

Guide to Creating Identity Statements

by Scott Savage

When my kids first saw *The Greatest Showman* movie, they were obsessed with the soundtrack. It seemed like they quickly memorized all of the lyrics. As some of my other friends' kids did the same thing with *Frozen*, I wasn't complaining!

One of the central themes of the movie is the insecurity plaguing the characters. From PT Barnum (played by Hugh Jackman) to the cast of his circus, they're all trying to figure out who they are and if their true selves can be known, loved, and accepted by others. The plot of the movie follows their journey to overcome insecurity.

Insecurity, however, isn't a battle limited to the big screen; it's a struggle many of us know all too well.

My Struggle with Insecurity

I can first remember feeling insecure in my church youth group. One day, I became aware that my clothes were not as stylish as other kids. My haircut felt lame and I knew I wasn't perceived as "cool." And I won't even get into how I felt around girls!

So, as I got deeper into high school, I tried my best to morph who I was based upon where I was. I was a smart kid in class, available to help other kids with their work. I wanted to be liked so much I let other kids cheat off me. On the baseball field, I tried to be the passionate tough guy, screaming, cursing, whatever it took to play the part. At church, I was a spiritual leader, the one who knew all the answers.

By the time I got to college, I was accustomed to wearing masks and fashioning who I was to find acceptance in a new environment. The problem? I didn't know who I was anymore.

I began a journey that is now deep in its second decade – a pursuit to claim and develop my God-given identity. Not who other people want me to be. Not who I think I should be. But who God says I am.

I've spent many years standing on stages and speaking in front of hundreds and thousands. I've written articles which have been read by tens of thousands. Despite that success, I've struggled with defining myself by what I do, what other people think about what I do, how I compare to others who do what I do, and how I'm not yet where I want to be.

From personal experience and many years of mentoring and pastoring people, I've learned about some of the dangerous places here we locate our identities.

The Danger Zone for Our Identities

We tend to locate our identity in several dangerous places.

We define ourselves by what we do.

A common question anyone asks upon meeting us is “what do you do?” Our jobs become a key identity marker, along with our performance or achievement in them. Yet it only takes a bad decision, tragedy, injury, retirement or industry shift to shatter this identity. Having pastored two churches with sizable groups of attendees in retirement, I’ve seen the aftermath of defining oneself by where you go each Monday morning. When you stop doing that job, who are you?

We define ourselves by our talent and abilities.

Talent is a beautiful thing. It’s incredible to discover you do something well and improve that ability over time. Whether it’s marveling at a painting, standing in a new building, using a smartphone, or watching an athlete compete, we all benefit from the talents of others. But those people are bigger than their gifts. An injury, the aging process, a shift in technology or preference in the market can turn admiration into “meh.”

We define ourselves by who we know.

I love my friends. During each season of life, I’ve appreciated the people around me. But, like you, I’ve seen seasons of abundant relationships transition into seasons of scarcity. And I’ve seen people who I trusted deeply wound and betray me even more deeply. Death, fights, transition, or conflict – they can all destroy our identities if we’re only as valuable as who we know.

We define ourselves by what “they” think of us.

Popularity is a finicky thing. Just ask any one-hit wonder or professional athlete. One day, everyone wants to talk to you and the next, they’ve moved on. When we’re only as good as what “they” think of us, we’re skating on thin ice. I’ve learned what “they” think of me is often just one or a few names. And, as the artist LeCrae once said, “If you live for their approval, you’ll die from their rejection.”

We define ourselves by how well we’re doing.

You’re not going to kill it, every time. None of us will hit a home run every day. Some seasons will feel like strikeout after strikeout, and not just in the beginning. We live in a world where, in many ways, we’re only as good as our last at-bat. There is always someone better than you or always someone coming for you. Performing for your identity is exhausting!

So, if these are all dangerous places, then what’s the answer? I learned one way forward recently, in an unexpected conversation.

The Gap Between Believing It and Living It

I began meeting with a counselor several years ago. After years of recommending this step to others and some bouts with anxiety, I decided it was time to practice what I preach.

I was talking with my counselor and the issue of identity came up. I talked about an identity statement I wrote in seminary, books I've read over the last ten years and what I believe about myself.

My counselor asked me a question when I was done with my "speech." He said something to the effect of, "Do you believe that? I mean, you can recite it all very well, but do you really believe it? Do live from that? Do you create from that?"

I paused long enough to really take in the question and not answer without some reflection. The answer which came up wasn't what I was expecting.

The truth is I don't. I can say it. I can recite it and teach it to others. But the words I told my counselor about who I am did not match the place I live from every day and the place I create from. It was a jagged pill to swallow.

The First Step I Took to Start Overcoming Insecurity

In addition to meeting with a counselor, I had a conversation with a friend. Let's call him Nick. had noticed what the same counselor had – this gap between what I could easily say and where I was truly coming from.

Nick shared a step they took which proved very helpful. I followed Nick's advice, which led me to write a new identity statement. It was not much different in content than what I wrote 11 years ago in seminary, but it came out much different in spirit and confidence.

I also took a step I never took back then. While I wrote the statement years ago and then put it away, I began revisiting this statement each morning. Some days, I come back to the words I've written throughout the day. In one difficult season, I read this statement three or four separate times per day.

