

The Identity Step



Leader's Note: Before class begins, be sure to make copies of the Participant Handout for the session. Begin by welcoming the ladies and open the class in prayer. Before you watch the video, introduce the topic by spending approximately five minutes going over the definition and Session Opening. After you watch the video, open the floor for discussion and move into your selected group exercise(s).

The group exercises are designed to generate meaningful discussion. Depending on how much time you have, you may not have time to discuss all of the exercises. Before class begins, select the exercise(s) you want to focus your session on. Remember, the goal is not to “get through” all of the exercises, but to create an atmosphere where revelation comes through group dialogue that creates “aha moments”. When women bond through shared experiences and increased knowledge of God’s word, healing comes and creates an opportunity where safe and solid relationships can be built that can last well beyond the group study.

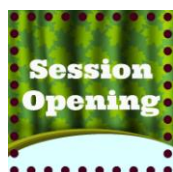
Definition of Identity:



The identity step is the practice of seeking our **worth** through the reflection of Christ and not the opinions of man.

The Bible doesn’t use the word identity, self-esteem, self-image or self-confidence. These are secular terms to describe what the Bible refers to as **hope, confidence or trust**.

Session Opening:



Help, someone stole my identity

Can you image life without a social security number? It’s our identity. It protects our personal and financial security. We can’t apply for a job, get a loan, get health insurance or file taxes without a social security number. Our credit rating, job history and tax returns are things that measure our identity on paper. Background checks can verify what type of character someone possesses. But what about your soul identity? We can’t really function effectively without a healthy identity in our soul. But how do you measure that? How do you create a healthy identity in your soul? What is your identity based on? Is it based on a secure foundation or one that could easily topple over when threatened by criticism, adversity or chaos?

For me....my identity was in _____. *(As a facilitator share a bit about where you used to put your identity. Remember how important it is to be vulnerable. Your own transparency sets the stage for others to feel like the group is a safe place to open up and share.)*



Video & Discussion Time: Watch the video for Session 3. Afterward, discuss the video before you transition into the group exercises. Pitch out a question or two to the group. Here are a few to get you started:

- ? Have you experienced a time in your life when you wrestled with God like Jacob did? What happened? Did you emerge from your struggles with a different walk?
- ? What are some other places women put their identity?

For this question, a dry erase board is extremely helpful. As each lady provides a response, write it on the board. There is something about having a dry erase marker in your hand that communicates the message that you are going to fill up the board with responses and creates a collaborative group effort that encourages group participation. When you are finished filling up the board the visual presentation of all the answers can make a dramatic impact.

Some of the places your group may mention include what I call the 6 A's:

- Accreditations (titles you've earned)
- Affiliations (popular or prestigious people you know)
- Associations (places of prestige to which you belong)
- Acquisitions (things you own)
- Achievements (things you've accomplished)
- Appearance (the way you look)

These 6 A's can resemble a secure foundation. When they are used to secure your soul identity, they result in pride. They can seem like stable place to anchor your identity, but most of the time they eventually fall. The resulting crash can create tremendous insecurity.

Other places where women anchor their identity include their children, friends, parents, siblings, employers, colleagues and even ministry leaders. A relationship doesn't even have to be close or intimate in order to bring false identity. Even acquaintances and affiliations can bring validation. The association with someone who has influence and power can be quite fulfilling for someone who craves identity. When we place high expectations on others in order to meet our own happiness and fulfillment, however, our identity is compromised.

- ? Does anyone care to share about where you've put your identity?



Group Exercises

Group Exercise A

Go around the room and have the participants take turns reading the bulleted items from their handout. Encourage group members to share and make comments after each item is read.

When a woman's identity is compromised she may:

- Be held in bondage to the opinions of others
- Worry about what others think of her
- Blend in and put on a false sense of self so she doesn't risk criticism
- Deny her feelings even when she's hurting
- Be overly defensive
- Pull approval out of other people
- Feel unworthy
- Fear change
- Fear rejection
- Constantly over-analyze and criticize her actions
- Seek validation from external influences instead of her inner confidence
- Be overly concerned about her appearance
- Never leave the house without makeup or wardrobe perfection
- Deny problems when they exist
- Avoid certain people because of what others may think

When we struggle with a compromised identity, our self-esteem is affected by how others treat us. When we fail, *we* are failures. What we don't understand is this: When we derive our identity from others we will constantly be looking for a fix—something to give us identity. But just like a drug addict, we often spend more than we can afford to maintain our pseudo sanity. We struggle to find a guarantee of confidence. We can be shaken at any time.

