

THE CASE OF HIDDEN IDENTITY

There is a children's story that most of us have heard of at one time or another. It is the story of the ugly duckling. As this little duckling goes along the journey of his life he encounters obstacles and problems which cause him to question his identity, his purpose and the meaning for his life.

He is rejected, ridiculed and mocked, abandoned and left alone. He is lonely and a social outcast in his society circle. He looks different, acts different and questions who he really is. He looks in the reflection of the pond to try to see what makes him so different from his brothers and sisters. They do not seem to be encountering the same identity problems; so why is he in crisis? Even his "mother" does not understand him although she tries to love him for who he is. His "pre adult" time was a time of many questions, much despair and discouragement; a time of lost hope, lost dreams, lost zeal and purpose for living. Much of his behaviour and inner struggles were based on assessment and judgment of his outward appearance both by himself and the opinions/words of others around him. The ones closest to him, his family, were the greatest source of his pain.

He tried very hard to please others and to "fit in". He could not understand why all his efforts seemed to be for naught. He strived and strived for acceptance and the perceived perfection of a duckling that would become a great duck. He could never quite meet the expectations of himself or of others.

Then one day as he was in the pond and happened to see his reflection he noticed an amazing thing. The reflection looking back at him was that of a beautiful swan. He could hardly believe his eyes—he was really beautiful! It took him some time to comprehend and believe the incredible transformation that had taken place. The perception he had of himself and who he was began to change. Others around him were able to see the change and transformation that was taking and had taken place.

He now had purpose; he had hope and a reason to go on in life. He now knew who he was and who he was always meant to be. He had been destined to be a great and beautiful swan and not a duck after all!

Can you see the parallels of this story with the lives of the human race, with your life? Were you or are you one who really can relate to or identify with this ugly duckling? It may be that you have believed the words, the judgments that others have spoken about you and to you. In doing so, you have come to be what was spoken or "expected" of you so that others can say, "see I told you you would never amount to anything" or "you'd be no good for nothin'" or "you're stupid" etc. etc. Or perhaps you have strived hard, worked hard to prove others wrong and have done well for yourself but still haven't achieved the perfection of the expectations you have placed on yourself.

The truth is that the God of the universe, the Creator of heaven and earth has called you. He has created you to be a man/woman of destiny and purpose. He knows who you are and who He has created you to be. The Word of God says in Isaiah 49:1b says that before you were born the Lord called you. In Isaiah 49:16a He says "I engraved you in the palm of my hands." From birth He has made mention of your name to the Father in heaven. Imagine

that – the Lord of the universe finds you as an individual, worthy of mention. In Jeremiah 31:33 the Lord speaks of His covenant that He will make with you..... that He will put His law in your mind and write it on your heart! You are valuable in His sight. He knows you have messed up at times. He sees beyond the outward appearance and beyond what others say about you. He knows that others may not want to change their opinions or judgments about you. He is not influenced by others opinions about you or your own opinions about yourself. In 1st Samuel 16:7b it says that the Lord does not look at the things mankind looks at but He looks at the heart, what's on the inside.

He is interested in you as an individual; and He will give you rest in the midst of the struggle. He will give you peace, hope and a reason for going on in life. If you are tired and weary, if you are having difficulty knowing who you are or how you fit in, or you question your identity, purpose and the reason why you were put on this earth, then take another look in the mirror. See Jesus standing there with you. Let Him melt away the fears, the pains of the past and the present with His love. Let Him walk with you in your journey so that you can be transformed into the beautiful person He has created and destined you to be.

He accepts you, He loves you and He forgives you. He is waiting for you to say YES to Him, relinquishing your control or perceived control, into His hands. When you allow Him to take the driver's seat then He will empower you with the ability to fulfill the destiny and calling that is placed on your life from the beginning of time. You will then be able to relate to the beautiful swan rather than the ugly duckling.

Submitted by Ray and Leslie Johnson, pastors at Resurrection Life