

Identity and Intimacy



This intimate painting was on multiple sites but I could not find the name of the original painter.

Here [in Bethany], a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

John 12:2,3

February

Identity and Intimacy

Whose you are; who you are; purpose & mission

Who am I? Who does God say I am?

Who is He?

How do I live out my identity?

Scripture-based exploration

- Jim Branch's Blue Book chapters *Made in His Image*, *Who Are You?*, and *Naked*
- Proverbs 31 (promise me you will read this for what it is: an ode, not a to-do list. You don't have to compete with her. She's just a woman who is rather awesome and beckons to us. Consider her a loving mentor.)
- "Who you are" table, Week 3

Books

- Epic A really short, passionate book of the gospel as a story, viewed through the visually dramatic lens of several movies.

Artwork for the creatives

Fingerprint: Who am I? What makes up me? Who is God? Who does He say I am? See the illustration at the end of the lesson. Super fun. (The illustration is about Jesus; you can do a fingerprint about what He says about YOU as well. Pinterest has some great examples.)

Movies

"Pride and Prejudice" with Kierra Knightley (Lizzie knew who she was, even when confronted with strong cultural pressure to conform to the societal norms of her day.)

Online

Consider **watching**, then **doing** "Cardboard testimonies" as a bridge between January & February. It's on YouTube ... several versions. Here's my fav:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RvDDc5RB6FQ>

Questions to ponder

- When answering the question, "Who am I?", where do you begin? Consider why you do that.
- Can you make a list of 10 things God says about you? Do it. Can you match up what you say with Bible verses, or are those 10 things just from living close to Him?
- Do you believe God in what He says about you?
- What do you believe about yourself?
- What's the most difficult thing for you to believe about yourself, as God sees you? The easiest?
- The concept of identity is complex. If you were to try to explain it to a child, what would you say?
- Are there any parts of your past that have formed you that you need to shed in order to get free in the gospel? Name them... think about this all month... and see what comes up. When you shed something (an event in your life, a comment, an attitude someone had toward you, etc.), make sure to put something on in its place. For example, if Dick treated you like a piece of trash to be used then ignored, shed him and his opinion of you and put on Jesus and His love for you.
- How attached are your roles to your identity? You know the scenario: "Hi, my name is ____ and I'm a _____." To what extent does your job define you? (Mom-ing is a job. Spoken with love and respect, women.) Do you think that's reasonable?
- As you consider what and who has formed you, how is your heart?
- Think about the powerful impact your family of origin has on who you are. Respond to this quote: "You may have Jesus in your heart, but you have Grandpa in your bones!" ~Pete and Geri Scanner

Music for this month:

Redeemed, Big Daddy Weave

How He Loves, David Crowder Band

Lose Myself, Toby Mac

Outcast, Kerrie Roberts

Hungry, Joy Williams

Find You on My Knees, The More I Seek You, You are For Me, Kari Jobe

You are My Joy, David Crowder Band

~Some of these are oldies but goodies. Relax into them. **Send us some new ones too.** ~

Restless, Audrey Assad

Marry Me, Train

Just As I Am, Glad Acapella

Big Gathering, Suzanne's Teaching: Ezer, from Genesis 2

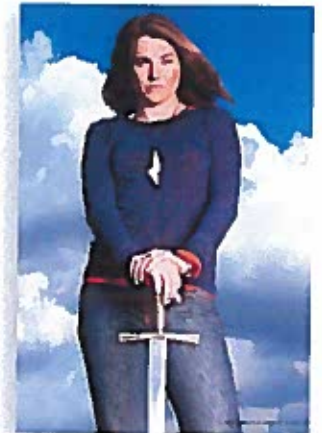
Week One: Who you are

Think through the next questions and pages together. Enjoy the conversation. When an idea or thought challenges you, take note. Wonder about it. Do you feel defensive? Confused? Elated? Make time this week to ponder why.

- Review *ezer*. What did you find to be compelling? new? difficult? Focus on Days 5, 9, 10, 11. (The booklet is online at cspc.net/sos or you can get a hard copy at Cedar Springs Church. Just call Jane @865-291-5214.)
- What does it mean to be made in the image of God, who is the Ezer of His people, specifically as a woman?
- Do you see yourself as a "warrior companion"? Why/not?
- Can you accept your identity as God's beloved daughter?
- Review the Ezer booklet together, asking questions of it and yourselves. What insights are you gaining about being a God-centered woman?



Both of these pictures may describe you even though they feel worlds apart. Write your thoughts below. Enter into a conversation with your Father about who He made you to be.



Ezer Thinking: write your response to this quote.

According to Dr. Victor Hamilton, "The new creation [ezer] will be neither a superior nor an inferior, but an equal. The creation of this helper will form one-half of a polarity, and will be to man as the south pole is to the north pole.... Any suggestion that this particular word denotes one who has only an associate or subordinate status to a senior member is refuted by the fact that most frequently this same word describes Yahweh's relationship to Israel. He is Israel's help(er)."



