The Truest Thing About You: Identity, Desire, and Why it All Matters

Your identity is the launching pad of life. Get your identity right and you get life right—because if you don't, you won't.

Nothing could be more fundamental to your life as a leader than unflinching clarity to the question: Who am I?

To that end, allow me to introduce David Lomas' book **The Truest Thing About You: Identity, Desire, and Why It All Matters**. This book is at once well-argued and well-written.

Title: **The Truest Thing About You: Identity, Desire and Why It All Matters**

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Copyright Date: **2014**

Book Description:

There are many true things about you—true things you use to build an identity. Parent. Introvert. Victim. Student. Extrovert. Entrepreneur. Single.

These truths can identify you, your successes and failures, your expectations and disappointments, your secret dreams and hidden shames. But what if your true identity isn't found in any of these smaller truths, but in the grand truth of who God says you are? In other words, lots of things are true about you—but are they the truest?

David Lomas invites you to discover and live out the truth of who God created you to be: you are loved, you are accepted, and you are made in God's image. It's time to move beyond the lesser voices and discover why everything changes when you become who you really are.

Book Quotes:

This book is about the truer things, the things so deeply true about you that they have the power to change everything else, including the merely true things. LOCATION: 85

What we are going to attempt to discover is this: what does God say is the truest thing about us? LOCATION: 89

Here's the problem: you're clinging to true things about yourself that simply aren't that true. You're elevating things that are merely true—or half-true, or true some days but not others—to the level of "truest." I know you're doing this because I do it too. We all do. It's the human condition. LOCATION: 99

Well-intentioned people sometimes tell us not to believe lies about ourselves. They tell us that we can put

negative thoughts behind us and begin to live positive lives. That's missing the point though. There are many destructive things about us that aren't lies we need to reject. In fact, many destructive things we believe are very much true! We do fail, we did lose the money, we aren't as beautiful, we were abused. The problem is that we have pushed many of these merely true things down to the most fundamental layer of who we are and in so doing have built our whole lives and identities on them.
LOCATION: 103

It's been said that our identity is that which is identical about us in every situation. Identity. Identical.
LOCATION: 127

That's why we are so conflicted, because so many competing and complementary things about us are true at the same time. We can hate that which is permanent about ourselves, like the way we were raised, just as we can hate that which is temporary, like a bad haircut. We're after something deeper, some truer identity that makes sense of our myriad parts. LOCATION: 139

These questions matter—a lot—because our identity is the lens through which we see the world. We cannot not see our lives—lives sometimes magnificent in detail and beauty, other times crushing in blurriness and drab normality—from the perspective of who we believe we are. Our identity shapes the way we live.
LOCATION: 156

Identity drives motivation, motivation drives action, and action drives results. For example, if someone speeds past me at ninety miles per hour on the highway, odds are I won't chase them down and issue a ticket. I don't have an identity that says, "I am a police officer," so I have no motivation to act. A police officer, on the other hand, does have that identity and therefore has the motivation to take action (chasing down the speeder) and get results (issuing a ticket). LOCATION: 159

Every action we take in life has a sense of identity behind it. How we see ourselves matters. LOCATION: 163

No—who we believe we are determines how we live our lives each day. That is why all this matters.
LOCATION: 172

If you don't know the truest thing about yourself, you don't know yourself. And that matters. What you believe about yourself determines how you live. We were made for something. Something bigger than the little things we seem fated to surround ourselves with.
LOCATION: 220

That's what we are today. A collection of contradictory someones, defined by what we do, the things we have, and what we desire. Do, have, desire—they can all be true, but none is the truest. LOCATION: 239

When you find your identity in what you do, your identity will be shaken the moment you change what you do.
LOCATION: 275

But here's the truth: what we do is not the truest thing about us. Building our identity on the foundation of what we do creates an identity that can crack or break or tumble down at any moment. LOCATION: 285

We think that the things we have define us. We over identify with what we have by making what we have the truest thing about us. LOCATION: 292

