

FIRST WOODWAY

YOUNG ADULT + COLLEGE



WHO ARE YOU?

A DEVO SERIES ON CHRIST-CENTERED IDENTITY

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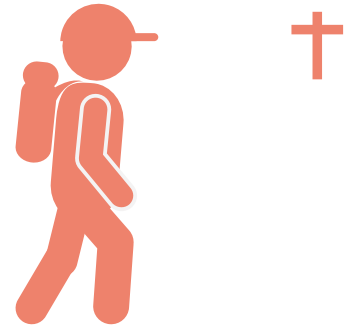
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THE QUEST TO BECOME TRULY HUMAN



In the beginning we were created in the image of God. Meaning, that every human in every place bears the image of God. This is a big deal. Klyne R. Snodgrass writes, *"If we are created in the image of God, we are not the origin of our existence, we cannot explain ourselves, and we are not the ultimate source of our identity. We are the result of action by Another; our identity is a gift of grace; and we mirror and point to Another."*

So our identity is given to us, not found/discovered. However, do people really look like they perfectly bear the image of God?

Well, no. This is because in Genesis 3 - through our rebellion, sin enters the picture and begins to wreck havoc upon humanity. There is a tension between what we were created to be and who we now are through sin.

Identity then becomes about being who God originally created us to be. Yet, we remain unable to do so because of our sin. What are we to do?

In steps Jesus Christ. Jesus was fully God, and fully human. Jesus bore the image of God to perfection. He lived a sinless life, and died on the cross identifying with us (sinners). After death on the cross He rose to new life, so now we may rise with Him as well. Dave Lomas writes, "Jesus is the only true human...He came to show us the way. He came to *make* the way."

The quest to become truly human is found on the journey to become like Jesus. This is why our identity is found in Him. In Jesus is the only place we find life/purpose/identity.

Read Genesis 1:26-27. What is the image of God? Why is this important for you and for others?

Discuss the significance that our identity is given as opposed to found.

Where are some common places that people "find" identity?

Why is Jesus the "only true human"?

Read Genesis 3 and Matthew 4:11-17. How are the passages connected? What is different and what is similar?

How is the quest to become truly human the same as the quest to have a Christ-Centered identity?

If our truest self is found in Jesus, then what does this mean for you and the group going forward?

If you don't know Jesus, then start today. Share with the group that you want to follow Jesus, and they will help you take next steps.

INTERPRETING OLD STORIES WITH THE NEW



What's your story? What's in your past? For better or for worse, we all have a history that has shaped who we are today. Some things we've done, and other things have been done to us. We've been both the victim and the perpetrator. The question is: What is God going to do with our stories?

Believe it or not, this is a running theme throughout the Scriptures. Think about it.

Cain is haunted by the past of killing his brother. In response he builds a city east of Eden outside of God's presence.

Joseph is betrayed by his brothers. Years later, Joseph interprets the past through God's goodness rather than evil.

Jacob steals Esau's birthright and spends a lifetime burdened by his deceit. In the end, Esau would embrace Jacob forgiving him for the past wrong doings.

In Nehemiah, the writings of the people of God are compiled because they knew the importance of knowing their story in light of God.

Paul's story was that he once sought to kill Christians, but now he is marked by raising up disciples and entire communities of Christians.

Jesus was able to identify where He was God's redemptive plan for humanity. It's by His story that we interpret our story now. What does the story of Jesus have to say about our story. His *new story* is the story we use to interpret our *old story*.

Read Ephesians 2. What do we learn about the history of those who follow Jesus? Before and after?

What do you think it means to interpret an old story with the new story?

What does the gospel say to those that have a history of being victimized, wounded and hurt? Share scripture that comes to mind.

What does the gospel say to those that have been the perpetrator, and the victimizer? Share scripture that comes to mind.

**Divide into smaller groups for next questions (guys and girls)*

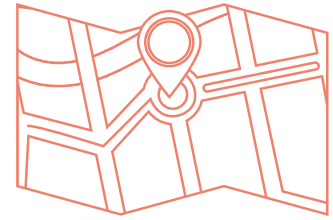
Share a part of your story that has had power in your life (good or bad).

