

Discovering Who You Are in Christ

Lessons by Pastor Blake Gideon



iDENTITY

iDENTITY

Discovering Who You Are in Christ

Six-Week Small Group Study Guide for use with
Identity: Discovering Who You Are in Christ DVD series



TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Pep Talk For Small Group Leaders _____ 4

How To Use This Study Guide _____ 5

Small Group Sessions

Session One: Who Do You Think You Are? __ 8

Session Two: They Say. He Says. _____ 17

Session Three: The Truth About You _____ 25

Session Four: Building Unity _____ 33

Session Five: Walking With Integrity _____ 40

Session Six: Becoming A Warrior _____ 48

Helps

Suggestions for Small Group Leaders _____ 56

Small Groups, Who Needs Them? _____ 61

“We, The Small Group Members” _____ 64

Answer Key _____ 67

Pep Talk For Small Group Leaders

No pressure. Even if you have never led a small group before, you can do this!

When you meet with the rest of your group, simply play the provided DVD, watch it along with everyone else, and keep the discussion and prayer time that follows headed in the right direction.

The Holy Spirit will do the rest.

In the days ahead, keep in mind that each small group is as unique as its members. Do not expect yours to look like anyone else's. Focus on welcoming people wherever they happen to be spiritually and providing them with the opportunity to take the next step in their relationship with God. Only He knows what the next six weeks hold.

Be open, maintain your enthusiasm, and expect great things!

How To Use This Study Guide

Each session in this study contains all of the following segments. Below you will find a brief explanation of each.



GETTING ON THE SAME PAGE:

Your small group members will converge at each meeting having experienced many different things in the course of the day. Their mindsets will differ accordingly. That is why it is so important to give everyone a chance to take a deep breath, put the cares of the outside world aside for the time being, and focus on what God wants them to hear. Follow the instructions and/or discuss the questions in this segment and allow time for group members to settle their hearts and minds before you play the DVD.



MEMORY VERSE:

Each week, you will be given a Bible verse from the focal passage for that week's session for your group to memorize. Take time to read it aloud and give those who memorized the verse for the week before an opportunity to say it to someone else without looking. You may want to do this in pairs. Be careful not to make those who did not memorize the verse feel awkward.

LISTEN:

Each week, your small group will watch a video lesson taught by Pastor Blake Gideon, Edmond's First Baptist Church. Fill in the blanks as you listen to the lesson. If necessary, you can find the answers to the fill-in-the-blank questions in the answer key at the back of this book.

EXPLORE:

After each lesson, take a few moments to think about/answer the explore questions as individuals. Then, discuss them as a group. Do not hurry. Let the Holy Spirit guide your discussion and spend time on the questions that your group members want to discuss the most. Give every group member an equal opportunity to speak, but do not pressure anyone to share if they do not feel comfortable doing so.

APPLY:

Before you close in prayer, give group members a few moments of quiet to think about and answer the questions provided while their thoughts are fresh. These questions are not for group discussion, but will encourage group members to apply Truth to their own lives and respond immediately to the Holy Spirit's voice.



PRAY:

Prayer knits a group together. Take time to thank God for what He has done and pray for the needs and concerns of the members of your group. Keep track of prayer requests and praises.



ONE MORE THING:

While you are all together, use these instructions to prepare for the week ahead.

Session One

Who Do You Think You Are?

Focal Passage: Ephesians 1:3-6



GETTING ON THE SAME PAGE:

- Take a few moments to get to know one another. Go around the room and give everyone a chance to share their name and a little bit about themselves. Guests may want to tell whom they came with and how they are connected to that person.
- Before you begin, read through the “We, the small group members” pledge on page 64. Ask the members of your small group to verbally agree to the guidelines listed in this pledge so that everyone will feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and ideas in the weeks ahead. You may want to make a larger version of this pledge to hang on the wall that every small group member can sign.

- Why did you come to this small group meeting?

- What are you hoping to discover or learn?

- What do you want God to do in your life?

 **MEMORY VERSE:**

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, in Christ; for He chose us in Him, before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight...” Ephesians 1:3-4



LISTEN:

Introduction

N_____ is more influential in your life than you are.

