



IDENTITY **SHIFT**
PATHWAY

Discussion Guide

Why going through this pathway with others makes a more lasting impact.

Discipleship is a two-sided coin. For lasting impact and transformation to happen, it takes growth in knowledge of God and relationships with the new family of Jesus. (love) This pathway offers opportunities to explore both aspects. You will learn more about God, who you are in Christ, and strengthen friendships with others. If you do not have anyone to go through this pathway with, I would reach out or ask us, and we can try to connect someone with you.

It is important to understand that when it comes to the area of sexual brokenness, professional counseling is recommended and encouraged. Getting counseling will only aid in the healing process. You will find a list of preferred counselors on page seven under the appendix of the first session. Healing from sexual addictions and trauma is a process, but rest assured, it is possible through the Spirit of God!

How to go through this pathway.

We encourage you to watch one video a week and meet with someone, whether in person or on the phone. Each video includes specific discussion questions for you to review together. One video a week allows you time to process, pray, and meditate on what you are learning. This isn't a race, but developing a daily habit of spending time with Jesus. (John 15:5)

Introduction video

- What this resource is:

- Intended to help you begin to _____ your _____ and get your thinking in the right direction.

The battle starts and is won in the mind.

“The scene of the crime begins in the mind.” – Dr. Derwin Grey

- Romans 12:1-2 – do not be conformed to the patterns (norms) of the world but be transformed by the renewing of the mind (present tense verb – ongoing).
 - I encourage you to watch one sermon a week, take notes, and memorize the Scriptures. Read them daily.
 - This resource is best used in _____.

- What this resource is not.

- It is not _____. After the first session, please visit the preferred counseling list. We also have the list under resources in the church app and on the website.
 - This resource is not a silver _____.

Session #1

“Hello, my name is Brand New!”

Watch Session #1 from the pathway if you have not yet.

Introduction:

When we come to Jesus, we become new creations. Yet, if we're honest, it doesn't always feel that way. We struggle with past hurts, decisions, betrayals, pain, and hardships in this life. We encounter Jesus, but we still encounter triggers, pain, and consequences from our past. How do we move forward into the reality of who we are in Christ? How do we live out of our new identity? How do we maintain hope as we continue to heal? Welcome to the Identity Shift Course.

Session #1 Discussion Questions:

1. What things did you often place your identity in before Jesus?
2. Was the clothes/jacket analogy helpful in understanding what spiritually took place when you said yes to Jesus? Why or why not?
3. Are you having difficulty believing and receiving your new identity in Christ? If so, why?
4. Why is knowing who we are in Christ foundational to a healthy biblical sexuality?
5. Have you ever taken a moment to write out your story? If not, here is a simple guide to help you think it through.
 - a. What is one word that describes your life before Christ?
 - b. How did you come to cross the line of faith into a relationship with Christ?
 - c. What is one word that describes your life now that you are following Jesus?
 - d. Who has been influential in you following Jesus?
6. Is there a wound in your life that still needs healing? Unhealed wounds can keep us stuck in destructive patterns. *We have a list of preferred Christian counselors in our church app and in the appendix to session #1*

Bible Study:

1. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 together.

2. What does verse 21 mean when it says we “become the righteousness of God?”
3. If God’s word is true, how can I help my feelings align with God’s reality? What can I do if it doesn’t feel like I am brand new?

Application:

1. Take a moment and think about the area of brokenness in your life that doesn’t feel brand new. Write a positive faith statement below declaring the work God has done and is doing in you. (For example: I thank you, Jesus, that what others have done to me in the past no longer defines me or binds me. Thank you for healing my heart and leading me to live out my new identity in Christ as brand new.”

Closing Worship Song: “Heart of God,” by Hillsong Young and Free

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HwpSL3KabDo>

The challenge for the week:

- Read Colossians 3:9-12 every day this week
- Memorize 2 Corinthians 5:17
- Take the focus challenge: When you start feeling shame, temptation, unforgiveness, etc., creeping back up, stop and write down 8 things you can thank God for and see what happens.

