

UNIDENTIFIED

UNCOVERING THE TRUTH OF WHO WE REALLY ARE

SESSION 3: IDENTIFYING [REDACTED] WITH DEATH

WHAT WE WANT STUDENTS TO LEARN: Students will learn that being reidentified in Christ, while a free gift, brings responsibilities along with it. They will discover that their identity in Christ requires them to die to themselves, take up their cross daily, and identify with Jesus' death so that they may have eternal life.

SCRIPTURE: Romans 6:5-11; Luke 9:23-25

SESSION SNAPSHOT: When we're freed from sin and reidentified in Christ, we can sometimes be tempted to live however we want to. We can become obsessed with elevating, caring for, and looking out for only ourselves. However, that's not how God would have us live in the identity He's given us. When we're identified in Christ, we're identified with all of Him, including even His death. This is why Jesus says it's necessary for us to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily to follow Him. Our sinful selves have to be put to death every day because when we die to ourselves and identify with Jesus' death, we get to identify with His resurrection too.

BIBLE BACKGROUND

The Bible Background is a focused, brief overview of some of the background info for the main passage you will be teaching.



TEACHER PREP VIDEO

Each Leader's Guide comes with a Teacher Prep Video. These short videos are designed to help you grasp the main point of the lesson as you prepare to teach.

To access your *Unidentified* Lesson 3 Teacher Prep Video, click on the link below:

- <https://youtu.be/phLW04vpwrw>

THE DETAILS

ROMANS

- **Author:** Paul is the author of Romans.
- **Time frame:** Romans was probably written from Corinth in the winter of 56-57 AD.
- **Purpose:** Since the church in Rome had not received comprehensive theological teaching on salvation and other implications of following Christ, Paul wrote Romans to ensure a good understanding of such things. In addition, since many Jewish Christians were rejecting some of the new Gentile converts, it was essential that a level playing field be given to all believers. This is what Paul was advocating for in Romans.

LUKE

- **Author:** Luke was a doctor, a Gentile Christian, and a companion of Paul.
- **Time frame:** The Gospel of Luke was written around 60 AD.
- **Purpose:** Luke is the only Gentile author of the Bible. His entire purpose was to write an accurate account of the life of Jesus so as to present Jesus as Savior, fully God and fully man. It is one of the synoptic Gospels, having much in common with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.

THE MAIN POINT

The main point for this lesson is found in Luke 9:23 and Romans 6:5. These two verses work together to show that, in order to be faithful Christ followers, we have to die to ourselves and put to death our sinful desires on our cross. It may be confusing to your students that Jesus gives them a new identity in Himself only to ask them to lay it down for His sake. However, when we look at Jesus' words in Luke 9 alongside Paul's in Romans 6, we see the full picture. When we deny ourselves, take up our cross, and therefore identify with Jesus in a death like His, we "shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His." It may seem contradictory that the only way to get true life is to embrace death, but that's the wonder of the Gospel. When we identify with Jesus' death in our own life, we get to identify with His miraculous, eternal resurrection too.

THE TAKEAWAY

Students will see that the forgiveness and identity Jesus gives them aren't to be used as excuses to live however they want and elevate themselves above others. Just as Jesus came to serve and not be served and to die as a ransom for many, we must live in the same way. Students will see that they must identify with Jesus' death every day by denying themselves their selfish, sinful desires and instead submitting to the power of the resurrection. A power that sees us through death. Your students will reflect on what it means to identify with Jesus' death, prioritize others above themselves, deny themselves, and take up their cross daily. They will come up with practical ways they can decrease while Jesus increases in their life.

LESSON PLAN

THE LESSON PLAN CONTAINS THREE ELEMENTS:

- **Getting Started** - An interactive way of kicking off your time by introducing the lesson's general focus
- **Digging In** - The section where you'll settle down and dig through Scripture
- **Wrapping Up** - The section where you'll give students practical takeaways to apply in their lives

GETTING STARTED

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This lesson will utilize pages 21-25 in the *Unidentified* Student Book.
 - This activity will use pages 21-22.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - Make sure your students have a Bible, their Student Books, and something to write with.
 - You may want to have some extra Bibles in case a student forgets theirs.

