

New ID!

By accepting Christ, we are adopted into the family of God, which gives us an identity more authentic and stable than the images we see in the world.

LIFE NEED

Identity and acceptance are two important keys to unlocking the mystery of how teens feel about themselves. Everywhere they turn, they face the pressure to be accepted not only by others but also by themselves. It is widely believed that people form their view of themselves in four ways: **subjectively** (who we each think we are), **objectively** (who others think we are), **socially** (how we think others view us), and **ideally** (who we'd like to become).

The adolescent years are the starting point for most of this “forming.” This journey is complicated by puberty, peer pressure, and the pain of finding oneself. Teenagers from varied backgrounds will have varying values. Some find what they think is their identity through wearing the right clothes. For some, it's athletics; and for others, music. It is probable that some have their identity anchored in the church and church activities.

Use this lesson to enable your students to explore the only real identity that will sustain them throughout life, an identity based on Jesus Christ. Ultimately, it will be more important for them to be identified with the Christ than the crowd.

RESOURCES

- Driver's license
- Copies of the *My Side* handout; pens and pencils
- Chalk/marker board or overhead
- Chalk or markers

BIBLICAL REFERENCES

Ephesians 1:3-14; Romans 8:17-18; Colossians 2:6-10

The key to unlocking **Ephesians 1:3-14** is found in verse 5 where the concept of adoption is introduced. We find that belonging to God's family has many privileges. Adoption was a very involved process in Roman times. A child's natural father had to give up all rights before the child could be adopted. This was a tedious process. However, when the process was complete, two things occurred simultaneously: (1) the adoptive father was viewed as the owner of all the adoptee's possessions and had the right, as a loving father, to control the child's behavior; (2) the child had a new identity with all the rights of the new family regardless of previous status and social rank.

With this in mind, the writer equates earthly adoption to spiritual adoption by Christ. Prior to accepting Jesus, we lived in the “sin” family. Because Christ died and was resurrected, it is now possible for us to be accepted into His family with all the rights of God's children!

Romans 8:17-18 also supports this idea of adoption but goes at the concept from the angle of inheritance. That is, when we are God's children, we become His heirs—just like His Son, Jesus. This new inheritance is a wonderful gift from God. It means we receive spiritual blessings now and will share in the glorious riches of God's kingdom. However, sharing this inheritance with Christ also involves sharing in His suffering and sacrifice.

Colossians 2:6-10 uses the theme of adoption by outlining the responsibilities that come with this great inheritance. We cannot merely sit back and enjoy this inheritance; we must continue to live in the fullness, power, and completeness that Christ gives. Adoption into God's family means receiving an overwhelming inheritance. We're given not only a new identity but also the responsibility to live as children of the King!

PREPARING THE TEACHER

I remember the days of trying to figure out my identity. Wondering about myself proved to be an incredibly grueling process for me. I was brought up in the church, and for me, my identity often seemed more wrapped up in the church than in Christ. It wasn't until my sophomore year in college that I realized my identity was not found in who I was at that time or who I was going to become. My real "who I'll be forever" identity was found in Christ.

As an adult, I sometimes still struggle with this issue of identity. I also see other adults around me constantly seeking to be reassured of their identity in Christ. The pressures of their

***We don't see things as they are,
we see them as we are.***

—Anais Nin, American writer

jobs and family relationships cause them to struggle and stumble in their journey with Christ. I have seen others who question their identity when a spouse leaves them unexpectedly or when they become parents and realize the responsibility they have to their children.

All of these adult issues, while different in degree, are still identity issues. If our identity is wrapped up in a job, spouse, family, or

money, then we are focused on the temporary. Then when these things fail, we identify ourselves as fail-

ures. The emotional traumas we face can't be shrugged off with the hope that one day we will suddenly "find ourselves." We must face these struggles and be reminded that we are His children—so we're not alone in facing them. We must decide whose we are and then behave like His children.

How do we accomplish this? How do we identify with Christ? The key to this process involves our focus. Who are we concentrating on? What motivates and drives us to reach our goals? How do we even arrive at goals that would identify with Christ? When we lose ourselves in Him, when our focus centers on Christ and away from ourselves, then we can begin to identify with Him. Identity in Christ is the element that changes our focus away from the temporary and back to the eternal.

