

IDENTITY - STUDY THROUGH THE BOOK OF EPHESIANS

INTRODUCTION

Many of us, during our college and early adult years, were sure we discovered our identity, only to realize that we were barely skimming the surface of who we are. Many of us, today, are still searching for our identity. Truth of the matter is, discovering one's identity is a lifelong process.

The Book of Ephesians has an abundance of wisdom to share with us that will reveal where our identity should be anchored. This study, even more so now in our current "lockdown" reality, has timely nuggets of truth that'll reveal who we are. In other words, when we anchor our identity in Christ, the shifting winds of change that inevitably happen in life won't shake us to the point of sinking.

Over the next few weeks, we'll explore the Book of Ephesians to better understand our identity, especially our identity in Christ, and look for ways to boldly live out who we are with as much grace, love, and truth as possible. We'll also track our journey together by keeping daily journal of our discovery.

JOURNALING WITH THE "HEAR" METHOD

In addition to our weekly gatherings, I'm also asking that each of you spend time in the assigned readings and journal your experiences with God by using the "HEAR" method. The acronym stands for **H**ighlight, **E**xplain, **A**pply, and **R**espond. Each of these four steps creates an atmosphere for hearing God speak.

Highlight - Simply jot down a verse or two that jumped out at you while reading the assigned verses.

Explain - Summarize the passage in your own words or explain what the text means to you. Consider context, what you sense God trying to communicate through the text, etc.

Apply - Use the following questions to help you extract application points from the verses...How can this verse or passage help me? What's God saying to me? What would the application of this verse look like in my life?

Respond - Finally, respond to the text. You may write an action step to do, describe a change in perspective, or simply respond in prayer to what you've learned.

FINAL THOUGHT

This study is rooted in discovering God's desire for us and, in turn, discovering our identity in Him. Be excited for what God has to share. And, as tiring as any particular day might be, stick with it, but don't beat yourself up if you miss a day or two in the readings. God's understanding and forgiving. And so am I. =)

WEEK ONE - REDEMPTION IN CHRIST

READ EPHESIANS 1:1-14

Ephesians contains only six chapters. It's a mere 155 verses. If you read it straight through, it would take you about 20 minutes. Yet the rich wisdom packed in this book will take you much longer than 20 minutes to apply and live out. If you want to apply this book, read it slowly. And often.

Paul, the author, writing to the people in Ephesus, started out with a few seemingly benign statements. They would be easy for a reader to gloss over in an attempt to get to "the important stuff." But if you do that, you'll regret it. You'll short-circuit the work God wants to do in your heart instead of digging deeply into who God declared you to be. And who God declared you to be is more powerful than who you feel you are.

The One on whom you fix your eyes is both the source and the object of your identity.

It may seem obvious, but in order to follow Jesus as His disciple, you have to see Him as He truly is. Once you have a clear picture of Jesus, you can fully understand who you are.

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS:

- When you were a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?
- What similarities exist between what you do now and what you thought you wanted to do?

As kids, we dreamed. We dreamed of one day playing professional sports, traveling the universe as an astronaut, or being a superhero who can fly.

Deep down we have a desire to do something significant and make a difference in the world. And there's nothing wrong with that desire. There's actually something God-honoring in it. The hero or heroine's story touches us deeply because God wired us for significance. The deeper questions we all have to answer are what define who we are and where we'll find our significance.

1. Describe how the church at Ephesus was established (Acts 18:18–21).
2. Define "saint" (1:1)
3. List at least six "spiritual blessings" that we have in Christ.
4. Who was chosen "before the foundation of the world"?
5. Define "predestined" (1:5)
6. Define the phrase "in Him" (1:7).
 - A. Compare with the other times this phrase is found (1:3, 4, 7, 9, 10, 20; 2:7, 10, 13, 21, 22; 3:6, 11, 12, 21; 4:21, 32).
7. What is the "administration of the fullness of the times"?
8. What is "the seal of the promised Holy Spirit"?
9. How is the Holy Spirit the "payment of our inheritance"?
10. What is "the redemption of God's own possession"?