FIRST, ask your students to turn to page 21 and, if you think it would be helpful, read or have a student read the session intro. If you choose not to do this, direct their attention to page 22, where they'll find the Getting Started activity. On this page, your students will see 3 different scenarios. Each one will present a potential tragedy, and students will have to write in the space provided a solution to prevent it. Encourage students to come up with fun or crazy solutions to these scenarios. Feel free to put students in groups or have them do this activity individually; either one will work.

THEN, read each scenario one by one, allow students enough time to write their responses, and then have them share their answers. Feel free to have some fun with this by giving an award for the funniest or most creative answer. When each scenario has been read and discussed, **say something like this:**

• We're usually pretty good at keeping ourselves out of harm's way. You may not even realize that you do several things every day that protect you from getting hurt. Wearing your seat belt, not eating that moldy bread, and keeping forks out of electrical outlets are all things we do to avoid a serious tragedy. In fact, we can sometimes go out of our way to avoid injury or, even worse, death. We can become so obsessed with looking out for ourselves that we neglect the people around us. But that's not how God would have us live in our new identity. In this session, we'll take a look at how we're called to live in our God-given identity.

IF THERE ARE NO COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS, TRANSITION TO THE DIGGING IN SECTION OF YOUR LESSON.

DIGGING IN

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize pages 23-24 in the *Unidentified* Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - You'll want to make sure students have something to write with and a Bible or Bible app.

FIRST, introduce the idea of this session by **saying something like:**

- **As we learned in our last session, when we have faith in Jesus, we can be unidentified from sin through His grace. You may think this means that we're now free to do whatever we want with this new identity. Or that since your sin problem is figured out and you now have eternal life, you can focus on things like making your new life as awesome as possible. But in reality, we don't get to live however we want to or make our lives the most important things in the world. Quite the opposite, really.**

NEXT, instruct students to turn to Luke 9 in their Bibles and page 23 of their Student Books. If you think it would be helpful, use the *Details* section of the *Bible Background* to give some context. Explain that you're about to look at a story in the Gospel of Luke where Jesus tells His disciples what it takes to be a faithful follower - how they're supposed to live in their new identities that He's given them. Then read or have a student read Luke 9:23-25. **Ask:**

- **What does it mean to "deny yourself and take up your cross?"**
 - **Answer:** Tell your students that this could also be said as "dying to yourself." To deny or die to yourself means that you make others more important than yourself. It means that you put aside your preferences for the sake of serving God and others. You're no longer the most important thing in your life - following and serving Jesus is.
- **Why do you think Jesus would say that denying yourself is necessary to follow Him?**
 - **Answers will vary.**
- **In your own words, explain what Jesus meant when He said that if you try to save your life, you'll lose it, but if you lose your life, you'll save it.**
 - **Answers will vary.** Bring the discussion for this question around to this fact. Even though we can try to save our lives by making ourselves most important, looking out for ourselves, and making sure we always have what we want/need, we're unable to truly save ourselves. Only Jesus can save our lives, and that requires us to lay down our lives for His sake.

Direct students to Romans 6 in their Bibles. While they're finding it, explain that you're transitioning from a Gospel story to a letter written by Paul to the churches in Rome. Paul goes into great depth explaining what it actually means to deny ourselves and take up our cross and why we have to do it in the first place. He emphasizes the need to identify with Jesus in His death, not just His life. Explain to your students that, while that may seem like a weird thing to do, there's a greater reason and purpose behind it. **Say something like:**

- **This might seem a little backward to you at first. You may be wondering why Jesus gives you true life and meaningful identity in the first place if He's just going to ask you to lay them down. But there's more to it than just laying them down. Let's take a look at what Paul has to say about this in Romans 6. As we read these verses, write down any connections you see between this passage and Jesus' words in Luke 9.**

THEN, read or have a student read Romans 6:5-7. **Ask:**

- **What do you think it means to be united with Jesus in a death like His?**
 - **Answers will vary.** Tell your students that when we are reidentified in Jesus, we take on His whole identity. We identify with His perfect life and the blessings it brings, but we also identify with His death. We don't get to choose which parts of Jesus we identify with when we put our faith in Him. If we are truly united with Him, we are united with Him in all things, including His death. But it doesn't end there...
- **According to verse 5, when we lay down and lose our lives for Jesus' sake, what are we promised?**
 - **Answer:** Resurrection. True life. Freedom from sin.
- **What is "our old self?" If it's been crucified, does that mean you'll never deal with sin again?**
 - **Answer:** Our old self is our sinful nature and identity we talked about last time. Jesus took our sinful nature and identity upon Himself, and it was crucified with Him. He took our sinful selves to the cross so that we could identify with His death and have the promise of resurrection. This doesn't mean we'll never sin, though. We're free from the penalty of sin (death), but we still live in a broken world and will deal with sin's influence until Jesus comes back.