How you see yourself will affect you E_____.

M_____, S_____, and

F_____.

Sources of Influence

You have a choice to make.

You can find your identity H_____, focusing on situations, experiences, and human relationships.

Or

You can find your identity V_____, focusing on the work God is doing in your life through Jesus Christ.

Tell-Tale Signs

Those who find their identity H_____ often experience discontentment, dissatisfaction, anger, anxiety, defensiveness, and depression. They exhibit the fruit of the flesh.

Those who find their identity V_____ experience contentment, satisfaction, joy, and peace. They exhibit the fruit of the Spirit.

The Solution

IF you are a believer, meaning you have surrendered your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and found forgiveness of sin through His death, burial, and resurrection, you must **choose** to see yourself as God does.

In Jesus Christ, you are

1. B_____

God has done great things for you. Paul calls them “heavenly” and “spiritual” (v.3). They are permanent, not temporary, and go way beyond the positive experiences you have in everyday life.

2. C _____

By His grace, God has lavished you with His free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. He chose you for Himself “before the foundation of the world” (v. 4). You did not deserve it, but He chose you anyway.

3. P _____

God knows everything that has ever happened or will happen, and He has control over all of it. Before you even knew He existed, He chose you to belong to Him because He wanted you (v.5).

4. A _____

When you were ready, God made you aware of His love and grace and gave you the faith to put your trust in Him so that you could be adopted into His family once and for all. As His child, you are His heir alongside your brothers and sisters in Christ and Jesus Himself (v.5).

Why did God do all of this for you (v.6)?



EXPLORE:

Do you find your identity vertically or horizontally?
What does the evidence say?

Have you surrendered your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ? If so, when did you make that choice? How is your life different now that you are a member of God's family?

What, if anything, is keeping you from seeing yourself as God sees you? What needs to happen in your life?

How does it inspire you to know that God loved and chose you before you were ever aware of Him? When did you first hear about His love for you? Did you believe it? Why or why not? How about now?

Do you live like someone who believes they are blessed?

 **APPLY:**

Record your thoughts honestly. You will not be asked to share what you write here.

What did I learn from this session that I did not know before?

What was I reminded of?

What is God saying to me?

How will I respond?



PRAY:

Share praises for what God has done in the lives of your small group members. Share prayer requests and pray for those requests as a group.



ONE MORE THING:

Go to “Small groups, who needs them?” on page 61 . Follow the instructions you find there.

Have you personally made the decision to follow Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? If not, consider staying a little later tonight and discuss this decision with your group leader or someone else from your group. They will be more than happy to listen and share with you about the most important decision you will ever make.

Session Two

They Say. He Says.

Focal passage: Ephesians 1:7-14



GETTING ON THE SAME PAGE:

- Take a few moments to make new small group members feel welcome. Reintroduce yourselves and try to find common ground.
- Read through the “We, the small group members” pledge once again. Let new group members know that everyone in the group has agreed to the requirements listed and ask them to do the same.
- Think back over your week. Were you able to find your identity vertically instead of horizontally? What victories did you experience? What setbacks? Give specific examples.



MEMORY VERSE:

"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace..." Ephesians 1:7



LISTEN:

Introduction

If your identity is not established in Christ, you will look to other things to establish your identity. Some false alternatives that people look to are

1. P _____
2. B _____ I _____
3. M _____
4. S _____
5. K _____
6. E _____

The Solution

To review what we learned last week...

IF you are a believer, meaning you have surrendered your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and found forgiveness of sin through His death, burial, and resurrection, you must **choose** to see yourself as God does. In Jesus Christ, you are blessed, chosen, predestined, and adopted.

You are also

5. R_____

Before salvation, every person is held captive by the power of sin. However, in Christ, we are set free from both sin's power and sin's penalty, which is death (Romans 6:23).

6. F_____

When a sinner turns to Christ in repentance, the penalty for sin is sent away (Luke 13:3). Christ carried the burden of your sin on the cross (1 Peter 2:24). As a result, everyone who believes in Christ is declared "not guilty," including you (2 Corinthians 5:21)!

