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Who am I? Who are you?

By Otto Engelberth

When I'm asked who I am, I usually tell the person my name. What usually follows is a discussion of what I do for work, what was the focus of my education, where did I go to school, where did I grow up, do I have a family, and so on. Perhaps your experience with this type of conversation is similar to mine.

Maybe it even includes revealing things that you identify with, such as your favorite baseball team. For me this is always a light hearted diversion because I've been a Cleveland Indian fan since 1948. Living in Vermont, Indian fans are rare, and given their record, I usually get a reaction that is sympathetic to my plight.

On a more somber note, the IRS wants to know my social security number, my address, date of birth, and my citizenship. They even want to know my race and, in the future, they may want to know my ethnicity and religious affiliation.

Do these descriptions that other people use to categorize me describe who I am, or is there more to my identity? I have heard people say, "If I did such and such, I couldn't live with myself." Does this mean that they have more than one self?

When we use the words, I, me, my, myself, what do they really mean? It's not as simple as it looks. If you are like me, you may not have given much thought to how we arrive at our personal identity.

As we move on in this discussion, we will discover that we have many potential identities. Some are legitimate and some are not. Some have the potential to destroy us and some can be very positive for us.

Most of these identities are related to our past. However, when trying to examine these identities, the challenge we face is that they are stored in our subconscious mind. So, many times, we only become aware of them when they are spontaneously brought to our consciousness in the form of a conscious thought.

It's as if our mind is like a computer, we can't observe our subconscious thinking process, only its output. Another way to think about those identities is to imagine that they are in prison and occasionally they send an email or text in the form of a thought. And finally, we can think of some of these identities as being imposters that are pretending to be us.

Before we talk about the potential identities related to our past, it will be helpful to recognize that we only can live in the present. So it follows that we also need to consider how these identities impact our present. And finally, we need to think about ways that we can neutralize their impact.

Are you still with me? Yes, I know that we can dwell on our past or think about our future. However, would you agree that we can only do this in real time, in the present? Later we will discuss more about the characteristics associated with living in the present. However, before we do that, let's look at some of the identities that many of us have.

Identity connected to the things we have

It has been said that this is the "I have therefore I am" identity. Examples of the things that people identify with are almost infinite. They range from boats, cars, homes, jewelry, clothing, money and paintings to cork screws. Yes, cork screws. I knew someone who collected cork screws. They even speculated about how much their collection was worth.

Another category of things that we identify with are those things that are in our trophy case. These include our trophies, diplomas, plaques and certificates of achievements.

The challenge we face when identifying with things is that we tend to become dissatisfied with what we have and need to have more of them to sustain our identity. This need to have more stems from the thought that our identity is enhanced when we have more than other people have and we get an extra buzz when we are complemented by others on the things we are identifying with.

The real bummer that comes with having our identity based on things we have is that all ownership is temporary. It may be that we have to sell them in order to pay the bills. In any case, we can't take them with us when we die. Then they are either sold, given away, or hauled to the dump.

Identity based on our role in life

Rather than "Who am I?", these identities fall into the category of "What am I?". These identities are related to our roles in our family, workforce, and our community.

Along the way, we may even take on roles that have their own burdens. This happens when we get sucked into being responsible for other people's happiness, or being the peace maker in other people's disagreements. I thought I would mention that just to make your day.

Identity based on our associations.

Identity based on our association with groups of people is natural for us. After all, three thousand years ago our ancestors identified with their family, clan, and tribe. It's as if there was safety in being identified with a larger group of like-minded people.

In today's world it is common for people to be identified with their race or ethnic group. As we will see later, these identities are often made stronger with a grievance that these groups have because of being mistreated in the past.

There are a lot of other opportunities for associations with groups of people. Those associated with our community, state, and nation include political parties and branches of the military. We even have names like Vermonter and American that define those associations.

Those in the broad category of career are educational institutions, employers, and trade unions. And finally, those associations that are more social in nature would be social clubs, sports teams, entertainment groups, and religious organizations.

For me, this is where the Cleveland Indians Baseball team fits in.

Identity based on a video game character

We are now in an era where it is possible to get totally engrossed in interacting with life like video games. In these video games, the player assumes the identity of a character in the game and the game reacts to the actions of the player.

Most of these games are violent and action-packed. In some cases the player gets addicted to playing the game and their mind assumes the identity of the character.

