

Way of Discipleship Small Groups

Bible Themes 12: New Testament: Our identity



Touching base (5 minutes)

Open in prayer as is helpful for your group.

If this is your first session take time to introduce yourselves and set any ground rules you want to for your time together.

If you met previously take the opportunity either as a group or in pairs to check in with each other about how your response from last time has gone.



Introduction: These final three sessions on Bible themes look at how the letters of the New Testament, and the book of Revelation, unpack the meaning of God's story and the significance of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. Written to early Christian disciples, they also tell us a lot about what it means to live as followers of Christ in the world. These three sessions look at the lifestyle of a disciple. The previous session examined what these letters and the book of Revelation show about the relationship God wants with us. This session explores our identity. Next session will look at our callings.

Opening question(s) (5 minutes)

What do you think it means that I can be a new creation?



Understanding the information (25 minutes)

Share these thoughts in your own words or read them together:

The New Testament unpacks how God sees us, and what He longs to do in us. This gives us the deepest sense of our identity as human beings.

It tells us how, through Christ, we are renewed creations. Just as God's plan is to restore all things, He wants to restore us. "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5: 16-17) This transforms how we look at ourselves and others.



It promises that, as restored persons, we can become more like Christ. In the New Testament, a fully human life is one in which "Christ is formed in you". (Galatians 4:19)

Our baptism symbolises this. It is a time when we die to our own way of living, and from now on live a new life – totally identifying with Christ, and living life as He would live it: “We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” (Romans 6:4)

As we understand who we are in Christ, our natural response to what God has done is to live differently. Many of the letters unfold what God has done, and then pivot to challenge or invite Christians to live in response to that. Paul writes that those who hear “about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus” will “put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness”. (Ephesians 4: 22-24)

Change comes as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit. The New Testament describes and explores how the world is now in the age of God’s Spirit. The presence of God’s Holy Spirit in the world, the power that raised Jesus from death and brings the reality of God’s future promise into the present, is the source of any meaningful change in our lives. As we seek to become more like Christ, the only path offered is in cooperation with God’s Spirit. Those “who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God” (Romans 8:14) and while Christians seek to live to God’s eternal standards, we cannot do it “by the flesh” (our own efforts) but by the Spirit. (Romans 8:1-13)

The Holy Spirit also works to restore us to each other. In Acts we see how at Pentecost God reverses the way humans are divided from each other in two amazing ways. Firstly, He uses all the languages of those who are present to communicate – affirming that differences are a gift, not a problem. They are part of God’s creation. But secondly, by giving His Spirit to every person, God reveals how these different people are made one community in Christ. The story of Acts describes this creation of a new family, as the Jewish followers of Jesus began to see and respond to how God was now calling all people.

Through Christ God has broken down the wall of hostility (Ephesians 2:14) between different people groups...”in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:26-28) The ultimate promise in the book of Revelation is of “...a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:9-10)

Discuss: What do we most need to understand about who we are? Why?

Reading the Bible (15 minutes)

Read 2 Corinthians 5: 14-21 which explores what we most need to know about who we are in Christ.

Discuss the Discovery Bible Study questions:
What does this passage teach me about God?
What does this passage teach me about people?
How does this passage call me to obey God?
What might I do in response to this this week?



Seeing how it looks in real lives (10 minutes)

There is no video, but you are invited to discuss your experience of seeing yourselves and others as God sees you.



Responding to God's leading (5 minutes)

Give people an opportunity to think about, "What might God be showing me and how might I respond?" They may like to write this down and/or share it with the group and/or share it with one other person. A friendly question is to ask each other, "Is there anything that would be helpful to ask you next time?"



Group prayer (5 minutes)

God our Father,

On our journey you long for us to be with you, to rest in you and to hear your voice.

You have made us for covenant love - Our hearts are restless until we find ourselves in you.

We praise and adore you.

Lord Jesus,

We become more ourselves the more we grow like you.

Shape us as your disciples, growing in kindness, faithfulness and above-all self-giving love.

We praise and adore you.

Holy Spirit,

You are at work in our lives, closer to us than we can imagine.

You are at work in the world, releasing the life of God's healing reign.

In every part of our lives we join in with you, living each day for your purpose and glory as disciples.

We praise and adore you.



Bible Themes 12: New Testament: Our identity

The New Testament unpacks how God sees us, and what He longs to do in us. This gives us the deepest sense of our identity as human beings.

It tells us how, through Christ, **we are renewed creations**. Just as God's plan is to restore all things, He wants to restore us. "So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5: 16-17) This transforms how we look at ourselves and others.

It promises that, **as restored persons, we can become more like Christ**. In the New Testament, a fully human life is one in which "Christ is formed in you". (Galatians 4:19)



Our baptism symbolises this. It is a time when we die to our own way of living, and from now on live a new life – totally identifying with Christ, and living life as He would live it: "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." (Romans 6:4)

As we understand who we are in Christ, our natural response to what God has done is to live differently. Many of the letters unfold what God has done, and then pivot to challenge or invite Christians to live in response to that. Paul writes that those who hear "about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus" will "put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness". (Ephesians 4: 22-24)

Change comes as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit. The New Testament describes and explores how the world is now in the age of God's Spirit. The presence of God's Holy Spirit in the world, the power that raised Jesus from death and brings the reality of God's future promise into the present, is the source of any meaningful change in our lives. As we seek to become more like Christ, the only path offered is in cooperation with God's Spirit. Those "who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God" (Romans 8:14) and while Christians seek to live to God's eternal standards, we cannot do it "by the flesh" (our own efforts) but by the Spirit. (Romans 8:1-13)

Bible Themes 12: New Testament: Our identity



The Holy Spirit also works to restore us to each other. In Acts we see how at Pentecost God reverses the way humans are divided from each other in two amazing ways. Firstly, He uses all the languages of those who are present to communicate – affirming that differences are a gift, not a problem. They are part of God’s creation. But secondly, by giving His Spirit to every person, God reveals how these different people are made one community in Christ. The story of Acts describes this creation of a new family, as the Jewish followers of Jesus began to see and respond to how God was now calling all people.

Through Christ God has broken down the wall of hostility (Ephesians 2:14) between different people groups...”in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:26-28) The ultimate promise in the book of Revelation is of “...a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:9-10)