What good do you think God would speak into that moment? Share scripture with one another.

Pray over one another.

If you realize there is significant need and trauma in your own life - please reach out to a First Woodway staff member. There is no past, no darkness, or sin that is too great for our God! We want to help you as you journey with God in in the healing process.

RELATIONSHIPS & GEOGRAPHY



Charles-Augustin Sainte-Beuve said, "Tell me who loves, who admires you, and I will tell you who you are." This may or may not come as a surprise to you, but much of our identity is shaped by relationships. We often look to people and things outside of us to understand who we are and what we should do. The question for this section is this:

Where are you? (Geography)
Who is there? (Relationships)

GEOGRAPHY: The "where" might sound like a strange question, but this is kind of a big deal. We often define ourselves to a source or a particular place. Not necessarily a physical place, but a place of found meaning. For a Christian, we are defined "in" Christ. Meaning, that we might get pulled in a thousand directions, but our ultimate place of definition is through our relation to Jesus. He is our home. He is our dwelling place.

RELATIONSHIPS: Most of the time the "Who" is easily answered after you define the "Where". Our surrounding community shapes us for better and for worse. For Christians, our community is found in Jesus. This is going to be a radical claim, but we believe that your primary source of community should be in your local church. The reason is that for formational purposes, we shouldn't have our "main" friends and our "church" friends. You can have friends outside of church for sure - we're all about it - but ask yourself: Who is my real community? Wherever you find your real community that's where you'll find the most formational power in your life. Then in that community we need to have restorative and redemptive relationships that mirror what Christ has done for us.

Are you defined out of a dwelling place in Christ?
Are you surrounding yourself with people that remind you of your true home?

Read Ephesians 2:13; Phil. 4:1; Rom. 16:12; 1 Cor. 1:4; Rom 12:5; Gal 3:26; Gal. 5:6; 1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Timothy 2:1; Rom. 3:24.

In your own words, what does it mean to be "in" Christ?

If Christ is to be our home - what are some false places that we tend to find home?

How have you seen people defined by their relationships?

Who are the people that shape or have shaped you the most in your life?

How does the gospel renew/restore our relationships with others?

Klyne R. Snodgrass wrote, "If your primary relations are not rooted in your Christ identity, your identity will not flourish. The people you are with will shape you, and you will shape them. Your identity is at stake." Discuss. Do you agree? Disagree?

Take time as a community to share any thoughts or prayers that you feel need to be shared on this topic.

Silent Personal Reflection:

Is your external community one to be trusted, one to be chosen, or should you change it if possible? Can you change it without being disloyal to yourself and disloyal to your relationships? What new relationships will help you become the person God intends?

ACTIONS COMMITMENTS HABITS & RITUALS



Somewhere along the way - people started believing that the things we *do* don't say anything about who we *are*. Unfortunately, this couldn't be further from the truth. Yes, what we do doesn't dictate how God feels about us -thankfully we are saved by the grace of God alone. However, our actions, commitments, habits & rituals still say a good deal about who we are. Jesus talked about this a lot, but he used more agrarian language to explain it. Wherever you read fruit just substitute with actions.

"You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will recognize them by their fruit" - Matthew 7:16-20

Good fruit only comes from being in Christ, so our actions don't save us - Jesus does. Still, it seems that our actions are important. Our actions (fruit) are a good sign of who we're abiding in.

Contrary to what many people believe, you are not just what you believe and think. You are also what you do, because what you do is a sign of what you truly believe.

Annie Dillard wrote, "How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives". Look at your day. Does it look like a life based in Christ? Whatever it is - it's a hint at what your life will look like.

Read Ephesians 4:1; Colossians 1:10; and 1 Thessalonians 2:12. What is Paul's main appeal?

In your own words, how are actions/commitments/habits & rituals connected to belief? (Recommended reading: John 15:1-11)

Read and discuss James 2:14-26

Pass out blank sheets of paper. Have each person write down how they spent the last two days from morning to evening. No one has to share - unless they want to.

Based on what you wrote down - How would you feel if the rest of your life looked like that?

What commitments, habits or rituals in your life would you get rid of?

