

Who Am I?

By Frank Catanzaro

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, students will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Study the section in **It's in the Book** that explains the difference between *egocentrism* and *Christocentrism*. Demonstrate how two teenagers with those two different perspectives would complete these sentences:

During the day most of my thoughts are about _____.

I feel pretty good about myself because I _____.

The most important part of my life is _____.

Assignment Two

After studying the comments related to 2 Corinthians 5:14–15 in the section **It's in the Book**, prepare to share what compelled Paul to live as he did.

Assignment Three

Study the comments related to 2 Corinthians 5:17 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: In the movies, what are some ways a spy is given a new identity that is fake? At conversion, what are some ways a new believer is given a new identity that is real?

Scripture to Memorize

"I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well." Psalm 139:14

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will be able to express the source of their identity, consistent with Scripture.

Frank Catanzaro is associate dean for the Doctor of Educational Ministry Degree program as well as professor of Counseling and Adult Education at Southwestern Seminary. He served for twenty years as a student pastor, discipleship pastor, and worship leader.

He and his wife, Teresa, have been married for over thirty-four years and have one son, Jonathan (a pastor in Georgia), who is married to Elissa. They have three children. Frank and his wife live in Fort Worth.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Suppose you meet someone for the first time and you began a friendly conversation. Suppose that person were to ask, "Who are you?" How would you answer that question? Guard against overthinking or overspiritualizing the question. Answer with the first thing that pops into your mind.

Introduction

Paul, writing to the church in Corinth, described a life committed to Christlikeness. He provided a true picture of what that life is, and he reveals the primary task to which disciples have been called. This is valuable to young adult disciples searching for their identity. We already know that the world in which we live is at cross-purposes with God's plan for each of us.

Even though the following two concepts are complex, most young disciples can understand them. These two concepts will be important in understanding the passage in Corinthians and in understanding identity in Christ.

Egocentrism describes people who are primarily focused on self and who receive a sense of identity from the external world and their place in it. This could be related to where they live or the school they attend or the sports in which they participate. This could also be related to the friends they have or where they go to church. Many externals are used to evaluate their place in this world or, stated another way, their purpose for existence.

Christocentrism is just the opposite. This is a life characterized primarily by seeking to imitate and follow Christ in every aspect of life and living.

The difference between those two terms is basic to understanding identity—to considering "Who am I?" and "What is my purpose?"

Assignment One Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment One** during the week will now demonstrate how two teenagers with two different perspectives would complete the sentences.

On Your Own

Think of someone who is well known and who clearly exhibits egocentrism. Is that person also known as a disciple of Jesus?

Think of someone whose identity is clearly centered in his or her relationship with Christ. How much of that person's life is focused on self?

Read 2 Corinthians 5:14–17 out loud.

Assignment Two Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report to the group what compelled Paul to live as he did.

Studying the Passage, 2 Corinthians 5: 14–15

These two verses contain a general description of what Christianity is all about. Christ's death made it possible for all of us to die to our own sin. In turn, His life made it possible for all of us to live.

Verse 14. controls. The Greek word translated as *controls* literally means “being seized or affected beyond control.” Paul was stating that the controlling power of his life was the love of Christ. Not necessarily his love for Christ, which he certainly did possess, but Christ's love for him was a compelling motivation and reason for living. In other words, Paul was so overwhelmed by Jesus's love for him that to serve and honor Christ became the controlling motive of his life. That should be true for every disciple today.

Verse 15. no longer live for themselves, but for Him. This phrase describes the death of an old identity and the creation of a new one—in Christ.

Discussion Question

Would you characterize your life as being controlled by the love of Christ? Or would you characterize your life as being primarily controlled by self?

Studying the Passage, 2 Corinthians 5:16–17

This verse states the heart of the matter in a succinct fashion. **Verse 16. Therefore.** This word always signals the importance of looking at what has just been said and finding what the implications are for today. **we recognize no one according to the flesh.** Paul was saying believers don't pay attention to identities that are tied to the world, such as race, wealth, social standing, etc.

Verse 17. a new creature. Paul declared that because of what Christ has done and because by faith we have trusted in Him, we have been given a new identity. The verse is not stating that our old lifestyle is gone and we have been given a new lifestyle. It goes much deeper than that. We have been given a new spiritual identity.

Our way of thinking and our perspective on everything takes on new meaning. So when someone asks, “Who are you?” the first thing that comes to mind is, “I am a child of God.” Grasping our new identity is the starting point. Then, over time, the implications of that new identity become clear in our conversations and the way we live in general.

Assignment Three Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now provide illustrations of new identities that are fake and real, drawing from the movies and from conversion.

On Your Own

Fill in these blanks: “If you want to know the real me, then you need to know the four most important things about me. In order of importance, I am a _____, a _____, a _____, and a _____.”

Did the term “Christian” or “child of God” make your list? Can you truthfully place one of those terms in the first position? Bottom line, would you say your new life in Christ is at the core of your identity, or is something else?

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven.

Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart (the real you) for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something in your life for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit says to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to. . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to King Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Ultimately, God has created us for His glory. By His grace and the sacrifice of Christ, we have a relationship with Him. But He has not simply invited us into a relationship for our own pleasure and fulfillment. He has a purpose for our lives, and understanding our identity in Him can help us find that purpose.

In 2 Corinthians 5: 14–17, we begin to understand the significance of knowing who God has made us to be. The truth of that passage can help move us from egocentrism to Christocentrism.

Paul was so overwhelmed by Jesus's love for him that to serve and honor Christ became the controlling motive of his life. Specifically, Paul said, "The love of Christ controls us" (2 Corinthians 5:14). In the same way, Christ's love for us should be a compelling motivation and reason for living.

Paul declared that because of what Christ has done and because by faith we have trusted in Him, we have been given a new identity. In reality we have become new creatures.

Consider these questions:

If Christ had not died for your sin, where would you spend the next few billion years? Does the depth of His sacrifice help make His love more real to you?

If Christ had not died for your sin and then drawn you to salvation, what kind of life would you be living today? What kind of pain would you be in today? What would your future life and relationships look like? When you think about what Christ has saved you from, does that make His love more real to you?

Which of these statements is more powerful to you?

"I am controlled by the love of Christ."

"I am controlled by the rules of my religion."

Would you say your life in Christ is at the core of your identity? Does that identity in Christ come through clearly in your social media? In your online profile, is your identity in Christ so engaging that others would be drawn to Him?

In marriage two become one. If your identity is centered in who you are in Christ, can you truly become one with someone whose identity is not centered on Christ but is centered on self? Would complete unity and a shared purpose for living ever be possible?

Remember, "He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf" (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Parent Question

What does it mean to you to be compelled by the love of Christ?