Identity based on an association with perceived truth

So far we've discussed identities related to things, roles we play, and groups of people. In this section we'll discuss how our identities can be associated with our commitment to a concept that we believe to be true. The thing to notice is that, in most cases, the concept which we are committed to usually has a flip-side. That flip-side is a competing concept that we believe not to be true.

Examples of concepts that we can become identified with are:

- Man-made global warming. Some people believe there is such a thing and others don't.
- Some believe that our world came into existence by chance and others believe that it was created by a supreme being.

- Capitalists believe that theirs is the most efficient and productive economic system and Socialists do not.

Identity based on the appearance of our body.

About now you may notice our discussion is moving from identities which are optional to those that few of us can avoid. Each of us are forced to play the physical “hand that we were dealt.” We did not get to choose our biological parents, our genetic makeup, our time in history and location on the earth to be born into.

Our identity associated with our body comes about when we compare ours with other people. Unfortunately, we have the advertisers of physical and beauty products that give us an additional measuring stick against which we measure our looks. Offsetting these influences is our mind’s capability to see what it wants to see when looking in the mirror.

Fortunately, as the old saying goes, “beauty is only skin deep.” There is more to who we are than our looks. This is especially true as we grow older. Take it from me from a guy who is going through the aging process (I’m 77 years old).

Identity based on other people’s opinion of us

Very few of us have gone through life without having someone call us a descriptive name. Sometimes the name accurately describes us and other times the person calling us the name just wants to control us by calling us a name that is a false description of us.

Our challenge comes when the person, calling us a name like “bad’ or “stupid”, is someone that we respect, such as parent or school teacher. Then we may decide to believe them and adapt their opinion of us as our identity. These identities can be destructive for us in our teenage years when we are trying to figure out who we are.

Identity based on our addictions

I know this subject can make us uncomfortable but needs to be included in identities that some of us adopt. Common addictions that can become identities are destructive addictions to drugs, alcohol, food, gambling, pornography, and sex.

Identity based on our personal character scoreboard

Most of the games we play have rules and some sort of scoreboard. The game of life also has rules and a scoreboard. However, the game of life's rules are not fixed. They vary from society to society and individual to individual.

Society's rules (laws) are established primarily to maintain public order. Examples that come to mind are those that highway drivers need to abide by, like speed limits and stop signs. Others might be those that relate to property rights, taxation, public safety and the conduct of war.

In addition to society's rules, there are religious rules that are said to have been established by God. These are sometimes referred to as moral law. Religious rules are primarily rules against attitudes and actions that are destructive for us individually, destructive for our relationships with others, destructive for society as a whole, and ultimately destructive for our relationship with the creator and sustainer of the universe.

In our society, the most well-known religious rules are the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai.

Four of these commands are about our relationship with the creator:

- Have no other gods, only me.
- Do not make and worship any idols.
- Respect God's name and what it stands for.
- Set aside one day of the week to rest and reflect on who God is.

And six cover our relationship with people:

- Honor your father and mother.

- Don't commit murder.
- Don't commit adultery.
- Don't steal.
- Don't tell lies about your neighbor.
- Don't covet what other people have.

Over time, various religious groups have added rules and developed scoreboards to measure people's compliance to their rules. The idea being that in order to go to heaven you have to have enough points on their scoreboard.

Later on we will discuss a different perspective. However, in the meantime, let's get back to discussing our personal character scoreboard.

As I said at the beginning of this section, games have rules and scoreboards. The challenge we face when trying to figure out our personal rules is that they reside in our subconscious mind. Many times we only become aware of them when we act on them.

Have you ever thought about your internal rules that drive your character? While you are at it, what does your scoreboard look like?

The guilt identity

For a lot of us the saying, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," is the basis of the rules that we try to live by and our scoreboard for those rules is the level of guilt that we carry around from having fallen short of living up to that ideal.

What makes this tricky is that our rules tend to be situational. I'm reminded of the internal conflict that I experienced in the U. S. Army's hand to hand bayonet combat training. As we were practicing these moves the drill sergeant would yell, "What is the motto of the bayonet fighter?" We would respond by yelling, "To kill,

to kill!” Fortunately, I never had to put this training into practice. I often wondered what feelings I would have experienced if I had killed someone.

