

# Real. Present. God.

## The Search for My Identity Leader Notes

### LESSON 1: WHO AM I?

*“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.” (Matthew 5:14)*

#### Introduction

#### ICE BREAKERS

1. *Who gave you your name? Why?*
2. *What is the ethnic origin of your name?*
3. *What are your nicknames, if any?*

#### OPENING QUESTIONS

1. *In the age of social media profiles, how many people know the real you?*
2. *How many people do you really know?*

You were on God’s radar from the beginning.

#### ILLUSTRATION

*For Reflection:*

1. *As a student in that class, what would your decision be for this family?*
2. *Those health issues are labels; what labels have people tried to stick on you?*

#### Into Scripture

The Text: Read Ephesians 1:3-10.

The message of Ephesians is that God invited and welcomed you into the body of Christ not because He had to, but because it was God’s heart’s desire to do so. You are part of His plan. From the beginning...

- He has wanted you to be a member of his family.  
(Ephesians 1:5) “...he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will,”
- You have been part of His plan. From the beginning, it was His idea you would become good. Notice what Paul says,  
(Ephesians 1:4) “...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.”

#### FOR REFLECTION

*Describe how Paul’s writings in Ephesians impact your identity.*

#### Faith in Practice: Worship

*The Third Commandment.*

*Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.*

*What does this mean?*

*We should fear and love God so that we do not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it.<sup>3</sup>*

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A. W. Tozer in *The Purpose of Man: Designed to Worship*:

*“Everything in God’s creation has its purpose. God created the silkworm to make silk; the bird was created to sing; the sheep for their wool. Throughout the Bible, the prophets and apostles all testify that God made us for a purpose and that purpose is to sing His praises before the hushed audience of all creation.*

*The purpose of nature is to lead us to the Creator and to worship Him. The purpose of man’s feelings and emotions is to lead to the One who implanted those within the heart of man, to the Creator. Everything in all of creation is to point to the Creator and evoke within adoring wonder and admiration and worship. Wherever we go, we can worship.*

*When God made the human soul in His own image, He did so that we might act according to that Divine nature. He never intended the virus of sin to infect that sacred place within man. Sin, therefore, is the unnatural thing. It is a foreign substance defiling man’s heart and life, repelling God’s gaze. Because of this [fallen] condition in man, sin is [now] natural, worship is unnatural; and so, few people really do it.”*

**Psalm Connection: Read Psalm 62:5-8, 11-12.**

### MISSION POSSIBLE

Your mission this week is to see your entire life differently. In Romans 12, Paul reminds us, “I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.” (ESV)

Our Christian mindset differs greatly from the audience Paul addressed. In Greek philosophy, the thought was that the physical body was evil, which led to the practice of asceticism. Ascetics would treat their bodies harshly for religious purposes, often seeking to atone for the sins committed with their bodies. In addition, Greeks offered sacrifices to their pagan gods just as Jews offered sacrifices to God, seeking favor or forgiveness. But Paul presents a radical shift in thinking as he tells believers of Christ to commit their entire being or person to God (1 Cor. 6:20) as they had previously committed it to sin (cf. Rom. 6). Instead of offering dead sacrifices or punishing the body, Paul urges believers to have an active life of service and Christ-like love. He calls us to be holy, which in this context means “set apart for God’s service.”

I say all this to lay the groundwork for you, as you journal, video log, or capture in pictures this week how you are being used by God for His purposes. What was your act of worship this week?

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### LESSON 2: YOU WERE CHOSEN

*“For many are called, but few are chosen.” Matthew 22:14*

**3. When God Calls, Be Willing to Go!**

#### Introduction

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#### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

**1. Can you think of a time you struggled to hear God’s voice in your life or see the direction He was leading?**

**2. What was going on in your life, when God seems silent?**

**4. Trust His Plans**

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**1. What impact do you want your life to make on the world?**

**2. How is God calling you to serve Him and His Kingdom?**

#### Into Scripture

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The Text: Read 1 Samuel 3:1–10.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**1. Our personal agenda can impede God’s will. How did that play out in the life of Eli the prophet?**

**2. How did God break through the spiritually deaf lives of Israel’s spiritual leaders?**

#### THE APPLICATION: WHAT IS GOD CALLING YOU TO DO?

**1. Stop and let God speak to you, through prayer and the study of God’s Word.**

**2. Be Open to His Leading.**

#### Faith in Practice: Prayer and Meditation: Praying the Scripture

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*“No one can believe how powerful prayer is and what it can effect, except those who have learned it by experience. Whenever I have prayed earnestly, I have been heard and have obtained more than I prayed for. God sometimes delays, but He always comes.” – Rev. Dr. Martin Luther*

#### MISSION POSSIBLE

This week spend time in prayer and discovery. I believe that God is calling you. Not only did God call Samuel, but God is calling you—that’s why I believe you’re taking part in this Bible study on this day, in this church. What is God calling you to courageously do for Him and His kingdom? Come back next week and share your findings with the group.

