

More Than a Name

Module: CHRIST IN YOU: GOD-GIVEN IDENTITY

Lesson 2: IDENTITY LOST

Objectives:

- Students will come to understand that sin has caused us to live in a way contrary to how we were intended
- Students will recognize what sin actually is and that ‘to sin’ is to fall short of God’s design
- Students will discover that an attitude of independence from God is the root of sin and distances us from our God-given identity

Materials Needed:

- ☐ Masking tape
- ☐ Bean bags
- ☐ Copies of handouts “Identity Lost Part 1 and Part 2”
- ☐ Pens and Bibles

Minds On

This lesson starts with the reading of a story that will not only re-cap what was learned last week, but will also set the stage for today. Encourage students to imagine themselves in the story and to pay attention to what the moral of the story is. There are questions listed throughout the story that you can choose to use if you would like in order to break up the bulk of the text and keep students' interest.

Read or have someone/multiple people read the following excerpt from Major Ian Thomas' book, *The Indwelling Life of Christ*. You could even have some students re-enact the actions as the excerpt is being read.

Imagine that far out in space, in another galaxy, there is a planet inhabited by intelligent creatures. These creatures and their planet and galaxy were of course fashioned by the God who created everything. But they do not know what God is like, though they possess an insatiable appetite to find out more about Him.

Then one day they detect, through their highly developed forms of intergalactic surveillance, the existence of a planet called Earth. They also make initial discoveries about the human beings who dwell there. Immediately, and with intense excitement, they mobilize their resources to build a spaceship capable of sending a delegation to faraway Earth with the specific goal of going there to learn about God.

(Optional - Ask: Thinking back to last week, what do you think these aliens have discovered about humanity? Why should they expect to learn about God by observing humanity?)

Why Earth? Because their initial findings have disclosed the record of what God said when He first created human beings on this planet--that He was making them in His own image and according to His own likeness. Such a revelation is absolutely the most

thrilling news these aliens have ever heard. By getting a close-up view of humanity, they will be getting their first-ever glimpse of God.

With the spaceship completed and a carefully chosen delegation ready to embark, great crowds gather to see them off and wish them well.

After a long voyage across several galaxies, the hearts of every member of this delegation beat faster as Earth comes into view. This beautiful blue planet grows larger and larger as they come closer. "Soon we will see man," they tell each other, "the creature God made in His perfect image. We will be able to return home with eyewitness knowledge and understanding of what God is really like."

(Optional - Ask: *Is this a reasonable expectation for these aliens to have?)*

Slowly and softly their spacecraft makes its landing on Earth...and the alien creatures step out.

They have landed on a vacant lot in a city (much like whatever city you know best). They leave their spacecraft and walk down the nearest street. The first human being they lay eyes upon is a body sprawled on the curb that they have to step over, a drunk (though the aliens do not know about drunkenness) who is lying there in his own vomit. The aliens try talking to him, but the man only moans and rolls over.

Leaving the drunk behind, they turn a corner and suddenly confront two rival groups of young men threatening each other with knives. They have scarred arms and a lifeless stare in their eyes (though the aliens have not learned about drug abuse).

Stunned by this unexpected danger, the aliens turn quickly in a different direction and hear sounds from an open door under a tavern sign, and they enter the safety inside. The few people there ignore them. They have sullen faces as they sit in booths at the room's shadowy edges.

The sound the aliens were hearing is coming from a television set above the bar, and on the screen someone is announcing the "world news." The aliens crowd closer to catch a summary of what is happening all around this Earth. The "news" they hear is about terrorist bombers and murderers. It is about corruption in business and government. It is about childish and foolish behaviour by celebrities in the realms of entertainment and sports.

The aliens stare in shock at the screen, until one of them turns to the others and says, "Let's get off this planet. This place stinks."

(Optional - Ask: These aliens expected to see the character of God displayed through humanity. What did they end up seeing instead? [Sin])

With heavy steps they make their way to the spaceship, weighed down by revulsion and disillusionment over this display of God's character. And on their long, sad journey back, they wrestle with their total loss at knowing how to convey this tragic discovery to their loved ones at home.

Of course, you and I know that what they actually learned was not what God is like, but what sin is like. Was there anything wrong, however, in the logic behind their expectation of seeing God on our planet?

No, their thinking was entirely correct, as we see more clearly when we carefully read the Scriptures.

When you have finished with the story, ask the students for their thoughts on it. Ask questions like, "What does it fully mean to you that you have been created in God's image and likeness? What things should logically be expected from someone who is made in God's image and likeness?"

Action

***Say something like:** Last time we talked about that fact that God has designed us and created us with a specific identity: to be His image-bearers. But as we read through that story, and if we're completely honest with ourselves, we recognize that something has gone wrong with God's original design. You and I, and the rest of humanity are not who we were intended to be.*

***Ask:** What has gone wrong? Why aren't things the way they were intended to be?*

'Sin' may likely to be the most popular answer. If so, challenge them to define sin in words/phrases that their non-Christian friends could understand.