Another time as a teenager, a group of us decided to tip over the outhouse toilets at night in our farm community. (To accomplish this, five guys would drive to a point near the target, then two would run across the field to the outhouse and push it over.) One time a funny thing happened. One of the farmers had had his outhouse tipped over in the past so he moved it off its poop storage hole so that one of our guys fell in the hole before he got to the outhouse. Needless to say, we made him take off his pants and shoes before letting him back in the car.

The point that I want to make is that our rules often change to those of the group when we are with other people.

Identities based on our grievances

The flip side of, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” is, “Do unto others as they have done unto you!” The farmer’s actions, in my earlier story of the farmer and his outhouse, is an example of this. The farmer definitely had a grievance. Especially if the story was true that he was in the outhouse when it was tipped over previously.

The thing that makes a grievance powerful as an identity is that it is implanted into our subconscious mind with an emotional event. And as such, it becomes a permanent condition of hurt and anger that festers in our subconscious.

Experiences that can lead to long standing grievances for us would be experiences like being bullied, physically beaten, sexually molested, or betrayal by a friend or family member.

And sometimes, the pain that is associated with our grievance is so great that our mind blocks the thought out of our awareness. Often this blocked out grievance

impacts our self-image and behavior in less obvious ways like anger towards other people and depression.

Before we move on from this discussion of how our grievances impact our identities, we need to be aware of how our identities can be impacted when we adopt other people's grievances. This phenomenon is often on display when groups of people participate in demonstrations against wrongs that they personally have not experienced.

Is having an identity optional?

No. Having an identity is a characteristic of being human. And being human, we are born with the perspective that we are significant and a characteristic of being significant is to have a unique identity. From childhood on, our significance is reinforced when we are given a unique name and the feedback we are given by the adults and peers with whom we come in contact.

Time out for a personal identity inventory

Phew! We've covered a lot of ground. Do you now have a better idea of who you are referring to when you say I, me, my, and myself? Have you recognized any of your identities as being impostors and not really you? And finally, have you determined that any of your identities are destructive for you?

Did you notice that two of the identities yield the destructive emotions of guilt and grievance? Two emotions that act like sand in our mind's gears and are something we deal with continually because they don't go away by themselves. It's at this point that many of us would like to get rid of and do away with some of the identities that we are saddled with.

How can we do that? Well, we could go to a counselor or psychologist. Their role is to help you gain awareness of the factors that caused you to adopt the identity that you struggle with and help you come to grips with its not being relevant to the present that you are living in, or -----.

Our Creator has provided a cure for our problem identities that result in guilt and grievances

I know I know, you may not believe that there is such an entity as a Creator and Sustainer of all that is in our universe. But, stick with me. At the very least, you will learn concepts that will make you an interesting conversationalist when talking about identities with your friends.

Did you know that polls show that more than 85% of Americans believe that there is a creator? Have you wondered why they believe the Creator exists? Many people think that it's because our logical minds seek answers to questions like:

- What caused the universe to come into existence?
- What caused life to come into existence?
- What is the context of my existence?
- What happens when I die?
- Am I answerable to someone other than myself?
- Where did I get my conscience?
- Are there spiritual beings that I can't see? Am I impacted by them?
- What caused the order and complexity of what I observe?

Speaking of order and complexity, you are probably aware of the trillions of stars and associated planets in our universe. Have you thought about how amazing it is that our planet earth rotates on its axis every 24 hours, orbits around the sun every 365 rotations (days), and has had a very uniform average temperature for thousands of years?

Did you know that recent research has shown that each of our 15 trillion cells in our body contain an instruction code called DNA, that is made up of 3.1 billion different letter combinations? What I find fascinating is that our thoughts and decisions actually modify that code. In addition, those modifications actually impact our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren's DNA code when they are conceived.

Describing the Creator and Sustainer

So, if you were the Creator and sustainer of everything, how would you describe yourself? Would you have any knowledge limitations and power limitations? Would you be a physical being or a spiritual being? How about your concept of time? Would you be like an author of a book who is not personally constrained by time passing in the storyline of the book they have written?

Would you have a reason or purpose for creating what we observe? This would include the material universe as well as life.

Would you create spiritual beings that humans could not see? Also, would you be visible to humans? And finally, what about your character? Would you give your created beings free will or would they be robots that you control? Would you care about what happens to the humans that you created? What kind of relationship would you want to have with them, if any?

