
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO BE ME?

BY MICHAEL CARD

Whenever I spend time with my two older children (Kate, 17 and Will, 15), I sense this question underneath all our more in-depth discussions. Whenever I spend time alone with the Lord, I sense this question beneath all my frustrated conversations with Him. Together with my children, perhaps with you as well, I ask, “How am I supposed to be me?” In this fallen world, with our fallen selves, how could this impossible goal possibly be possible?

One single answer will not do, will it? After all, we are all uniquely created to be different “me’s”... my oldest daughter, the dancer; my oldest son, the painter; I least of all it seems approaching fifty am hard pressed to tell you exactly what it is I “do.” And our two little ones (Nate, 11 and Maggie, 10)... where to even begin? The strangest thing is the two of them seem least disturbed by the question!

There are, of course, the quick theological answers, “made in the image of God...” “Conformed to the image of Christ...” “Die to yourself...” But in the midst of my own personal confusion, these kind of didactic answers don’t seem enough. There is an unsatisfied place in my soul they barely even touch. When you are on the other side of a dilemma like this it is easy to look back and say to yourself, “Of course, it should have been obvious to me then.” But Kierkegaard was right when he said that the problem with life is that it is lived forward and understood backwards. Where I am, at this point in the journey, they are not enough. I need more than answers. My hands may be filled with books that are filled with all sorts of good answers but I find instead that my hands ache to be

filled with the warm flesh of another Hand. I don’t need answers as much as I need to know I am not alone. I don’t need a wise guru; I need a silent, listening, loving Friend.

Incarnation, Presence is the only answer to this dilemma of how I am supposed to be myself, of how you are supposed to be yourself. It was not an answer composed of words, even the wisest of words. No, the answer is the Word that has come alive, a word whose power lies not in somehow convincing me of the truth of who I am but of a Word that will someday make me true.

The Nazarene stepped out, lived and breathed out the only answer worth holding on to. He is the Answer after all to how we are supposed to become ourselves. Weaving in and out, breathing in and through the precious moments we have preserved for us in the gospels of that perfect life of His, those contain the answer woven into all those timeless moments. Those moments when He said the perfect thing to have said or left it unsaid in the perfect silence that must have surrounded His words. Those moments when He did the perfect thing, or did nothing at all, in that still, grace-full perfection that is His presence.

At the heels of the hunt the answer is surprisingly simple and frighteningly complex. The answer is the perfect solution though paradoxically it leaves the question altered yet still unanswered. So let me ask it for you in another way that settles it as far as I am concerned...

“Jesus, how am I supposed to be me?” ✍