What are the effects of this identity structure? As we saw in chapter 1, if we have looks, we need to keep our looks. If we have money, we need to have more money. And so life becomes about consumption—about never having enough and always trying to have more. LOCATION: 299

There's a third way we identify ourselves though. Desire. LOCATION: 316

That desire can take us only so far. Desiring good is certainly better than desiring evil. But neither the desire for evil nor the desire for good can provide us with our true identity. LOCATION: 340

When we take any one of our strongly felt desires and construct our entire identity around it, we discover that we are making a part of who we are into the whole of who we are. LOCATION: 352

Desiring isn't inherently wrong, and in fact it can be great—until our desires conflict or are unfulfilled or are directed toward the wrong objects or become addictions. LOCATION: 364

What we desire, whether noble or corrupted, is not the truest thing about us. Building our identity on the foundation of what we desire guarantees that our identity will change every time our desires change. LOCATION: 365

Identity in Christ is truer than every other voice we hear. Gay, straight, divorced, lesbian, single, bi, celibate—identity in Christ is true regardless of our attractions. It's truer than our sexual identity labels. LOCATION: 403

As I've pastored people in my church, my sole purpose and goal has been the same with every single one: to help them understand that their fundamental and truest identity is found in Jesus. LOCATION: 410

When you come to Christ, no matter the shape of your desires, you are given a new identity. You are hidden with Christ, and you are the beloved of God. Period. That's the label that supersedes all others. LOCATION: 418

Before we get any further, it will be useful to step back from any specific definitions and make a broader point: whatever imago Dei means, it must certainly mean it for all people at all times. And whatever it means, it has everything to do with our identity because it is how we were created. LOCATION: 483

Imago Dei is for all people at all times. It's who we are. LOCATION: 494

So whatever the imago Dei is, we can be sure of a few things: it's present in all people at all times, it's critical, God placed it only in humans—both male and female—and God wanted us to know about it. LOCATION: 572

What does this all mean? It means you have worth because you are made in the image of God. You matter to God. No matter your past, no matter your proclivities, your habits, your flaws, your temptations, your orientation. You have worth! You are not what you do. Your self-worth does not depend on what you have. You are not a prisoner of what you desire. No—what the Scriptures make clear is this: humans, created by God, are a finite, visible picture of the infinite, invisible God. LOCATION: 624

So this is the Genesis key: we don't find our identity. That runs counter to the stream of our culture, but it is an undeniable biblical truth. We don't find our identity. Rather, we receive our identity. We are given it by God. Everything true about our identity is true because it was created and gifted to us by God. LOCATION: 628

So we were created in, and created for, community. You need other people. If you don't think so, you're denying something so fundamental to your humanity that I would say you've lost your grip on reality. LOCATION: 680

Adam couldn't fulfill his function as an image bearer without Eve. We are all created for community with God and with our fellow creatures, and that hardwiring for companionship is part of what it means to be image

bearers of God. LOCATION: 694

No matter how loved or satisfied we feel in this life, it is not satisfaction or love that can last forever. It cannot become our all. It will disappoint us … because it was designed to disappoint us. Or rather, designed to point us to something beyond this world. LOCATION: 744

No, Jesus' baptism was planned for a specific reason, and it took place in a specific way. I believe one reason is this: Jesus was baptized so that He could identify with you. LOCATION: 901

And now, when we choose to be baptized, we are saying to Jesus, "You chose to identify with us, so we choose to identify ourselves with You." LOCATION: 919

Before He completed the work He was given to do, Jesus heard what was truest about Him…And what telling words they were—words that echo back in time before the world was created and into the perfect joy of God's eternity: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." LOCATION: 934

Henri Nouwen pointed out that we find an identity in part through what others say about us. What others say about us can shape our self-identity in profound ways. Identities are not found; they are given. For many of us, identities are given by people who don't have the right to identify us. LOCATION: 938

True identities can be given only by God. LOCATION: 941

Instead, Jesus was given an identity by His Father, and the identity was one of love. The beloved. Jesus received that identity and then lived in it, as if it was the truest thing about Him. Because it was. LOCATION: 950