7. W_____

God has granted you His divine wisdom. You are now a part of a large family that is made up of every tribe, tongue, and language. God has granted you the wisdom to understand this mystery, which is made possible through the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

8. A J_____ H_____

Not only has God given us an inheritance in Christ (1 Peter 1:3-4), but He has made us an inheritance FOR Christ. The Church is His body, temple, and bride. We shall someday share His glory. Though we will never become divine, we will live forever in His presence as His adopted children and joint heirs with Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21).

9. S_____

When a sinner hears the Word of God, which is the Truth, and trusts in Christ, they receive the Holy Spirit. When you receive the Holy Spirit, you are sealed by God forever. You belong to God, and He will keep you (John 10:27). Nobody can break the seal.

What you say to yourself will either promote personal well-being or damage it. Practice C_____ -C_____ S_____ -T_____. Find your identity in Christ and speak words of life to yourself every day.

For example: "In Christ I am blessed, chosen, predestined, adopted, redeemed, forgiven, wise, a joint heir, and sealed by His Spirit. This is who I am, and who I am determines how I live. Therefore, since my identity is in Christ, I will choose to live today for Christ."



EXPLORE:

What evidence do you see in your own life that you have been set free from sin?

How does the fact that you are forgiven and God no longer holds your sin against you affect the way that you think, act, feel, and/or live your life?

Why is it so easy to forget that we are a part of a global family that transcends nationality, skin color, language, and other barriers? What can be done to help us remember?

How should the body, bride, and temple of Jesus Christ be treated? Are you treating yourself that way? What, if anything, needs to change?

The enemy wants you to believe that your relationship with God is as fragile as your own humanity, but it is not. How does it feel to know that once you belong to God, you belong to God forever? How should that knowledge affect the way you live?



APPLY:

*Remember, this part is just for you.
You will not be asked to share.*

What did I learn from this session that I did not know before?

What was I reminded of?

What is God saying to me?

How will I respond?



PRAY:

Give small group members a chance to share what God is doing in their lives. Thank God for the blessings and challenges. Next, share prayer requests and pray for them as a group.



ONE MORE THING:

Visit the “Small groups, who needs them?” page once again and decide whom each group member will invite to the next meeting. Pray as directed.

Have you personally made the decision to follow Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? If not, consider staying a little later tonight and discuss this decision with your group leader or someone else from your group. They will be more than happy to listen and share with you about the most important decision you will ever make.

Session Three

The Truth About You

Focal passage: Ephesians 2:1-10



GETTING ON THE SAME PAGE:

- Take a few moments to introduce new small group members, reintroduce yourselves, and make them feel welcome.
- Briefly review the “We, the small group members” pledge for those who are new to the group.
- Were you able to live your life in freedom and confidence as the body, bride, and temple of Christ last week? What obstacles did you face? How did you handle them?



MEMORY VERSE:

“For by grace you are saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift—not from works, so that no one can boast...” Ephesians 2:8-9



LISTEN:

Introduction

In this lesson, we will take a look at our true Christian biography, who we were in the P_____, what God has done and is doing in the P_____, and what the F _____ holds.

Our Past: We were D_____ in sin (vv. 1-3)

Throughout history, people have held three basic views concerning human nature:

1. Man is basically O_____.
2. Man is not well, but S _____.
3. Man is spiritually D_____.

Humanity without Jesus is spiritually D_____, hopeless. Before salvation, our identity is that of a C_____.

**Our Present: We have L_____ in Christ
(vv. 4-6)**

If you have put your trust in Jesus Christ for your salvation, God has done two things for you:

1. He has made you A_____.
2. He has R_____ you up.

**Our Future: We are S_____ with Christ in
the H_____ (v. 6).**

If you have put your trust in Jesus Christ for your salvation, you have already been made to sit with God. You are "in Christ." Someday you will be glorified practically as well as positionally.

1. The word S_____ means that your position in Christ is eternally secure.
2. The phrase "I ____ C_____" means that you will reign with Him.
3. All of this has happened by His G_____.

The Task at Hand

For as long as we live here on earth, our job is to live out P_____ what we already are P_____.



