

Individuality – Who are you?

“Am I really that which other men tell of? Or am I only what I myself know of myself? Who am I? This or the other? Am I one person today and another tomorrow?”

These words, penned by Dietrich Bonhoeffer while in a German concentration camp, speak to one of our inner narratives. Who am I, really? What are the things that make me, me? Is it OK to have unique passions, habits and tastes? The Bible sheds some light on this most important of inner questions. Join us, as we consider who we are, as distinct individuals from our friends, family and neighbours.

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**BIBLE
SOCIETY**

Live light

Scripture taken from The Holy Bible: NIV

Day	Readings	Reference	Reflection/Question	Prayer
1	When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?	Psalm 8:3-4	The Psalmist recognises the magnitude of God’s creative act, and wonders out loud whether such a magnificent God would take time to care for measly little humans. Later in this Psalm, he answers the question: “you have crowned him with glory and honour... given him dominion over the works of your [God’s] hands... put all things under his feet.” It is God’s choice to care for human beings, and he has done it in style. Do you ever have moments where you struggle to believe that God cares for you? How does this passage challenge those thoughts?	Father God, Although you are magnificent, thank you that you have chosen to care for me. Help my unbelief. Amen.
2	For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. 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. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book	Psalm 139:13-16	God knew what he was doing when he “knit [you] together in [your] mothers womb”. Your propensity to get the flu twice every year, your introversion, your love of dance, your level of intelligence: none of these are weaknesses. God does not make mistakes. God has made you unique, and your uniqueness proclaims his creative glory. You are his work, and his “work is wonderful”. What things about yourself are you tempted to think of as weaknesses? How can you work with the body/personality God has given you to proclaim his glory?	Heavenly Father, You have made me this way for a reason. Teach me to accept it, and in my own way to love and serve other people. Amen.

Individuality – Who are you? (continued)

Day	Readings	Reference	Reflection/Question	Prayer
3	<p>Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”</p> <p>So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.</p>	Genesis 1:26-27	<p>All people are created in the image of God. But “mankind” is not just a blob of indiscriminate people; even in the beginning there was a distinction between men and women. Difference is woven into creation from the beginning and should not be minimised or tossed aside.</p> <p>Do you rejoice in what makes you different from others, or do you strive to conform to how others say you should be?</p>	<p>Lord God, Forgive me when I forget that my difference is given by you. Show me how to submit my life to you while being faithful to the person you made me to be. Amen.</p>
4	<p>Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.</p>	1 Corinthians 11:1	<p>The Apostle Paul wanted the Corinthians to be Christ-followers. How would they learn what that looked like? They’d follow a Christ-follower of course! But Paul wasn’t trying to create an army of mini-Pauls. He was trying to create a group of faithful Christians who knew how to follow Christ in every arena of life.</p> <p>Are you able to model to others what following Christ looks like without conforming them to your image?</p>	<p>Dear Jesus, I want to follow you. Help me to be a model to others of how they might follow you. Amen.</p>
5	<p>Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptised by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.</p>	1 Corinthians 12:12-14	<p>We are all different. When you became a member of the family of God, he gave you his Spirit, which enabled you to turn your unique gifts and passions towards service of the body. There’s room for everyone in this family. The body of Christ needs all sorts to work together.</p> <p>What part do you play in the church body? Do you ever wish you played a different part?</p>	<p>God, Thank you for making me, me. Please show me how to use my gifts in service of the church, and help me to do it joyfully. Amen.</p>

Individuality – Who are you? (continued)

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6	For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.	Romans 6:6-11	<p>When we confessed Jesus as Lord, our old self – our old way of doing life – was crucified with Jesus. It is dead. Gone. Kaput. It had to be this way, so that the body governed by sin could be raised to new life in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. This dying and living changes us. But it doesn't obliterate us. The new you – the one that is alive to God – still shares the same history, experiences, and talents with the old you. But now, you are free to put them to use in serving God rather than serving sin.</p> <p>In what ways do your unique gifts and passions tempt you to sin? What might be the antidote?</p>	Gracious God, Forgive us when we idolise our individuality. Prompt us to be thankful for our uniqueness and to use it in the service of the Kingdom. Amen.
7	For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.	Romans 12:4-5	<p>It can be easy to be jealous of the unique talents of other Christians. "I wish I could teach kids like that" or "I wish I could pray like that" or "I wish I could sing like that". But Christians belong to the body of Christ, and we won't all be able to perform every function. We are a team.</p> <p>What are some of your unique talents that you can use to serve the church? How can you turn jealousy into thankfulness?</p>	Father God, Forgive me for the moments I feel jealousy of other Christians. Please help me to be content with the place you have given me in the body of Christ. Amen.
8	So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.	Galatians 3:26-28	<p>Just because salvation is available to all, and that once saved, all Christians enjoy unity with one another and with Christ, this doesn't mean that we cease to exist as individual human beings. Nothing can destroy your cultural heritage, or your maleness or femaleness. All people have equal access to God, and remain deeply rooted in what makes them different.</p> <p>What parts of your individuality did you leave behind when you became a Christian?</p>	Generous God, Thank you for placing me in this particular culture and family. Please help me to know how to remain grounded in my origins as well as know deeply that I am found in you. Amen.

