

## **Weekender Slide**

## **Nones & Dones Slide**

Nones & Dones welcome.

## **Moment of Silence**

I want to introduce you to 2 reality television personalities this morning. One right now- and the other at the close of this sermon. We'll start with Andy.

He is on the current season of Survivor. In case you have missed the last 24 years- Survivor is a competition where people are divided into teams -called tribes- on an Island in Fiji and they compete against other tribes in challenges. The losing team goes to what's called "Tribal Council" where the whole tribe votes by writing down the person's name that they want to vote off the tribe. The lone SURVIVOR at the end of the season wins \$1 million- which now will buy a family of 5 dinner at Chick-Fil-A.

(I mean- its been 24 years....I think we should maybe adjust for inflation.)

Anyway.

During episode one of the current season, Andy is standing out on the beach with his tribe and the host- Jeff Probst- asks him to share a little about himself. I now quote him directly

"I'm Andy. Growing up, I had like 4 friends- I was so unpopular- because I didn't have an identity. I kept trying different things [to fit in with different social groups]. But I learned I just have to be myself...and I've become a super-magnet for all the people who are in my life right now!"

Well- later in the episode- Andy suddenly gets paranoid. The people he thought he was making friends with on the island- he started to doubt that they were genuine. Its not they said or did anything really...its that he was creating a narrative in his head...and every little thing they did or didn't do- fed this narrative- that nobody really liked him. And if nobody liked him...surely he would be the first to have his name written down to leave the island.

Then came the competition. Which his tribe lost. Andy lay there on the beach- exhausted from dehydration and over-exertion in the heat. Jeff approached him with the medical team...and asks if he is ok...all he can do is mutter "They were gonna vote me off!"

Finally- in a few minutes he is nursed back to health with a little water and shade- and Jeff asks him again 'Andy- are you ok? You look a little emotional- whats going on?

**“I was fighting for my life. I’m on the bottom. I see it in their eyes. I crack open a coconut and they didn’t cheer for me. They cheered for Jon and they don’t like me. I don’t think.”**

“I crack open a coconut and they didn’t cheer for me!”

That’s it. That’s the line. Hold onto it- we’re gonna come back to that line.

When they get back to their camp- It’s nothing but praise from the other tribe members for Andy. “We like you. You’re great. You are so valuable!”

Then- they head to Tribal Council where you have to vote someone out. Before the vote, Jeff asks a bunch of questions- giving everyone time to chime in- hoping to get some good stuff for television.

That’s when Andy says...

**“I feel like I grew up on the outside. Never belonged. But I thought I had changed. Got rid of the need to please people.”**

**I made myself ready to conquer that. [I thought] ‘I can show the world how far I’ve come and how easy it would be [for me on Survivor]’...which I now see...is not the case.”**

The tribe then voted out Jon- and Andy survives for another week.

In the second episode of the season- there is a scene- where Andy is opening up coconut- and all his tribemates are cheering for him “Yay! Andy! We’re so proud of you! You did it!”

And Andy smiles- finally getting what he needs.

**Title Slide “Nobody Cheered for Me: How Jesus Offers and Unshakeable Identity”- 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; 4:1-5, 6:19-20; Galatians 2:20**

Andy didn’t know who he was. Then he thought he figured it out. He thought he became a confident friend magnet.

That identity was tested...in a new environment with new people and new pressure.

Turns out- he was paranoid, insecure, and needed constant affirmation from people he barely knew...to have any sense of safety at all.

He cracked open his coconut and nobody cheered for him.

That's how fragile his identity was. That's how unsure he was of WHO he was...and to WHOM he belonged.

Today we're going to look at Identity. Answering the question that Andy was trying to figure out- WHO AM I? and TO WHOM DO I BELONG?

Or as my Dad used to put it- You need to know WHO YOU ARE and WHOSE YOU ARE.