Jesus was able to own His identity in trust and confidence and live out of the fact that He was beloved by God. Jesus' hair was still wet with His baptism identity, and in every temptation, He chose to live out of the truest thing about Himself. LOCATION: 1008

Discovering our true identity, then, makes us capable of things that would otherwise destroy us. LOCATION: 1019

Slowly, achingly slowly, I was learning to understand that I am deeply loved by God, and because of Jesus, God is well pleased with me. Every other identity I create for myself is an illusion. LOCATION: 1051

But that isn't what happened. Jesus was baptized because He wanted to step into our mess. He wanted to. Jesus didn't become human because He got stuck with it, as if Plans A, B, and C didn't work out and He ran out of options. No—Jesus wanted to become human, to enter our world, for a simple reason. He wanted to because He wanted us. LOCATION: 1064

Here's the good news of all good news: our identity is the same as Jesus'! Beloved. Child of God. In whom God is well pleased. LOCATION: 1073

Uncovering the truest thing about you isn't a project. It isn't self-help. It isn't something to journal about on your day off or discuss with your friends. The truest thing about you isn't how you act or how you want to start acting. It isn't the ways you've acted in the past or the pain that has been acted upon you. It isn't how you feel or how you wish you felt. The truest thing about you isn't the names you've given yourself or the names that have been given to you. LOCATION: 1240

To receive our true identity from Jesus, we must first let go of the false identities we hold. LOCATION: 1334

Jesus provides us with the conditions for finding our true selves. To save our lives we have to stop trying to save our own lives. We have to die to that idea. To that pursuit. And when we do, we discover that Jesus saves our lives and in the process gives us clear vision. We see who we really are for the first time. LOCATION: 1342

New life is not about earning God's love before we return, but rather looking up to find Him already declaring our new identity and waiting with open arms. LOCATION: 1368

God absolutely desires that we be holy. We're given new identities for a reason. But there has to be a better way than trying to use our willpower to submit to external rules. LOCATION: 1415

If you have placed your trust in Christ, that's who you are. And our call, then, is to become who we are—to live out the truth of this truest thing about us. LOCATION: 1470

Henri Nouwen has never changed my life more profoundly than when he wrote this sentence: "From the moment we claim the truth of being the Beloved, we are faced with the call to become who we are." LOCATION: 1481

Become who you are. That transformed my whole conception of identity and belonging. LOCATION: 1483

It might sound dry to talk about types of speech, but it is hugely important for this reason: when we confuse indicatives with imperatives, we sabotage our ability to live in our new identities…Colossians 3 is full of indicatives. You have been raised with Christ. You died, and your life is now hidden with Christ. Christ is your life. All of these things are declared about you as facts that are already true…Here's why. Every imperative in Scripture is based on an indicative. In other words, we're never asked to do something until we're told something true about who we are. LOCATION: 1511

The truths of the gospel support and sustain the commands of the gospel. If we do not first understand the truth about who we are—the truest thing about us—we will be crushed by the weight of the commands. LOCATION: 1519

Jesus always tells us who we are before He ever tells us what to do, because Jesus knows two things about those who will choose to follow Him. First, He's asking the impossible. And second, He specializes in making the impossible possible. LOCATION: 1520

This paradigm isn't found only in the New Testament. Think of the greatest list of rules in all of human history, the Ten Commandments. How does it begin? "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt." That's identity, ladies and gentlemen. You were slaves, but now you're free, and because of that, live like this. LOCATION: 1529

We simply cannot become who we should be. It's impossible. The only thing we can become is who we are. It's the high and beautiful gospel indicatives that sustain the gospel imperatives. In Christ, we can become who we are. LOCATION: 1533

Identity statements are everywhere. Find a command, and you'll find somewhere near it a truth about who you are. LOCATION: 1546