***One of the greatest contributions we
can make to our teenagers' well-being
is to demonstrate they are loved and
esteemed.***

—Bruce Narramore
Adolescence Is Not an Illness

Think back on your teen years when you were forming your self- identity:

- ☞ How did you feel about yourself during those years?
- ☞ What was your primary source of identity? Sports? Music? Art? Home life? Church life? Something else?

Think about your life today:

- ☞ How do you feel about yourself today? Do you feel like a child of God? Why, or why not?
- ☞ Do you think your identity is wrapped up in your job? Spouse? Children? Level of income?
- ☞ What can you do right now to be reminded that because of Christ, you belong to God and are a part of His family? Read the scripture for today's lesson? Talk with a Christian friend?

Think about your students:

- ☞ Which students in your class struggle with knowing they can belong to God's family?
- ☞ What can you do to help them experience God's adoptive love?
- ☞ Which students in your class exhibit a clear understanding of relying on God and their inheritance in His family? To what do you credit this ability?
- ☞ Pray for your students as they make decisions about whether to be adopted into God's family.

TEACHING THE LESSON

NOTES

LIFE

Student Goal: See that the only real and lasting identity is found in Jesus Christ.

Playing Dress Up ⌚5

Say: **Most likely, everyone probably knows what “glamour shots” are! Just in case you don’t know, they are fashion-type portraits taken after the subject has had a complete makeover in hair, makeup, and clothes.**

Then ask the following questions. These questions are designed so that your students will begin to see that *real* identity is not found in a picture or in what we wear or how we look. Rather, *real* identity is found in Christ. (NOTE: For a great idea on how to expand this activity, see the Creative Options section of this lesson.)

- **Why do you think glamour shots are so popular? What do they do for the person getting the photos taken?**

Common answers will probably center around the image that teens want to project. Point out that the image we must reflect is the image of Christ.

- **Are your friends really into their looks? Why do you think that is?**

The answer will probably be a resounding yes! The point of this question is to get your class to look at others around them.

- **Have you ever become friends with someone based on the way they look?**

Then say: **If we all chose friends solely on looks, we’d all have very few friends! We know from His Word that God doesn’t look at outward appearances. He only looks at the heart.**

Explain to your students the story of David’s anointing to be king of Israel. Samuel was looking among Jesse’s sons for a new king. Samuel assumed that the Lord would want the most kingly looking son to do the job. This was not so. To let students hear what God’s criteria was, have a student read 1 Samuel 16:7.

Then ask, **Are your friends really interested in your looks?** It asks your class to think about how others perceive them. This question will hopefully begin the process of helping them see that depending on how others look at us will not bring about a healthy self-concept.

In your own words, say: **We form our identities in part by the ways we look at people and by the ways they look at us. Let’s see just how far that kind of identity building will take us.**

Identity Crisis ⌚5

Pass around to the class your driver's license. If you don't have a license, a photo of yourself will do. If you're really brave, bring in a picture of yourself when you were in high school. And remember, self-disclosure is a healthy thing!

Ask your class, **If you had never met me and looked at my picture, would you say that this picture is a good representation of me?**

In your own words, relate this concept to your class. Say something like this:

When I was younger, I wanted my picture on my license to look good. Since then, however, I've learned it is nearly impossible to have a good picture made! School photographers and the Department of Motor Vehicles must take classes on how *not* to take a good picture!

I'm fortunate, though. My self-identity is not based on this photo of me. In fact, if I depended on this picture for self-identity, I'd be in big trouble. My self-identity is found in a person named Jesus Christ. He's the only Source I have found to help me to accept myself—even love myself—regardless of how photogenic I am.

Take some time and ask your students if they have any pictures of themselves they'd be willing to share with the class. If they aren't willing, ask them to share why.

Ask, **Have you ever had a picture taken in which you were really embarrassed with the way it turned out? How did it make you feel when others saw it?**

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TRUTH

Student Goal: Realize that having an identity in Christ means accepting what Christ did for us and being adopted into God's family.

My Side ⌚15

Ask your class the following question: **Do you remember playing team games at school or in your backyard as a kid? How were the teams formed?**

More than likely, the response will be that someone (usually the loudest or oldest kid) appointed captains. The captains in turn then chose their team based on how well they thought the kids could play.

Point out that the wording was often, "OK, you're on my side."