My aim today is to understand how most of us go about establishing an identity- and how it keeps letting us down. And then- I want to show you why Christianity is a better way to develop an unshakeable- sense of self- that you don't lose when the worst things happen to you...one that can survive...even the horrors of nobody cheering you when you open a coconut.

### **1 Corinthians 2:1-5**

**When I came to you, brothers and sisters, announcing the mystery of God to you, I did not come with brilliance of speech or wisdom.**

**2 I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. 4 My speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, 5 so that your faith might not be based on human wisdom but on God's power.**

### **1 Corinthians 4:1-5**

**A person should think of us in this way: as servants of Christ and managers of the mysteries of God.**

**2 In this regard, it is required that managers be found faithful. 3 It is of little importance to me that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I don't even judge myself. 4 For I am not conscious of anything against myself, but I am not justified by this. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 So don't judge anything prematurely, before the Lord comes, who will both bring to light what is hidden in darkness and reveal the intentions of the hearts. And then praise will come to each one from God.**

### **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

**Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.**

### **Galatians 2:20**

**I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me**

## **Transition:**

First- lets talk about the secular understanding of identity- how most people in 21st century America learn to define themselves without God in the picture.

Then- from what Paul writes to the churches in these letters- I want to show you why Christianity handles identity in a much more stable and healthy way.

### **1) Looking inside to find yourself creates a fragile, insecure identity.**

As much as I would love to trace the philosophical development of identity over the last 400 years- I don't think you would love it...and we don't have that much time.

So let me generalize.

Basically there have historically been two approaches to identity over the course of human history.

First- there's the traditional model. Which says "First figure out WHOSE YOU ARE- what people do you belong to- and then you can adjust WHO YOU ARE- to be sure you conform to those people's expectations.

So- if I'm born into a the family of a blacksmith...but deep down inside I feel more like a dancer...I'd tell myself "Sorry buddy- you're no dancer...doesn't matter how you feel. You are a Blacksmith because you belong to a family of blacksmiths and this village needs you to be a blacksmith" So I would devalue my desires and lift up my family and community's expectations above them to understand WHO I AM because I KNOW WHO I BELONG TO.

The traditional identity is one of self-renunciation. I reject my inner desires in order to belong to a people.

Well-after 400 years of philosophical work from Descartes to Hobbes and Locke (which sounds like a Fast and Furious spinoff)- the traditional way inverts to the modern method of figuring out who we are.

Now- instead of looking out to our family or community to determine who we are- we actually look inside to figure out what our desires are. And iff we can get down to the deepest part of us- untouched and uninfluenced by our community- we can know who we truly are. At that point- its our responsibility to figure out to whom we belong. First and foremost- we learn that we belong to ourselves. In the modern identity- being true to yourself is the highest value. Then- you go about expressing who you are on the inside to those on the outside- seeing who will accept you- just as you are.

Then- the people that accept you- that's how you know to whom you belong.

Those are your people. The people that won't challenge who you feel you are deep down on the inside. But instead will affirm and uplift that Identity as worthy.

The modern Identity is about self-actualization. I look deep inside...and then I adjust my life and my community in order to become MORE of what I find on the inside.

This has become so cliché in music and movies and books- its almost impossible for us to really imagine that it is anything but the ONLY way to live. Remember the plot of FROZEN- and the song Let It Go!

First the traditional identity-

**The wind is howling like this swirling storm inside  
Couldn't keep it in, heaven knows I tried  
Don't let them in, don't let them see  
Be the good girl you always have to be  
Conceal, don't feel, don't let them know**

of course- Elsa is miserable living into the traditional identity forced on her by her family- so her cure?- The Modern Identity- Let It Go!

**Let it go, let it go  
Can't hold it back anymore  
Let it go, let it go  
Turn away and slam the door  
I don't care what they're going to say  
Let the storm rage on  
The cold never bothered me anyway**

In other words- innately she is saying- the thing that bothered everyone else- was actually who I really was- so they are just going to have to deal with it.