I realized this process of writing, reading, and revisiting this identity statement was reprogramming my mind with a new sense of identity - an identity which is not rooted in what I do, how I do it, the skills I have, the people I know, or the opinions of others about me.

And for the very first time, I felt the gap between what I say with ease and the place I live from every day grow smaller.

You Can Take This Step Too!

If you battle insecurity, you've got so much company. You're not alone. And there's nothing wrong with you.

I believe the process which is transforming me could be helpful for you too.

In the Scriptures, the Apostle Paul described the path to peace as running through our mental practices.

“And now, dear brothers and sisters, one final thing. Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned and received from me—everything you heard from me and saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you.” -Philippians 4:8-9

Identity statements help clarify the truth of who you are and empower you to replace insecurity with your true identity. I’ve broken the process of creating these statements into four steps.

STEP 1 – Brainstorm the Raw Material

To write your identity statements, I want to encourage you to process through a series of questions. You can do this on your phone or you can grab a piece of paper and write down your responses to these 3 prompts.

Ask yourself...

- Who do the Scriptures say that you are? (Check out Romans 8, along with Ephesians 1-2. Also, check out the “Identity in Christ” list of Scriptures at the end of this resource)
- Why do I have worth and value in the eyes of God?
- What truths do I believe about who other people are, but have a hard time believing about myself?
- When someone I know is feeling insecure, what statements do I share with them, but struggle to share with myself?

STEP 2 – Decide the Form for Your Identity Statements

Once you’ve answered those questions, the next step is to identify what form you prefer. (In the following step, you’re going to create something which you’re going to revisit every day, maybe even multiple times a day.)

You need to decide the form you prefer to use. Would you rather have more of a narrative approach to your identity statements (think two or three medium-length paragraphs), or would you rather have a list of bullet points?

One is not better than the other. This is your creation, so go with your preference.

STEP 3 – Create Your Identity Statements.

Using your answers to the prompts in Step 1, write out your sense of who you are. Some of the things you wrote in Step 1 will be hard for you to believe about yourself. That's okay! This is the very reason for this exercise.

Take the content of your responses to those questions and turn it into a list of identity statements or series of paragraphs about who you are.

Remember – this is not a list of what you do, what your gifts and skills are, or even a list of your goals for the future. This is a list of who you are, an expression of your worth and value based upon how God made you and sees you.

STEP 4 – Practice Your Identity Statements

The set of beliefs you currently hold about yourself are different from the list or narrative you just created. If you're really honest, the gap might be pretty big between what you believe about yourself and the list you just created.

We've formed beliefs about ourselves over hundreds or thousands of days. Writing out what you just did won't replace that thinking immediately.

I am years into my journey with my own narrative and it's a tough switch to make. But practicing this replacement process is getting easier each day.

I want to encourage you to read the identity statements you just created every morning for the next 3 weeks. You'll miss a day here and there and that's okay. But be consistent and persistent in reading and repeating these words.

Depending on how big the gap is (between your list and what you currently believe about yourself), consider revisiting it multiple times a day.

An Example of Identity Statements

After you create your identity statements (and I mean this, stop reading before making your own), or if you get stuck creating your own, I've added a portion of my narrative identity statements.

Please don't copy mine; I'm sharing them to encourage you, not to save from the important work represented in those four steps above.

My identity statements were constructed to overcome insecurity I faced as a pastor and author.

“I am the Beloved of God, loved for who I am not what I do. This is my truest self and everything I do flows from it. What I do flows from who I am. What I do is not who I am.

I am capable of helping others overcome their fears, develop new perspectives, abandon unhelpful beliefs, and take courageous steps forward by using the Word of God and words of wisdom I’ve gained from my life experience.

Who I am does not depend on my performance or output as a pastor or author. My worth and value are not up for someone I don’t know and haven’t met to determine. What God says - not what others say - is the truest thing about me. Who I am, my worth and value, have been declared by the one who made me in His image and gave His life for my redemption. I am unconditionally loved by God. God loves me based on His character, not my performance.”

Share Your Completed Identity Statement With Someone Else

I hope this practical experience helps you to claim and develop your God-given identity.

What God says about you is the truest thing about you. And once you believe it and embrace it, your true self can become the source from which you create and live and love. I’d encourage you to share your statements with someone you trust. If you don’t have someone like that in your life, please send me an email - I’d love to read them and to encourage you.

I’m hoping you’ll find what I am finding – freedom!

Your Identity in Christ

I was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:28)

God chose me and appointed me to bear fruit (John 15:16)

I am God's masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10)

I was created to do good (Ephesians 2:10)

I am victorious (Romans 8:37)

Nothing can separate me from God's love (Romans 8:38)

God isn't finished with me and won't stop until He is (Philippians 1:6)

I shine like a star (Philippians 2:15)

I didn't save myself; God's grace did (Ephesians 2:8)

I'm a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)

I am filled with Resurrection power (Romans 8:11)

I am not condemned (Romans 8:1)

I am free (John 8:36)

God chose me and adopted me into His family (Romans 8:15)

God knows all about me and still loves me (Psalm 139)

I am no longer a slave to sin (Romans 6:6)

I am a child of God (1 John 3:1-2)

I have been raised to life (Colossians 3:1-3)

**This PDF is based upon materials which first appeared at ScottSavageLive.com