Session #1 – Appendix

List of Preferred Counselors:

- Living Life Counseling Offices in Ann Arbor, Brighton, and Livonia 7677 Professional Center Dr Suite 135-C Livonia, MI 48154 (810) 220-8844
www.livinglifecounseling.com
- Hopeful hearts counseling services Laurie Ann Palmer, MACP, TLLP First United Methodist Church 72 Oak Street Wyandotte MI 48192 (734) 486-8854 hopefulheartscs@gmail.com
- Linda Armstrong Counselor, MA, LMFT Armstrong Family Counseling 8475 Burning Bush Road Grosse Ile, Michigan 48138 (734) 274-2773
lindamariearmstrong@gmail.com
- Suzy Peper Counselor, MA, LLPC Center for Healing Connections, LLC 14950 Northline Rd Southgate MI 48195 (313) 483-7932 (313) 502-2127
suzy@centerforhealingconnectionsllc.com * Located inside Gateway Church of Christ building

Session #2

“Hello, my name is loved.”

Watch Session #2 from the pathway if you have not yet.

Introduction:

At the core of every human being is the desire to be loved. Ironically, God is love; therefore, we are designed to need and be in a relationship with Him. Yet, without even realizing it, we end up living to protect or prove ourselves. We feel like we have to protect our hearts because of the previous hurts. We feel like we have to show God how good we are so that He accepts us. This can be an endless cycle that leads to discouragement, loneliness, and more pain. What could life look like if we truly received and believed in God's love? Imagine a life where the foundation of everything we do is built on the love of God.

Session #2 Discussion Questions:

1. What has been your definition of love? Has it changed since you encountered Jesus?
2. The real you and the real me are not in what we see. How has your worth and ability to receive love been based on performance, looks, others' opinions, etc.?
3. God's love is not earned but received. Have you had a difficult time accepting God's love? If so, why?
4. Finish this sentence. "If I fully received God's love, then I would..."

Bible Study:

1. Re-read Ephesians 3:16-19 together.
2. Why do you think Paul prayed for the church in Ephesus to understand and experience God's love? What is the difference? Is it possible to understand the love of God without experiencing it? Explain.
3. Read 1 John 1:16 together.

4. Think about V16 for a moment. What kind of love must God possess to lay down His life for us?
5. Read 1 John 4:7-18 together.
4. According to V9, how should we live?
5. This means we are not ultimately led by our thoughts or feelings but by the Holy Spirit that lives inside us. (V13)
6. What else stands out to you in this passage regarding the love of God?

Application:

1. Write out 1 John 1:16 below, but personalize it by inserting your name at the end.

Closing Worship Song: “Belong to You,” by Here Be Lions

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hl4HjgPQ5tI>

The challenge for the week:

- Read Ephesians 3:16-19 every day this week
- Memorize Matthew 10:31
- Have you shared this journey with a friend yet? If not, we encourage you to do so this week.

Session #3

“Sexual Restitution: Viewfinder.”

Watch Session #3 from the pathway if you have not yet.

Introduction:

When we hear “worldview,” we might immediately think it is merely a philosophical term. However, "worldview" is deeply theological. Our worldview shapes how we make decisions and live our lives. If someone has a Biblical worldview, every aspect of life is viewed through God’s word. One’s sexuality, finances, relationships, entertainment, and so on are guided by the Scriptures. When various worldviews become intertwined, individuals may be tempted to follow certain parts of the Bible selectively. Let’s embark on a journey to understand what it means to have a Biblical worldview.

Session #3 Discussion Questions:

1. How have you seen culture change in the span of your life?
2. How does the consistency of God’s Word comfort you? Speak to you?
3. What spoke to you the most out of this week's message?
4. Is there any area of your life where you have ignored or suppressed the truth of God? (Be honest)
5. Is God asking you to make a change? If so, what is He asking?
6. Is there a trustworthy and safe person with whom you can be completely open and invite to join you on the healing journey God has planned for you?