Individuality – Who are you? (continued)

Day	Readings	Reference	Reflection/Question	Prayer
9	You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.	Ephesians 4:22-24	<p>Before we were Christians, we lived a life corrupted by sin, even though we couldn't always see it. Now that we have become Christians, we are called to put away those ways of living that are governed by deceptive desires. But not every action we did before we knew Jesus was evil in and of itself. Putting on the new self requires us to pursue righteousness and holiness (an "attitude of the mind"), even if the action itself remains the same.</p> <p>What are some actions that could be put to use for both evil and righteous purposes? How can you tell which purpose they are achieving?</p>	Lord God, Show me the things in my life that are currently being corrupted by sin. Help me to turn away from what is evil and seek your righteousness and holiness in all I do. Amen.
10	<p>If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.</p> <p>But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.</p>	Philippians 3:4b-7	<p>The Apostle Paul was a believer in Christ, yet he had a firm grasp on his cultural identity. He didn't deny that those parts of him exist, simply that he would not claim his heritage in order to make personal, political or social gains.</p> <p>If you had to make a list like Paul's, what would it include? Would you be willing to consider it all loss for the sake of Christ?</p>	Father, Please enable me to honestly say that all I have I consider loss for the sake of Christ. Amen.
11	Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.	Colossians 3:2-3	<p>Our lives truly are hidden with Christ in God, but we also live on the earth, with real bills to pay, real children to feed, and real issues to face. Learning to manage this tension is a lifelong project. There is not one right answer. Under God, we are free to work out how to manage this tension in our own life, without feeling the need to force others to play along with our answers.</p> <p>Have you ever forgotten that you are a resident of heaven, as well as of earth? How do you manage the tension of being a resident of earth and heaven? Have you ever been tempted to tell someone how they ought to live with the tension?</p>	Gracious God, Forgive me for the times I have forgotten that I am a resident of heaven. Forgive me for the times I have forced others to live with the tension as I do. Show me how to help others navigate the tension with grace and humility. Amen.

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12	Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.	Colossians 3:9-11	<p>The age-old battles of racism, classism, and sexism have no place in the kingdom of God. These belong to the old self. The new self is free to recognise that different ethnicities exist without dehumanising the other. We are free to love the difference in the other, without letting ourselves be governed by fear.</p> <p>When does difference scare you? How can you take small steps to reaching out and bridging the gap?</p>	Loving God, Forgive me for the times in my life I have lived in fear of those who are different to me. Teach me what it means to love deeply and sacrificially. Amen.
13	“Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” – Jesus.	Luke 24:39	<p>When Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection, he was both a body, and a body scarred by what transpired on the cross just a few days prior. In his resurrection he is perfected, but still recognisable as Jesus (after a little prompting). Jesus is still Jesus in eternity. And you will still be you.</p> <p>If you will still be you (in your perfected individuality) in eternity, how will that shape how you live now?</p>	Heavenly Father, Thank you that Jesus still bears the marks of the cross, so that we may never forget his sacrifice. Please help us to live lives that produce enduring fruit. Amen.
14	Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality.	1 Corinthians 15:51-53	<p>We cannot go to heaven as we are. We must be perfected. The things that make you an individual will be stripped of the sin that has clung so tight, and you will be free to be you in the perfect presence of God.</p> <p>Spend a minute imagining what it'll be like to worship God without being distracted, or ill, or plagued by thoughts of what's coming next. Are you ready?</p>	Lord God, We long for the day when Jesus will return and make all things right. We're excited about getting to worship you perfectly! Help us to never lose sight of that day. Amen.