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INTRODUCTION

This semester I have completed my biblical counseling practicum under the supervision of Chris Hogan, a Christian life coach at Noble Call Ministries. My practicum has focused on Christian identity formation for young women. I have been leading a small group through the first edition of Chris Hogan’s book, *Noble Identity: Discovering You.* God has called me to help young women who are hurting find his healing and freedom in Christ. A poorly developed identity contributes to emotional pain by promoting wrong decisions and painful memories. Identity in Christ is a highly important area for young people in need of wholeness and healing. The goal of this paper is to discuss how identity formation impacts young people, and propose resources for addressing this need based on my practicum experience.
IDENTITY

Is it important for young people to know their identity? One research study published in the Journal of Psychology and Theology showed that students with higher levels of identity development were more likely to adjust well to college and be better prepared for vocational and spiritual development. The study findings suggested that, “…students who have explored and come to conclusions about their identity (have an achieved identity status) also have a greater understanding of their Christian vocation.”¹ Research studies such as this one point towards the significance of identity formation for young people.

Christian counselors also stress the importance of identity. A foundational concept of biblical counseling is that actions spring from beliefs. In Basic Principles of Biblical Counseling Larry Crabb states, “If the feelings and behaviors are sinful, the belief behind them must be

wrong.”² Carrying this concept forward, identity is a set of beliefs that will impact a person’s behavior. Christian author and counselor June Hunt writes,

Most people experience confusion about who they really are because they lack a biblical understanding of what determines their identity. Your behavior is an outgrowth of your identity.³

Having an identity based on Scriptural truth will result in a belief system that promotes Christ-like actions. Identity formation impacts young people significantly.

How can this need for identity formation be addressed? Chris Hogan, founder of Noble Call Ministries is currently doing research on the impact of four aspects of identity development. In his book Noble Identity: Discovering You, Hogan proposes that every person must answer four foundational questions accurately: (1) “Does God delight in me?” (2) “Do I delight in who God made me to be?” (3) “Can I know and delight to do God’s will?” (4) “Can I delight others with my strengths?”⁴ These four core questions are ordered by importance. Questions one and two relate to a person’s being while questions three and four relate to a

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person’s doing. Being defined by only performance instead of by personhood leads to an unstable identity.

In fact, Hogan proposes two models of identity: normal identity and noble identity. In Hogan’s normal identity model four factors contribute to a person’s identity apart from Christ: self-centeredness, praises gained, positions earned, and possessions acquired.\(^5\) In Hogan’s noble identity model, a person in Christ is defined by (1) “Whose I am.” (2) “Who I am.” (3) “Whom I am called to serve.” (4) “Who my strength comes from.”\(^6\) This noble identity model provides the basis for answering the four core questions.

Having a normal identity leads to insecurity, failure and a lack of joy. Having a noble identity promotes security, success, and joy. Perhaps the most important aspect is joy. Joy comes from being in God’s presence. Psalm 16:11 states, “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” When a crisis comes a person’s core beliefs will either be established, challenged, or reinforced. Hogan recommends active listening and cognitive behavioral therapy to aid in identity formation.

\(^5\)Ibid., 7-8
\(^6\)Ibid., 7-8.
Identity formation is an important need for young people today that can be addressed through coaching and discipleship. In Chris Hogan’s small group model, which I have been implementing during this practicum, participants study each of the four core identity questions. They identify lies, resulting fears, wrong decisions, and painful memories, which comprise their normal identity. They then work through exercises and search the Bible to find truths to develop their noble identity in Christ. These truths are adapted into a statement to be used to challenge wrong beliefs in times of crisis and help the participants return to joy.
CONCLUSION

I plan to use this model in ministry in the future. I will be on the identity course development team at Noble Call Ministries this summer. This team will be developing the noble identity model used in my practicum into an identity formation course for use in college ministries. I am thankful for my practicum experience, which has equipped me with concepts and tools to carry out my calling.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


