

# What Defines You

When you meet someone what's the first thing you say about yourself? What you do for a living? Where you live? What school you attended? Stay with me as I talk about what defines you.

## Introduction

The other day I was meeting a friend for coffee at a local coffee shop. We do this regularly. This particular time he brought another friend who is a retired pastor. Our mutual friend introduced us to one another and the retired pastor asked me, "So what do you do?" Both our mutual friend and I chuckled, and I started sharing all the things I do.

## Defined By Occupation

Here in America, as well as across much of the world, I am sure, for as far back as anyone can remember, we have been defined by our occupation. Many people have relatively simple family names which were derived from what their family did centuries ago. Family names like Baker, Farmer, Cook, and the like. Everyone knew what you did and what you were about just by your occupation. People made assumptions about you because of your occupation.

Hi, I am Brian the Preacher. But that's not all I am or do. I'm a dad. I serve my community by supervising a team of school bus drivers and mechanics. I volunteer my time working with boy scouts. I'm a US Navy Submarine Service veteran. I'm a member of many organizations. No one of these wholly defines me.

## Defined By Name

Sometimes we define ourselves or others by our family name. Some family names started simply like Johnson and Tomson, which were derived from "John's son" or "Tom's son". They became very common family names. There are other unique family names, like Rockefeller or Gates. What about Churchill, or Windsor? These are famous family names that many of us have heard or know. But do they define each person who has one of these names?

## Defined by Citizenship

We can define ourselves by where we were born. I was born in a region of the United States known as New England. I am a New Englander. I grew up thinking that made me special and unique. I have friends in England. I'm finding there's not much "new" about New England.

Where you are born and raised does influence your worldview. It does help form your perspective of others. But is there any difference between being born in the United States, France, Pakistan, China, Brazil, or Kenya? Does being born somewhere define you?

## Defined by Accomplishments

How about our past? We tend to define ourselves by our past accomplishments or past failures. Make no mistake friends, what is past is past. Past accomplishments can be anchors keeping you from seeing what is ahead just as much as past failures. Reliving that success you had all those years ago does not help you move forward in what you are meant to be doing right now.



## Defined by Religion

What about faith? Does the church you belong to or are a part of define you? Does it matter whether you are Methodist or Presbyterian? Pentecostal or Episcopal? Anglican or Baptist? Does the denomination of the church you attend or grew up in define who you are?

## What Really Defines Us

It's funny how we are. We want to define ourselves and show ourselves in the best light when we meet people. We all succumb to it to varying degrees. We throw in tidbits of information about ourselves trying to define ourselves before the person we are meeting can come to any conclusions on their own. We also automatically make assumptions about others depending on how they define themselves.

We are here to tell you today, that none of that is important in defining ourselves. There is only one thing that defines us and gives us purpose. There is but one we need to impress. That is God.

## God Defines Us

How do we define ourselves then? We ask God. We ask him what his thoughts were as he created us. Look at Psalm 139:13-16.

### Psalm 139:13-16

(13) For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. (14) I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. (15) My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. (16) Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

We first define ourselves as a creation of God. Not just any creation, but a unique creation that is wonderfully made with a plan and a purpose. God created you for a unique plan and purpose that only you can fulfill. Sure, others can do the job, but only you can do it the way he created you to do it. Only you can achieve all God created you for. No one else can. You are the perfect fit for the plan and purpose God created you for.

This goes deeper in Jeremiah 29:11

### Jeremiah 29:11

(11) For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

God's plans and purposes for you are not to harm you. They are not to bring you despair or calamity. God's plans for you are to bring you success. They are to give you hope amid this dying world. God's plans and purposes for you give you hope and fulfillment, and they help define who you are.

So now we are a creation of God, created with a distinct purpose.

How else does someone who follows Jesus define themselves today?

## Defined As Part Of The Body Of Christ

We define ourselves with the part we play in the body of Christ. Look at 1 Corinthians 12:14-27



## 1 Corinthians 12:14-27

(14) Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many. (15) Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. (16) And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. (17) If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? (18) But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. (19) If they were all one part, where would the body be? (20) As it is, there are many parts, but one body. (21) The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" (22) On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, (23) and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, (24) while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, (25) so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. (26) If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. (27) Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Each one of us has a place in the body of Christ, the Church. This is part of what defines us. The role we play. It is very important to note that no part is more important than any other part. For the Church, the body of Christ, to function properly we all must do our part and do what we were designed and destined to do by God himself.

## Jesus Defined Himself

Jesus referred to himself in many ways. He most commonly referred to himself as the son of man. He also said he was the bread of life and again that he was the way, truth, and the life. When asked if he was the son of God, he said he was. Does that mean his full name should have been "Jesus Godson"? Jesus' definition of himself always pointed to God. The way he described himself pointed to reconciliation with God and the redemption of mankind.

## Conclusion

How do you define yourself? Is it with a title or degree? Maybe it is with your occupation or merely by your family name. I choose to simply define myself as Brian, redeemed creation and servant of God, following Jesus Christ. Frankly, friends, that's all that matters. The fact that my formal education is Nuclear Engineering is irrelevant. All my past accomplishments are irrelevant. All that matters is I'm redeemed by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, and I'm a new creation dedicated to serving God by doing exactly what he created me to do.

What did God create you for? What role do you have in the body of Christ? How do you spread the love, grace, mercy, forgiveness, and hope of Jesus Christ in this world? That's what should be defining you.

