

## Christian identity crisis

By Erink Wikle –

From singlehood to parenthood to Bruce and Caitlyn Jenner, much has been on my mind as I've scrolled through my newsfeed and skimmed story after story about topics seemingly stemming from one thing: identity. You don't have to look far. There's an inundation of information available for just about anyone and everyone: witty blogs overflowing with satirical commentary by and for struggling parents, articles proliferating the inequality of human rights among the LGBT community, and posts about the perceived injustices of marriage and singlehood (because if you fall into one category, you'd much prefer the other).



As I've watched what is gaining widespread attention, I've carefully considered my own response, asking the Lord to reveal his heart on these matters. For those who self-identify as followers of Christ, what follows is important.

Many of us Christians are struggling with major identity issues—maybe more so than the transgendered or single person trying to figure out life. As a believer, it seems it no longer suffices to say, “I follow Christ,” and then actually do it. This life is most always messy—missteps occur, bad choices continue to be made, all usually followed by round after round of repentance with an ongoing desire to keep seeking God's best. Yet, this is the life you and I chose when we said yes to Christ and no to everything else.

Nonetheless, somewhere in time, it became lackluster to make a decision for Christ and then lead a life in honest and humble pursuit of following and living like Christ—with real joy (not happiness), true contentment, kindness and compassion toward others, a love for the Father, integrity and good character, selflessness, all tied up with a pretty bow of self-control. Instead, we've given ourselves over to identifying more with a status of single, married, gay, straight, transgendered, mom/dad, single-parent, infertile, and so on—all of which were never meant to mark our identity in the first place. As our spiritual identities have conformed to the likeness of societies, we have become unable to address, head on, topics related to these unique “statuses” within and outside of our Christian communities. Instead, we dance around these conversations for fear of judgement (both judging and being judged), offending (the spirit of offense is not from God), and because political correctness has won out biblical rightness.

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This must change.

*Single Christian friends* – you are not marked by the absence of a mate. You do not need to put on a spirit of offense when your married friends enter into conversation with you about your singlehood. You also don't need to wear your status as a symbol of pride. You are not a victim. You are also not to live "sloppily" as though not accountable for your actions. Your life actually is not your own. You can do what you want, but not everything is good for you (1 Corinthians 10:23).

*Married Christian friends* – you are not marked by the presence of your mate. You are not made whole by your spouse, nor have you "arrived" because you are married. Do not put on an air of pride when your single friends enter into conversation with you about marriage. You aren't better than your single or widowed friends. Walk with humility and contrition (Psalm 51:17).

*Homosexual and transgendered Christian friends* – you are not marked by your sexual orientation. God has called you to live life in complete freedom from everything that keeps you from knowing and loving him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength (Deut. 6:5).

*Infertile Christian friends* – you are not marked by the absence of children. You are not alone; your desires are not disregarded. Do not put on a spirit offense when your friends with children enter into conversation with you about their varied experiences as parents—both good and bad. God knows your grieving heart; he hears your cries (Psalm 43:17). He alone is the giver of life.

This is a call to all those who profess to believe in Christ to stop living in the gray. I'm not propagating legalism; but, in his graciousness, there are some things God is very black and white about. Does your conversation bring life? Is your witness consistent with your actions—both publicly and privately? If not, know that when you shirk your call to holiness and choose to dabble carelessly in dark discussions about transgendered issues, homosexuality, sloppy and reckless living and you seek man's proverbial pat on the back through a Facebook "like" or Twitter retweet—you are wrong in doing this. Do not settle for what society has claimed as "the norm." God is calling you to walk with integrity. "*He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk in integrity.*" (Proverbs 2:7 ESV).

Where have you placed your identity? Is it in Christ? Is what he calls you enough—beloved, blessed, beautiful, his child, his created? Friends who claim to follow Christ, it's time to remember again our call to holy and right living, remembering that we were made in the very likeness of God. Don't settle for appearing or choosing to be anything less than a mirror of this holy and beautiful image.