But here's God's paradigm for us: I'm loved. Therefore … That single word of difference changes everything. Our identity as beloved children of God is not dependent on a condition but secure from the moment we turn to Him. The moment our lives are hidden in Christ. God's therefores are always built on the unconditional truth that we are loved. LOCATION: 1577

The call to become who we are is the only claim on our lives that matters. LOCATION: 1675

The call of the Christian life is to become who you are. LOCATION: 1697

Remember how we talked about the Ten Commandments, the list to end all lists, and how those commandments do the same thing? Before the Israelites were given a list of how to live godly lives, they were reminded of their identity: "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery." Who they are is the basis for how they will live, not the other way around. It's as if God is saying, "Your life in Me will look a certain way because of My deliverance, My redeeming love, and My provision for you—because of who you are." LOCATION: 1746

You are holied. Set apart for God and devoted to His purposes. And because you are in Christ, because you are God's beloved, because God's Spirit lives in you, you are also called to be holy. LOCATION: 1765

Identity in Christ starts with believing something about Jesus and then believing something about ourselves in light of what we believe about Jesus. LOCATION: 1796

How does our view of Jesus shape our identity? Like this: if we begin with Jesus, every subsequent thing we think or see about ourselves will be seen in the light of His truth. LOCATION: 1808

When it comes to our identity, to knowing the truest thing about us, knowing Christ first is everything. LOCATION: 1820

Our new identity in Christ causes us to reimagine all of life. Not to stop living life, but rather to work and relate and play as if those things are not the truest things about us. They're not the source of our identity anymore. We live as if these things do not determine our existence, because that power belongs only to Christ. LOCATION: 1851

Sabbath reminds us that we are loved for who we are, not for what we can produce. Sabbath is the real-life practice of finding our identity in Christ, not in what we do or in what we have. It is all too easy for us to allow work to determine our identity. Most of us spend the largest single chunk of our lives working. More than being with friends. More than sleeping. More than pursuing our favorite hobbies. It's no wonder we can get our relationship with work so wrong—it's constantly demanding our time and attention. LOCATION: 1868

In the words of Eugene Peterson, Sabbath is about shutting up and showing up. We kill our own agendas, and we show up before God. We lay before Him our week behind and our week ahead; we stop laboring for money, for meaning, for purpose, for image management, for relationship management. Instead we simply rest. For a full day we stop trying to produce and let God produce in us. To some that might mean reading, writing, hiking, meditating, painting, taking pictures, surfing … but it always means prayer. Ceasing from work brings all our anxieties to the surface and confronts us with what we've been running from for the last six days. And in prayer we offer all that to God. We say, My identity is in You, God. In You. LOCATION: 1883

And it is when we choose to Sabbath, to climb off the hamster wheel of life and begin to listen, that we hear God affirming our true identities. You are not a worker—you are My child. You are not a producer—you are My beloved. I do not love you because of what you do or what you have, but because of who you are in Christ. LOCATION: 1892

The word Sabbath is the Hebrew word Shabbat, which simply means "quit." Stop. Take a break. Cool it. The word itself has nothing devout or holy in it. It is a word about time, denoting our nonuse of it, what we usually call wasting time. LOCATION: 1916

And that's the good news right there—that God is the One who will bring the work in us to its intended goal. It's not up to us. It isn't about us using our strength or cleverness or dedication to cross the goal line. It's God's responsibility. God's the One working in us, pushing us, and sometimes carrying us. Which is why it's God who controls exactly how much change we go through. LOCATION: 2074

At the same time, however, we work out in our lives what God is working in us. I want to say that again. We work out what God is working in. LOCATION: 2081

Here we are, at the end of the book. And this is the question I want to leave you with. What is our part in working out all this identity talk? Trust. LOCATION: 2151

So here it is. You will not find your identity in what you have, but in who has you. You will not find your identity in what you do, but in what has been done for you. And you will not find your identity in what you desire, but in who has desired—at infinite cost to Himself—a relationship with you. LOCATION: 2183

And you will understand that the truest thing about you—that in Christ God called you His beloved in whom He is well pleased—has been true all along. LOCATION: 2188