

Positioned for a Purpose: Encountering Jesus
Small Group Questions for Week #1

During this series we are going to look at 3 important questions:

- Who am I?
- What am I designed to do?
- Where has God placed me?

The way we answer these questions determines the impact we will have on our world.

The first question, "Who am I?", deals with our sense of IDENTITY. (If you plan on spending 45 minutes in this study then continue to read and answer the questions. If you are limited to 30 minutes or less, proceed to -----starting point #2.

_____STARTING POINT #1_____

During the time of the Judges (after the nation of Israel had entered the Land of Promise but before the monarchy has been established), God chose to work through a man named Gideon to mobilize the people of Israel against their oppressors, the Midianites. Read the following passage from the book of Judges, chapter 6:

¹¹ The angel of the LORD came and sat down under the oak in Ophrah that belonged to Joash the Abiezrite, where his son Gideon was threshing wheat in a winepress to keep it from the Midianites. ¹² When the angel of the LORD appeared to Gideon, he said, "The LORD is with you, mighty warrior."

¹³ "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened to us? Where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about when they said, 'Did not the LORD bring us up out of Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian."

¹⁴ The LORD turned to him and said, "Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. Am I not sending you?"

¹⁵ "Pardon me, my lord," Gideon replied, "but how can I save Israel? My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family."

- How did the angel of the LORD refer to Gideon?
- Was Gideon behaving in a way that was consistent with this?
- Gideon's IDENTITY was shaped by certain factors in his life. What was one of these factors?

----- STARTING POINT #2 -----

- List 2 or three event(s), factor(s) or perspectives that have shaped the way you view yourself. Take a minute to share one of these with your group.

In the message this past Sunday, we looked at the first foundational building block for developing a God-given identity. Building Block #1 is I AM CREATED BY GOD. Take a moment to read the following passage from Genesis chapter 1.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,^[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

- Fill in the following statement. Don't stop after inserting just one phrase; try to come up with at least 3.

BECAUSE GOD CREATED ME, I _____ .

- It's one thing to intellectually list a truth; it's a different matter to truly believe this truth. Is there a truth you listed that isn't consistently expressed in the way you think, talk or act?

Read the following passage from Luke chapter 7.

³⁶ When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷ A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. ³⁸ As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

³⁹ When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

⁴⁰ Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, teacher," he said.

⁴¹ "Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii,^[a] and the other fifty. ⁴² Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

⁴³ Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

⁴⁴ Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered,

has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷ Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

⁴⁹ The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

⁵⁰ Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

- What was the woman’s IDENTITY in the eyes of the Pharisees?
- Do you think the woman shared this perspective? What in the passage leads you to this conclusion?
- By the end of the encounter, how do you think this woman’s IDENTITY (sense of self) has changed? What were the specific actions or words of Jesus that reshaped her identity?
- How do you think her life after her encounter with Jesus was different from her past?
- Have you experienced a time when either directly or indirectly, Jesus reshaped your identity? Take a moment to allow one (or more) person in your group to share their experience.

It’s possible that your identity has been shaped most powerfully by events/experiences other than an encounter with Jesus. This is not a “good” or “bad” thing – it just IS. Don’t pretend otherwise. But if you would like your identity to be grounded in Jesus, tell Him this. Ask Him to show you ways you have built your identity on things you can control or on things that are not true. Invite Him to rework your identity even if this means you are a bit disoriented for a season. Let Him know that even though you don’t know everything about Him, you trust Him and know He has the power to give you REAL life.