Bible Study:

1. Together, read the different translations of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 below.
2 Timothy 3:16-17 - (NLT) - All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. 17 God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.
2 Timothy 3:16-17 – (ESV) - ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable

for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God^[a] may be complete, equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – (Message) - Every part of Scripture is God-breathed and useful one way or another—showing us truth, exposing our rebellion, correcting our mistakes, training us to live God’s way. Through the Word we are put together and shaped up for the tasks God has for us.

2. Why is it important to know and solidify that the Scriptures are inspired by God or God breathed?
3. What practical implications arise from God’s word being inspired (or breathed out)?
4. Do you consider yourself to have a good understanding of what healthy sexuality looks like according to God’s word?

Application:

1. If I were honest, most of the time I use _____ to filter my decisions and guide my feelings.
2. Write out a faith declaration below. (example: Moving forward, I will build my life on the truth of God’s word no matter what I feel.)

Closing Worship Song: “Good, Good Father,” By Chris Tomlin

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WoBW4Tw7yH0>

The challenge for the week:

- Read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 every day this week: All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.
- Memorize Hebrews 4:12 - For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Session #4

Breaking Free From Your Past

Watch Session #4 from the pathway if you have not yet.

Introduction:

Even though we are brand new in Christ, many of us struggle with triggers and emotional baggage from the past. We know we are forgiven, but living in genuine freedom is an entirely different story. What steps do I need to take to break free? Is it possible to move forward from the various sexual challenges I have faced in my past? Is healing in Christ attainable?

Discussion Questions:

1. What might be one “tent” God is inviting you to focus on and deal with today?
2. What false self are you struggling with that Christ wants you to die to so that you can truly live?
3. What would it look like for you to surrender the pains of the past (mistakes, sins, setbacks, and disappointments) to God today?
4. What pains in your life are waiting to be acknowledged and grieved?
5. Why is facing our past and staring it in the face a key part of breaking free from it?
6. Have you been through counseling, and/or do you need to be going through Christian counseling?
7. What is one next step the Lord is stirring in your heart?

Application:

1. Memorize Jeremiah 29:11
2. Pray this prayer every morning or evening this week.
3. **Prayer:** *Lord Jesus, set me free to be the person you have destined me to be. Help me pause to hear your voice today, and to leave behind the “baggage” I am carrying as I seek to follow you. Help me to discern your hand at work in and through my life, both in the past and the future. Show me what steps to take to face my past and move towards the freedom you have already provided. In Jesus’ name. Amen*

Session #5

“Hello, my name is defined by God.”

Watch Session #5 from the pathway if you have not yet.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you tend to follow your desires more than God’s design? If so, what is one step you can take this week to move toward God’s design?
2. Do you have any unresolved trauma or addiction from your past? If so, what is hindering you from intentionally seeking help from a counselor or others?
3. Who can you pray for this week who needs to hear God’s grace and truth in their lives? (Be sure to talk to God first about a person before you speak to the person about God)
4. How can God change your attitude and your heart toward those who practice acts of sexual sin (sex outside of marriage, pornography, homosexuality)?
5. How difficult is it for you to engage others in challenging conversations? Why is that? Are you willing to ask God to help you become an advocate?

Bible Study:

1. Reread 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 together in the NLT.
2. What is significant about the phrase, “Some of you were once like that...”
3. No matter the past or level of sexual brokenness, Jesus Christ can heal and restore!
4. Satan holds greater power over those who isolate and hold secrets. Are there any secrets you have been hiding? (You don’t have to share specifics in the group setting. However, be honest, and then find 1 or 2 people you trust and can share with for support and encouragement.)

Application:

1. Based on what God is speaking to me during this session, one action step I need to take in the next 7 days is...

Closing Worship Song: No Longer Slaves by Bethel Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8TkUMJtK5k>

The challenge for the week:

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:11 every day this week
- Memorize Genesis 1:27 - So God created man in His own image, in the image and likeness of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Session #6

“Sexual Restitution: Identity.”

Watch Session #6 from the pathway if you have not yet.