EXPLORE:

Which of the historical views of mankind, that he is okay, that he is just sick, or that he is dead do most of the nonbelievers that you know hold to? How do you know? Knowing this, what might be the best way to share the Truth with them?

Why is it so difficult for people to accept that we are spiritually dead on our own? What does the fact that we are dead on our own say about all that we live and work for outside of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

What emotions do you experience when you think about the fact that Jesus Christ died and rose again to make you alive and raise you up? How does it change your perspective on life and the things that you go through?

Do you feel like someone who has been seated in the heavens? Explain. Why is it so difficult to maintain an eternal focus in this temporary world? How can you overcome the temptation to give in to defeat on a daily basis?

Do you know any Christians who do a good job of living out practically what they are positionally in Christ? Explain. What is the biggest obstacle you face when trying to do so yourself?



APPLY:

Everything in this section is just between you and God. Write down your thoughts completely while they are still fresh.

What did I learn from this session that I did not know before?

What was I reminded of?

What is God saying to me?

How will I respond?



PRAY:

This time, before you pray, give group members who want to do so an opportunity to share their salvation story; to tell the when, where, why, and how of their coming to know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. Pray out loud and thank God for the difference He has made in their lives here on earth and their eternal future.

Then, give small group members a chance to share other praises and prayer requests. Pray for them as a group.



ONE MORE THING:

Once again, visit the “Small groups, who needs them?” page and decide whom each group member will invite to the next meeting. Pray as directed.

Have you personally made the decision to follow Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? If not, consider staying a little later tonight and discuss this decision with your group leader or someone else from your group. They will be more than happy to listen and share with you about the most important decision you will ever make.

Session Four

Building Unity

Focal passage: Ephesians 4:1-6



GETTING ON THE SAME PAGE:

- Take a few minutes to welcome new group members and get to know them. Find out who they came with and try to find common interests.
- Briefly review the “We, the small group members” pledge. Ask new members to agree to the requirements.
- Did you live your week like someone who has been made alive and raised up in Christ?

- How has making an effort to find your identity in Christ rather than your surroundings changed your outlook over the past few weeks?

 **MEMORY VERSE:**

"I...urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, accepting one another in love, diligently keeping the unity of the Spirit with the peace that binds us." Ephesians 4:1-3

 **LISTEN:**

Introduction

What we B_____ should affect the way we L_____. Those who are in Christ should strive to live together in Christian U_____.

Character Traits That Cultivate Unity

1. Be H_____, G_____.

and P_____, bearing with one another in L_____.

2. Put off falsehood and tell the T_____.
3. In your A_____, do not S_____.
4. Do not S_____, but do something useful with your H_____. S_____ with those in need.
5. Do not let U_____ talk come out of your mouth, but build others up according to their N_____.

The Charge to Preserve Unity

Make every effort to keep the U_____ of the S_____ through the bond of P_____.

The Divine Origin of Christian Unity

Unity is rooted in the T_____,
which is made up of the H_____
S_____, J_____
C_____, and G_____ the
F_____.



EXPLORE:

Any time people get together, there is the potential for conflict. What makes unity in the Church, a group of diverse individuals, possible? How is it achieved? How does it glorify God?

Some people consider humility, gentleness, and patience to be signs of weakness. How is God glorified when we exhibit these character traits in front of others who may or may not value them?

Why is it so important that believers control their tongue, speak truthfully, and learn to keep quiet if they cannot say anything nice? How do our words affect other members of the body? How do they affect people outside of the Church?

Why is it so important for every member of the body to do his or her part and give to one another? What happens in a person's heart when they give? What happens in a relationship when both parties give to one another?

What does this passage mean by "every effort"? How far does God expect you to go in order to promote unity through the peace that Jesus Christ provides?



APPLY:

*Jot down your thoughts before they slip away.
Remember, you do not have to share
these answers out loud.*

What did I learn from this session that I did not know before?

What was I reminded of?

What is God saying to me?

How will I respond?



PRAY:

Take a few moments to share praises and prayer requests with one another and pray as a group. Follow up on prayer requests mentioned in previous weeks for which follow up reports have not been offered.