Then say: **Use your imaginations and pretend you're little kids again. We're going to play kickball. To make things easier, let's go ahead and assign teams. Then I've got a few more friends who want to play, and the captains and their teams will get to decide who will play on your team.**

Have the class decide who they would like to serve as team captains. Then divide the class into two teams. Those members whose last names start with *A* through *K* are on team 1; those with last names starting with *L* through *Z* are on team 2. If the teams are not even, move people around until the teams are as even as possible. Have the teacher flip a coin to decide who picks first.

Distribute copies of the *My Side* handout, which is printed at the end of this lesson. Then say, **Meet these other potential teammates. Use their pictures to help you decide who will play on your team. Captains, with the help of your team, you can choose up to three more people to be on your team. Be sure to have a reason why you chose the way you did.**

After the teams have been chosen, ask the following questions:

- **Who did you choose and why?**
- **As captain, how did it feel to be able to choose your team?**
- **As members of the team, why did you want certain people chosen before others?**
- **Based on what you can see of this person, how do you think the person who was picked last felt? What about those who weren't picked at all?**

Say, **Let's do a little more exploring into whose side we're really on.** Together as a class, read Ephesians 1:3-14.

After reading, ask your students, **What do you think these verses say about God's team?** Help them see that God loves us so much that He promises He will adopt us into His family.

On a chalk/marker board or overhead, write the three statements listed below:

Let's Look at His Side!

After writing this, read verse 4 together. Then say, **In verse 4, we learn that God has chosen us before the creation of the world! That is, God had in His plan a place for each one of us! It is important to recognize that we are not aimless creatures! As a part of God's family, you are a person with true purpose!**

Next write, Let's Look at His Love!

After writing this on the board, read together verses 7 and 8. Then say, **We are chosen by God only on the basis of love. It does not matter whose family we come from or how rich or poor we are. Love accepts everyone! This love was demonstrated in Jesus' death on the Cross for our sakes; God is interested in giving us a new identity based on love!**

Finally, write, Let's Look at His Family

Read verse 5, and then say: **Because of this act of great love, we are adopted into His family! We are given a new identity and purpose! He does not choose us on the basis of looks! Rather He chooses us on the basis of love! Your new identity creates in you a sense of belonging! You are one of God's children, and as one saying goes, "God don't make no junk!"**

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VISION

Student Goal: Determine to have a relationship with Christ.

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall . . . ⌚5

Have your class get out either their school ID card, driver's license, or a recent picture of themselves. Ask them to look at their pictures and answer these questions:

- **Have I accepted Christ and been given a new identity?**
- **When I look at my picture, are my looks more important than His love?**
- **Do I spend more time on my looks or with Christ?**

Prayer ⌚5

Have class members pray for specific concerns. Here are some suggestions: (1) Encourage someone to pray a prayer of thanks for being a child of God. (2) Have someone else thank God that He looks at our hearts and not on outward appearances.

Finally, as the teacher, pray out loud for each class member by name. Thank God for their uniqueness and openness to being a child of God, a part of His team. Allow a moment of silent prayer for those who may not have accepted Christ yet. Ask God to make himself known to those people as a Father. Thank Him that they too can be adopted into His family.

CREATIVE OPTIONS

Glamour Shots: In Reverse

To supplement the discussion in the Playing Dress Up activity in the LIFE section of the lesson, bring in dress-up or glamour-type clothes (blazers, sequined party dresses, feather boas, hats, scarves, ties, etc.) for students to wear. You may want to also bring gaudy costume jewelry—the more outrageous the better. Take pictures (preferably with a Polaroid camera) of them. Tell them that these are the *before* shots. Then have them return to their normal look and do *after* shots of them together as a group in class. Display the photos in class as before-and-after shots. Follow this fun opener with the questions from the LIFE section.

Drama

Use the following skit to open this unit study on Ephesians:

“Just a Little Determination” from *A Funny Thing Happened to Me on My Way Through the Bible* by Martha Bolton, Lillenas Drama Resources (MP-628), available at www.barefootministries.com. This comedy monologue replays the story of Zacchaeus and shows how we are special in God’s eyes.

Group Singing

This lesson focuses on the change that occurs in our lives when we become children of God. Use praise choruses that focus on that fact as part of your closing in the VISION section of this lesson. Following are some appropriate choruses: “His Strength Is Perfect,” “If God Is for Us,” “Big House,” “I Am Somebody,” and “Hidden Treasure” from *All the Best Songs for Youth* chorus book (MB-748), Lillenas Publishing Company, available at www.barefootministries.com.