

Defining Ourselves Positively

By Bob Young

Understanding God's purpose and intention for our lives delivers us from a difficult dilemma: our tendency to define ourselves negatively. How many Christians or Christian groups do you know who define faithful Christianity by what a person rejects as part of the faith system or by what a person does not do? How many are like the Pharisees, more concerned about things to avoid than things to accomplish? Recall the story of the Pharisee and the publican at prayer (Luke 18). "I thank you that I am not as this publican...." Mature Christians learn positive, biblical identities and put aside the tendency to define self by one's failures—to "define ourselves by what we are not."

As Christians, we have a positive identity based on who God is and the good news that we can be like him. This is possible because he created us "in his image" and makes possible the reversal of sin's power in our re-creation in Christ. As Christians, we are grateful for the new life we have in Christ. We are aware of the delivering power of God's grace. The Christian is aware of the past but is focused on the future. We best live the Christian life celebrating what we have become rather than looking backward to what we used to be, or by looking at what we not yet have become. Likewise, focusing on the things we are against has little power for positive living. We best live the Christian life with a positive focus that seeks those things that are above.