Practice praying these Scripture readings to get you started.

Hebrews 4:16

Psalm 119:18

Psalm 24:1

Romans 8:26-27

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### LESSON 3: MY IDENTITY INFLUENCES MY VIEW OF OTHERS

*“I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.” (Psalm 139:14)*

#### Introduction

##### FOR DISCUSSION

**1. How did the closed minds of the ushers impact Gandhi’s view of Christianity? What if their attitudes would have been more welcoming? What impact could this have had on religion in India?**

**2. Describe attitudes members of your family or your friends in school have toward people with a different nationality?**

**3. How might those attitudes hinder sharing the Gospel?**

#### Into Scripture

The Text: Read Acts 10:9-49.

##### DISCUSSION

**Who are the people you struggle to share the gospel with?**

#### Application

##### DISCUSSION

**Describe a time when you experienced God opening a door for you to share the Gospel.**

#### Faith Challenge: The Place of Good Works and Witnessing

*“The forgiveness of sins happens freely for Christ’s sake, that Christ, and not our works, is the Atoning Sacrifice for sins, as Peter says, ‘To Him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins’ (Acts 10:43)?- Article XX: of the Augsburg Confession*

##### MISSION POSSIBLE:

Christian love is twofold: love the Lord Your God with all your heart, soul and mind, and love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:37-39). Out of knowledge of God’s love for us, and our neighbor, Christians are given the opportunity and desire to proclaim the gospel to the world.

The gospel is intended for all races, tribes, and nations.

“Then I saw another angel flying directly overhead, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and language and people.” (Revelation 14:6)

While the Bible does not contain any clear definition of race, it instead talks about nations, tribes, tongues, and peoples. One thing still running rampant in the church is racial tension. Our prejudices are in direct conflict with the nature of God. We saw in the text that God will move heaven and earth to reshape our thinking about those different from ourselves. Our text was just one example of how racial prejudice is out of line with God’s heart. Other examples in Scripture: God showed His displeasure by disciplining Miriam for her criticism of Moses’ Ethiopian wife (Numbers 12:1–15). God taught Jonah a valuable lesson when he refused to take his ministry to those of another culture (Jonah 1:12). Peter was disciplined again for not opening the “door of faith to the Gentiles,” his behavior did not exemplify God’s inclusive grace (Acts 10:15; Galatians 2:11–18). So, here is your mission challenge this week. It is in the form of a letter.

Dear Christian Church,

As I look at the racial pain all around and the way it is portrayed in the national media, it saddens me. The tone is so negative, and it is feeding into the darkness that is already out there in our sin-sick world. I don’t expect the world to have real solutions. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that.”





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Dear Followers of Christ, especially the youth, the Church of today and tomorrow, you have a pivotal role to play. You have the Light. You don't hold the history of the past. You can lead us forward with a clean slate. You know the only real Love. The world is lost without your voice, without your direction. It is time to stand and lead. Now is the time to speak out.

Sincerely,

Those Looking for Answers.

The writer of Ecclesiastes shares these words of wisdom:

*“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:  
a time to keep, and a time to cast away;  
a time to tear, and a time to sew;  
a time to keep silence, and a time to speak;  
a time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1,6-8)*

Pray:

God, you have given us Jesus as the Light of the world. As Paul reminds the children of light,

For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. (2 Corinthians 4:5-7)

May the light that has shone in our hearts burst forth in the world so we may reflect the Light in the lives of those around us. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The mission is simple yet complex. Lord, help Your church lead in a movement toward racial reconciliation. Help us remind people that You do not judge people by their outward appearance but by their heart.

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### LESSON 4: CAN WE BE ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE?

*The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek him shall praise the Lord!  
May your hearts live forever!  
All the ends of the earth shall remember  
and turn to the Lord, and all the families of the nations  
shall worship before you. For kingship belongs to the Lord,  
and he rules over the nations. Psalm 22:26-28 (ESV)*

are part of the church, and we are sent out from the church building to be the church in our neighborhoods, schools, homes, workplaces, etc. to share God's love and the message of His salvation. In this sense, we, too, are missionaries.