**Back to 1)**

According to a 2015 Barna survey- 91% of US adults say that the best way to find yourself is by looking within yourself.

89% believe that you shouldn't criticize someone else's life choices. and 70% of US adults believe that any kind of sexual expression between 2 consenting adults is acceptable.

See- with the modern Identity- if your inner desires are the key to understanding who you really are- then the greatest de-humanizing sin is telling someone his or her desires

are wrong. Once again- you belong not primarily to a people in the modern identity- you belong to yourself.

This is what is known as Expressive Individualism. In my bubble- where I am the ultimate authority- I define myself according to my desires- and then I EXPRESS WHO I KNOW I AM BECAUSE OF HOW I FEEL AT THIS MOMENT- and your job is to affirm and accept me- or you have sinned against me.

So what? What's wrong with that?

If this is the way we live in the Modern West- looks like we should be the most sure, non-anxious, unfazed people in the history of the world. We've figured it out. Nobody can push us around anymore. I don't care what you say about me- I know WHO I AM!

Well- for all the big talk we do online about it- we are actually some of the worlds most anxious, depressed, insecure, and self-absorbed people in human history.

Why-

One we reason we are so self-absorbed is because if all of the major voices in our lives — which now primarily come through electronic media- if all of those voices are saying- LOOK TO YOURSELF AND YOUR DESIRES to understand who you are...if they are all saying- WHAT YOU OWE TO THE WORLD IS TO CHOOSE AN IDENTITY... well- we end up spending A LOT of time focused on ourselves.

And conveniently- for all of those voices- selling an image is really profitable. Because if you are going to EXPRESS yourself to the world- you are going to need a brand...and that brand is going to have to be funded.

So Let the world know who your people are- with this pre-shrunk cotton graphic T- now on sale. Or with this Louis Vuitton handbag. Or by changing your profile pic to show the cause you support- not by actually supporting it...but by chaining your profile pic to prove you are the kind of person who would support this cause if you were ever going to SUPPORT a cause outside of yourself.

The modern pursuit of self- that puts our desires at the center of our identity-leaves us fragile and insecure for 2 main reasons.

### **If our identity is based on our desires- what happens when our desires change?**

Your deepest desires will eventually contradict.

I really love Italian food...or honestly...any good food. I also love living a long time and being healthy. Which one is the real me?

When I was a teenager- I thought a lot differently about myself than I do now- which me is the real me? The way I felt as a teenager...or the way I feel now?

### **Is it really possible to not be influenced by outside sources?**

If the idea behind a understanding who I am comes from looking inside us- is that even really possible.

For example- an ancient Viking warlord- may at the same time have deep anger and deep homosexual desires. That Viking warlord, because he lives in a culture that says "ITS GOOD to take your anger out on others- because it displays power...and its bad to go against sexual norms" is going to say "The anger is really me...its the sexual desires i need to resist".

But its going to be the opposite today. You can't say- AHHH this ANGER IS REALLY who I am...no instead, because of the culture we live in- the culture says "Following your inner sexual desires is an acceptable form of self-identification- but walking around punching others in the face- that needs to be controlled through therapy and anger management."

Its like all the Goth kids in the early 2000s thought they were being counter-cultural... while they all bought their goth supplies from Hot Topic- like all the other counter-cultural Goth kids.

### **"Advertisers of the 20th century helped clarify what perfection looked like: a whole nation of stars, all expressing their own singular, unique personality by using the same few products."- Tara Isabella Burton, Self-Made**

We are so influenced by the culture around us- its impossible to know if a look inside myself is REALLY a look inside myself- or just following yet another script handed to us by our cultures and communities.

### **The modern self is fragile because- Expressive Individualism depends on external affirmation.**

No matter how much we claim that "I KNOW WHO I AM AND IT DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOU THINK" on social media...we're also sneaking a peek to see how many people liked that post.

