

Old Testament Joseph was remarkably clear about his identity. Though he was sold as a slave by his brothers after treacherous kidnapping (Genesis 37:18-28), he remained fair, pure, wise, and faithfully served people around him. All who stayed with Joseph for a while experienced tremendous blessing! They talked about Joseph at occasion, until Pharaoh himself heard about him in a critical moment! (Genesis 41) Out of Joseph's identity, powerful and true image grew, of a faithful and wise steward.

The Old Testament Saul, on the other hand, did not have his identity clear at all. Though he experienced God's public calling as king of Israel (1 Samuel 10:17-24), he did not grasp his identity and even hid himself at first. Later - as king - he sought protection in ceremonial sacrifice (1 Samuel 13:8-24) instead of in the Lord Himself! When confronted with this foolish failure, he says to the prophet Samuel: „Above all, honor me before the people!“ (1 Samuel 15:21-30) Saul cares more about his image than his identity in the LORD. Saul wanted to make up for his lack identity with a pretended image.

Identity is identity.

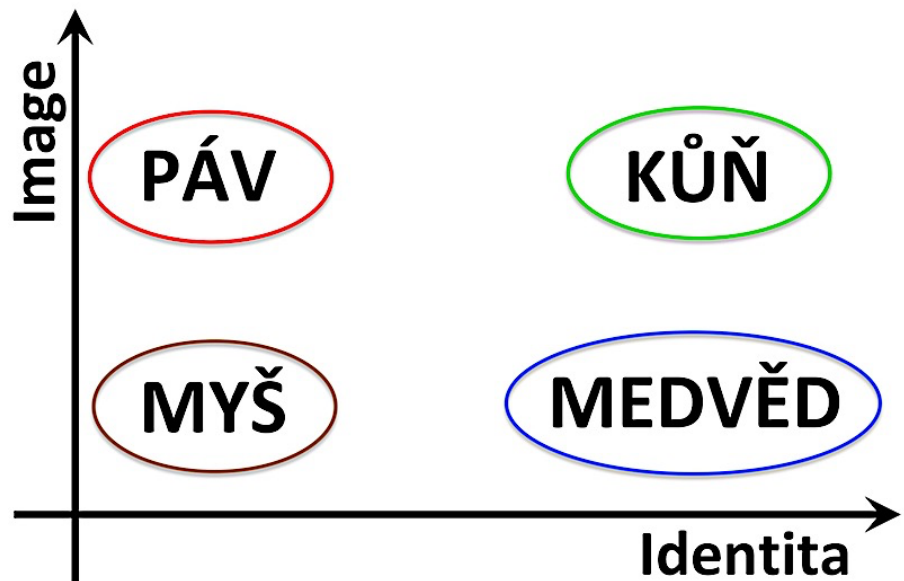
IMAGE is a picture of ourselves we form in minds of the people around us.

Both of these issues are very important:

- 1) Who am I really? - This is my identity.
- 2) How do I present myself or how do I serve externally? - This is my image.

a) There are some people who don't have their identity clear and don't try to present anything outwardly or serve anyone in particular. Let's call them „mice“ here.

b) Others, however, even if they are not sure about their identity, try to pretend that they are cool or even they are „somebody“. Of course, the discrepancy between true identity and feigned image is easy to see. I'll refer to them as „peacocks“. Kind of a big chicken with a fancy tail.



c) Intellectually, I know who I am, but I don't show it outwardly. I don't serve around me with my identity. Maybe I haven't had healthy example of how to do this, maybe I'm held back by past failures. Let's call him a sleeping „bear“. He has considerable power, but doesn't apply it in any useful way.

d) He knows his biblical identity, has accepted it, and is living it out. Moreover, he also manifests his identity outwardly. He acts with kindness and confidence even in the midst of disrespect. He proves nothing to anyone and fights no one for his worth. He applies it to benefit of others where it is wanted. Let us call him a „horse“. Not only does it run fast on its own, but it lends its power to the rider or to a chariot.

Where do you see yourself in that chart?

Observations tell me that many healthy and quite strong Christians need to learn to grasp their identity and express it outwardly, build a healthy image among the people. How does one do that? I have no better wording than „be a blessing to people“. When I have an image of a „good friend“ among unbelievers it allows me to talk straight about Jesus! My friends find it enjoyable and stimulating to be with me. I notice what they are good and interesting at, and encourage them. This „good friend image“ opens their hearts and occasionally allows me to look at the ceiling and without warning tell Jesus the need I just heard... A young Slovak lady came up to me in our pub and said: „They said you could help me...“ We had never talked much before. Suddenly she presented her life situation to me and



wanted to hear my perspective. You see, my non-believing friends are talking about me!

Whether I want it or not, I'm creating my image among them!

What do your unbelieving colleagues, relatives, neighbors say about you? Who are you to them? Our identity in Jesus is essential! But in all expressions of our identity, we inevitably build an image among people. And our image becomes, in a way, an image of Jesus, because we represent Him!

Examine the relationship between your identity and your image. Ask Jesus how your identity can be used properly for His glory among people. Make your Jesus identity visible with all humility. Especially by serving people around you; you will be an encouragement and a blessing to them.

Lord Jesus, the power of your identity has changed this world. And your image still powerfully attracts or repels people today...