Ugly Side of Ezer	Ezer Woman
<i>Militant: push, push, push; or Mouse: no voice, quick to recede</i>	<i>Rest in the Lordship of Jesus and His timing while maintaining her passion, trust, and vision</i>
<i>Militant: bitchy (I don't mean to offend by using this) Mouse: invisible</i>	<i>Marked by the fruit of the Spirit</i>
<i>Inappropriately aggressive or passive</i>	<i>Acting only in the Spirit</i>
<i>Militant: So focused on a cause that she misses the souls and spirits of those near her Mouse: not engaged or quietly and overly obedient</i>	<i>Caring and shepherding in the moment, in wisdom and strength (Proverbs 31 woman)</i>

Reflect on the chart above, and as you consider it, think about the garden ... the fall ... the curses ... the swords. What is God stirring up in you?

Questions

Think about how God defines you as a co-heir in Christ, a capable woman on mission, and an able person to reflect His nature. Through Jesus' redemptive work and the Holy Spirit's power, you are equipped to go out into the world to do the work God has called you to do. Think and pray about these questions, friend, and pursue the heart of God in them.

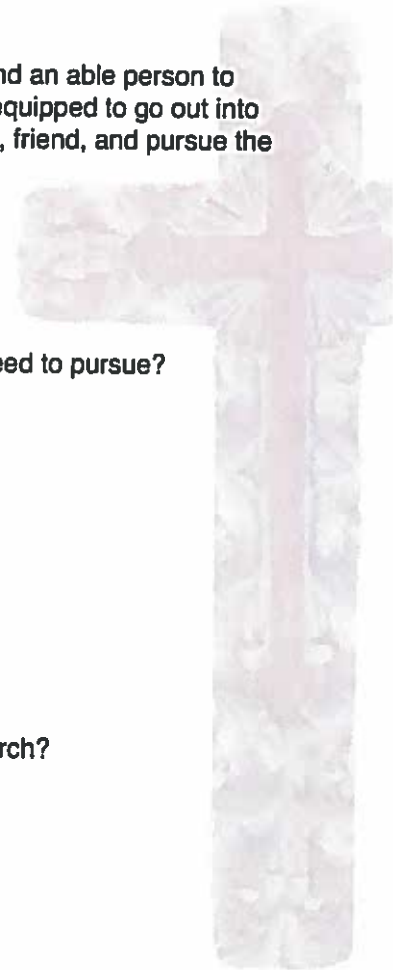
What or who is holding you back?

What do you need to work on? What do you need to let go of? What do you need to pursue?

How do your ideas about yourself need to change?

What has been the greatest challenge to you in the Scriptures?

What is your greatest challenge within the Body of Christ and the church?



Ezer: identity and destiny

Let's continue our conversation about your identity and your destiny.

So with all my talk about a sword, why doesn't Jesus talk about the **sword**, or being a **helper**?

Jesus knows the ezer **sword** symbolizes our identity; but He asks us to take up something else... something that completes our identity and gives us our destiny. He asks us to take up our cross. Just as Jesus took up His cross for the sake and service of all mankind, He asks us to do the same.

Taking up the cross... what does that mean? What does it look like? See Luke 9:23-25. God is so big, and His people are so diverse, that there is no "one size fits all" answer to this, other than, we die to our fleshy self that wars against our spiritual nature. Read more about this in **Galatians 5**. It's so very worth your time.

List the deeds of the flesh below:

List the fruit of the Spirit below:

Where do you need to repent, to die to the flesh-self list? **Circle your answers**. Picture yourself taking them off like you would take off a coat, and placing them at the foot of the cross (or nailing them on to the cross!).

Then look at the fruit of the Spirit. Pick up and put on any of those attributes that you lack and ask the Holy Spirit to teach you to live life wearing this style, **His** style.

He also names a new relationship with our ultimate **Helper**, the Holy Spirit. Our role as ezers is to help, to battle, and to be with. Because we are daughters of Eve, we need help to help others. We must be filled by the Holy Spirit, who is the Source of all the wise counsel, love, and equipping we need. The Spirit gives us the grace and truth we need in the moment we need it. He asks us to listen to Him.

Ezers have a **responsive attitude**. **Ezers come and battle when they are called**. I urge you to get away with the Holy Spirit. Be quiet. Be still. Listen, pay attention. What is He stirring in you? Which of the many cries on this planet is He leading you toward? There are cries for help lifting up throughout our world ... throughout our neighborhoods ... throughout the rooms in our own homes. You, as God's girl and ezer, are being called to help somewhere, somehow. Listen. To what place or person or group or cause are you being called? Write your thoughts below, maybe even in the form of a prayer.

Week Two: "Want to know me? Put your hands in my wounds."

This week we will do an exercise that stretches not our hamstrings but our souls.

Our reading is from John 20:24-29 (NIV): Jesus appears to Thomas after His crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came.

25 So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in His hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

26 A week later His disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" 27 Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see My hands. Reach out your hand and put it into My side. Stop doubting and believe."

28 Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

29 Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Lisa Duke, therapist at Ebenezer Counseling Services, wisely taught about Thomas refusing to believe that Jesus was resurrected. How did Jesus invite Thomas to know it was truly Him?