Now that you have thought about being the creator and sustainer of the universe, let's look at what the Bible tells us. About now you're probably asking why I'm referring to the Christian Bible for this information rather than going to Islam's book the Koran, or the book of Mormon, or the writings of Confucius, or Hindu or Google?

The answer is that I go to the Bible because it is a collection of books and letters about man's relationship with the Creator written by 38 authors over a 2000-year period of time. Its accuracy is confirmed by archeologists and historians.

However, for me, the Bible's credibility as the source of information about the Creator and Sustainer of all that is in the universe is confirmed by the incredible number of supernatural events that only the Creator could have brought about.

Around 1500 B.C., the Creator revealed to the Israelites that He was the real deal by doing supernatural things in their presence. Events like the plagues that God brought on the Egyptians: The Nile river turned to blood, the plague of frogs, lice, flies, animals dying, boils, extreme hail, locusts, three days of darkness, and the death of the Egyptians' first born males.

After the Israelites exited from Egypt with the Egyptian army in hot pursuit, The Creator parted the Red Sea so the more than one million Israelites could walk across it on dry ground. After they crossed the sea, they looked back and saw the Egyptian army drown as the water closed in on them.

In the wilderness they ate the manna and quail, and drank the water that the Creator provided them. They saw the cloud by day and the nightly pillar of fire that The Creator used to guide them. They felt the earth shake and heard the Creator speak to Moses at Mount Sinai.

Over the next 1,000 years, the prophets foretold about the coming of the Messiah – Jesus - the Son of God. They predicted where He would be born, what He would be called, where He would grow up, where He would die, how He would die, where He would be buried, and that He would come back to life on the third day after His death. They even predicted, to the exact day, some 500 years later, when He would be hailed king by the crowds on Palm Sunday.

About 2,000 years ago, the Creator accomplished this by becoming the biological and spiritual father of a child conceived by a young Israelite virgin named Mary. She gave birth to a baby boy whom she named Jesus.

Jesus would prove to mankind that He was God's Son by performing many supernatural miracles observed by thousands of people. Included in Jesus' miracles were the healing of hundreds of people's sicknesses and mental illnesses, restoration of their limbs, eyesight, hearing, and ability to talk.

On two occasions Jesus fed thousands of people by expanding one person's meal in such a way that they were all fed with several meals left over. On another occasion He walked on water, on another He turned water into wine, and on another He calmed a violent storm by His verbal command.

Jesus even brought dead people back to life. His most dramatic raising of a dead person occurred just a few weeks before His own death and His resurrection three days later. This occurred when Jesus brought back to life His good friend Lazarus even though he had died and his body was decomposing because it had been in a tomb for four days.

All of these supernatural events were witnessed by anywhere from a minimum of ten to as many as thousands of people. That's why I use the Christian Bible as a credible source for information about the Creator and Sustainer of everything that exists.

The Bible's description of the Creator

About now you are thinking, "Ok, ok! Otto, get on with it. How does the Bible describe the Creator and Sustainer of everything and what's in it for me?" Before we talk about "what's in it for you", I think it would be helpful to know what the Bible says about the environment that we are living in.

The Bible has many comments about who The Creator is, His capabilities, His character, and His purpose for creation. First of all, the Creator is a Spirit. This means that He does not have a physical body like you and I, and is not visible and measurable. Also, He always existed in the past and always will exist in the future.

The Creator knows everything that has happened in the past, everything that is happening in the present, and everything that will happen in the future. His knowledge includes the minutest detail about each of us whether we lived in the distant past, are living in the present, or will live sometime in the future.

The Creator has character. He is honest. He is good. He is just. He is loving. Being the Creator, He expects to be respected.

The Creator operates outside of time as we know it. A thousand of our years is like one day to Him. It's as if He has already "seen the movie" of everything that will happen, but still, He operates in the present moment.

The Creator has unlimited capabilities. He created all that we are aware of and probably much more. We are continually making new discoveries of things that have been in existence for a very long time. Things like DNA and magnetic waves.

The Creator creates life

The Creator also created all forms of life. These on earth range from virus, bacteria, fungus, bugs, plants, fish, animals, to human beings. As an aside, all created life have some of the same DNA.

Additionally, the Creator created spiritual beings called angels. You may find it interesting that there are a lot of angels. They don't reproduce and they don't die. They are each unique. Originally they all had fellowship with and also serve the Creator. They have a lot of knowledge because they have been around a long time and they know the Creator well. Being spirits, they are not limited to one location but can move in space.

