

# ID & ME

## WHO GOD CALLS US TO BE

*ID & Me: Who God Calls Us to Be*

Contributions from Noah Lehman, Christa Lord, Jim Lord,  
Miya Nakamura, and Brent Niedergall

Some material adapted from *People Positive*, copyright © 2025 by  
Positive Action for Christ.

Copyright © 2025 by Positive Action for Christ, Inc., P.O. Box 700,  
502 W. Pippen Street, Whitakers, NC 27891.

[positiveaction.org](http://positiveaction.org)

All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any manner  
without permission in writing from the publisher.

Printed in the United States of America

Print ISBN: 978-1-59557-415-2

PDF ISBN: 978-1-59557-416-9

Edited by Brent Niedergall

Cover design and layout by Christa Lord

Published by



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction . . . . .	5
Lesson 1—Identity Conflicts . . . . .	8
Lesson 2—Does It Matter What Others Think of Us? . . . . .	17
Lesson 3—Our Background and Identity . . . . .	25
Lesson 4—Sex, Gender, and Identity. . . . .	33
Lesson 5—Broader Community and Our Identity . . . . .	41

# INTRODUCTION

Personal identity presents a challenge for everyone—especially teens. We can struggle with how we see ourselves, how others see us, or how God sees us. Thankfully, Scripture addresses both who we are and who God calls us to be. In this study, we provide biblical principles for understanding identity, addressing topics like reputation, cultural background, community, and the relationship between sex and gender. Your teens can learn that an exploration of their God-given identity can help nurture gratitude and joy.

## Lesson Format

God's Word is the primary catalyst for our spiritual growth. As God teaches us His truth through His Word, He captivates our attention and opens our understanding. Just as Christ illustrated His teaching with tangible objects—a coin, a tree, or a sheep—you can use illustrations to cement biblical principles in your students' minds. Rather than simply talking about how God's Word reveals our heart (James 1:22–25), bring a mirror to show your students.

Hot Shots encourage interaction between students and teacher through exercises, handouts, and lively illustrations. Use the suggestions provided in each lesson, but feel free to enrich the lesson by using your own ideas.

Each Hot Shot lesson follows the same format.

- The **Warm Up** introduces the lesson topic through an activity, like a game, worksheet, or survey.
- The **Bridge** relates that topic to the lesson itself using an illustration or discussion prompt.
- And at the end of each lesson, the **Conclusion** reviews the main points.

Handouts may be copied for church use. They are also available as a free PDF download on the *ID & Me* product page at [positiveaction.org](http://positiveaction.org).

## Before Each Lesson . . .

1. Read through the lesson and take note of the Objectives, Text, and any preparation needed for creative teaching segments.
2. Adapt the lesson if necessary. Determine ahead of time if you'll need to modify teaching methods or activities to fit your equipment or facilities.
3. Plan your schedule for class time. Each lesson can be taught in 20–30 minutes, but feel free to shorten or lengthen the lesson to fit your needs.
4. Be enthusiastic! Excitement on your part will help cultivate your students' interest. If you don't feel that one of the teaching ideas or Warm Ups provided will excite your teens, modify it to fit your group.

# Course Objectives

This study will . . .

- Offer biblical principles about our personal identity.
- Weigh the significance of how we view ourselves, how others view us, and how God views us.
- Provide a framework for understanding reputation, cultural background, gender, and community.

## Lesson Overview

### *Lesson 1—Identity Conflicts*

- God made us all in His image, and we can reflect Him in some way.
- No matter our choices, abilities, roles, or stage of life, God’s image remains the core of our identity.
- Our sin betrays God’s image, but Christ expressed God’s image perfectly.
- Our identity exists within three broad tensions—between right and wrong, between subjectivity and objectivity, and between individuality and community.

### *Lesson 2—Does It Matter What Others Think of Us?*

- We should not build our identity on what others think of us.
- We should steward our appearance, persona, and reputation as acts of love.
- If forced to choose, we should value integrity over popularity.