ONE MORE THING:

Ask everyone to decide whom they will invite to next week's meeting. Divide up the names of any small group members who are absent or have stopped coming and agree to contact them within the next 24 hours. Do not make them feel guilty. Simply let them know how much they are missed.

Have you personally made the decision to follow Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? If not, consider staying a little later tonight and discuss this decision with your group leader or someone else from your group. They will be more than happy to listen and share with you about the most important decision you will ever make.

Session Five

Walking with Integrity

Focal Passage: Ephesians 5:1-6:9



GETTING ON THE SAME PAGE:

- Greet new people and make them feel welcome. Introduce yourselves once again even though most of you probably know each other by now.
- Go over the “We, the small group members” pledge very quickly, hitting the highpoints, like confidentiality.
- What measures did you take to promote and preserve unity in the body this week? How did it feel to put the needs of others above your own?

- How have your priorities and perspective changed over the past few weeks? Can other people tell? Explain.

 **MEMORY VERSE:**

“Therefore, be imitators of God, as dearly loved children. And walk in love, as the Messiah also loved us and gave Himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God.” Ephesians 5:1-2

 **LISTEN:**

Introduction

Rather than flirting with the world and T_____, focus on imitating God and run hard after Him.

Walk This Way

Walk in L_____ (5:1-6)

1. If you know J_____, do not live like those who do not.

2. Run away from S_____ and all forms of _____.

3. DonotsayF_____thingsormake C_____ jokes. Instead, use your mouth to give T_____.

4. Do not be G_____.

Walk in H_____ (5:7-14)

1. Partner with God and walk in the L_____.

2. Produce G_____, R_____, and T_____.

3. D_____, or figure out, what is pleasing to the Lord.

4. E_____ the darkness.

Walk in C_____ (5:15-17)

1. Be W_____.
2. Make the most of T_____.
3. Do not be F_____,
but understand what the Lord's
W_____ is.

Walk in H_____ (5:18-6:9)

1. Honor God in your M_____
relationship.
2. Children, O_____ and
H_____ your parents.
3. Parents, do not stir up
A_____ in your
children
4. Serve others with a good A_____,
as if you were serving God, not men.

5. Treat those under your A_____ with respect.



EXPLORE:

Which is the bigger challenge for you, guarding your speech or avoiding greed? Explain. How do you guard against it?

What are some practical ways that you guard your heart against sexual immorality and other forms of impurity that might help others in your small group?

How might asking other believers to hold you accountable help you resist the pull of the world? What keeps believers from asking for that kind of help from one another?

It has been said that silence is agreement. Why is it so important for believers to expose the works of darkness? Is there a right and wrong way to do this? Explain.

Whose job is it to make sure you know what God's will is and what pleases Him? Are you assuming this responsibility or relying on others to tell you what God's Word says?

What does it say about our love for God and willingness to be used in His master plan to rescue the lost when we allow our closest relationships to sour? How can we guard against apathy in this area?



APPLY:

*Record your thoughts before they slip away.
Remember, you do not have
to share these answers.*

What did I learn from this session that I did not know before?

What was I reminded of?

What is God saying to me?

How will I respond?



PRAY:

Take a few moments to share praises and prayer requests with one another and pray as a group.



ONE MORE THING:

Next week is the last lesson in the Identity series, but this is not the end of your small group. It's the beginning. Use the last lesson as a springboard to launch new long-term relationships. Get busy. Reach out. Decide tonight whom you will invite and finish strong!

Have you personally made the decision to follow Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? If not, consider staying a little later tonight and discuss this decision with your group leader or someone else from your group. They will be more than happy to listen and share with you about the most important decision you will ever make.

Session Six

Becoming a Warrior

Focal passage: Ephesians 6:10-18



GETTING ON THE SAME PAGE:

- Take a few minutes to welcome new group members and get to know them. Make sure they know you are glad they came.
- One last time, briefly review the “We, the small group members” pledge.
- Were you able to resist temptation and walk in the light this week? Would you like to share any specific victories?

- Did you honor God in your relationships this week? What obstacles did you face? How did you overcome them?