When the Creator created angels and humans, He gave them "free will" because He cares about them and wants a relationship with them. In other words they are not robots, they can like and respect the creator or they can reject Him if they want.

The angels were created before humans were. They communed with the Creator and served him. However, one of the Angels named Lucifer was very capable. In fact he decided that he wanted to take over the Creator's role, so he led one third

of the angels in an unsuccessful rebellion against the Creator. Then Lucifer and his rebellious angels were cast out of the Creator's presence and ended up on planet earth.

Humans are physical and spirit beings

The Bible states that mankind is different from all other physical beings that the Creator made. It states that we are made in the image of the Creator. So what is the significance of that? It means that we are both a physical as well as a spiritual being because the Creator is a spirit. And further, like the angels, our spirit never dies.

Do we have any evidence to support that? For me, the strongest evidence of human's spiritual nature is the fact that our knowledge and capabilities are far greater than those of any other physical beings. To me it makes sense that this has happened because the creator and sustainer of everything has shared some of His knowledge with humans.

Additional evidence that humans are spiritual beings is that they are the only physical beings that believe that there is a creator and desire to know Him and know about Him. They are the only beings that want to worship an idol or some other higher power.

Spiritual communication

About now, you are wondering how our spirit communicates with the Creator and other spirit beings. The key here is understanding how your mind works. I assume that you are aware of your subconscious mind works on automatic pilot beyond our ability to monitor its processes. It monitors and operates all of your body's functions. It interprets and files the inputs from our five senses: sight, hearing, touch, taste, and smell, and along the way it formulates most of the words you say.

We also have a conscious thinking process. Our conscious mind vets out the output of our subconscious mind and works on projects that require outside information. However, it is inefficient because it is not good at multitasking so it does only a small part of our thinking.

While we are on the subject of our mind's functions, how does our mind arrive at a belief? After all, this is an important function because we need to have a belief before we have a thought or take an action. The reason we are not aware of our forming a belief is because most of the time the belief forming process also occurs in our subconscious mind where we can't monitor the belief formulation process.

This even comes into play when you form a belief that is based on something that you can't prove. When you act on this type of belief, it's called faith. For example, if you operating under the premise that everything in the universe came into being without a Creator, you are acting by faith because you can't prove that that is true. Later we'll see how faith is a key part of the Creator's guilt and grievance healing process.

Getting back to the subject of how our spirit communicates with other spirits. Most of the time this spiritual communication occurs in our subconscious mind beyond our awareness. We only become aware that the spiritual communication has happened when we have thoughts that originate outside our mind.

About now you may be trying to visualize what the spiritual world is like. Fortunately, our generation has an easier time visualizing unseen communication because we are using it every time we use our cell phone to access a WIFI or cellular provider's unseen signal.

However, spiritual communication is different from this man-made example designed for human communication. It is different because the Creator has made us with our spirit and our own built in spiritual receiver designed so that we are able to communicate with spiritual beings.

The Bible's description of the spirit world that exists on our earth

As I mentioned earlier, the Bible says that Lucifer, also called Satan, led one third of the created angels in an unsuccessful rebellion against the Creator. Their defeat resulted in their being thrown out of the Creator's domain. The rebellious angels then took up residence on planet earth.

Sometime later, the Creator made our ancestors, Adam and Eve, and placed them on earth in the Garden of Eden where His loving presence was continuously with them. His purpose in creating mankind was for them to be his personal representative and to have dominion over the earth.

In a way, the Creator gave Adam and Eve a heads-up concerning Satan's presence on earth by placing a tree called "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" in the middle of the Garden of Eden and instructing them not to eat its fruit because if they did they would die.

However, Satan was able to convince Eve of the lie that it would be a good thing to know good and evil because if they did they would be like the Creator. So they disobeyed the Creator by eating of the tree's fruit. In doing so, they not only knew the good that the Creator taught them but were introduced to evil that Satan wanted them to know.

Adam and Eve's disobedience introduced mankind to two conditions that plague us today. They experienced guilt and they fell under the influence of Satan. Why is Satan's influence bad for mankind? It's bad because Satan is still in conflict with the Creator and ultimately wants to destroy mankind because they are the Creator's creation and their purpose is to have dominion over the earth which Satan considers to be his domain.