### *Lesson 3—Our Background and Identity*

- Each of us has a different background—ethnicity, culture, and family heritage—but this does not dictate our identity.
- Everyone’s background presents unique opportunities and challenges.
- Believers are God’s children—brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

### *Lesson 4—Sex, Gender, and Identity*

- God created Adam and Eve as male and female, both reflecting His image.
- Sex designation and gender expression are distinct concepts that help us relate to other people.
- Sex and gender are significant to earthly relationships but not essential to our spiritual identity.

### *Lesson 5—Broader Community and Our Identity*

- No human group or ideology is perfect, but we can support movements to the extent that they follow Christian ideals.
- Our bond with Christ is more important than any other group or calling.
- Churches are groups of Christians joined together for worship, encouragement, and instruction.

Lesson presentations for this study are available to download free at **[positiveaction.org](http://positiveaction.org)**.

# IDENTITY CONFLICTS

This study outlines biblical principles of personal identity. How does God view us? How do we view ourselves? Can we change or grow—and if so, how? In this first lesson, you can introduce students to three broad tensions they may encounter as they establish their own identity.

## Content Objectives

- God made us all in His image, and we can reflect Him in some way.
- No matter our choices, abilities, roles, or stage of life, God's image remains the core of our identity.
- Our sin betrays God's image, but Christ expressed God's image perfectly.
- Our identity exists within three broad tensions—between right and wrong, between subjectivity and objectivity, and between individuality and community.

## Preparation

You will need . . .

- A copy of Handout 1 for each student
- Pens or pencils

## Warm-Up

Ask students to fill out the survey on Handout 1, being sure to warn them that the rest of the class may hear their answers. After a few minutes, collect the handouts, shuffle them, and read them at random. Ask volunteers to guess which student may have completed each survey.

**Discussion:** Which of these answers reveal the most about people? If you wanted to know someone well, which of these questions would you ask?

## Bridge

“Who am I?” Some people never think seriously about this question, and some people think about it so much that they paralyze themselves with fear or uncertainty. So in this study, we’ll talk about ways to ground our identity and stand firm when life throws conflict our way.

**Discussion:** Have you ever heard of an *existential crisis*? What kind of conflict is that?

Just like it sounds, an existential crisis is a crisis of our existence, our very being. Something big in our life will change, and then a whole section of our identity falls apart.

- Maybe we fail in a huge way, and we realize we're not as special as we thought.
- Maybe someone breaks our trust, and we start to question how to connect with other people.
- Maybe we lose someone we care about, and we don't know how we'll move on with life.

Our world keeps changing, and we have to adapt. But not all changes need to shake our identity to its core.

**Discussion:** When is it good for someone to adapt to their environment? And what kinds of changes or adaptations are bad?

- We don't want to be like those "chameleon" boyfriends or girlfriends who change everything about themselves to match their new infatuation.
- We don't want to be like those artists or celebrities who get a little fame and success, then suddenly treat everyone like garbage.

If our environment can dictate who we are, then our identity or integrity weren't very strong to begin with.

Crises and opportunities will appear all throughout our lives. They will test us. If we don't have a strong sense of identity, we will bend and break under the pressure. The world will grab us and force us into one of its boxes—strong or weak, communist or capitalist, rich or poor, victim or oppressor, or any number of labels that simplify and reduce the complexity of the human condition. We must show the world *who* we are before it tells us *what* we are.

## The Core of Our Identity

So as we frame up our identity, what is our foundation, our center, our core? Obviously, people can look and act and think very differently from each other, but do we all share some common attribute?

**Read Genesis 1:26–27.** In the beginning, when God created the first humans, He made them in His "image." This made people different from all the other creatures and objects in Creation.



**Discussion:** What do you think it means to be made in God's image? What is this image?

Christian theologians and scholars differ on how to interpret this phrase.

- Some believe God's image to be an intrinsic quality—some ability or capacity to reflect God's character and connect with Him.
- Some believe God's image to be a task or calling—something we do to fulfill our purpose in this world.

And some believe that we reveal God's image by having a relationship with Him. The image is a picture that emerges as we follow Him.

Regardless of how you describe God's image, it lies at the core of our identity. God designed us to reflect Him in some way.