Before moving to the second half of this passage, explain to your students that this is the connection to the passage you read in Luke. Our old self, our sinful identity, was crucified with Jesus over 2,000 years ago. But because we still live in a broken world, we will still struggle with sin and deal with its consequences. This is why Jesus said we have to "take up our cross daily." We have to put our sinful identity to death every day so that we can fully live in the identity He's given us.

NEXT, be prepared to hammer down on what it actually looks like to die to yourself, take up your cross, and identify with Jesus' death. This is very "churchy" language, and your students probably don't have a good idea of what this actually means for their everyday lives. Read or have a student read Romans 6:8-11. **Ask:**

- **According to these verses, if you've been reidentified with Christ, what is true about that identity?**
 - **Answer:** Our old self has been crucified, we are free from sin, we will be resurrected, we will live with Jesus, we will never die again, we've died to sin, and we now live to God.
- **Explain what it means to be dead to sin and alive to God. What does it take to do this in real life?**
 - **Answers will vary.** Walk your students through some examples of what it practically looks like to die to sin and live to God in everyday life. Maybe give some examples from your own life. Pull down the lofty language we tend to use and really flesh it out.

FINALLY, end the Digging In section by telling your students that you've covered a lot of difficult, complex stuff. Remind them of the big points: God calls us to live a certain way with our new identity, we have to deny ourselves (or die to ourselves) and take up our cross daily, and we have to identify with not only Jesus' life but His death as well. And that means we have to crucify, or put to

death, our selfish, sinful desires every day. **Say something like:**

- When we're unidentified from sin and reidentified in Christ, we're called to identify with His death. That may sound dark, but it's really great news because it's only through His death that we can have true life. As Jesus said in Luke 9, if we try to save our lives by acting in our own interests and serving only ourselves, we'll lose them forever. But if we deny ourselves, take up our cross, and identify with His death, we also get to identify with His resurrection and live forever. We'll still struggle with sin every day, but in order to faithfully follow Jesus and live in the identity He's given us, we have to put those sinful desires on the cross and follow in His footsteps. In order to get the gift of eternal life, we have to identify with Jesus' death. That's the only way we'll ever truly live.

ASK IF ANYONE HAS ANY THOUGHTS OR QUESTIONS, THEN TRANSITION TO THE WRAPPING UP PORTION OF YOUR LESSON.

WRAPPING UP

- **Student Book Pages**
 - This activity will utilize page 25 in the *Unidentified* Student Book.
- **Additional Instructions**
 - Make sure students have their Bible and something to write with.

FIRST, direct students to page 25 in their books, where they will see John 3:30 and a quote from a theologian named Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Bon-hof-er). Instruct them to read through these two things a few times and really think about what they mean in light of what they've just learned.

THEN, encourage students to, on their own, weigh the cost of following Jesus, reflect on what it means to die to themselves, and write down what it might look like to decrease themselves and increase Jesus in their lives. When enough time has passed, have students share their answers and discuss others' answers. Begin wrapping up this session by **saying something like:**

- Being identified in Jesus is a free gift, but it does bring responsibilities with it. We aren't set free from our sinful identity to live however we'd like or to elevate ourselves. Just as Jesus came to serve others and give the ultimate price by dying on the cross for all of our sins, we are called to serve God and others before ourselves and take up our cross daily. If we're to truly be identified in Jesus, we have to take all of His identity, not just the parts we like. That means we have to deny ourselves and put our selfish, sinful identity to death. But the good news is that Jesus was resurrected and is still alive. And if we identify with His death, we get to identify with His resurrection and life too.

FINALLY, ask students if they have any questions or additional comments. Inform students of the devotions located on pages 35-42 in their Student Books. Provide them with a schedule or some structure as to when you would like for them to work through them. The third devotion is on page 39.

IF THERE ARE NO MORE QUESTIONS, CLOSE IN PRAYER FOR YOUR GROUP.