



## Where in the world did you come from?

Some time ago at Fellowship of Christian Athletes, I was in a small group with a few junior high girls. We were talking about why genealogy is important in the Bible.

You know, what's-his-name begot so-and-so and so-and-so begot that one dude ... and so on.

"So girls, why is genealogy important?"

Blank stares.

"Ok, let's start with this. What is genealogy?"

I've never seen a junior high girl get quite this excited during small group time. "Oh oh oh! I know! It's like when you get three wishes!!" I could not help but laugh. No girls, genealogy is not the same as a genie.

"Genea" comes from a Greek word meaning "family," and "logos" means knowledge.

So here's the question. Why is genealogy so interesting? Why should we even care?

I watch a lot of British, Jane Austen-type movies, and I can see how important ancestry was to them. It completely determined their lives, their occupation, their marriages and their inheritances. But why should genealogy be important to me, here in Colorado, in the 21st

Century?

For us today, genealogy is about discovering one's roots and identity. The knowledge changes how we view ourselves, our families, history and connections. It means so much more than that family tree you made in fifth grade.

"I just think it's interesting to know your own history and where you came from and what your ancestors had to go through," commented my sister Nicole, who has recently been interested in researching our family tree.

For her, learning the unique personal stories is what makes it enjoyable. It's fun to see how young our relatives were when they got married, how many kids they had and what their occupations were. We've discovered when they arrived in America after they emigrated from Europe and where they settled down. And who knew we had an ancestor who fought in the Civil War?!

Genealogy helps bring history to life, not only for students sitting in history class but for their parents and grandparents as well. If you know a relative was part of a famous historical event, it's easier to picture yourself in their shoes as they marched into battle or walked across Ellis Island.

We can also begin to get a better picture of why our families and communities carry on the culture and traditions of a certain country and how we can preserve those things for future generations. (This might explain why your grandma makes that oh-so-tasty lutefisk at Christmastime!)

And when we better understand their culture we can better understand ourselves—like those quirky personality traits that have been passed down through your family tree. If I don't like something about myself, I can just blame it on those Germans! (A bit of a family joke in my household...)

There's even a TV show now called "Who Do You Think You Are?" We intently watch as

## I'm Just Sayin'

Written by Darci Tomky

---

celebrities attempt to trace their ancestry. And speaking of celebrities, maybe if you dig hard enough, your family tree will prove you are related to a famous person, too.

Besides simply human curiosity, people research genealogy to validate family stories, discover family medical issues, reconnect with long lost relatives and find birth parents or children given up for adoption. Others might want to see if they qualify for a lineage society, like Sons of the Confederacy.

My sister used Ancestry.com to get started on our family tree, but there's lots of websites and computer programs out there that can help. The next step would be to dust off that old family Bible, ask Grandma for her photo albums and sit down for an interview with Great-Grandpa (before he loses the rest of his memory ... or before he loses his hearing aids).

You might run into some dead ends, but that's OK, just turn to a different source.

Local and national demographics can also give you hints about your ancestors, like how long the average person was expected to live, how many kids they usually had and the primary occupations in certain regions of a country. If you know what town your ancestors lived in, you can look at the census records or at the old newspapers in that town.

Think you're ready to research your own family tree? Much to my junior high girls' dismay, genealogy can't give you three wishes, but it can open your world in more ways than you might have imagined.

# I'm Just Sayin'

Written by Darci Tomky

---

Holyoke Enterprise June 21, 2012