MEMORY VERSE:

"For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens." Ephesians 6:12

LISTEN:

Introduction

Jesus Christ won the victory over Satan through His D_____, B_____, and R_____. In Christ, you are V_____, but Satan wants to destroy your T_____ and will attack you. You are a W_____, so prepare and fight!

Be Strong in the Lord (v. 10)

1. Trying to fight Satan in your own strength is F_____.
2. Draw your strength from the L_____.

Put on the Whole Armor of God (vv. 11-17)

The Armor of God is something you always put on, but never take off.

As a warrior for Christ, your armor includes

1. The B_____ of T_____ Study Scripture for yourself. Do not be carried away by false doctrine (Ephesian4:14).
2. The B_____ of R_____ Guard your emotions by obeying God.
3. The S_____ of the G_____ of P_____ Make sure you are rightly related to God through the Gospel and then carry the Gospel to others.

4. The S_____ of F_____ Satan will send flaming arrows your way: immorality, hatred, envy, anger, covetousness, pride, doubt, fear, despair, and distrust. Choose to put your trust in God and believe that His way is best.

5. The S_____ of the S_____ Use God's Word to fight temptation.

P_____ at all times to prepare for battle and to get you through the battle.



EXPLORE:

How does knowing that Jesus Christ has already won the victory help you fight the battles that you face? Give specific examples.

How can you tell whether you are trying to fight a battle in your own strength or in the Lord? How do your tactics differ? How do the results differ?

Why is it so important to study Scripture for yourself and double check everything you hear against God's Word? Have you ever been carried away by false doctrine simply because it sounded familiar or biblical? Explain.

Why is it so important to memorize Scripture and have it ready for immediate recall at all times?

How has obedience to God protected you in the past and kept you from pain?

Are you carrying the Gospel to others and multiplying God's army? If so, what is the most effective method you have found? If not, why not?

Can faith really be as simple as choosing to trust God and believe His way is best? Why do we make it so difficult?

 **APPLY:**

Keep this book so that you can look back through it later and remember what God did in your life over the course of this series.

What did I learn from this session that I did not know before?

What was I reminded of?

What is God saying to me?

How will I respond?



PRAY:

Take a few moments to share praises and prayer requests with one another and pray as a group.

Tonight, make sure to thank God for the relationships that you have formed with other small group members and ask Him to bless those relationships as you make an intentional effort to support and encourage one another.



ONE MORE THING:

Go around the room and let those who want to express what this small group experience has meant to them. Let them share what they have learned and what God has done in their lives over the past month and a half.

Make sure that everyone knows they are welcome to be a part of your weekly small group meetings even after this series is over. Give the time and place you normally meet and express your interest in forming a long-term relationship with them.

Have you personally made the decision to follow Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? If not, consider staying a little later tonight and discuss this decision with your group leader or someone else from your group. They will be more than happy to listen and share with you about the most important decision you will ever make.

Suggestions for Small Group Leaders

Thank you for stepping up and taking responsibility for a small group! May God bless you for your willingness to serve in this way. Here are a few things to remember as you look ahead and prepare to lead your group.

1. Be prepared.

The time your small group will spend together over the next six weeks is too important to take lightly. Make sure that you are guarding your personal relationship with God and not allowing spiritual static to interfere with your ability both to hear the Holy Spirit's voice and to lead with discernment.

Before each meeting, watch the video on your own and fill out every blank in the study guide, giving careful thought to your answers. That way, if discussion lags or others are reluctant to share because they are still processing new information, you will be able to keep the discussion moving and model the kind of transparency you would like to see in your small group members eventually.

Pray for your small group during the week, especially in the hours just before your meeting.

- Ask God to work in their lives, open their hearts to His truth, and guard the Word that is planted there each week.
- Ask Him to give them opportunities to invite new group members and the boldness to follow through.
- Ask Him to make a way for your small group members to attend and put aside distractions during your time together.
- Finally, thank Him for the opportunity to serve and influence others in such a personal way.