Introduction:

When you are growing up, it doesn't take long to discover that boys and girls are different. Sure, it is not healthy to stereotype because some girls love common guy things and vice versa. Yet, there is a reason why little boys think girls have koodies. Simply because they are different. Boys are built differently and think differently than girls. Biologically, men and women are different. Why? Is gender just a social construct? Is gender something we can choose? Why does gender matter to God? What is at stake if we try to alter God's design?

Discussion Questions:

1. Did Pastor James's illustration of the Ambassador Bridge and crossing into Canada clarify what Lordship means? Explain.
2. When you have thoughts, desires, or ideas, how often do you look into God's Word to see what He says about it?
3. If both men and women are made in the image of God, what does that imply about gender?
4. Because both men and women reflect God's divine nature (Imago Dei), what qualities do they possess that help us understand what God is truly like?

Bible Study:

1. Reread Genesis 1:26-28, 31 together.
2. Share as many insights as possible from this passage before answering the questions below.
3. Genesis 1:28 says, "And God blessed them..." What was supposed to be the result/evidence of that blessing? (Hint: it's in the rest of V28)
4. If part of God's design was for fruitfulness and multiplication, what happens to individuals transitioning into another gender? They can no longer do what they were called and created to do.

***Some heterosexuals desire to but medically cannot have children. In no way is*

*that indicating they are outside God's will or have done something wrong. The above statement is speaking categorically***

5. Why is V31 important to the creation story?

Application:

1. Take a moment and thank God for designing you and your gender. Write out at least 5 things you are thankful for.
2. If you are wrestling with thoughts or feelings regarding your identity, please don't carry that burden alone. Whether through Christian counseling or another brother/sister in Christ, share it this week and find the support you need. You are not alone!

Closing Worship Song: I Speak Jesus by Katy Nichole

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YqHjjZz1Syg>

The challenge for the week:

- Read 2 Corinthians 5:15 every day this week:
He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!
- Memorize Genesis 1:31 - God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Session #7

“Deception: I am my thoughts and feelings.”

Watch Session #7 from the pathway if you have not yet.

Introduction:

Most of us have thoughts that pass through our minds that we wish never did. We can have thoughts of jealousy, revenge, lust, perversion, and even violence. Sometimes, we have a thought of something that we would never do in a million years. Why did that thought happen? Where did it come from? What does it mean? Our culture is trying to teach us that our thoughts and emotions reveal our true selves. Embrace who you truly are. Nothing is further from the truth. Following the culture's advice is a recipe for disaster. What does God's word say about all this? What do I do if I have thoughts and feelings contrary to the Word of God? Help!

Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways have you experienced spiritual warfare in your mind (thoughts)?
2. Ephesians 4:21-24 says to let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. How do we let Him do that?
3. Reread Philippians 4:8 together.
4. When Paul says, “Think on these things,” what is he implying?
5. What is the difference between a thought and actively thinking upon it?
6. How was the object lesson with the string helpful to understanding how thoughts work?
7. Read Isaiah 26:3. How does this apply to what we are talking about?
How do these statements encourage you and bring you hope?
“Friend, you are not responsible for every thought that flashes into your mind. Satan can plant thoughts in our minds. But you are responsible for what you do with them once they are there.” – Dr. Tony Evans
“Because I feel it and think it, doesn’t make it true.”
“We may not be able to control every thought, but we can control what we fix our minds on.”

Application:

1. Thoughts pass by, but what we think upon grows. What is one thing you can do to be strategic in thinking about God's Word?
2. If you wrestle with unwanted intrusive thoughts, remember they are just thoughts. The quicker you let them pass through, the less power they have.

Closing Worship Song: "The Blood," by Kingdom Culture Worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYK2ZXVvfio>

The challenge for the week:

- Read Romans 12:1-2 every day this week.
Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing, and perfect will.
- Memorize Philippians 4:8
Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things.

Session #8

“Sexual Restitution: Sexuality”

Watch Session #8 from the pathway if you have not yet.

Introduction:

In our culture today, sexuality is defined by feelings and desires. There appears to be no standard, and nothing is off-limits. Yet, we know from everyday life that boundaries are healthy. There is a reason there are guardrails on certain roads. There is a reason there are out-of-bounds areas in football and soccer. There is a reason planes can only take off from a runway. Without boundaries, there would be chaos and pain. Why would it be any different concerning sexuality? What is God’s design for sexuality? Sex was God’s idea, and it is good. How is it to be expressed?

