

[E x c e r p t]

IDENTITY THEFT

DISCOVERING THE REAL YOU

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*Bestselling Author of *Willing to Wait**



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IDENTITY THEFT: DISCOVERING THE REAL YOU

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction: <i>Exposing Identity Theft</i>	15
Theme Poem: <i>Stolen Identity</i>	19

STEP 1 – *Identify What Is Missing*

Chapter 1 Know What You're Looking For	27
Chapter 2 Don't Be Taken By Surprise.....	41
Chapter 3 What's Really At Risk?	59

STEP 2 – *Inventory The Actual Loss*

Chapter 4 Don't Let Your Guards Down	79
Chapter 5 The Search To Find "You"	99
Chapter 6 In Pursuit Of Your Purpose	121

STEP 3 – *Inspect All The Findings*

Chapter 7 Check Out Your Sources.....	139
Chapter 8 Check All Your Pockets	157
Chapter 9 Target The Real Enemy.....	179

STEP 4 – *Initiate The Full Recovery*

Chapter 10 On The Road To Recovery.....	201
Chapter 11 Go Get The "Real You" Back	213
Chapter 12 Walk Into The "New"	225

INTRODUCTION

Exposing Identity Theft

Imagine finding out that someone has been posing as you for days, weeks or even months. Since you know that the imposter is not you, shouldn't it be just as easy for others to figure out the truth? It is not the fault of the stores that gave the imposter merchandise, the banks that handed out money or the creditors that extended credit to the "fake" you. They believed that the thief was you since he or she apparently had proper identification to prove it. After the thief had maxed out the fraudulent credit cards in your name and left the bills or loans unpaid, these same businesses now want you to assume your "stolen" identity and pay up. Sadly, this sounds like another tragic case of "identity theft."

Despite all the efforts to combat identity theft, it has become the fastest growing crime in America. Almost ten million people fall victim to this "faceless" crime in the United States each year. Identity theft is an equal opportunity crime, affecting victims of all races, ages and income levels. It occurs when someone obtains and uses your personal identifying information (e.g., name, date of birth, social security or credit card number) for personal gain. This serious crime can happen in a variety of ways, such as when a thief steals your credit card to make purchases, impersonates you to open a loan, pretends to be you when arrested for a crime or even uses your social security number to apply for a job. Since there is no one-size fits all when it comes to identity theft, we must figure out how to protect ourselves from a moving target.

Identity theft works best when the unsuspecting victims remain unaware of what has happened. Many people don't even realize that their identity has been stolen

until it's too late. They only discover their plight once their credit has been ruined, and they have suffered substantial, financial losses. I know first-hand because it happened to me about seven years ago. I didn't discover the theft until almost three months after it happened. Before I could stop the impersonator, she had already maxed out all of the new credit cards that had been fraudulently opened. Since she didn't have a driver's license in my name to "officially" pose as me, she decided to use my social security number along with her own personal information. Since the retailers apparently didn't notice the discrepancy, I was left holding the bag with nearly \$10,000 in bills for merchandise, like computers, printers, tires and clothes that I had never seen. Moreover, I later discovered a fraudulent mortgage loan in my name for a \$1.3 million house. I was shocked and appalled that the thief was able to use my "identity" to obtain more luxuries than I had using my own identity.

Although I had taken proactive steps to protect myself, I still ended up becoming a "victim" of identity theft. I was very careful about giving out my personal information. I checked my credit reports and reviewed my bank statements in a timely manner. I was devastated because there was nothing else I could have done to avoid this essentially "virtual" crime. It was not as if the thief had physically taken anything from me or stolen my social security card. My purse was not stolen, my credit cards were not lost, and my debit card personal identification number (PIN) was not misused. However, this predator was actually a pickpocket and had effectively slipped my identity right out of my pocket without me knowing it.

While I was fighting to recover my stolen identity, I was forced into a complicated legal battle to prove that I

didn't make any of the fraudulent transactions. While the identity thief got the benefit of the doubt with my identity, I was treated as if I were the criminal instead of the victim. When I came to the realization that neither the police, the federal agencies, the prosecutor nor the creditors could help me to bring the culprit to justice, I decided to investigate my own identity theft case. In fact, I had to gather all the evidence to give to the police before they would even pursue my case.

