

Who Are You? Small Group Guide

Warm-up Question: (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. What is your full name? Do you like it?
2. What is one unique aspect of who you are?

Read the following passages: Ephesians 1:1-2.

The introduction of Paul's letter to the Ephesians followed the typical conventions of letter writing in the ancient world. So it's not the form of this introduction that is significant; it is the content. Paul identified himself as Christ's messenger, a role given to him by God. He goes on to describe the recipients of his letter as "God's holy people," or, more literally, "saints," "the faithful in Christ Jesus." From just this short introduction, we can tease out several important implications: 1) Our identity comes from God; 2) This identity is not a result of our performance; 3) Jesus is at the center of our identity; and 4) We are God's holy people, not because we never err, but because God has made us holy.

Questions for Discussion (Choose several that are relevant for your group):

1. God is the only one who can tell us who we really are. In fact, later in this letter Paul will write, "For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name" (Ephesians 3:14-15). Given this fundamental reality, what role should our families, friends, life experiences, personal decisions, and other factors play in our self-understanding? Are any of these influences saying something about your identity that is contrary to who God says you are? Explain. What should we do when we find ourselves being influenced to embrace a self-understanding that is contrary to what God says?
2. Read Acts 22:12-16. Paul introduces himself as an apostle in the majority of his letters, so this was clearly an important part of his identity (at least when it came to his relationship with the churches to which he was writing). What can the timing of Paul's call to be an apostle teach us about the relationship between our identity and our performance? What should we do when the way we're living doesn't seem to align with who God says we are?
3. Consider the following statements about our identity as followers of Jesus. Do you find it difficult to embrace any of these statements? Explain.
 - I am God's child (John 1:12; Romans 8:16; Ephesians 1:5)
 - I am Christ's friend (John 15:15)
 - I am a saint (Ephesians 1:1)
 - All of my sins have been forgiven (Colossians 1:14)
 - I am free from condemnation (Romans 8:1-2)

- I cannot be separated from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39)
 - I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me (1 John 5:18)
 - I am God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works (Ephesians 2:10)
4. Read Galatians 2:20. How did Jesus shape Paul's identity? Describe what role Jesus plays in your current self-understanding?
 5. Read Philippians 3:4-9. All of us are tempted to lean on something to justify our place in the world. Why was it so significant when Paul expressed his desire to "be found in [Christ], not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ"? What are you prone to look to in order to feel good about yourself? Explain.
 6. Why might looking to establish our own sense of self-righteousness lead to a life that oscillates between pride and self-loathing? How does the Gospel change that?
 7. If righteousness is a status given to us as a gift of God's grace, do our actions even matter? Explain.
 8. Do you feel accepted by God? Explain.
 9. What is one way you want to change how you think about yourself in relationship to God?

Pray