Following some brief discussion on what they think sin is, tell students that they will be participating in an activity that will teach them more about what sin actually is. Challenge them to consider what it might have to say about sin as they play.

- **Target Practice:** Ahead of time, using masking tape, create a large target on the floor (at least 4'x4'). Place a small piece of tape in the centre as the bulls-eye. With students standing at least 10 feet from the target, have them toss beanbags (or whatever else) toward the target, with the goal of landing *perfectly centred* on the bulls-eye. Be tough on them: a beanbag that just touches the bulls-eye isn't good enough. It needs to land perfectly centred. The goal of this activity is actually for students to fail at it, so make it difficult! No matter what, don't let anyone win.

After each student gets a few tries, have students find a partner. When everyone is in partners, have them get into groups of four. Challenge groups to discuss together what this activity had to do with sin, giving them Romans 3:23 as a reference point. Give students about 5 minutes to wrestle with this. Gather students together again and have groups share their thoughts on the activity.

***Say something like:** Sin isn't just doing bad things. Sin is actually our inability to measure up to what God expects of us as His creation. Whenever we fall short of God's standard or original*

*design, whenever we display anything other than His image, we sin. So, a way to think of it is this: **SIN = missing the mark.** It is any behaviour that falls short of what God does, says and is. So in the target activity, you all 'sinned' because you missed the mark. You fell short of what you were intended to do.*

Remind your students that God breathed Himself into Adam in order that we might be the bearers of His image—His character. The very presence of God in us is what gives us his purpose and identity from the start. Human beings are intended to be walking, breathing pictures of the invisible God, but this purpose of ours is only lived out when we live in **dependence** on the presence of God within us (i.e. flashlight and batteries).

But we all know that this isn't what we tend to see. Like those aliens in our story, if we observe the world around us, we are not likely to see much of God's character being displayed. Somewhere along the line, something went horribly wrong, causing us all to sin – to fall short – and lose sight of our God-given identity.

Have students return to their previous groups. Be sure each group receives a pen, Bible and copy of Identity Lost Part 1. Give students around ten minutes to complete their work.

When students have completed Part 1, pass out Part 2 and give them a further five minutes to discuss together. Please note that Part 2 is a spoiler to Part 1 so be sure and give them out separately!

Following their fifteen minutes of group work, bring students back together again and have them share their findings from Parts 1 and 2. As they share, guide students toward the understanding that sin comes out of an attitude of independence and disobedience. These attitudes toward God destroy our identity and distance us from our Creator and His purposes for us.

***Say something like:** By choosing to ignore God and live independently from Him, Adam and Eve missed the mark. They fell short. They became abnormal. Humanity has been designed to function only in and through the presence of God within itself. Just like a flashlight is dependent on batteries to produce light, thus behaving normally, so are we completely dependent on our*

Creator. When Adam and Eve chose to function apart from Him, the relationship was severed and their existence poisoned. Their original design was shattered by their disobedience and they no longer lived life the way they were intended to. Sin is so destructive: it not only affects our relationship with God, but it also affects our relationships with those around us, as well as our relationship with our own self. As long as we are living in rebellion to our Creator, we will never discover our true identity, nor will we live life to its fullest.

Consolidate/Debrief

In response to this lesson, encourage students to find a quiet place either in your meeting room or elsewhere in your building as boundaries permit. Give them a few minutes to spend in silent prayer as they examine themselves, considering what attitudes might exist within themselves in their relationship with God. Are they living independently from their Creator or in total dependence on Him? In what areas of their life are they ‘missing the mark’?

Encourage them to surrender themselves to God, giving Him access to every part of their lives. If you wish, supply each student with a Bible and have them read through Psalm 51 as a guide as they pray.

IDENTITY LOST Part 1

Adam and Eve didn't just think, 'hmmm, let's sin today!' Something happened within their heart and mind that caused them to fall short. They had been created to relate to God in a certain way, but in that moment, they both had certain attitudes toward Him that caused them to fall short and sin.

As a group, read Genesis 3:1-13.

Discuss together and decide on three attitudes that Adam and Eve might have had that led to their fall. The answers aren't laid out plainly in the passage, so you will need to look deeper into the story and consider what was happening within them. What was going on in their minds? What changed in what they believed? How did their attitudes toward God change?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

IDENTITY LOST Part 2

From Part 1, we see that by listening to the word of the serpent over the word of God, Adam and Eve chose to disobey God, distrust His word and live independently from Him. They chose to do what was right in their own eyes rather than living in obedience and dependence on their Creator. They fell short of who He had intended them to be.

Taking this into consideration, what were the consequences of their decision?

How did it affect their relationship to God?

How did it affect their relationship with each other?

How did it affect their view of themselves?
