

SESSION 3 – Centering My Identity in Christ

Sharing About Exercises (25/20 MIN)

Keep in mind that in order to have time for everyone to share, each person should plan on around two minutes. The goal here is for you to share with the group how your exercise from last week went, and possibly something you learned about God, or yourself (it is not a teaching time).

Opening Prayer (1/1 MIN)

Premise of this Session (2/2 MIN)

When we were born, at the core of our essence was an identity that God dreamed up for us. But life and the world layer lies and false identities on top, and we tend to lose sight of who we really were created to be. As we follow Christ, our original identity is renewed.

Key Scripture Passage (2/2 MIN)

Ephesians 2:10 (NIV) For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Commentary (to be read aloud in the meeting) (10/10 MIN)

(Credit to Jamie Winship at identityexchange.com for some of the insights for this lesson)

At Ridgepoint we talk about the values of "being, knowing and doing." We desire to BE followers of Jesus who KNOW who we are meant to BE, and who KNOW who God is and what He is calling us to DO. We start with knowing who we are, so that our identity can be informed by who God is. With our God-given identity secure in Christ, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to do the "good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

When asked who we are, we often mention our job or our role in our family. While these labels can be helpful, they do not define our God-given identity at its core, which is that we are the beloved of God, no matter what we have done with our lives. We are God's children, adopted into His family. We are a new creation. We are overcomers by the blood of the Lamb. This is our God-given identity. And our enemy, the devil, does not want us to understand and live in our true identity in Christ.

For the purposes of our discussion, there are two kinds of identities: our true God-given identity and our false identity that comes from the world. In Genesis, Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, and their true identity included naming the animals and being caretakers of the Garden. All was well until the serpent came along and questioned their identity *and* their view of God. When they started to believe his lies and question their identity, they disobeyed God. Ever since then, we have all struggled with our identity and how we view God.

The false identity is the self that develops over time to self-protect and/or self-promote. We have both positive and negative experiences throughout life that cause us to adjust to get the outcomes we want. If I am a good athlete, I might learn to enjoy the praise. Suddenly the game is more about performance and praise than it is about the fun of playing. Or someone might have criticized me when I was young and, as a result, I label myself as a failure or inadequate. We might live feeling like a failure, or perhaps we become overachievers trying to prove our worth. We tend to compare ourselves to others and measure ourselves against the world's standards. We adapt to minimize the pain, fear, or sense that we lack in something.

Our true self is who God made us to be in our mother's womb; it is given to us, not chosen like our false identity. It is not determined by our gender, job, political party, or religion (although both identities will inform these). Learning about our true identity often takes a lifetime of learning to understand it through being in relationship with God and others. It takes unpacking the lies we believe about ourselves and the misunderstandings we have about God. Our true self lives in peace, abundance and intimacy with its Creator. We have both a shared identity as sons and daughters of the Father and specific identities that are unique to each of us.

Oftentimes, our false identity includes measuring ourselves against others. We internalize lies that we are

stupid, inadequate, worthless, or on the other end, important, smart or talented. What we forget is that we were never meant to live in a context of the measurements that impact our identity. We were meant to live in the measureless love of our Creator. Instead of constantly comparing our false selves, our true self can live in peace trusting who God is and what He is up to and that we have everything we need to live an abundant and confident life.

How do we find our true identity? We can start by asking God: “What do you want me to know about my identity? What part of my identity is not from you? What about how I see you keeps me from fully following you?” This means we have to learn how to “crawl up into our Father’s lap,” quiet the “noise” and listen and then respond. It will almost certainly involve confession, repentance and a willingness to be transformed.

When God dreamed each of us up, before we were even born, we were never meant to live burdened under false identities. We were meant to experience our eternal true identity and live life to the fullest. Our character, which we will discuss in Session #4, does not define who we are; it flows out of our identity.

When we live in our false self, we are careful to protect who WE are and prove how valuable WE are. But

when we live in our true self, we become others-focused followers of Jesus who unconditionally love even our enemies, just as Jesus loved us while we were still His enemies. Who are you beyond being a son or daughter of the Most High (our shared identity in Christ)? What is your *unique* identity? Perhaps you are a champion of the marginalized or a “servant warrior.” Maybe you are a peacemaker for those in conflict or a person of blessing.

Who are you becoming?

Discussion Questions (25/10 MIN)

1. **Discuss** some of the attributes of your true kingdom identity as found in Rom 8:15-16, 2 Cor 5:17, Rom 8:17, Rom 8:37, Rev 12:11, 1 Pet 1:4, 1 Cor 6:19, Col 3:12 and Col 1:13.
2. **Share one memory** where you were hurt by words or actions that has had a lasting impact on your identity. Why do you think that memory has stuck with you?
3. **As you have followed Jesus**, what are you passionate about? Worship? Helping or encouraging others? Teaching? Giving generously? Caring for the marginalized? How could those be a clue to your true identity?
4. **Consider the story** of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). What do we know about him? Imagine the taunting he might have heard as a child about being short. How might that have contributed to him becoming who he was? How did his identity change after Jesus spent time with him?

Spiritual Formation Exercises (15/14 MIN)

Please pick one exercise (or make up an exercise) that you want to do for the coming week.

1. **Dealing with Fear.** What do you fear the most in life? Why is that? What does that fear say about how you see God? Listen and respond. Ask God to correct any part in how you see Him that is wrong.
2. **Discernment and Action.** Go to whoamibecoming.org > Session 3 > Ask, Seek, Knock and read Discerning God’s Will. It is likely that most of us believe lies about ourselves that we have been hanging on to for some time. And we are so used to the lies that we are not aware of them. Ask God to reveal the lies. Write a prayer from Col 2:7, John 15:13, Rom 6:11, 1 Cor 6:20, Rom 8:2 or Phil 4:7.
3. **Worship.** Go to whoamibecoming.org > Session 3 > Worship Exercise. Listen to the video.
4. **Quiet Time.** It can be easy to fall into the trap of seeing devotions as a responsibility. But what if you saw your quiet time as an opportunity to be in your favorite place with your Creator and Lover of your soul? Find that place and practice “climbing into your Father’s lap” each day.
5. **Examen.** Each day this week, ask God where you responded out of self-protection or self-promotion or where you confused your false identity with your true identity. Listen to His answer and respond.

Prayer Time (10/1 MIN)

Online Resources for this Session

Visit whoamibecoming.org and click on **Session 3** tab for: **Session 3 Intro** video, the **Going Deeper** commentary, **Sermon Video** and **Transformation Story** about a doctor overcoming addiction to prescription drugs.