While I was still struggling with my ordeal, I recalled how often I had heard the expression, "First natural, then spiritual." If this type of identity theft was happening in the natural, I wondered what the enemy had been up to behind the scenes in the spiritual realm. Then, I imagined going through life and suddenly discovering that my "spiritual identity" had been stolen. This thought led me to the scripture, *John 10:10*, which states that the thief comes to steal, kill and destroy. That's when I knew that I had also been exposed to "spiritual identity theft," which is even more traumatic and life-altering than the loss of my money and credit. Spiritual identity theft occurs when Satan slowly and subtly tries to steal our sense of who we are and leaves us searching for our purpose and destiny.

When the Lord first gave me the book title, *Identity Theft: Discovering the Real You*, I didn't fully know what He wanted me to share with you. As a victim of natural and spiritual identity theft, I have experienced the damaging effects of losing my identity in two ways. As a result, I finally realized that with the same tenacity that I went after the imposter who stole my "natural" identity, I had to go after the identity thief in the "spiritual" realm. That's why it's so important that spiritual identity theft be exposed for what it really is...a deceptive scheme of Satan to rob us of our God-given identity.

Similar to the natural crime, many victims of spiritual identity theft may not even be aware of what has happened until it's too late. This kind of spiritual theft may go unaddressed for many years until you face a difficult situation, such as a divorce, a bad relationship, the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, a chronic illness or a financial struggle, and end up having to do a personal inventory of your life. At that point, you suddenly discover that your spiritual identity has been stolen or lost in the process, and you end up asking yourself the critical question, "Who am I?" Only then can you begin the long and challenging, but necessary journey in search of your spiritual identity. It's the only way that you can finally discover and reclaim the "real" you.

In *Identity Theft*, the discussion on how to recover your stolen identity is divided into four essential steps (see Table 1):

- Step 1 – Identify What Is Missing
- Step 2 – Inventory The Actual Loss
- Step 3 – Inspect All The Findings
- Step 4 – Initiate The Full Recovery

This book will walk you step by step through your own spiritual identity theft case, so that you can identify and recover everything that the enemy has stolen from you. As you begin your personal journey of self-discovery, be prepared to fight for what rightfully belongs to you...your "spiritual identity."

THEME POEM
Stolen Identity

I did not know my identity was at risk,
While I was going through life in total bliss,
All of a sudden my ID was just stolen away,
But I couldn't narrow it down to a specific day,
Well it could have been when I failed my test,
Or when I was told to be better than the rest,
Sometime between my childhood and now,
I had lost myself, but didn't fully know how,
From the outside, everything looked fine,
But the face I saw in the mirror wasn't mine,
I began a long journey in search of me,
Yet who I really was, I could no longer see,
I had somehow lost sight of the "real" me,
Blinded by my past and filled with insecurity,
I was not sure about my true self-worth,
Or for what purpose I was put on this earth,
Like everyone else I wanted to be affirmed,
But I was taken advantage of at every turn,
I had been robbed by bad relationships,
And those who loved only with their lips,
The enemy wanted me to feel ashamed,
And to focus on someone else to blame,
Then I started to really question who I am,
Feeling very pressured and overwhelmed,
My good name was secretly taken from me,
And it left me as devastated as I can be,
But it didn't compare to what came next,
When I could not put my life into context,
All of those missing pieces that I lacked,
I had to take steps to get them all back,

Stolen Identity (con't)

But I didn't want to remember the past,
Yet I wasn't ready to take off my mask,
I had lost all my confidence and worth,
And just couldn't let go of all the hurt,
A head-on collision tried to take me out,
Bringing even more fear and self-doubt,
I had been living my life for everyone else,
And not having any quality time for myself,
I was driven to succeed by all that was said,
And did what was needed to get ahead,
A real perfectionist through and through,
My self-esteem became tied to what I do,
How it all happened I did not have a clue,
And the trials I went through were not few,
But I knew that I was a threat to the enemy,
That's why he didn't want me to know "me,"
I had been struggling to find the right way,
And always worried about what people say,
Yet God knew me in my mother's womb,
So my God-given identity I could assume,
Now that I know what He said about me,
From others' opinions I am now finally free,
I had to fight to get my true identity back,
And follow the Truth instead of the facts,
The enemy came to steal, kill and destroy,
But when Jesus came he didn't get very far,
So now I can start living the abundant life,
For I know that my "real" identity is in Christ,
Now I finally know who I was created to be,
But first I had to reclaim my "stolen identity."