Group Exercise B

Identity Scriptures

Go around the room and have the participants take turns reading the scriptures and questions from their handout. Encourage group members to share and each person reads.

📖 My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Hosea 4:6 (NIV) knowledge comes from a Hebrew word meaning perception.

📖 My people are ruined because they don't know what's right or true. Hosea 4:6 (The Message)

? How can someone be destroyed by having the wrong self-image, perception or identity? If you have experienced a time when your identity suffered from the opinions of man, how did you overcome?

📖 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

📖 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27 (NIV)

? What does it mean to be a new creation or created in the image of God? Have you experienced a time when your identity was renewed in Christ?

📖 **3 John 1:2** Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. (NKJV)

📖 But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose *confidence* is in him. Jeremiah 17:7 (NIV) Blessed [is] the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose *hope* the LORD is. Jeremiah 17:7 (KJV)

Notice that the KJV of this verse uses the word *hope* instead of *confidence*. Hope comes from the Hebrew word *mibtach* (miv-täkh') which means trust, confidence, refuge

- a) act of confiding
- b) object of confidence
- c) state of confidence, security

? How can you tell when others do not have hope and confidence in God? What characteristics or mannerisms do they exhibit? How can you tell when your own hope and confidence is not centered in Christ?

📖 The gullible believe anything they're told; the prudent sift and weigh every word. Proverbs 14:15 (The Message)

📖 With persuasive words she led him astray; (stole his confidence so she could control him) she seduced him with her smooth talk. Proverbs 7:21 (NIV)

? Do actions really speak louder than words? How do we know when it is safe to trust others and what they say? Have you experienced a time when you put your trust in someone before they earned it? What happened?

📖 Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

📖 In the paths of the wicked lie thorns and snares, but he who guards his soul stays far from them. Proverbs 22:5 NIV

? Do you think guarding your soul is more like building a wall, being mistrustful, being cautious or establishing boundaries? How do you guard your soul?

📖 My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and a good name in the sight of God and man. Proverbs 3:1-4

📖 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh. Philippians 3:3 (NIV)

? Can having the favor of God also give you the favor of man? Have you experienced a time when you stood up for your Christian standards in the midst of apparent opposition? What happened? Did you win the favor of God or man or both?

Group Exercise C

The following action points are discussed in Love Junkies beginning on page 82. Read each action point. Participants can either follow along in their books or fill in the blanks on their handouts. After you read each bullet point, encourage group members to comment, giving their own insight or sharing their own experiences.

If you struggle with identity, try these action points:

❖ **Speak the Word**

Use the suggested scriptures above and declare them out loud by filling your name in the blank.

❖ **Declare Positive Affirmations**

Make a list of positive affirmations and say them out loud over yourself.

❖ **Exercise Your Faith**

Take truth and apply it to your life even if it feels awkward. Do it anyway. Ask God for specific ways to do this for your areas of weakness. Exercise and practice what he tells you to do. Don't despise small beginnings. The more you exercise the stronger you'll get, but you'll never lift a 15 pound weight if you can't lift a 5 pound dumbbell.

❖ **Evaluate Your Thoughts**

Be careful of what you say about yourself. Say your thoughts out loud. If what you say about yourself is not kind and encouraging and you wouldn't say it about someone else, don't say it about yourself. Our words create life and have the power to produce death.

❖ **Give Yourself a Break**

We tend to be the hardest on ourselves. Whenever you goof up, give yourself some grace. You give it to others so why not acknowledge the fact that you are imperfect and believe you'll do better next time.

❖ **Evaluate Friends and Places**

Change your friends. Protect your soul by discontinuing friendships with negative people. A man is known by the company he keeps and complaining is contagious.

❖ **Avoid Negative People or Environments**

Refuse to argue with others. When you are in a negative environment, say as little as possible (without wood a fire goes out) and remove yourself from the place if possible.



Reading Assignment for Next Week: Forgiveness

Chapters 9-11