

Bible Talks for the 21st century series

Bible Talk: Spiritual Identity Theft

Have you ever had your identity stolen or known someone that had? What happened? How did it make you feel to know someone was pretending to be you?

CLIP #1: Citibank funny commercial on identity theft:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Iy5jiYWuNKo>

CLIP #2: THE OFFICE (American version)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WVaw7jWBkX8>

Identity theft is one of the fastest growing crimes in the United States and around the world. A few facts regarding this crime in the U.S. according to the Federal Trade Commissions Identity Theft Survey Report:

- 10 million American consumers discovered that their personal information had been used to open fraudulent bank, credit card, or utility accounts, or used to commit other crimes.
- Identity Theft costs almost \$53 billion annually.
- Americans spent 300 million hours resolving issues related to identity theft.

If you do not take steps to protect your personal information, you too can be a victim. Just as each person has a physical identity, God has created a spiritual identity for all people. Learn what God intended for his people to be from I Peter 2:9 and Ephesians 2:10.

- A chosen people and royal priesthood.
- A holy nation, a people belonging to God, declaring his praises.
- God's workmanship, created in Christ to do good works.

God wants every person to take their place in his kingdom and fulfill their destiny! However, many people are ignorant of God's ultimate plan for them and that their spiritual identity is being destroyed. Let's examine the bible and discuss how you can protect yourself from spiritual identity theft:

1. Your spiritual identity can be stolen through ignorance of God's word.

II Cor 4:1-4

Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has

blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

This passage speaks of deceptions and distortions of the word of God. What is the difference between a distortion and a deception?

Distortion=to twist or mis-represent. VS. Deception=an illusion or fraud

What are some examples of distortions and deceptions about God's word that mislead people?

In verse 4, the scripture refers to sort of mental blindness preventing the truth of God from being seen. Why is "blindness" to God's word so dangerous?

Who is the "god of this age"?

What tricks does the "god of this age" use to deceive unbelievers about their spiritual identity?

Ignorance of the Bible is not bliss, but is necessary for salvation and to detect the tricks and traps of the devil that can destroy us.

2. Jesus Christ warned that even his identity would be stolen or "hacked" by men.

Luke 21:8

He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them.

Mark 13:21-22

At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ^{cl}!' or, 'Look, there he is!' do not believe it. For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and miracles to deceive the elect—if that were possible. So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

Obviously, there is only one Jesus Christ that ever walked the earth. If you did meet someone claiming to be Jesus:

How could you prove the identity of the real or a fake Christ?

How can you be certain when a Jesus impersonator shows amazing signs and does miracles?

Why did Jesus warn us in advance and with specific examples that his identity would be claimed by others?

Because of Jesus' teaching 2000 years ago, we won't be fooled when the false prophets and religious counterfeits show up in the 21st century. Even a copy of Christ won't do-you must know the real one to be saved.

3. Only God can give you a true spiritual identity.

I Corinthians 6: 9-11

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

The apostle Paul, the writer of I Corinthians, makes it clear that the “wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God”. He goes on to name a number of sinful acts that are incompatible with Christian living

Why did Paul get so specific about what wickedness is?

What sins do people commit today that define or “label” them for life? How do these labels affect their lives?

Why did Paul spend time reminding the Corinthians of their sinful past?

Fortunately for these Corinthian Christians, God took away their transgressions and sins and gave them their true identity. God erased the old evil person and made them into justified, sanctified, and holy people.

Read Eph 4:20-23.

Without Christ, our identity is corrupted and evil because of sin. Jesus wants us to discard the old self and put on the new self to be “like God in true righteousness and holiness”. He made you to be made a new creation with a glorious future and only He can give us this new identity. In the end, we really only have two choices: Choose God’s identity for us or let sin define who we are.

Conclusion:

Don’t let spiritual identity theft happen to you! In summary, here’s how you can protect yourself:

- Study God’s word to find salvation and truth and avoid the deceptions of the devil.
- Identify and know the real Jesus and reject false Christs and their teachings.
- Understand that only God can give your true spiritual identity and that sin will rob you of it.