Another way of looking at it is that we are ambassadors of Christ (see 2 Corinthians 5:20). An ambassador is someone who is an authorized representative or messenger. We are God's representatives to the world around us, and His messengers of grace to the people in our lives.

#### Introduction

#### DISCUSSION

*Talk some time to share how the opening illustration applies to the church today.*

#### Into Scripture

The Text: Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

*What is evangelism?*

#### Application

#### DISCUSSION

- 1. How in your life is God asking you to be a Philip?*
- 2. Have there been opportunities in your life when you missed the chance to have a faith conversation with someone seeking answers?*

#### Faith in Practice: You are God's Sent Ones

The word "mission" means "a specific task with which a person or group is charged." It has also been used to mean "sending."

The term "missionary" means "one sent."

The church has been charged with the task of spreading the gospel message to the ends of the earth. This is the church's mission. Within the church, there are those who are given the specific role of being sent to the ends of the earth to proclaim the gospel. We call these people missionaries, as they are the "sent ones" of the Lord to specific places. But all believers

#### THE GREAT COMMISSION

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

He said to them, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15)

You can see the words are different, but the meaning is the same. Here is a recap of Jesus' missionary command:

"I the Lord, Jesus Christ, who has been given all authority in heaven and on Earth, command you, my devoted disciples, in every age to go to the ends of the earth, to teach all people of every tribe and nation my gospel. Make all people my disciples who will produce other disciples to expand my kingdom to the ends of the earth."

What a bold, majestic command of our Lord and Savior. No one else would dare make such a decree. Not only does Jesus command we "go out," but this same Jesus also backs up that order with all the authority of heaven and seals it with the promise of salvation in His precious blood shed on Calvary's cross and verified with the empty tomb.

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Jesus sends out missionaries and ambassadors to the ends of the earth. He is given this authority and power from the Father. The mission is clear to proclaim to all the peoples of the land that this final King of the Jews is calling all people to Him. He invites the world to live under His merciful kingship for all eternity. Our mission manifesto is that we are sent with the promise of Jesus' presence and the backing of His almighty power. All the authority of heaven and earth supports this mission manifesto.

### Mission Possible: Engage in a Faith Conversation.

With this mission manifesto in mind, here is your final mission possible assignment. This one, like the rest, is a lifetime assignment. Let us begin with a quote from Doug Pollock in a book entitled "God Space: Where Spiritual Conversations Happen Naturally."

He quotes from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, "The good news is that most of our failures can be reclaimed. There's no statute of limitations." He also suggests we commit this verse to memory, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil." Ephesians 5:15-16.

*"So, if you have someone in your life that you feel you blew it with them, don't give up. We serve a God who is great at giving second, heck third, fourth and fifth chances. If you feel you have blown it here are a couple of questions to ponder if you get that second chance to share the gospel."*

### SOME THINGS TO PONDER AS YOU ENGAGE IN THIS FAITH CONVERSATION

What do you do when the person you are talking to is so resistant, hurt, or turned off to talk about God? When there is nothing you say that appears to make a difference?

Practice patience. Respect their real pain. Acknowledge the hurts they have experienced in life. Realize your conversations may be triggering some deep-seated emotions that they have long buried. If that is the case, your only path at this point may be to pray with them and pray for their circumstances. Pray intentionally for the emotional turmoil they are facing. That could be the method God uses to open the door to that deeper spiritual conversation.

What do you do if you have someone who is not open to these kinds of spiritual conversations? Does their lack of openness mean you should just leave them alone?

Maybe. If your conversations are causing damage to the relationship, be willing to take a step back and give the person some space. What you don't want to do is push the person away from you. Give them some time and keep the relationship intact. Maybe this is not the time for this conversation. Perhaps, down the road, the right opportunity may present itself. In the meantime, keep the lines of communication open. Be willing to apologize if your conversation has caused offense. Say, "I sense that I might have said something in our last conversation that caused you to shut down. If so, could you help me understand what I said or how you interpreted my message? I value our friendship. I enjoy our conversations, so if I've offended you, I'd like to make things right."

You never know where and when the opportunity to share the gospel will present itself. Be always ready to share the hope that you have in Christ Jesus. You may be the vehicle God uses to share the gospel with someone outside of God's grace. Realize that when that happens God will give you the words to say. God is the one who waters the seed and makes the seed grow. We are just called to spread the seed. Your lifelong challenge is to be seed spreaders.