom.
- "There are two unforgivable sins in a postmodern, post-Christian and individualistic world. The first is to judge someone else. The second is to fail to fulfill your desires." – Andrew Walker
- God's story, as told in the scriptures, best answers the four questions:
 - Where did we come from?
 - What is our problem?
 - What is the solution?
 - How will this end up for us?
- We answer these questions with one of the following lenses:
 - God-ism: the idea that there is some One behind everything, a personal mind who created everything and rightfully governed it all, both material and immaterial. This would be our story as sincere and true Christians; we believe in the God of the Bible as the One!
 - Mind-ism: the idea that material and immaterial things are an illusion. We are all part of an invisible and impersonal force to which we will eventually be reabsorbed into. This is the belief you'll find expressed in philosophies like Buddhism and Hinduism and most eastern and new age thought.
 - Materialism: the idea that the universe is nothing more than matter. There are no minds around any immaterial source of power influencing what takes place. We are here by some grand accident. It just happened.

- Francis Schaefer said that Christianity does not start with, “Jesus saves you from your sins.” It starts with, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”
- In the beginning there was God!
 - Dostoyevsky the Russian philosopher and orthodox Christian said, “If there is no God, everything is permissible!”
 - Atheist philosopher Philippe Foot who taught at the University of California said, “If you don’t believe in God there is no truth.”
 - That’s what Sartre meant when he said you have to face life with a certain bravery because there is no right or wrong in the sense that everyone has to do it.
 - There is a big problem with this thinking, because there is a sense of right and wrong. It’s hard wired in us as human beings.
 - Freedom comes then from being and behaving the way God created us to be and behave. Anything less than that restricts us.
 - If I don’t accept who God made me to be then I will try to be who you think I should be or I’ll be chasing my desires and what they tell me I should be. Neither will bring me true freedom or satisfaction. Look at how unhappy our world is today.
 - If who I am is truly found in God, how do I discover and experience it?
 - The Word of God
 - Praying in the Spirit of God
- Before the beginning there was love.
 - When you read the Bible carefully you discover that the whole Trinity (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) is involved in creation. See Genesis 1:1-3; John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:15-17. The trinity is a mystery. God is one divine essence who exists in three distinct personalities. What is the essence of God? 1 John 4:8 plainly says, “God is love!”
 - If there is no God, then there is no love and if there is no love then all you have left is power and violence.
- Before the beginning there was darkness.
 - When God speaks, darkness disappears. When God comes, the darkness flees away. Another way of saying it is that when God speaks, chaos and disorder disappear and orderliness appears.
 - Where sin is present in our lives and relationships or in society, it unleashes forces of darkness but when you place your life under the word of God and the love of God it brings light, orderliness and peace.
 - How do I know that God is love? Because when Jesus came to earth in bodily form and suffered and died, the Creator became unmade. Darkness and evil took its toll on Him. It wore him down and destroyed Him. Why did He allow it to happen to Him? Why did Jesus become unmade so to speak? So that we could be remade!

