



# **LIVE** the **WORD**

*IT'S EVERYTHING!*

## **SMALL GROUP LEADER** *Identity*

# Identity

**SCRIPTURE READING:** Genesis 1:26-27; 2 Corinthians 5:17

**Group leaders should:**

- "Set the table" for interaction and group discussion by (4 minutes):
  - explaining the idea of the week's theme
  - explaining the context of the main passage(s) to be discussed
- **Debrief from weekly reading (8-10 minutes)**
- *Facilitating, Discipling, Guiding, Shepherding* **(30 minutes)**

## Small Group Questions:

**Discussion Instructions:** This week hand out the questions to the class and read through them. Ask the class to pick 2 or 3 questions for group discussion?

1. When we introduce ourselves to someone, after saying our name we often include our vocation or say to whom we are married. Why do you think Christians seldom share that they are followers of Jesus when introducing themselves to someone new?
2. What was God's motive for creating man to image Him?
3. How deeply has sin impacted the image of God in unbelievers?
4. Why should all categories of personal identity fall under "image of God" for followers of Jesus?
5. How does it feel to think of yourself as an imager of God?
6. How does the realization that other believers you may have problems with are also created in the image of God?
7. How is the Holy Spirit leading you to repent today?

## **SET THE TABLE**

**NOTE:** Start with breaking into small groups of 3 or 4 and ask them to discuss, “What is identity?” Let the groups share their answers.

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### **Created to Image God**

Identity comes from the understanding of the essence of who you are. Your identity determines how you live.

In creation the foundation of true identity is in being created in **the image of God**. The key to understanding what it means to image God is found in the action and responsibility of **representation**. We were created to **represent** God by living in relationship with Him for the purpose of glorifying Him. We were created to know God, love God, worship God, and joyfully serve God.

As a part of the image of God, our identity is to live in intimate family relationships—as husbands and wives, as parents, and as children.

### **Fallen Creatures - Broken Images**

In the fall our identity was broken. The Old Testament themes that describe a shattered identity carry over to the New Testament. We were separated from God, spiritually dead. We were slaves to sin. We were autonomous, taking control of our lives and doing what is right in our own eyes.

