

## Chapter 1: The quest for identity continues...

### Chapter 1: A Challenging Generation (

**Verse for pondering:** *For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.* (James 3:16)

#### **The Author Asserts:**

- We live in an age where identity is a big question.
- People are seeking to “Find themselves”
- We are in an age of “self awareness” and the expanding of “consciousness”.
- We suffer from an identity crisis.

#### **Generations prior to his did not express this same concern:**

- As an example, Dr. Matzat cites his parents as not (verbally) expressing a desire to seek out their identity. His mom cared for the home and his dad worked outside the home and spent his spare time working around the house.
- Their Sundays were spent at Church.
- It was vital that they heard the Good news of Jesus and the promise of salvation.
- All their perceived needs were met.

#### What Happened? / Questions for consideration.

1. Social Revolution: Bringing the “Self” to the front and forgetting the group.  
Traumatic Social issues  
A distrust of Government  
A rejection of the identity apart from social trends
2. What was the “disillusionment” of the 60’s and 70’s generation?  
What is the comparison between “Archie Bunker” and “Meathead”?  
→ What is positive about each... what is negative?
3. “Those left behind their former identity and received nothing in return are left without any vision for the future.”  
→ Why would that cause a person to turn inward? (p.18)  
→ How can “do-goodism” be selfish? (p.19)  
→ What is the difference between selfish and selfless motivation?  
→ Do you know of anyone who can’t seem to be at ease with themselves if they aren’t working or playing?  
→ Do you see a relation between this behavior and a modern belief that people are “basically good”?  
→ What does God say our basic condition is? (Psalm 51:5, 1 John 1:8)

#### Meeting the Needs:

4. What if Christians defined ourselves primarily in terms of how we are doing “mentally” or “emotionally”? What does that mean for the way we view sin, death and the devil?  
→ What is the difference between Christian compassion and secular compassion when it comes to what God calls sin?

(Discussion)

## Chapter 2: The quest for “Relevance”

**Verse for pondering:** <sup>7</sup> Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. <sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. <sup>9</sup> Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited those devoted to them. (**Heb 13:7-9**)

**Question to ponder:** *What separates Christianity from all other religions?*

### An Irrelevant Gospel?

Quoting Rev. Robert Schuller (Pastor of the 10,000 member Crystal Cathedral) says that in order for Christianity to win out over psychology, the Church must be about figuring out “*the deepest needs felt by humans*”.

- ✓ **What is the central message of the Gospel according to Dr. Matzat?**
- ✓ **Does the Gospel change?**
- ✓ **What does the Bible say?** (Read: Galatians 1:8)
- ✓ **So based on the Galatians passage, what should be our concern about Rev. Schuller (or anybody) who has adopted a different “primary goal / concern for the Church”?**

### What About Jesus?

- **Author states that Psychology has not been negative to the person of Jesus.**
- **Author states that Psychology has been negative to the theology of sin and grace by calling it irrelevant.**
- **How can looking to Psychology be a “failure to grasp the essence of the Christian faith”?**
- **The author asks: “Is there a topic that Jesus does not give us guidance on?”**
- **What ways can / do we overcome this “failure to grasp the essence of the Christian faith”?**

### A New Reformation

- **The Reformation of 1517 showed a loss of Jesus being the foundation for life and salvation (*Our righteousness – Jeremiah 23:6*).**
- **Author contends that the same thing is happening today. That the concepts of sin, repentance, forgiveness and salvation are put in the background in order to seek “identity”.**
- **How should we view our identity in Christ? (*Galatians 2:20*)**
- **Other false ideas of identity found in the Church are identity based on:**
  - **Political ideology**
  - **Loyalty to a church “Name” and not a church theology.**
  - **What is meant when the author talks about it being better (closer to God) to sever your ties with a church (church people) identifying themselves with “America, baseball, Chevrolet and Apple pie?”**

### The Proper Conditions:

- **Author asserts that Luther proclaiming “Jesus Christ saves us by grace through faith” (*Ephesians 2:8-10*) was extremely relevant to a time and people who were suffering greatly.**
- **Is it relevant to people who are having crises in identity?**
- **What if they don’t care to know Jesus? How can we bring this life-saving proclamation to an unbelieving world?**

(Discussion)