So how does Satan go about destroying mankind? The answer is that he spiritually influences mankind to think thoughts, say words, and take actions that are destructive to them personally, destructive for their relationships, and destructive for society as a whole. Ultimately, Satan's goal is to have us believe that we are self-sufficient under his influence and that we come to the conclusion that there is no Creator.

Actually, Satan doesn't want us to know about the other very serious problem we have because we are under his influence. This problem stems from the Creator's ultimate plan for Satan and his angel followers. That plan is to have them spend eternity in a very unpleasant place called Hell. Unfortunately, those of us who choose to live our lives under Satan's influence also have Hell as our ultimate destination as well.

The Creator provides us with a way out of this mess

You may recall that earlier I referred to a person named Jesus who lived some 2,000 years ago. Actually it was 2016 years ago that he was born. He was so highly regarded that our calendar year dates from his birth year. You've also probably heard people say "Jesus Christ" when they want emphasize a point. So about now you may be wondering how Jesus fits in to the Creator's plan for getting us out of the mess that we are in.

Earlier, I mentioned that the Creator's purpose in creating Adam and Eve was so that they would be His earthly representatives and they would have dominion over the earth. In that role, they had an intimate spiritual relationship with the Creator. That relationship and role for mankind changed when they chose to also have a spiritual relationship with Satan.

However, the Creator's plan for mankind didn't change. He still wants to have an intimate spiritual relationship with us, as well as for us to represent Him by ultimately having dominion over the earth.

The Creator accomplished his plan by sending a part of himself to become a man. The Creator referred to this man as His Son because the Creator was the spiritual and biological father of a baby boy born of a virgin woman named Mary. The Creator's son is the man that we know as the Jesus whom I discussed earlier.

Not only was Jesus able to do all the supernatural things that I mentioned earlier, he was also able to resist falling under Satan's spiritual influence because of his intimate spiritual relationship with the Creator.

Since Satan couldn't kill Jesus by bringing him under his spiritual influence, he had the people that he had influence over put him to death by driving nails through his hands and feet into a wooden cross. Then letting him hang there until he died. By killing Jesus, Satan thought he had again foiled the Creator's plan to have dominion over the earth through mankind.

What Satan hadn't planned on happened after Jesus' dead body laid in a guarded tomb for three days, He came back to life! By coming back to life, Jesus not only conquered Satan, he also removed the major barrier that prevents us from having an intimate spiritual relationship with the Creator.

As a side note, after he came back to life Jesus' body was different from the one he had before he died. His new body was dominated by his spirit. In the forty days that he stayed on earth he appeared to over 500 people. He ate food. People touched him. He had conversations with people. He had the scars from the nails that were driven through his hands and feet, as well as the spear that pierced his side.

Jesus was able to make himself visible when spending time with people and then become invisible when he left them. The last time he was seen was when he ascended into heaven to take his place next to his father, the Creator and sustainer of all that exists. More on this later.

The answer to your “What’s in it for me?” question

The answer to your question depends on your answer to the “Who are You” question. I’m assuming that you are more aware of who you are, now that you’ve read this far. However, the part about the Creator and Sustainer of all that is the universe may have made you aware of another identity possibility. It has to do with citizenship in either Satan’s Kingdom or the Creator’s Kingdom.

The Bible says that we are born with citizenship in Satan’s Kingdom by default. Proof of that citizenship is that we respond to Satan’s spiritual influence to think thoughts, say things, and take actions that are destructive for us personally, for our relationships, and for society as a whole. The best that we can do with this citizenship is measure our status based on the “Scoreboard of Life”, thinking that if we get enough points on our scoreboard, we may be ok if there is such a thing as life for us after we die physically.

The alternative is to give up our citizenship in Satan’s Kingdom and accept citizenship in the Creator’s Kingdom. In my case, I became a citizen of the Creator’s Kingdom 69 years ago. While I didn’t fully understand it then, like citizenship in the U.S.A., citizenship in the Creator’s Kingdom also has guaranteed rights, benefits, and responsibilities. The Creator gave these because He wanted me to know that He loves me and wants me to experience the joy and peace that the angels told the shepherds about at the time of Jesus’ birth in a stable in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago.