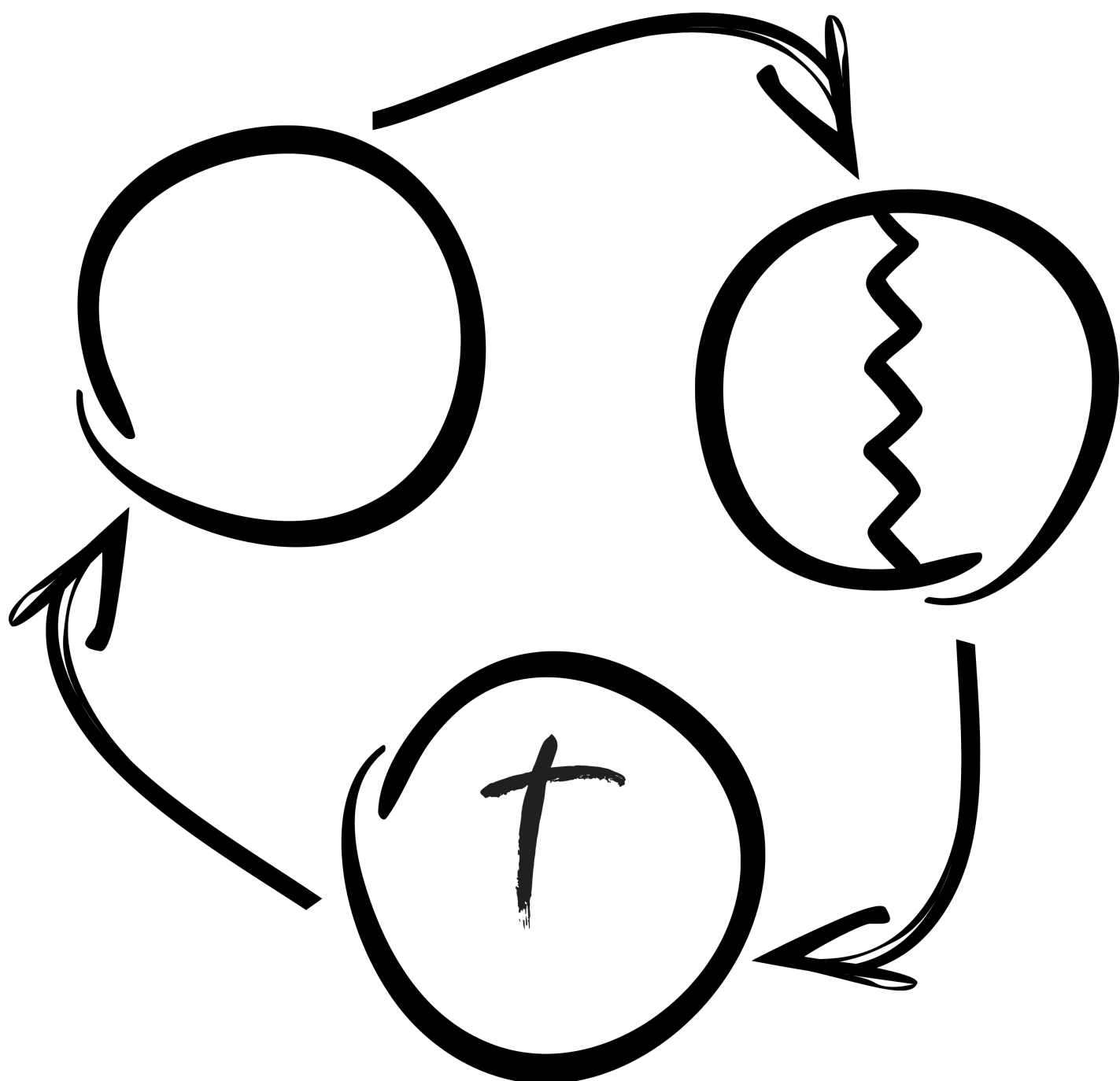
Fallen culture says people are to look within themselves and create their own identity. These false identities lead to destruction and death.

### **New Creations In Christ**

Our identity is now in Christ, in union with Him. In Christ we are new creations, children of God, part of the body of Christ, temples of the Holy Spirit, saints, disciples, and citizens of heaven.

### **The New Creation – Imaging God in His Presence**

In the new heaven and new earth our identity will be as God’s global, victorious, worshipping, eternal people.



# Identity - Commentary

Identity is an important biblical issue. Identity determines how you live. Identity answers the important questions of life.

- Where did I come from? The question of origin.
- Why am I here? The question of purpose.
- What's gone wrong in the world? The question of sin.
- How can it be made right? The question of redemption.
- How should I live? The question of meaning.
- Where am I going? The question of destination.

## Identity in Creation, Genesis 1:26-27

The foundation of our identity is that we were created in the image of God. That we were created in His image says something awesome about God in creative purposes.

Image does not mean that we are exactly like God. Instead, it means that we were created as divine representations who, in relationship with God and each other, function to represent God in carrying out our His designed purposes. Being created in the image among other aspects includes the following:

*We are spiritual beings.* We are created to represent and worship our God who is Spirit. Human beings are not merely material beings. When God created the first man, He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Genesis 2:7), making man a living soul and giving to him spiritual life. Only humans are able to relate to God in worship and communication.

*We are personal beings.* We are created by a personal God, and our personhood reflects that aspect of God. He created humans with personality, as unique individuals with self-consciousness and purpose. While every man and woman share common characteristics, no two people are alike. Since each individual is stamped with the image of God, each human life has significance before God. We are relational beings. God did not create us to live in isolated individualism. God created, in His image, male and female. That means that family reflects the image of God. We are to glorify God and find joyful meaning as husband and wives, as parents, and as children.