The very nature of looking inside yourself- then expressing it to other people is SO THAT they affirm you.

Otherwise- we'd just find ourselves and then say- OK- I know who I am...time to live my life. But we don't do that. We buy the T-shirt. We put the bumper sticker on the car. We get the tattoo. We post the TikTok...and if nobody cheers for us when we open our coconut...we get paranoid that we have chosen the wrong identity.

Just like Andy on survivor. Looking for who we are and whose we are on the inside makes us fragile because it all depends on constant cheering...constant affirmation... constant- YES! YOU GO GIRL! OPEN THAT COCONUT. And when the cheering stops- well- its time to RE-INVENT yourself for another exciting announcement about who you are on Instagram. Time for a job change. A gender change. A change in religion. A change in family. A life update... whatever.

All in the hopes that we will hear what all of us long to hear. "Good job. I'm proud of you. I love you."

But don't you see?

Ultimately- that's not an identity that you found. Its one you have to achieve. And then you have to constantly prove yourself.

Looking for your identity on the inside will undoubtedly lead to neurotically searching for affirmation and thinking you are included in groups that you think you should belong to. "Nobody cheered for me when I opened my coconut"

### **TRANSITION:**

And listen- I'm not telling you the traditional way is the answer...just very few of us are still living like that in America...

...what I want to show you from the Bible- is the answer to a better identity.

## **2) Jesus creates an unshakeable, secure identity- because its received, not achieved.**

The first way we know Jesus can give us a stable identity- is because he was born in one.

Just Kidding- but its still a good line.

(BTW- I've been talking with Dylan Phillips for a while now about my theory that Rap is dad jokes that people cheer for instead of groan. And I always struggle with examples when he asks me on the spot. I guarantee you is dyl. puts that into a track- the internet will BLOW up with hip-hop affirmation..."YOOOO BARS MY GUY!")

Look what the apostle Paul wrote.

### **1 Corinthians 2:1-5**

He says to the Corinthian church- when I showed up there- I didn't come EXPRESSING MYSELF... in fact I was nervous- and didn't really have much about me



that your culture would value...I didn't speak well- I wasn't trained in Greek rhetoric... see it wasn't the ME in me that made an impression on you- it was the Holy Spirit. It was GOD'S presence in and with me. And for that reason- your lives didn't change because of me..rather it was GOD.

Do you see that?

Paul contradicts both the Traditional and Modern sense of identity. Paul didn't get his courage by looking deep inside for who he was- like the modern identity says- instead he looked upward to his calling and identity from God. That he RECEIVED from God.

And he wasn't looking for acceptance from the Corinthians to determine whether he belonged to them or not...he was looking to the calling he received from God- that says love your enemies...that says- ALL NATIONS- ALL PEOPLE belong to me- and so take to them the message of the gospel.

The power of Paul doesn't come from inside him- and therefore he's not dependent on the Corinthians acceptance. His confidence comes from meeting Jesus on the Damascus road— where Jesus himself said “Paul- you are mine. You belong to me. And I am sending you out to carry my gospel to others”

I love you. Now go love others.

His identity is received...and then he serves others not to GET AFFIRMATION...but to offer them the identity that he never earned- but happily was given as a gift.

### **1 Corinthians 4:1-2**

**A person should think of us in this way: as servants of Christ and managers of the mysteries of God.**

**2 In this regard, it is required that managers be found faithful.**

Later he writes to them- “Here's how I want you to think of me.” And its not about his inner desires- its not about the family he came from- or his nationality- rather he says “Think us as belonging to CHrist- servants of Christ” And “as managers of the mysteries of God”

In other words- Paul has received from Jesus not only WHO HE IS and WHOSE HE IS- but also- WHAT HE IS SUPPOSED TO DO WITH HIS LIFE. Manage God's mysteries.

That word manager means a steward. Someone who receives something...is given something...is also expected by the giver to use that something in the right way.