2. Be patient.

The rhythm of God is different in each person's life, and the members of your small group will be in many different places spiritually. Do not expect everyone to know what you know, feel how you feel, or act how you act. Instead, accept them where they are and do your best to lead them to the next step in their relationship with God without getting in the way or pushing them. Remember, only

Jesus can be Jesus. Your job is to facilitate, to bring people to the feet of Jesus and let Him do the teaching, convicting, forgiving, healing, and restoring.

As you lead discussion, be aware of the needs of your group. Let those who need to share do so without dominating the conversation, and let those who need to listen and absorb do so without feeling pressure to reveal more than they are ready to reveal, all the while looking for opportunities to include everyone. You will find that some discussion questions are less personal than others. You may want to direct these questions toward your more reserved small group members to draw them out.

Try to resist the urge to answer every question or correct people at every turn. Allow discussion to unfold naturally. Give people time to think. If a full minute goes by with no verbal response, you may want to rephrase the question or offer a brief thought, but do not take over and begin to lecture.

If someone interprets Scripture incorrectly or seems bent on controversy, be gentle in your correction and rely on Scripture to make your point, speaking calmly and with an even tone. When necessary, kindly suggest that the small group member stay after your meeting to continue your discussion in private. While it is important that everyone leave your meeting knowing the Truth, it is

equally important for them to leave with settled rather than conflicted hearts.

3. Be flexible.

As a small group leader, your goal is to foster community built around the Truth of God's Word, not routine, not personality, not schedule, not even group dynamic, something that will most likely change as new members with distinct personalities join your group.

No matter what happens, do not allow the unexpected to derail your focus. When asked by church leaders to flex in the best interest of your small group and the church as a whole, do so with the proper attitude.

When new people join your group, welcome them and allow them to participate as if they had been a part of your group from the beginning. If necessary, change the way that your group splits up during memory verse, discussion, and prayer time to accommodate new members and give them an equal chance to participate.

4. Be reliable.

If, at this point, you have any reason to believe that you might not be able to see your commitment to lead a small group through to the end, alert church leadership immediately and wait for the next opportunity to serve. Once you have committed to lead a small group, make it the new non-negotiable on your calendar and schedule the rest of your commitments around this one.

Make arrangements to show up to every small group meeting early. When there is even the slightest possibility that you might be late or have to miss a meeting, let church leadership and one or two of your most reliable group members know as soon as you know so they can make sure your small group is unaffected by your tardiness or absence as possible.

Keep track of small group attendance, making sure to collect email addresses and phone numbers for everyone who attends. When someone is absent, contact that person within 24 hours or assign that person to a small group member who knows them well and ask them to do the same.

Keep track of prayer requests and praises for your small group.

Small Groups, Who Needs Them?

You may be very comfortable with the people already in your small group, but you can always make room for one more seeking heart, can't you?

In the weeks ahead, try to remember that this temporary study has eternal potential. Fight the urge to huddle up and turn your back to others who might be interested in joining your group given the chance.

Reach out. Invite. Extend a hand of welcome. Remember, God puts people in your life for a reason. Who knows? For some of the people you know, this may be it.

Fill in the blanks below with names that fit each category.

My family

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My friends

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My neighbors

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My coworkers

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

My church friends

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

People who share my hobbies/interests

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

People I know from school (mine or my child's)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Read back through this list. Which names jump out at you? Circle them.

Each week, share one of those names with your small group and commit to invite them before the following meeting, giving them a few days to plan ahead. Pray that God would stir curiosity in their hearts, make a way for them to participate, and give them a desire to join your group.

Look for opportunities to invite those whom God lays on your heart and follow through with your commitment!

“We, The Small Group Members…” Pledge

In order to create and foster a safe and supportive community centered on the Truth of God’s Word, we, the small group members, agree to the following requirements:

Respect

We agree to respect one another by giving everyone an opportunity to speak, listening to what they have to say without interrupting, and remaining quiet when we have nothing positive or encouraging to say in response.

Confidentiality

We agree not to discuss anything spoken in our small group meetings with anyone outside of our meetings.

Discretion

We agree to put the feelings of others before our own and refrain from bringing up for discussion topics that might be hurtful or embarrassing to the members of our small group.

We agree not to participate in gossip of any kind during small group meetings and give other group members permission to stop us when we start to go down this potentially destructive path.

