



**By Elder
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Of the Quorum
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Apostles

HOW TO DEFINE YOURSELF

Be careful how you characterize yourself. Don't characterize or define yourself by some temporary quality. The only *single* quality that should characterize us is that we are a **son or daughter of God**.

That fact transcends all other characteristics, including race, occupation, physical characteristics, honors, or even religious affiliation.

Yet there are those among us who choose to define themselves by some other characteristic. It may be the fact that they are "a patriot," a Cardinal fan, a person from Texas, a red-head, a great basketball player, or an underachiever.

We have our **agency**, and we can choose any characteristic to define us. But we need to know that when we choose to define ourselves or to present ourselves by some characteristic that is temporary or trivial in **eternal terms**, we de-emphasize what is most important about us

and we overemphasize what is relatively unimportant. This can lead us down the wrong path and hinder our eternal progress.

For example, a person who calls himself an "underachiever" tends to look for—or encourage others to look for—things that interpret his behavior in those terms. That has a very different consequence than if he and others looked on his quality of "underachieving" as simply a temporary tendency that needed to be disciplined in the course of seeking graduation, employment, or eternal life. Always remember that you are **a son or daughter of heavenly parents, seeking to qualify for your eternal heirship** under that parentage.

As a positive example of self-characterization, I cite our daughter, Jenny Oaks Baker. As a nationally recognized violinist, she could easily identify and think of herself as a great violinist who is also the mother of three young daughters and a son. I am pleased that she does not do this. She thinks of herself as a mother who happens to be a violinist, and she orders her priorities in that way. **NE**

From a BYU–Idaho devotional given on November 7, 2006.

Share Your Experiences
Share your experiences in applying this principle and read the experiences of other youth by going to lds.org/go/63G.



HOW HAVE YOU APPLIED THIS?



"I was born with a cleft lip and palate. Because of it, I've had some trouble making friends and having people make fun of how I talk. But I don't let that define who I am. I could complain about it or blame things

that happen to me because of it, but I don't. I don't let people get to me because I know I am a child of God and that He loves me. I don't let other people decide who I am; I decide who I am because of what I know!"
Rachel W., 15. Arizona, USA