Can you imagine getting a baseball bat for a Xmas gift as kid from your mom and dad...and then smashing the house up with it?

Your mom and dad wouldn't say- "well- it is a gift- use it however you see fit" No- you didn't get the bat to smash the house up with- you got it to hit baseballs with.

When you receive an identity from Jesus- there is an expectation that you steward that identity. And Paul is saying- Because Jesus changed me...I belong to him- my life is his..and he has called me to let the world know that Jesus died, resurrected and is coming back again...and ANYONE can get in on this.

#### **4:3-5**

Then he says- You can't judge me. No human court can. In other words- a rejection of the traditional identity. But what is next? A declaration of LET IT GO! The Sin NEVER BOTHERED ME ANYWAY. NOW IM GONNA LOOK INSIDE TO SHOW THE WORLD WHO I AM.

No.

Next is a rejection of the modern identity.

I can't even judge myself. Jesus- the LORD- is the one who judges me. He sees deep inside of me...to motives and desires that I don't even know are there. And ultimately- its not the praise and affirmation of humans (including myself) that I need...what I deeply need is the to here "I love you. and I'm proud of you from the God that made me"

Paul goes on later to apply this to the sexual arena.

#### **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**

**Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought at a price. So glorify God with your body.**

He says— "If your identity comes from above- from God- not yourself- and you are a steward of the body God gave you...you don't belong to you. ALL OF YOU BELONGS TO GOD. If he tells you WHO YOU ARE- then you also know WHOSE YOU ARE- you are his. So it is now your responsibility to not break the house up with the gift he has given you but to use your body to glorify him. YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN. Because....he says you have been bought.

What does that mean?  
Redeemed. Bought back.  
GOSPEL RIGHT HERE.

#### **Galatians 2:20**

**I have been crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me**

The traditional identity is self-renunciation. There is some good in that. Because there is something about our desires that are twisted and don't tell us the truth about who we are. We can't be ruled merely by our instincts. But the traditional identity falls short because we also can't simply live our lives trying to please other sinners.

The modern identity is self-actualization. There is some good in that. Because in our humanity that is broken by our sin- there is something still about the image of God that needs to be brought back- changed- come out of us so we can BE the person God intends us to be. But we don't get there by looking inside- because its impossible for us to really see ourselves rightly- our vision of ourselves is always clouded with selfishness and sin. Only God can cut through the mess- and see us for who he made us to be.

The Christian life is one of Transformation. Jesus dies for us...and we finally hear what we've been waiting for. We get the word of the Father that he gave to Jesus- "I love you. I'm proud of you....as Jesus takes all our sin on himself."

And from that love- we live the life of a manager of the mysteries of God. The mystery that I didn't earn...I didn't achieve the love of GOD...i just turned around and came home to him to receive it.

And if Jesus knew the worst of me...my deepest darkest secrets...and yet still made the choice to die in place on a cross to save me... Then I don't have to hide anymore. I just receive it. Nothing to prove. My righteousness is not my performance...it is all completely riding on what Jesus did in my place.

I told you I had one more reality TV Story...this is about Tony...from the BBC show "the Monastery"

Give Premise of show.  
Adult film actor and alcoholic.

Final episode of the series.

He has to leave...has loved the break...but knows he has to go back to his real life..but fears losing what he gained at the monastery.

The priest tells him about this verse.

**Revelation 2:17**

**17 “Let anyone who has ears to hear listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name is inscribed that no one knows except the one who receives it.**

Priest says- grab this White Stone and it will help you remember who you are and to whom you belong. So you don't lose it.

Hes visibly shaken. And they sit in silence for a minute or two before the priest places his hands on Tony's head

Tony says, at that point I believed. I didn't want to go back to my old life.

At that point- Tony didn't care if anyone cheered for him...because he knew that the LORD knew who he was- and deeply loved him.

Jesus has a white stone for you.

Baptism.

**Lords Supper**