

SESSION 1: INTRODUCTION

Welcome and Program Overview (Facilitator): 10 minutes

Session #1 Teaching: Who are you and what defines you? 10 minutes

Who are you and what defines you? What is your identity? That's a question many people struggle to answer.

Too often, people base their identities on what they do (from their jobs to their roles in relationships), defining themselves by those pursuits. But by doing so, they significantly limit their lives. The truth is that God intends for all people to find their identity in Christ. If you're a Christian, your identity encompasses all the abundance of being a beloved child of God. Here's how you can start living your life fully in Christ, keeping in mind that your identity is found in Christ. Use this list of things God calls you and how He identifies you to remind yourself who you are in Christ. As a Christian, you've been adopted into God's family. The work of your big brother – Jesus – on the cross has made it possible for you to become one of the sons or daughters of God the Father. So make your main goal of life learning how to know, love, and trust God as your Father. While the people who love you can't do so completely unselfishly, continually, or perfectly, God does. As a Christian, nothing can ever separate you from God's great love for you. Jesus has given you the power to ultimately overcome evil, sin, and death. Use the spiritual weapons at your disposal as a Christian (truth, righteousness, the Gospel, faith, salvation, scripture, prayer, and the strength to stand) in spiritual battles, trusting that you can always emerge victorious

Small Group Discussion: 25 minutes

As you spent some time considering your life over the week and thought about your spiritual experiences, discuss the following questions with your group.

- *In an average day, what percentage of your energy and time and worry is devoted to non spiritual things?*
- *What keeps you busy and commands your attention?*
- *When you consider experiencing more of the spiritual realm, are you eager, excited, optimistic? OR... Are you anxious, confused, overwhelmed, unsettled and skeptical?*
- *Discuss how skeptical you are right now about the spiritual realm and your ability to come into contact with it. If you're skeptical, what is the source of doubt? Dig deep and spend some time discussing this as a group. Can you identify a particular experience of influence in your life that may hold you back from getting all God wants you to get out of this class?*

Finish this session by writing in your journal about your feelings and your expectations of this next study, and PLEASE be honest!

Small Group Wrap-Up: 10 minutes

- *What did you cover in your small group time?*
- *What were the biggest take-aways and action items*

Discuss This Week's Homework on next page: 5 minute

Discuss “Listening Prayer” & Review Session 1 Homework: 15 minutes

Read **John 1:43–51**. Nathanael, one of the disciples, recognized his daily need to seek out God in quiet and reflection. Because he was diligent, Jesus met him in a very personal way. Now, read **Psalms 139**, and view God as a father who wants to spend time to get to know you as His child! This week, commit to 60-minutes each morning to kick-start this study! Get up earlier than normal, so you can experiment with **“listening prayer” and journalling EVERY DAY!**

First, find a quiet place that brings you peace, perhaps outside, where you can sit still for fifteen minutes. Pray against distraction and confusion and invite the Holy Spirit to direct your thoughts. After 15 minutes, hopefully, you are fully relaxed. Then, look around and consider what is in front of you right now. Yes, physically in front of you. What do you see? Take it in. Take out your journal and describe what you see in one or two sentences. When you’re done, do it again. Take another five minutes and look harder. Consider what’s underneath whatever you see. What is going on beneath? Above? Beyond? What is the deeper truth? And again, in one or two sentences, describe what comes to mind. Now, if you’re not already uncomfortable, **let’s do it AGAIN!** Spend another five minutes looking again. Look even harder. Deeper. Further. It’ll surely be uncomfortable and you may be saying to yourself. “I’ve done this already!” **Push through anyway.** Stay with it and ask what God is trying to show you here. What is He trying to give you here? What does He want to teach you today? How is He trying to guide you? To love you? When you’re done, journal some more.

End the week by watching this video on identity and then journal: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsDQEbqlyM> - What does it mean to you that God thinks of you as a masterpiece?