Harmony

We agree to make an effort to include new members in our discussion and make them feel welcome without showing favoritism.

We agree not to argue with or push forcefully our opinion on other small group members. Should conflict arise, we will continue the discussion at another time if and when both members so desire with our small group leader serving as mediator. We agree to hold the Bible as the ultimate authority in settling any conflict that might arise.

Focus

We agree to make small group meetings a priority and attend unless unavoidably hindered.

We agree to stay on topic and set aside distractions during our small group meetings, leaving phones and other communicative devices on silent, and exiting the meeting room to text or make phone calls when absolutely necessary.

Understanding that tender ears can inhibit adult conversation, we agree not to bring children with us to small group meetings but arrange for child care if necessary.

Honesty

We agree to speak only what we know to be the Truth according to God's Word so that we do not lead one another astray with false doctrine or cause confusion in the hearts of fellow small group members.

Grateful for the opportunity to participate in Bible study and invest in the lives of others,

Signature(s)

Answer Key

Session One:

No one is more influential in your life than you are.

How you see yourself will affect you emotionally, mentally, spiritually, and functionally.

You can find your identity horizontally, focusing on situations, experiences, and human relationships.

You can find your identity vertically, focusing on the work God is doing in your life through Jesus Christ.

Those who find their identity horizontally often experience discontentment, dissatisfaction, anger, anxiety, defensiveness, and depression.

Those who find their identity vertically experience contentment, satisfaction, joy, and peace.

In Jesus Christ you are

Blessed

Chosen

Predestined

Adopted

God did all of this so that people would praise His glorious grace.

Session Two:

Some false alternatives that people look to are

People

Body Image

Money

Sports

Kids

Education

You are also

Redeemed

Forgiven

Wise

Joint Heir

Sealed

Practice Christ-centered self-talk.

Session Three:

In this lesson, we will take a look at our true Christian biography, who we were in the past, what God has done and is doing in the present, and what the future holds.

We were dead in sin.

Man is basically okay.

Man is not well, but sick.

Man is spiritually dead.

Humanity without Jesus is spiritually dead, hopeless. Before salvation, our identity is that of a corpse.

We have life in Christ.

He has made you alive.

He has raised you up.

We are seated with Christ in the heavens.

The word seated means that your position in Christ is eternally secure.

The phrase in Christ means that you will reign with Him.

All of this has happened by His grace.

For as long as we live here on earth, our job is to live out practically what we already are positionally.

Session Four:

What we believe should affect the way we live. Those who are in Christ should strive to live together in Christian unity.

Be humble, gentle, and patient, bearing with one another in love.

Put off falsehood and tell the truth.

In your anger, do not sin.

Do not steal, but do something useful with your hands. Share with those in need.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but build others up according to their needs.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.

Unity is rooted in the Trinity, which is made up of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, and God the Father.

Session Five:

Rather than flirting with the world and temptation, focus on imitating God and run hard after Him.

Walk in love.

If you know Jesus, do not live like those who do not.

Run away from sexual immorality and all forms of impurity.

Do not say foolish things or make crude jokes. Instead, use your mouth to give thanks.

Do not be greedy.

Walk in holiness.

Partner with God and walk in the light.

Produce goodness, righteousness, and truth.

Discern, or figure out, what is pleasing to the Lord.

Expose the darkness.

Walk in caution.

Be wise.

Make the most of time.

Do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.

Walk in harmony.

Honor God in your marriage relationship.

Children, obey and honor your parents.

Parents, do not stir up anger in your children.

Serve others with a good attitude, as if you were serving God, not men.

Treat those under your authority with respect.

Session Six:

Jesus won the victory over Satan through his death, burial, and resurrection. In Christ, you are victorious, but Satan wants to destroy your testimony and will attack you. You are a warrior, so prepare and fight!

Trying to fight Satan in your own strength is futile.

Draw your strength from the Lord.

As a warrior for Christ, your armor includes:

The Belt of Truth

The Breastplate of Righteousness

The Sandals of the Gospel of Peace

The Shield of Faith

The Sword of the Spirit

Pray at all times to prepare for battle and get you through the battle.