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TABLE 1
Four Steps To Recover Your Stolen Identity

STEPS	NATURAL THEFT	SPIRITUAL THEFT
<u>STEP 1</u> Identify What Is Missing	Confirm if your <i>natural</i> identity (e.g., name, social security no.) has been stolen	Confirm if your <i>spiritual</i> identity (i.e., who you are in Christ) has been stolen or lost
<u>STEP 2</u> Inventory The Actual Loss	Create a list of the <i>natural</i> things that you believe were stolen (e.g., credit, money)	Create a list of the <i>spiritual</i> things that you believe were stolen or lost (e.g., purpose, destiny)
<u>STEP 3</u> Inspect All The Findings	Review the <i>facts</i> (e.g., reports) closely to determine what was actually stolen (e.g., good name)	Review the <i>truth</i> (i.e., Bible) closely to determine what was actually stolen (e.g., character)
<u>STEP 4</u> Initiate The Full Recovery	Take <i>legal</i> action to get your natural identity back (e.g., file police report, go to court)	Take <i>spiritual</i> action to get your spiritual identity back (e.g., go to the Supreme Judge)

STEP 1



IDENTIFY

What Is Missing

"You will know that your tent is secure; you will take stock of your property and find nothing **missing.**"

Job 5:24 (NIV)

POETIC EXHORTATION

What Is Missing

I have to identify what is missing,
So to get started I had to go fishing,
Searching through the pieces of my life,
That's when I was forced to look twice,
To figure out what happened to "me,"
So I could recover my stolen identity.

STEP 1

Overview

The first step in the process of recovering your stolen identity is to identify what is missing in your life. During this step, you have to confirm if something is in fact missing before you can determine what has happened to your identity. If you are not aware that anything is missing, you won't know that you need to look for "it." I used to have a unique, college ring that I kept in my jewelry box to make sure I didn't lose it. One day when I decided to wear it, I discovered that it was missing. I was unsure if someone had stolen it or if I had somehow lost or misplaced it. Regardless of how or when it disappeared, I now knew that my ring was missing and had to figure out what happened to it. As a result, I went on a long rampage to try to find it. Once I had identified what was missing, I knew exactly what I was looking for.

However, if you don't know that your identity has been stolen, you won't even bother to look for it. For example, if you buy a jigsaw puzzle, you assume that all the pieces are in the box. Only after you start trying to put the puzzle together do you realize that one or more of the pieces are missing. At that point, you may check the box to see if any of the pieces were left inside. If you don't find the missing pieces, you will never be able to put the entire puzzle together. You may experience the same problem if you are unaware that your identity is missing. You may assume that your identity is intact until you discover that it is gone while trying to put the pieces of your life together. Once you know or have a suspicion that your identity has been stolen, you must figure out specifically what is missing in order to get it back.

REFLECTIONS ON
Identity Theft

"Americans are more worried about becoming a victim of Identity Theft than getting laid off..."

Wayne Abernathy, Asst. U.S. Treasury Secretary,
USA Today 2003

"I don't need to worry about identity theft because no one wants to be me."

Jay London

Chapter 1



Know What You're Looking For

Before we can even address the issue of “identity theft,” we need to understand the “crisis” that has been going on with our identities. A “crisis” refers to an emotionally stressful event or traumatic change in a person's life. We constantly hear about the economic crisis, the housing crisis, the banking crisis, the health care crisis, and recently the oil spill crisis in the Gulf, but no one is talking about the “identity crisis” that we all have experienced at some point in our lives. The term, “identity crisis,” is a psychological term, which describes someone who is in a constant state of searching for his or her identity. The person may be at a major turning point or crossroad in his or her life and struggling with who he or she is. During that process, the person is basically trying to figure out what is missing in his or her

life. However, before the person can even deal with the identity crisis, he or she must know what he or she is looking for in the midst of the crisis.