The first benefit that I have is a continuous relationship with the Creator. This relationship started when I invited the Creator’s Holy Spirit to dwell in my Heart and that relationship continues unbroken for the rest of my eternal existence. The benefits that are mine from this relationship are awesome:

- I have friendship with the Creator in His three persons; His Son Jesus, His Holy Spirit, and the Creator Himself. I am never alone.

- I have the love and support of all of the other people who have chosen citizenship in the Creator's Kingdom. They are my brothers and sisters in Jesus' family. We are all joint heirs, with Jesus, of all that is the Creator's.
- I have access to the Creator's power, wisdom, love, and ability.
- The Holy Spirit is my teacher, explaining to me the meaning of the Creator's revelation to the writers of the books of the Bible.
- I have ongoing Heart level conversations with the Creator's Holy Spirit as well as conscious dialogue called prayer. If I want the Creator to do something that would bring glory to Him, all I have to do is ask Him using Jesus' name to validate my request.

Secondly, I am a new creature, in that, the Creator has changed me. He has forgiven me of all of the wrong that I have and ever will commit. This means that God views me as being a perfect person because He sees Jesus' perfection instead of my imperfection. His Spirit, living in me, guides me in the renewal of my mind. This includes taking away all my accumulated guilt and anger. He helps me resist Satan's temptations to do wrong. And finally, after I die, I will eventually get a new body like the one that Jesus got after He arose from the grave.

Thirdly, I have responsibilities that come with being a citizen of the Creator's Kingdom. How I live my life needs to reflect the Creator's presence in my life. My mind-set is that I am a steward of all that He gives me. This includes my time, resources, and relationships.

Not only am I to love the Creator, but also to love other people as much as I love myself. One expression of my love for others is to share the good news about citizenship in God's Kingdom.

And finally, my journey will not end. It is eternal. My life on earth in this body is just a blip on the screen of my existence. Included in my Kingdom journey is the use of a heavenly mansion that is located on a street that has gold paving, and being able to sing in the heavenly choir that assembles to sing praises to the

Creator and his Son Jesus. I also get to go on special assignments such as coming back to earth with Jesus when He returns to set up the Creator's Kingdom on earth.

I look forward to meeting and getting a big hug from Jesus as well as getting to be with all of my fellow kingdom citizens who have gone ahead of me. Including people like Martin Luther King, Isaac Newton, Jesus' disciple John, the prophets Daniel and Isaiah, King David, Moses, and Abraham.

How to get the "What's in it for me?" Benefits

Now that you know the benefits that I have and will receive as a result of my relationship with the Creator, you may want to have that kind of relationship with the Creator as well. Your question probably is, "What do I need to do to get those benefits?"

First of all, you need to understand that there is nothing that you can do to *earn* citizenship in the Creator's Kingdom because it is a free gift. It's free because Jesus' death on the Cross and resurrection from the dead paid full price for all the baggage we will be leaving behind when we renounce our citizenship in Satan's Kingdom. And finally, like all free gifts, all we need to do to get it is to accept it.

After accepting your free gift, there are some things you'll want to do in order to enjoy the full benefits of citizenship in the Creator's Kingdom. First of all, you'll want to invite the Creator's Holy Spirit to dwell in you. There are several reasons you'll want to do that:

- He will cause you to know that you have your new citizenship.
- He will give you the strength to resist Satan's attempts to influence you.
- He will assist you in the process of renewing your mind.
- He will lead you in your living a life of eternal significance.
- He will empower you to live a life that exhibits the characteristics of love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Secondly, in your conversation with the Creator, you will want to thank Jesus for paying the penalty for all of the things that you have thought, said, and done which were destructive for you, your relationships, and for society as a whole. Tell Him that you take ownership of these destructive things and, in hindsight, you are sorry about them.

After you do this you can take comfort in the fact that the Creator now views you as a perfect person because He has chosen not to ever remember the things we have confessed.

Thirdly, tell others that you have taken this step. Find a group of fellow Kingdom citizens that you can share your experience with. Eventually you will want to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as a public recognition of your decision.

And finally, get a modern translation of the Bible to read and study. Why is this important? Think of the Bible as the Creator's instruction book for effective living for citizens of His Kingdom. I have the Olive Tree Store's NIV Bible down loaded on my iPhone and iPad.

Oh, and one more thing, email me at Otto.Engelberth@gmail.com , so I can congratulate you for becoming a fellow member of Jesus' family.

