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MONTH ONE

My True Identity



*“The true identity theft is not financial.
It’s not in cyberspace. It’s spiritual. It’s been taken.”*
Steven Covey

| Activity | Duration |
|----------------------------|------------|
| Meal and Fellowship | 30 minutes |
| Introduction | 30 minutes |
| Instruction | 60 minutes |
| Book Net Out/Goals | 60 minutes |
| Preparation for Next Month | 15 minutes |
| Prayer Time | 30 minutes |



Notes to Mentors



As you begin this session, make sure the men have filled out the Personal Leadership Assessment (it will be filled out again in November to see how they have grown) and the General Information sheet.

1. This month you will set the stage for what is to come. Even though you had an introductory meeting to familiarize your group with what *Joshua's Men* is all about, this will be the time to reiterate what they can expect as well as what is expected of them. It may look something like this:

Ask, “Why are you here?”

God needs leaders to accomplish His mission. He doesn't just need leaders; He needs strong, Godly, spiritual leaders. Therefore:

- You are in this room on purpose.
- You are here because you have been chosen — prayed in.
- You are here because of your leadership potential.
- No one in this room has “arrived,” but each of you can make a difference that marks eternity.

The purpose statement for our time together is:

We commit one year to the development of our Christian character and leadership potential.

My goals for you are threefold:

1. To help you become the man that God has called you to be. The process won't be finished by the end of the year. Instead it is a lifelong journey. What we are doing this year, beginning today, is taking the first step of that very important journey.
2. To help you develop into a spiritual leader who is a critical thinker. You will look at things in life—what you read, what you hear, what you see—and ask the question, “What does this have to teach me?” “How can I grow by being exposed to this?” Strong spiritual leaders don't settle for pat answers. They dig deeper in order to grow deep. Spiritual leaders are not superficial. They look for every opportunity to grow. You will be challenged by what you read, what we talk about, and what we do. But in the end, if it helps to hone your critical thinking abilities, it will be well worth it.

3. To help you become a lifelong learner. The books we will read aren't the end of your learning, rather, they are just the beginning. I hope our time over this next year will whet your appetite for reading and growing. Even when reading and hearing things that you may disagree with, my hope is that you will see the value in continuing to learn more, grow more, and experience more.

Expectations:

- ✦ We are in this together. We are all growing together. We all have value and experiences that we can learn from. No one is superior to another because of age, education, or experience. You will teach me as much or more than I teach you.
- ✦ Our responsibility is your success! (success = growth)
- ✦ Your responsibility is commitment!—*Joshua's Men* done right will infuse all facets of your life. Every day try to apply what you are learning and what you are reading to your family, your friends, and your work.
- ✦ Assignments—Complete the assignments. Read the books. Let me take it a step further: don't just read the books; dialogue with the books. If you agree with everything you read, then you are not reading carefully enough. Highlight, write, circle—do whatever it takes to make the books more than just words on paper.
- ✦ Prayer Partners—Meet with your prayer partner over the phone or in person at least once a month. Ask him how things are going and then pray specifically for him.
- ✦ Be on time out of respect for others' investment.
- ✦ Do your best.
- ✦ Support each other 100 percent.

Confidentiality:

- ✦ Keep no secrets from your wife. You are free to tell her anything about yourself (**but not anyone else in the group**).
- ✦ You will be stretched and you will be changed.
- ✦ Determine today... no regrets.

2. The lesson this month is titled “My True Identity.” As with the rest of the lessons in *Joshua’s Men*, it is more important to make sure that the men grasp the overarching themes than it is to rush through the lesson. Be willing to be creative and also be sensitive to the moving of the Holy Spirit as you teach these concepts to the men.
3. The “Book Net Out” time is one of the most valuable parts of the meeting. This gives the men an opportunity to share and dialogue about what they got out of the month’s book. It also gives you an opportunity to model what it means to have healthy dialogue if there is disagreement. At the end of the “Book Net Out,” there is a place for the men to write down three practical goals they want to achieve as a result of reading the book. Have each man make enough copies for the group and have them share their three goals with the group. Make sure the goals are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely). If they aren’t SMART goals, encourage the men to rephrase them. During next month’s meeting you will follow up with each man to find out how he did in reaching his goals.
4. Assign next month’s book, *Hunger*, by Jon Dybdahl.
5. Assign prayer partners. Remind the men that they are to pray for their prayer partner every day during the month. Also remind them that they are to meet with their prayer partner at least once during the month, either in person or over the phone.
6. Project (optional): Pick a spiritual practice you have never done before and practice it for a week. Journal your thoughts during that week.

MONTH ONE

My True Identity



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

(Genesis 1:27, NIV)



An Identity Crisis



“The true identity theft is not financial. It’s not in cyberspace. It’s spiritual. It’s been taken.”
Steven Covey

We live in a world where identity theft is rampant. Every year millions of people have their personal information stolen by criminals. However, millions more are affected by an identity crisis. They don’t know who they are. They are trying to find out who they really are. This can lead to two consequences:

- A. You let others define who you are.**
1. You can be defined by your parents’ expectations.
 2. You can be defined by your siblings’ achievements.
 3. You can be defined by your peers’ accomplishments.
 4. You can be defined by your wife’s perceptions.