In Crisis Mode

Some people aren't able to function in their daily lives if they are not in a crisis mode. We're so accustomed to dealing with crisis after crisis with our spouses, kids, jobs, finances or health that such stress becomes acceptable to us. We plug one hole and another one opens up, which is the only reason we do anything different than the norm. Not until we experience a real crisis situation will we start thinking about making changes in our lives. I think it's human nature to wait until things get bad before we decide to take action, rather than addressing the problem when it first arises. Many of us take the same approach when we struggle with our identities. We may become confused or uncertain about who we are, but we tend to overlook those concerns until it gets to a crisis level. It just takes one challenging situation to force us to question who we are.

We live in a world full of people who are walking around feeling lost, but they may not even know it or know what to do about it. Sometimes, many of us don't feel as if we fit into various aspects of our lives...at home, at work, at school or at church. It's similar to trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. We may be searching for a sense of belonging to someone or something, so in line with the old expression, we have learned to "get in where we fit in." We don't want to be different or unique because we're too busy trying to blend in with the crowd. Whether we feel comfortable or not, we will connect with people or situations where we can receive affirmation or validation without even realizing it. During

times of self-doubt, many of us are simply experiencing an identity crisis. We don't know who we are or why we are here. We have lost our "real" identity along the way, but we may not have been aware of it because we're in a crisis mode.

When we're going through an identity crisis, it's not unusual for us to be confused about who we are. I remember experiencing this type of crisis when I started college, which should have been the best time of my life. However, I was still recovering from a near fatal car accident, which was one of the most traumatic experiences in my life. I was dealing with the insecurities that came with the loss of my voice, but I didn't fully know how deeply I had been affected in other ways until much later. I can't pinpoint exactly when it happened, but I slowly began to struggle with my identity. Since I began to question who I really was, I found myself trying to fit in with the popular crowd. I felt like I was the only one going through an identity crisis. On top of that, I was so stressed out that I went through a period of insomnia during my last semester of college. When I went to the doctor, I was shocked by the diagnosis: I was depressed. I didn't know exactly what was missing in my life, but at that point, I finally recognized the internal conflict that I had been dealing with. However, I had been trying to confront my situation from a natural perspective when it was actually a "spiritual identity crisis."

Many Christians are constantly in and out of a spiritual identity crisis. We may actually find ourselves confused about who we are from a spiritual perspective. Some of us may have allowed people to tell us who we are, whether good or bad, our entire lives, so that we don't know for ourselves. In fact, we can sometimes forget who we really are and lose sight of our spiritual identity

as a result. The person who we have become may be further and further away from who God actually created us to be. That's why we can feel close to God one moment, and then feel distant from Him the next. We may even have days of great spiritual victories followed by periods of major, natural defeats.

After the prophet Elijah had miraculously called down fire from heaven and destroyed the 450 prophets of Baal, he experienced this same type of spiritual identity crisis (*1 Kings 18*). He soon thereafter found himself in a cave hiding from Jezebel. Sometime between his great victory over his enemies and his visit to the cave, he began to question his own identity, experiencing a spiritual identity crisis. Likewise, many of us have gone through a similar type of crisis even though we know who we were called to be.

As believers, we should know that we're the children of God, joint-heirs with Christ, a chosen generation and a royal priesthood. However, we can still experience a spiritual identity crisis. When our faith is challenged or we have a major loss in our lives, we may begin to wonder, "Who am I?" Many of us are struggling with our identities, whether or not we are willing to admit it. From the outside, I appeared to have it "all" together years after I had recuperated from my car accident. At least this was the perception that people, including my family and friends, had of me. However, I felt completely different on the inside and knew that something was still missing in my life. I couldn't specifically identify what was wrong, but I knew that something was off. It's one thing to know you have a problem, but it's another thing to be able to identify what it is. If you know the diagnosis, then you can get to the prognosis. The reason that we don't know that pieces of our identity are missing is because we have been secretly ripped off

by the master pickpocket, Satan, while we were going through our spiritual identity crisis.