Jesus invites Thomas to know Him by acknowledging, even putting his hands in, His wounds.

That is a classic invitation for all of us: Will we allow others to know us by inviting them into our wounds? Discuss this in your group.

Now write your major wounds on your hand in black Sharpie. It will take some time and thought. Please don't rush through this, as difficult as it is.

How do you feel as you see the words on your hands? Take note. Feel it.

Now pass around a sparkling hand sanitizer and some tissues. Wipe your hand ... what happens?

This is the beauty of Jesus' work on the cross illustrated for you. In Christ, you are not defined by your wounds; you are defined by Him. Meditate and reflect on this exercise together.

- Dwell on what Lisa Duke says: "Want to know me? Put your hands in my wounds." How does this apply to you?
- What are the results of those major wounds? Do you notice workaholism, perfectionism, performance (being "good enough" to love), explosive anger, passivity, despair and feeling worthless, self-destructive habits, pride, skewed view of your self, your body, or your beauty? Make your own personal list.
- Consider the wounds you wrote on your hand, and how you felt when you put the hand sanitizer on them. Now consider Jesus... His wounds, His love for you, His offer of forgiveness, peace, and grace. Is this real to you? Are you free within? This freedom and peace is the power of the Gospel.

Journal here if there are a few things on your mind.

Week Three: Who you are and Whose you are according to the Bible

Fill out this table together to get the basics, the bottom line, about who you are from the New Testament:

Scripture	Your Summary
John 1:12	
John 15:15,16	
Romans 5:1,8	
Romans 8:1,2	No condemnation! The Spirit sets me free!
Romans 8:28	
Romans 8:31-39	
1 Corinthians 6:19,20	
1 Corinthians 12:27	
2 Corinthians 5:17-21	
Ephesians 1:3-8	
Ephesians 2:10	
Philippians 1:6	
Colossians 1:13,14	
Colossians 2:10	
Colossians 3:5-14	
2 Timothy 1:7 <3	
Hebrews 4:14-16 (also Ephesians 3:12)	I have direct access to God's throne of grace, and with confidence!
1 John 5:20	

Highlight verses that speak to your purpose and mission (for example, Ephesians 2:10). What does that say to you?

What lies have you been believing about who you are? Are some of them based on your wounds? What is the corresponding truth from Scripture on which you can stake your life? Some starters are filled in.

The Wound	The Lie	The Truth
Rejection	I'm unloved and unloveable.	You are dearly and deeply known and loved! John 3:16
	I'm ugly, through and through.	Yes, that's true, you are ugly with sin, but Jesus still thinks you are worthy to be saved — so worthy, in fact, that He died for you. He calls you beloved, My beautiful one . Song of Songs 2:10,13 This is the Gospel! :-)
Helplessness	I can't do this!	Philippians 4:13
	Jesus couldn't possibly love me.	Oh, yes He does! He sees your flaws and failures, your fractures and fault lines, and HE CHOOSES YOU. Yes! Hebrews 4:14-16
	I'm not good enough.	True, none of us are (Romans 3:23). But don't stop there: But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). He is good enough.
	I will always be fearful.	

Finally, let me tell you some beautiful, strengthening news from the Old Testament, since we have not spent much time there this month:

Psalm 147:11 The Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.

Zephaniah 3:17 The Lord your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.

He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing.

2 Samuel 22:31-36 As for God, his way is perfect: the Lord's word is flawless; he shields all who take refuge in him.

32 For who is God besides the Lord? And who is the Rock except our God?

33 It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure.

34 He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he causes me to stand on the heights.

35 He trains my hands for battle; my arms can bend a bow of bronze.

36 You make your saving help my shield;
your help has made me great.

Short Form: if your group can't do all this stuff ...



1. With your group, read the Scriptures in the first two chapters in the Blue Book together, or use the Scripture list for Week Three. Use the Scriptures to see who you are in Christ, then write out the words and phrases with a Sharpie on a canvas in the form of a fingerprint.

2. Do the Enneagram together. First: Go to pstypes.blogspot.com. Take the free enneagram test and get your type (number). I warn you, the questions are made to be a little bit frustrating **on purpose**. Second: Go to enneagraminstitute.com, look up the 9 Type Descriptions, and have a GREAT discussion. IT'S SO AMAZING.

3. Watch Cardboard Testimonies (Google it.) Do that together as a group. Needed supplies: Fat black Sharpies and pieces of cardboard. One side = before Jesus; other side = after He did His redeeming work in your life. It will encourage your faith to see how He has moved in others' lives.

Conclude with this

Ezer warrior,

you have been brought into the companionship of God
who trains you with truth and
strengthens you for the battles of this life
with His love and grace.

You are loved and secured by Your heavenly Father;
He sees you,
knows you,
chooses you, and
heals you.

Relax into His love.

Then, full of this assurance,
let His transformative love compel you
into a dark and lonely world
to tell others the beauty of the gospel:

Our loving God is
pursuing His lost
children
to welcome them
home
into His great heart.