When you don't know who you are, you let others define you.

B. You are defined by “things.”

1. You are defined by your occupation.
2. You are defined by your degree.
3. You are defined by your bank account.
4. You are defined by your car, your house, and your possessions.

As Christian men our identities are not defined by the things we have or by others. We are defined by the One who created us.

Made in the Image of God

“Spiritual identity means we are not what we do or what people say about us. And we are not what we have. We are the beloved daughters and sons of God.”
Henri Nouwen

A. We are made in the image of God.

B. That image was marred by sin.

1. Adam and Eve believed the lie that their identity wasn't complete in God.
2. All of humanity now searches to find their identity.

C. The Gospel tells us that He knew who He was, and because He showed us who God is we can unequivocally know whom God created us to be.

D. Noted sociologist Charles Cooley proposed a theory called the “Looking Glass Self,” which suggests that people contrive their identities from how the most important person in their lives sees them.

1. The most important person in our lives determines how we see ourselves, ultimately determining our self-identity.
2. The only One we can base our identities upon is the One who created us in His image.

Our True Identities

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us.”

(Ephesians 1:3–8, NIV)

- A. **Blessed.** Jesus Christ brought us a blessing. Through Him, we are blessed. God always does what is best for us, even when we don’t deserve it. We may try and fight Him, we may try to do things our own way, but God always looks upon us with favor. We are blessed.
- B. **Chosen.** In Christ, we are God’s chosen. He never says, “I’ll settle for you because there is no one else left.” Instead, He says, “I choose you because I created you and because I want to spend eternity with you.”
- C. **Loved.** He doesn’t love us because of what we do or don’t do. We can’t earn more of His love or lose any of His love. In reality, His loving us has more to do with who He is rather than who we are. God is love, and He loves us unconditionally. He loves us with an everlasting love. His love for us won’t even run out in eternity. He has loved us, continues to love us, and will love us forever.
- D. **Sons.** We are His sons; He is never ashamed of us. There is nothing we can do that will cause Him to turn His back on us. And one day, we will inherit everything He has. We are sons of the heavenly Father.
- E. **Accepted.** We don’t ever have to look for acceptance from the Father because we already have it. We don’t need to gain acceptance; we are accepted.
- F. **Redeemed and forgiven.** Jesus was willing to leave the splendor of heaven and redeem us. Because he redeemed us, we can be forgiven. When we fall short of the mark or when we are blatantly disobedient, He still forgives us when we ask. He doesn’t keep score or choose to remember.

MONTH ONE: MY TRUE IDENTITY

The sins that we can't forget, He won't remember. The sins that others won't forget, He has already taken care of. There is more grace in God's heart than there is sin in our past.

My identity isn't found in my degrees, bank account, job description, or in the car I drive. It is found in Christ Jesus. In Him, I am blessed, chosen, loved, a son of God, accepted, redeemed, and forgiven.



Booklist: My True Identity

Groeschel, Craig. *Altar Ego: Becoming Who God Says You Are.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013.* You are NOT who you think you are. In fact, according to bestselling author Craig Groeschel in *Altar Ego*, you need to take your idea of your own identity, lay it down on the altar, and sacrifice it. Give it to God. Offer it up. Why? Because you are who GOD says you are. And until you've sacrificed your broken concept of your identity, you won't become who you are meant to be. When we place our false labels and self-deception on the altar of God's truth, we discover who we really are as His sons and daughters. Instead of an outward-driven, approval-based ego, we learn to live with an "altar" ego—God's vision of who we are becoming. Discover how to trade in your broken ego and unleash your altar ego to become a living sacrifice. Once we know our true identity and are growing in our Christ-like character, then we can behave accordingly, with bold behavior, bold prayers, bold words, and bold obedience. *Altar Ego* reveals who God says you are, and then calls you to live up to it.

Driscoll, Mark. *Who Do You Think You Are?: Finding Your Identity in Christ.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2013. Who are you? What defines you? What is your identity? How you answer those questions affects every aspect of your life: personal, public, and spiritual. So it's vital to get the answer right. Pastor and best-selling author Mark Driscoll believes false identity is at the heart of many struggles—and that you can overcome them by having your true identity in Christ. In *Who Do You Think You Are?* Driscoll explores the question, "What does it mean to be in Christ?" In the process he dissects the false-identity epidemic and, more important, provides the only solution—Jesus.

Stanley, Charles. *Discovering Your Identity.* Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008. "Who are you?" When someone asks that question, how do you respond? Do you give your name and then describe what you do for a living? Most people answer this question with basic, superficial information about their lives, but most Christians don't really know the truth about who they are. You are a saint! If you have accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, then this is the correct answer. And the term saint carries many layers of meaning, all of which is great news. The only right way to understand who we are is to see ourselves from God's perspective, as described in His Word. *Discovering Your Identity* will lead you through the many layers of understanding who you are in God's eyes. You are a beloved child of God; you are the heir of God's inheritance; you are a member of the Body of Christ. In short, you are God's masterpiece!

* Recommended book

MONTH ONE: **MY TRUE IDENTITY**