Once you determine that something is missing in your life, you need to know what you're looking for. In other words, you need to be sure that you're identifying the "right" problem. The only thing worse than knowing there's a problem is misidentifying it. On the TV show, *House*, Dr. House usually initially misidentifies the patient's condition and starts treating him or her for the wrong illness. He keeps going through his "diagnosis list" until he figures out the "real" problem, and most of the patients fully recover once their condition is properly treated. His approach to practicing medicine may not be very conventional, but he does try to rule out the wrong thing to get to the right thing. That's exactly what needs to happen when our spiritual identities are missing. We have to keep searching until we can correctly identify the right problem, so we can properly address our spiritual identity crisis.

A Case of Spiritual Amnesia

After we understand our spiritual identity crisis, we are on the right road to recovering our God-given identities. However, we have to first determine if we have a case of spiritual amnesia. Amnesia may involve a partial or total loss of a person's memory, usually immediately following some type of trauma. The amnesia can have a short-term or long-term impact depending on the severity of the injury. A person may receive some kind of blunt force trauma to the head and wake up feeling fine, even functioning normally. However, the person doesn't know who he or she is anymore. When I had my head-on collision, I had a major blow to my head. I was hit with so much force that my head put a hole in the windshield. After being knocked unconscious, I

remained in my car for over four hours until the police arrived. Despite the lacerations to my face and the hole in my throat, I was otherwise physically fine. However, I suffered from partial amnesia and initially could only recall what happened right before the point of impact. The experience was so distressing that my mind had subconsciously blocked it out. The same thing can happen when we go through a difficult or painful situation in our lives, pushing our minds to block out the trauma as if it never happened.

Many of us have life experiences similar to Jason Bourne in the movie, *The Bourne Identity*. He suffered from severe amnesia, which left him frustrated about who he was. Jason had been brainwashed and had no idea who he was or why he was in a particular location or situation. In turn, he went on a never-ending pursuit to discover his real identity. Our lives may not be as dramatic, but our questions are the same as his: "Who am I, and why am I here?" Consequently, we run from job to job, relationship to relationship or even church to church, trying to "find" ourselves.

Similarly, many Christians are going through life as if they truly know who they are, but they're really suffering from spiritual amnesia. It's like they woke up one day and discovered that they didn't know who they were spiritually. Spiritual amnesia occurs when someone is confused about whom God created them to be and who they have actually become. It's a real tragedy for believers to have that kind of amnesia, where they struggle with who they really are. They may not have a total memory loss, but just enough to forget their identity in Christ. In turn, they go back and forth about who they are. So one day they are "the head," and then the next day they are "the tail." They are "above," and then they are suddenly "beneath." They may see

themselves as more than a conqueror (*Romans 8:37*), and then the next minute they feel like a complete failure. These amnesia victims may oscillate like a fan because remember they are still going through a spiritual identity crisis and have become double minded.

“A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

James 1:8

As a result, they have a “divided” mind and are unbalanced in everything they do. However, it doesn't have to be this way if they can remember who they really are in Christ. Has this type of identity tug of war happened to you or someone you know?

If we have amnesia and don't know who we are, it's so easy for us to simply rely on what people tell us. If you lose your memory, the doctor may ask you, “Do you remember your name?” If your answer is “no,” then your family and friends may try to help jog your memory by telling you things about yourself that will help you recall. However, no matter how much they tell you, it's usually futile until you actually remember for yourself. It could be months or years before you get your memory back. In the meantime, you have to rely on what everyone else says about you. I can tell you from personal experience that it's a horrible feeling to not know who you are and have to rely on others to introduce you to yourself.

People may also try to take advantage of us when we suffer from amnesia. When I was still recuperating from my car accident, the drunk driver who almost killed me served me with a \$1 million lawsuit. The police officer on my case later sent me a handwritten note in the mail stating that I was at fault and had told him at the scene

that I fell asleep. However, that could not be true: I was unable to talk at that time, so the judge dismissed the ticket. As you can see, he tried to take advantage of my memory loss, but it backfired. When you have amnesia, people who you never expect to hurt you will try to use your loss against you.