# Identity - Commentary

## Identity as Broken Creatures

The image of God in humans was deeply marred and distorted by the Fall. Men and women died spiritually. Humanity's relationship with God, as well as interpersonal relationships, was ruptured. Moral purity was lost, replaced by a sinful nature. Personality was corrupted, producing an array of psychological problems. Emotions were turned to selfish desires. The uncorrupted image of God was replaced by the fallen image of the fallen Adam (Genesis 5:1-3).

There are pictures in the Old Testament that are carried over into the New Testament. The first is separation from God. Adam and Eve were driven out of the Garden and God's presence under the curse of death. In the New Testament, separated from God, we are dead in our trespasses and sins. The second is slavery. The slavery of the children of Israel in Egypt is a picture that Jesus referenced in John 8:34, "Truly, Truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin." The third is autonomy. It was said of the people in the days of the judges, "Every man did what was right in his own eyes." So, man in sin is taking control of his own life doing what is right in his eye.

Our culture is fallen as it aggressively promotes people to look inside themselves and create their own identity. The results are always disastrous, destructive, and lead to death.

Many today have adopted a sexual identity. LGBTQ+ is identity based on subjective experience and the sinful desires of the flesh, and not objective truth. The gender and the trans movement have become the hot button issue of our day. Little children are taught that they should change genders with parents kept in the dark. Biological males play on girl teams and demand to use girl's locker rooms and bathrooms.

Romans 1:18-32 shows us that when people in unrighteousness suppress the truth of God, they become futile in their thinking and become involved in confused and empty sexual identities.

We cannot find meaning in ourselves because we were created for the glory of God.

# Identity - Commentary

## Identity as New Creations, 2 Corinthians 5:17

In salvation our identity is in Christ, in relationship with Christ, in union with Christ. There are several sub-identities this gives us. New creations refers to a radical, pervasive spiritual re-creation of the inner being. Being a Christian does not mean mending your ways or changing bad habits or embracing a list of dos and don'ts. Being a new creation is the spiritual product of God's gracious life-giving power. There are several sub-identities in being new creations.

We are children of God. John 1:12, states. "But to all who did receive Him, who believed in his name, He gave the right to become children of God." 1 John 3:1 proclaims, "See what kind of love the Father has given us, that we should be called the children of God, and so we are." When you were saved, you were born again and adopted into the family of God.

We are part of the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 12:27 Paul said to the church, "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." We are united in the body. Jesus is the head of the body. We have spiritual gifts to serve in the body.

We are temples of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 speaks of the body of an individual as temple, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit within you, who you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." Ephesians 2:21-22 speaks of the church as temple with Jesus being the cornerstone, "in whom the whole structure, being built together, grows into a holy temple of the Lord. In Him you are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." When we studied temple, we saw that temple is a place where Heaven intersects with earth; where God manifests His glory-filled presence; where He is worshipped; and where He is represented on earth. What a powerful identity this gives to the body of individual believers and to the body of believers.

We are saints. Over and over in the New Testament we are called saints, God's holy ones. We have been set apart from the profane and set apart to the exclusive use and glory of God.

# Identity - Commentary

We are disciples. We are followers of Jesus, learners from Jesus, abiders in Christ, and fishers of men. We are disciples who are to make disciples in a never-ending process of multiplication.

We are citizens of Heaven. Philippians 3:20 says, “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” This world is not our home. We are in the world but not of the world. In the world, we are ambassadors of Christ beseeching men to be reconciled to God.

## Identity in the New Creation.

- As a global people, Revelation 5:11-12; 14:6-7.
- As a victorious people, Revelation 12:10-12
- As a worshipping people, Revelation 19:1-10.
- As an eternal people, Revelation 21:1-5