Discussion Questions:

1. Re-read Matthew 19:3-5
2. Before tonight, did you ever realize the significance of Jesus pointing back to the original design?
3. If God’s design is for men and women to be sexually engaged in the context of marriage, why do you think there is still so much temptation to go outside of those boundaries?
4. Why is it important to understand that if we identify with anything outside of our relationship with Jesus, it is idolatry?
5. How would you describe your current relationship with the Holy Spirit?
6. How does knowing that the Spirit of the Living God lives inside of you change your perspective on sexuality?

Application:

1. Memorize 1 Corinthians 6:19-20
2. Find someone you can trust to keep sharing with and asking to walk with you on your journey to healing.

Closing Worship Song: “I will Trust,” by Red Rocks Worship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNfvO8uqS64>

The challenge for the week:

1. Memorize Romans 1:7
2. Rewrite Romans 1:17 and remove “all of you who are in Rome,” and put your name in its place. Read it out loud, personalizing the Scripture.

Concluding Video

Potential Next Steps:

1. Check out the preferred counseling list in the Identity Shift folder in the church app. Remember, healing from sexual brokenness is often a process. Stay the course and don't give up.
2. Watch the bonus video on the next page and take notes.
3. Prayerfully consider going through the Genesis Process through Pure Desire.
4. Read Dutch Sheets's book *Becoming Who You Are: Embracing the Power of Your Identity in Christ.* He does a great job diving deeper into living a life with your identity solely built upon Jesus Christ.
5. Continue to re-read the Scriptures in this resource daily and meditate on the verses you memorized.
6. If you haven't already, join a group at Wyandotte Family. The groups tab is in the church app or on our website.
7. If you haven't yet, go through the New in Christ Pathway with someone else from the church. You can find it online or in our church app. This pathway will help you learn how to spend time with Jesus and connect with Him daily.

BONUS: Healing From Sexual Brokenness Part 1 & 2

Healing from Sexual Brokenness Part 1: Sy Rogers

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=49BQNGEcgwA> (28.22 min)

Message Notes:

God bought me freedom and a chance to make new history

God never intended for your gender to be a curse or a burden. God intended it to be a blessing through you to others.

Hebrews 4:15 - "This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for He faced all of the same tests we do, yet He did not sin."

2 Corinthians 5:17 "Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone, a new life has begun.

The power of sin has been broken – the penalty paid.

"Fretting is you calculating without God in the equation." - Oswald Chambers

Psalms 56:3 - "But why am I afraid, I will put my trust in you"

I have a human nature

Paul says in Romans 7:15, "I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate."

Weakness in the Hebrew language means disability.

Healing from Sexual Brokenness Part 2: Sy Rogers

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6C3adhDa_Z0

Message Notes:

Romans 12:2 - “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of the world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think.”

1. Mismanaged sexuality brings terrible consequences.

We need to discern truth from lies, healthy from unhealthy, Wisdom for folly, beneficial from detrimental.

Jude 1:4 - “I say this because some ungodly people have wormed their way into your churches, saying God’s marvelous grace allows us to live immoral lives.

2. We have a DNA code

Just because Mother Nature gives you a predisposition, it doesn’t make it natural to indulge because Mother Nature is not your mother; she is your corrupted, fallen sister.

3. We have hormones

- Hormones increase 600% between the ages of 12 and 17.

- God tells us to be true to Him despite our feelings.

1 Corinthians 6:19 - “Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

4. We need to ask ourselves – what is God’s definition of misusing my body sexually?

- Ephesians 4:24 - “Put on your new nature, created to be like God- truly, righteous and holy.

- God can redeem anything we give Him

- Walk by the Spirit. You will then, therefore, not satisfy the cravings of your flesh and will walk in freedom.

5. Your history – starving for/denied love

Relationship – God with skin on can save you.

Your suffering matters to God because you matter to God.