

SELF-DISCOVERY by Bruce Woolard

Sermon preached at St Davids on Sunday 15 March 2020.

Do you know who you are? This may seem a silly question, but the question is a lot deeper than you merely providing your name. Your name is the label that identifies your individuality, it does not define who you really are. There is more to you than your name, your identification number, gender, status, etc. Some intellectuals have difficulty with their characteristic traits to such an extent that they have given up on their careers which they hoped would give them purpose and meaning and have turned to eastern philosophies and false religion. Some have even sold their possessions, homes and traversed to India to consult a guru in their quest to “find themselves.”

Psycho analysts are having a field day with their patients who have difficulty with their identity and who can't understand themselves. Others suffer from “burn out” by virtue of their failure to succeed or measure up to life's standards and demands. Some live life pretending to cope by hiding behind a mask of pretence. Then we have others who have become so disillusioned with life and beliefs that they once subscribed to and have become casualties in the “rat race”.

Self-discovery is a journey of success and failure. It's an experience of good and bad. The paradoxes of life are too numerous to list. Who am I? Is a very real and pertinent question. Failing to find the answer will leave one in the wilderness of wanderings like the Hebrew slaves in the desert seeking for the promised land but never finding it.

Professor Brian Little, a personality science expert, says there are 5 personality traits in the ocean of humanity. Using the acronym **OCEAN** he suggests that these 5 personalities represent the characteristic differences between people.

O.C.E.A.N

O	Open to experience. The “O” personality tends to be open to new experiences and often tires from one experience and then seeks a new adventure. Like a butterfly they flit from one attraction to another. Their taste for new experiences is insatiable.
C	Conscientious personalities give too much attention to detail. They cross every “T” and dot every “I”. They make good accountants. The conscientious type, are of great value because they attend to time schedules in a competent and meticulous way. They have high anxiety levels and painfully worry too much.
E	Extroverts are people with personalities on steroids. They are bubbly, expressive, warm and friendly, and are often over stimulated and animated. If you introduce an extrovert to Charles, they will in no time call him “Charlie” and soon “Charlie” will become “Chuck my mate” or “Chuck my babe”. They speak “extrovertese” a language laced with hyperbole and have grandiose ideas.
A	Agreeable personalities are inclined to always agree, even when they disagree. The agreeable character is a dove-like person who tries to avoid conflict. They are peacemakers and pacifiers.
N	Neurotics are those who are difficult to understand. Today they’ll greet you, tomorrow they’ll snub you. They tend to be moody and their temperament is like a yo-yo, one minute down the next up. A neurotic person experiences emotional distress and unconscious conflict. They are given to unrealistic fears and have the propensity to be obsessive demanding and depressed. They will often accuse you of not understanding them and thus bringing out the worst in them. They are difficult to manage and understand. With sound advice, guidelines and a change in routines and diet, neurotics can be assisted to manage their neurosis.

OUT OF CHARACTER

From time to time these diverse personalities may act out of character and spring surprises that defy or question the stereo-type. When an extrovert is quiet, you'll notice them acting out of character. From a Biblical Christian perspective, we discover our true self when we receive Christ Jesus as our personal Saviour and Lord. By identifying with Christ as our Saviour we discover a new identity – 2 Corinthians 5:17 *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”*

FOOTNOTES:

When did Jesus know that He was the Son of God?

The vast majority of commentators agree that the Bible account of Jesus saying “I must be about my Father’s business”, reveals when He knew His identity - Luke 2:42-52 *“And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast. When they had finished the days, as they returned, the Boy Jesus lingered behind in Jerusalem. And Joseph and His mother did not know it; but supposing Him to have been in the company, they went a day’s journey, and sought Him among their relatives and acquaintances. So when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking Him. Now so it was that after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.” And He said to them, “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them. Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.”*

The narrative is of great significance. Families who visited Jerusalem at the time to celebrate a Jewish festival. The reference to Jesus being 12 years of age holds some Jewish significance. It is customary for a Jewish boy to be circumcised 8 days after birth and then at the age of 12 to celebrate his Bar mitzvah. The coming of age meant that the boy was ready to assume the role as a son of the Covenant and take on the trade or profession of his father. Up to the age of 12 a Hebrew boy is tied to his mother's apron strings and is her responsibility. At 12 he becomes the responsibility of the father. Jesus, in the narrative, acknowledged who His Father was and spent 3 days in the temple discussing God His Father's business including the Law of Moses.

A question often asked is how Mary and Joseph did not know the boy was not with them when they travelled back home? The answer is found in the Jewish custom of the time, that after the festival the women would leave first to set-up the tent and cook the meal on the first night of travelling home. The boys would then follow with their father. The large caravan of people made it safe for families travelling. Mary thought Jesus was with Joseph and Joseph, perhaps, thought Jesus was with Mary or at least in the crowd of travellers. It could be that Joseph, knowing that he was not the biological father of Jesus, assumed that Mary would have allowed the boy to travel back with her or at least another male relative. When they realised, on the first night, that He was not part of the caravan, they anxiously raced back to Jerusalem and spent 3 more days searching for the boy and found him in the temple about His Father's business. Jesus knew who he was, the Son of God the Father.

Who will deliver me?

Another interesting passage relevant to the subject of self-discovery is Paul's account of the inner struggle of a believer – read Romans 7:19-25 *“For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. For I delight in the law of God according to the inward*

man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.”

The old nature of sin and the new nature of sainthood are in constant conflict – Romans 6:6 records *“Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”*

In chapter 7 Paul used the term “law” to mean principle or force in one instance and the Law of Moses in another. The content reveals the difference. Paul had surrendered his life and mind to God and, therefore, was a new man, but the old nature was ever present working to dominate the new nature. The Law of Moses condemned the fallen nature of man. So Paul asked who can deliver me from this body of death? He answers *“only Christ can”*. The Lord brings deliverance in a way that transcends the human struggle with the forces of good and evil.

Discovering who Christ is transforms the mind and life of the believer who, because of Christ, becomes a whole new person.

Self-discovery is knowing that you are a depraved lost sinner in need of a Saviour. Have you made this discovery?

Romans 10:9 ***“That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.”***

The Lord our God sees us in our new identity through the prism of Christ Jesus.