If you do suffer from spiritual amnesia, you must be careful because the people closest to you can shape your perception of who you are, rightly or wrongly. If you don't know who you are and people tell you that you're a failure, a mistake, a loser or an embarrassment, you may believe them and start acting like who they say you are. As a result, you have to be very cautious about who you allow to speak into your life because words can have a lasting impact on you. The old adage, "sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt you" is the biggest lie. Not only can words hurt you, they can destroy you if you let them.

"Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof."

Proverbs 18:21

Words do have power and can be used to speak life or death to you and others. I recall several times when people have said things about me that weren't true, but I would try to just ignore them without saying anything. For example, I had a healthy appetite when I was a teenager, and my stepfather used to constantly say that I was going to be "big as a house" when I got older. I would pretend to laugh about it, but his words really bothered me. In fact, I later realized that a negative seed had been planted in my mind and began to affect my thoughts about myself. So, now if someone tries to say anything that I know is not true about me, I boldly tell him or her, "I don't receive it!"

We have to learn to shut down every word spoken to us that doesn't line up with what God says about us. We have to allow untrue words to fall on deaf ears.

Some cases of spiritual amnesia may be more severe than others. Regardless of the extent of your amnesia, you need to address it because what you think about yourself has a big impact on your behavior. If you think you're a child of God, you should act like you are. If you think you're just a sinner saved by grace, you will act like a sinner. A good biblical example is the story of the Israelites, who were treated like slaves in Egypt for so long that they started to think and act as if they were actually slaves. Although God kept trying to remind them that they were destined to be a great nation, they still didn't know who they were. The Israelites were God's chosen people, but at times they wanted to return to Egypt rather than go through their testing in the wilderness. They murmured and complained wanting to turn back to a familiar place of bondage. That's the epitome of a spiritual identity crisis. How can people chosen by God not know who they are? God was in their midst, yet they still suffered from spiritual amnesia. Similar to believers today who suffer from spiritual amnesia, their problems stemmed from their worldly thinking. It was the very crisis with their identity that kept causing them to stumble, and as a result, many of them never made it to the Promised Land.

The plight of the Israelites is far different from the story of Joseph, the son of Jacob, who was sold into slavery by his brothers. Despite everything he experienced after he told them his dream about his family bowing down to him, he still knew who he was. He went from the pit to the palace, and then to prison when he was falsely accused by Potipher's wife. No matter how difficult his situation became, he never wavered in his trust in God

or his perception of who God had called him to be. Not once did he think of himself as a slave or act like one. He never allowed his circumstances to dictate who he was. Because Joseph had not forgotten who he was, he was able to hold on to his spiritual identity and fulfill his divine purpose.

Likewise, if we want to hold onto our spiritual identities, we must take steps to avoid spiritual amnesia. We must never forget that we are only "in" the world, not "of" the world. We need to realize that we are actually "spirit" beings living out a natural existence, rather than "natural" beings living out a spiritual one. That's why the Bible tells us to be "spiritually" minded because that's the only way we can stay connected to who we were created to be by God.

I recall a powerful song, *There Is a King in You*, by Donald Lawrence, which addresses this very issue. He reminds believers that we come from royalty, and there is a King (the King of kings) in us. If we really believe that we have a King in us, how can we not know who we are? If our Father is the King, we are royalty and should act like it. The song goes on to say that, "The goal of the enemy is that you don't know who you are." This is so true. No matter what you've gone through in the past or are currently going through, there is a King in you. Unlike many of us, people who are royalty know who they are and what they are entitled to. Despite whatever you've gone through - the divorce, the abuse, the addiction, the cancer, the failure, etc. - it does not change who you are in Christ. It's up to you to do whatever it takes to get your spiritual memory back, so you can end your spiritual identity crisis.

