**Who Am I?**

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More than 60% of teenage marriages fail within 5 years, and a girl married at 17 is twice as likely to be divorced as a girl 18 or 19. If a girl waits until she is 25 the chances that her marriage will last are 4 times better (*Teen Marriage*, by Eleanor H. Ayers). Ever wonder why that is? We say things like “they were too young to get married”, but what does that mean?

The psychoanalyst Erik Erikson is famous for his “Stages of Psychosocial Development.” He proposed that we all develop through a series of 8 stages in life, each stage building on the previous. It is our task to resolve the major issue of the stage we are in before we can grow in to the next. If we do not resolve those issues we are “imbalanced”, to say the least. At the worst, the unresolved issues in a previous stage of development trip us up and prevent us from resolving any of the issues of the remaining stages. I must resolve stage 1, before accomplishing the tasks of stage 2. I must resolve the issue of stage 2, before I can master the tasks of stage 3, and so on (<http://psychology.about.com/library/bl_psychosocial_summary.htm>).

I am struck by the stage of adolescence, “Identity vs. Role Confusion”. In this stage, I must answer the question “Who Am I?”, or my sense of self is unstable and threatened. I have to know who I am, what I think, what I believe, my tastes, my values… have some awareness and confidence about me, or I am lost and confused in relationships with others who have different values and beliefs. My ability to be in relationship with other people who are not identical to me is the result of settling my identity issues.

No wonder this stage precedes the stage of “Intimacy vs. Isolation.” It is the task of the early 20’s to begin connecting with other people in more meaningful and intimate ways. Intimacy occurs because of my ability to be close, loving and vulnerable with someone else. Connecting with others means sharing me, and of course, I have to know myself before I can share myself. If I fail to resolve the task of intimacy, I risk rejecting relationships altogether or living relationships of promiscuity (getting too close, too quickly, and not sustaining a relationship).

What does it mean that “they were too young to be married”? I have to know myself before I can share myself. I have to know who I am before I can be in a close, sharing, vulnerable, intimate relationship with another person… who is different than me. Identity precedes Intimacy… in any relationship.

My ability to have a close, loving and vulnerable relationship with God is no different. In order to have that kind of relationship, I must resolve the issues of my identity as a believer in Christ. Who am I once I have committed my life to God? What does it mean that I believe Christ is the risen Messiah? What does it mean that I turn to God daily for grace to breathe each day?

When I think of it this way, knowing my “identity in Christ” becomes so much more real, not just another sermon full of words or phrases that I have heard a thousand times before. Knowing who I am in Christ is the only way I can have an intimate relationship with God.

***“For he has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us into the Kingdom of his dear Son, who purchased our freedom and forgave our sins.” Colossians 1:13-14***

***“For in Christ lives all the fullness of God in a human body.So you also are complete through your union with Christ, who is the head over every ruler and authority.”***

**Colossians 2:9-10**