What commitments, habits, rituals do you want to adopt?

Practice: Develop a "Rule of Life" within your D-group. Ask your CG leaders for more information on developing a rule of life.

RENEWING THE MIND



Have you ever considered that even your thoughts, moods and feelings can be submitted under the lordship of Jesus? Many Christians feel like they have no control over what goes on in their head. It's as if people believe that Jesus has won a new creation over everything except what we think, but this couldn't be further from the truth.

In Romans 12:2, Paul writes, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will"

We don't have to conform to the norms and patterns of the world. We can actually have our minds transformed by committing to renew it in light of Jesus Christ. Those who are in Jesus have the Holy Spirit within them. The Holy Spirit can help us identify lies and anything contrary to God, so we won't be slaves to the patterns of the world.

Joni Eareckson Tada said, "Part of my Christian growth is grabbing my thoughts by the scruffs of their necks and jerking them into line. I will not allow thoughts to take me down these dark roads."

Are your thoughts, moods and feelings calling the shots in your life, or is Jesus? The call isn't to become a robot, but to become fully human. For us that means submitting all of the raw material of our lives under the lordship of Jesus. Therefore as thoughts flood our heads through the Spirit we hold them up against the light and see if they hold weight. If they don't seem to be of God, then we refuse to engage them. Instead we dwell upon what we do know of God. Renew your mind and be transformed!

Read Romans 12:1-2. What do you think Paul means by renewing the mind? How does renewing the mind bring transformation?

Read Mark 10:35-45. Why could this be an example of Jesus calling for his disciples to renew their minds?

What are some habits that help us renew our minds?

Clearly, renewing the mind would be a blessing to the one that does it. But, how does renewing our minds benefit our community and the people we encounter?

Memorizing scripture is a key practice for renewing the mind. Why is this?

What memorized verses have helped you to renew your mind?

Where is a place that this group needs to be renewed? Where is a place that you've gotten caught up thinking in the patterns of the world?

Practice: As a group memorize a simple verse that combats the patterns of the world that you've been caught up in. (Ex. If your group doesn't value prayer enough - memorize a verse like Matt. 21:22).

WHO YOU ARE BECOMING



Are you excited for the future? So many people today fear the future. They anticipate it with skepticism and anxiety. Constant planning, and ruminating over past mistakes ruin the present. Charles Taylor said, "In order to have a sense of who we are, we have to have a notion of how we have become, and of where we are going."

We've already discussed your past story. You've been places, but where are you going? What is the end destination for you?

In theology there is phrase that is thrown around to describe the arrival of the Kingdom of God - "Now and not yet." Meaning, that when Jesus went to the Cross the Kingdom of God was inaugurated. It's begun! His Spirit has flooded into believers, so we don't have to be conformed to this world. However, the kingdom hasn't fully arrived... therefore, the kingdom is now and not yet.

Through the Holy Spirit in us we know that what God started - He is going to finish. We don't have to run after who God has called us to be in a panic - it's going to happen. The question is - how much of God and his Kingdom do you want to experience in this life? Don't you want to grow into all that God has for you here? You have a destiny - something that God has called you into and for that you have hope.

Klyne R. Snodgrass wraps this up well, "Perhaps the most important part of the message of hope is that you are more than you presently are. You are called to a higher level of existence, and by God's grace you can be different. That requires, of course, the willingness to move past the present, but at is what dying and rising with Christ and denying self to follow Christ are about."

Read 1 John 3:2 and John 5:24-29. How is this an example of "now and not yet"? Why is this important for identity?

For the Christian, what is the hope? Why does this change everything?

In what way does hope define an identity?

Read Ephesians 2:10 and Discuss.

Take a moment as a group to pause and consider all of the following: What is your story now in Jesus? How has He gifted you? What people has He placed in your life? What thought patterns is He currently reshaping?

Now ask yourself - what good works does God want me to walk into? Who is He calling me to be? If you have anything that God has revealed to you anything, then share it with the group.

Debrief on the series with one another...

For you, what was the most transformative topic covered and why?

What topic do you think you need to explore further?

Take time to pray and thank God for everything He has done