IDENTITY
Finding Your Identity
Beyond the Scoreboard
Sightline™
A CRU MINISTRY
VICTORY BEYOND THE CUP

The 4,000-Mile Identity Crisis

The living room was dark, the curtains drawn tight against the Sunday afternoon sun. The only light came from the 65-inch screen, glowing with the emerald green of the Anfield pitch.

Mark wasn't just sitting on his couch; he was in the Kop. He was wearing the 2019 kit—the one they won the Champions League in. It was his "lucky" shirt, the one he didn't wash during a winning streak.

"Come on, boys. pressing! We need to press!" Mark muttered, his knuckles white as he gripped a throw pillow.

His six-year-old daughter, Leo, wandered in, holding a drawing. "Daddy? Look, I drew a—"

"Not now, sweetie," Mark snapped, not taking his eyes off the screen. "Trent is about to take a corner. We have to score here. We have to."

We.

Mark wasn't a footballer. He was a project manager for an IT firm in Ohio. He hadn't run a mile in three years. But in this room, he wasn't Mark the Project Manager. He wasn't Mark the Dad. He was Liverpool. Their glory was his glory. Their failure was his failure.

The ball soared into the box. A header. A miss. The whistle blew.

Full time. Liverpool 0, Manchester City 1.

The air left the room. Mark didn't just feel disappointed; he felt decimated. He slumped back into the cushions, staring blankly at the post-match analysis. A heavy, gray fog settled over his chest. It wasn’t just that his favorite team lost a game; it felt like he was a loser.

Later that evening at dinner, Mark was silent. He picked at his food.

"Is everything okay, hon?" his wife asked gently.

"They played like garbage," Mark grumbled, not looking up. "The midfield was nonexistent. It’s embarrassing. I can’t believe we let that slip."

He spent the rest of the night doom-scrolling Twitter, looking for other fans to share in his misery, validating his anger, soaking in the collective despair. He felt hollow. For the next three days, his mood would be dictated by eleven men kicking a ball 4,000 miles away.

Mark had a family who loved him and a God who created him. But on that Sunday, he didn't know who he was, because his team hadn't won.

Popular apologetics questions about identity:

Why can't I create my own identity?
Don't I get to say who I am?
Why should I believe that I matter?
How can I know God cares about who I am?
I'm a pretty good person; why do I need Jesus?

Why the Scoreboard is a Shaky Foundation

When we cheer for teams, we can easily tie our identity into their presence and performance. We identify ourselves as a fan of the team, we decorate our houses, cars and ourselves with their logos. We memorize facts and stats so that we can share this part of ourselves with others. Moreover, when they win, we feel as if we have won. When they fail, our identity is impacted there, too. We promote them as if we are promoting ourselves and defend them as if we are defending ourselves. If their identity is threatened or celebrated, so is ours.

Why do we identify with teams?

We cheer for teams because our identity has become tied into their identity. We are affected at a deep level because, in a way, they are representing us.

What does it reveal about us?

It reveals a longing to be represented by those who can accomplish something great on our behalf. While teams can do this for a short period of time, the longing is not satisfied because the game ends, the players on the team change and a team's success is only temporary at best.

What do we do with this longing?

If we long for an identity in something beyond ourselves to represent us, and teams eventually let us down, we must seek a better source to fulfill this longing. The Bible tells us that Jesus represented us perfectly as both God and man. He lived a perfect life on our behalf, paid for the sins we're guilty of committing and secured eternal life for us when we place our trust in Him.

Key Takeaway

Christ is our perfect representative and our identity is complete when it is grounded in Him.

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