

BOOK REVIEW

Identity in Action: Christian Excellence in All of Life

Glanzer, P. L. (2021). *Identity in action: Christian excellence in all of life*. ACU Press.

Identity in Action examines two of the most pressing questions facing college students today: “Who am I, and what is my purpose?” In this book, aimed at an audience of university students, Glanzer (2021) began to unpack a scripture-based system to align personal identity and purpose within the created order properly. In Part One of the text, Glanzer (2021) started with the notion that common identity pitfalls can be sorted into two “lies” propagated by Satan. The first is that personal identity is rooted in achievement. The text states, “When your purpose and identity are found in your accomplishments, then you believe that you must always be performing, often on bigger and bigger stages” (Glanzer, 2021, p. 27). The second common lie is that identity is defined by other people. For example, a person is defined by their relationship with their significant other, or a parent is defined solely by their children. Then, in the absence of that relationship, they do not know who they are (Glanzer, 2021, p. 28). Both of these lies lead to unstable foundations of identity and ultimately leave a person feeling unfulfilled, insecure, and asking the questions once more: “Who am I, and what is my purpose?”.

Glanzer (2021) spent the rest of Part One arguing that to find one’s true identity, the first step is to recognize that they are made in the image of God, the Imago Dei (p. 31). The author argued that we could not understand what it means to be fully human without knowing who God is. Indeed, to relate human existence to the proper created order and the Creator is to understand humanity’s status and calling correctly. Glanzer (2021) continued by stating that the key to identity excellence does not simply recognize the creator-creation relationship humanity possesses but instead being able to harness the gifts that result from that relationship. The unique capacity to create and steward, the ability to attain excellence in many roles of life (which the author refers to as individual identities), and the ability to combine these individual identities and order them properly with the goal of human flourishing (p. 35). Although the method in which these individual identities are discussed borders on a theory of intersectionality, the author is careful to remain consistent with their biblical foundation regarding

combining individual identities to form a person’s full identity.

Part Two of the text examines these individual identities, with each broken into its own chapter. Being a good neighbor, friend, enemy, man or woman, lover, steward, or family member, is explored via anecdote and scriptural reference to connect each “identity” back to the person of Jesus Christ. Again, the author offers these individual portions of identity in a way that echoes or reminds one of intersectionality theory. Upon further analysis, it is clear that the author intends to explain that fullness of purpose and being are found in Christ alone with proper understanding and knowledge of who God is and who humanity is in relation to Him. The last chapter of the book speaks of this proper ordering:

Scripture reminds us that the Israelites and early Christians were given clear direction about how to order our loves and identities (love God, love one’s neighbor as oneself). Jesus’ words offer rich resources we can draw upon to provide examples of how to deal with particular identity conflicts. (Glanzer, 2021, p. 204)

Recognizing the proliferation of these questions, “who am I, and what is my purpose?” in the university population is paramount. While secular institutions may begin to answer these questions using intersectionality or critical theory, the Christian university can respond to these questions in full recognition that students come bearing the Imago Dei. Recognition that the worth of students is found and rooted in the blood of Christ. Educators at faith-based institutions have access to the only tool needed to help students ground identity crises not in a way that panders to transient feelings or unfounded notions of self but in a fullness that only comes from proper knowledge of the Holy one. Glanzer (2021) asserted, “The problem with those engaged in identity politics instead of identity excellence is that they often fail to emphasize the core reason for recognizing the dignity of all humans (p. 31). Educators at faith-based institutions have the opportunity and the responsibility to impart and demonstrate an understanding of the foundation of true purpose.

Glanzer (2021) offered a telling of a common human struggle of insecurity in oneself and the ultimate solution. The authors' recognition of individual aspects or realms of identity begins to help understand that finding purpose and excellence in life is more than simply being a good friend, neighbor, or worker, but connecting oneself to a God who has made all of these identities and perfected them first Himself. This book would benefit Christian educators in higher education at any institution as it speaks to the significant questions plaguing students today: "What is my purpose?". However, those at faith-based institutions might benefit more as they can overtly center their conversations with students around Christ and root identity excellence in Christ, as this book suggests. Although the text specifies that this book is aimed at university students, educators of all ages and career stages would benefit from it as it describes a condition that is not unique to the current generation of students, but seemingly more pressing, urgent, and difficult to decipher for them than it was for the generations who make up university faculties today.

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