Get Back To Eden

We must understand man's identity before the fall in order to fully comprehend our current spiritual identity crisis. If we know how God views us, it becomes the basis for how we view ourselves. The search for who we are began long ago in the Garden of Eden. We have to get back to that same garden to see exactly where we fit into God's creation. The Bible is clear that man was created in the image of God (*Genesis 1:27*). Since we were created in His image, we should look like Him and have His character. He blessed man and gave him dominion over the earth and every living creature.

“Then God blessed them, and God said to them, be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

Genesis 1:28

In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were never deprived, and they were totally connected to and dependent on God. Their lives in the garden were literally “heaven on earth,” and they were living on top of the world. It was a time in which man was complete and whole as God intended from the beginning. However, there was an adversary just waiting for Adam and Eve to mess up, so he could put an end to their loving relationship with God. There was no bondage or sin in the Garden of Eden until the spiritual identity thief, Satan, showed up to tempt them. It was not until after their fall that Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness and hid from God. At that point, they slowly began to go through their own spiritual identity crisis.

After all was said and done, Adam and Eve were struggling to get back to the place that God had originally intended for them. There is another song, *Back II Eden*, by Donald Lawrence that is right on point. The song states, "Let's get back to Eden, live on top of the world." It reminds us that our families, our finances, our minds, our spirits and our bodies are blessed, and we have to keep telling ourselves how blessed we are. I think Lawrence is simply telling us to remember who God created us to be when we start suffering from spiritual amnesia. If we focus only on the fact that the tempter (Satan) came to interfere with God's plan for man, then we will live beneath our privileges as children of God. Adam and Eve did fall, but that was not the end of the story. After they fell, Jesus came to make everything well. As believers, we can confidently say that "all is well." It may not look well or feel well, but all things work together for our good.

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Romans 8:28

Even if our situation itself is not good, God will still work all things together for our ultimate good. He allows everything that we're going through, good and bad, to be used to fulfill His purpose in our lives. We must realize that God divinely orchestrates every aspect of our lives and knows the part that we play in His overall plan. This is the insightful premise that my sister, Dr. Connie Stewart, highlights in her book, *The Master Orchestrator*. She reaffirms that "God is working even in the darkest hours of our lives and that His hand is always moving! Even when we can't see His face!" With this powerful insight, we all need to "get back to Eden" and start living on top of the world. Are you living on top of the

world where you should be? Or are you somewhere near the bottom? Only you can be the judge.

King David is a great biblical example of someone who could have suffered from spiritual amnesia, but instead chose to get back to Eden to understand who he was. We need to join him in his bold declaration to God in *Psalm 139*.

“...I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.”

Psalm 139:14

We are also fearfully and wonderfully made and should know by now exactly who we are. Even when we are suffering from spiritual amnesia, God knows who we are and why we are here. It's up to us to allow Him to reveal who He created us to be and to also walk fully in who we are in Christ.

Another lesson that we can learn from the Garden of Eden is that Satan, who desires to steal our spiritual identity, does so by playing mind games. That's why it's so important for us to keep our minds stayed on the Lord.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.”

Isaiah 26:3

The apostle Paul warned the Corinthians that the same serpent who deceived Eve in the garden is the same one who wanted to trick them.

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

2 Corinthians 11:3

Paul knew that the serpent had no control over Adam and Eve's situation, but he could try to gain access to their minds in order to steal their identities. Paul was referring back to when they were in the Garden of Eden. As long as they stayed in the presence of God, the serpent could not touch them. However, Eve was ultimately deceived into eating the forbidden fruit. Once she started listening to Satan, she opened the door for him to start messing with her mind. It wasn't long before she went from just thinking about the fruit to eating it, and then Adam joined right in. They had no idea that they were being robbed blind by the spiritual identity thief or the extent of the loss they would suffer from disobeying God. Now, we can see why they began to suffer a spiritual identity crisis.

Likewise, it's no surprise why we find ourselves experiencing the same type of spiritual crisis that occurred in the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve were living on top of the world, they still struggled with who God created them to be. As believers, we may be going through a similar struggle and asking the question, "Who am I?" That's the question we should be able to answer unless we have spiritual amnesia. We have already gone back to the garden to examine this issue, but we need to take a closer look at it so the enemy won't take us by surprise.