- God is love, and we can show a little of that same kind of love to others.
- God is truth, and we can stay honest and trustworthy, too.
- God is faithful, and we can show kindness and loyalty, as well.

Likewise, we can betray His image. By sinning—by breaking God's law, by doing wrong—we twist His likeness into something He did not intend.

#### **Illustration—God's Image and Murder**

Remember Noah, the man who built an ark to survive the huge flood? After the floodwaters receded, as Noah and the others began rebuilding society, God explained some critical rules—including a pretty big one we find in almost every civilization throughout history: Do not murder.

God explained the reasoning behind His law. **Read Genesis 9:6.** Since people bear God's image, they have inherent spiritual worth. To lash out at people is to insult God Himself.

#### **Illustration—God's Image and Cursing**

We see a version of this principle in the New Testament, too. In the book of James, the apostle writes about the difficulty of controlling our tongue—that is, our speech. When we nurture a cruel, hate-filled heart, we will naturally say cruel, hate-filled things. **Read James 3:7–10.**

This is the height of hypocrisy. God gave us speech to talk with Him and to help others. But Christians often praise God on Sunday and then spend the rest of the week tearing down other people—people who are made in God’s image. This makes no sense, and it does not reflect God’s love.

## The Perfect Image

**Discussion:** So if we should try to reflect God and respect His image in other people, how do we know what to do? How do we bear His image better?

It’s impossible to understand all of God’s character. We don’t yet know the depths of His love and goodness. We can certainly learn more by studying His Word—the Scripture He left us—but even then, many of these moral attributes might seem vague or abstract to us. Thankfully, God gave us a clear and perfect picture of His image in humanity—Jesus Christ.

**Read Hebrews 1:3 and Colossians 1:15–17.** Jesus is the Son of God—in other words, Jesus is God Himself in human flesh. Jesus lived a perfect, sinless life on Earth, and by doing so, He proved that humans could reflect God’s character. Jesus forged a path that we can follow, with His grace and help.

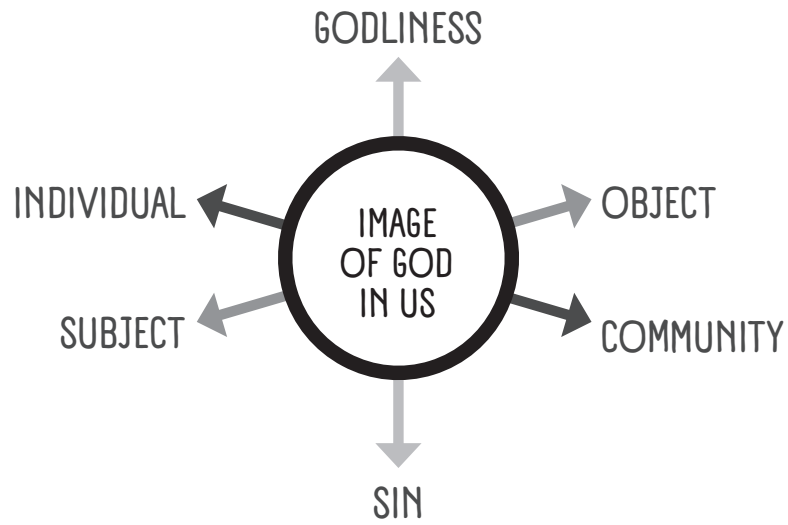
So we can learn a lot about God all throughout Scripture, but we best understand the intersection of the divine and the human by studying Jesus. If we try to be like Him—to care and love and serve and lead and sacrifice like He did—we will present a clear image of God to the rest of the world.

## The Three Tensions

Of course, even if we accept God’s image as our core—the center of our worth, our focus, our calling—we include other parts within our identity. People can describe or categorize us by our background, our sex, our ethnicity, our age, our socio-economic status—all sorts of frameworks visible to the human eye. These things are not as important or critical to our spiritual identity, but they do shape how we appear to the world. We can’t completely ignore them.

So how do we shape our identity within all these categories? To avoid any quick or foolish answers, perhaps we can understand our identity as existing in a state of tension—or rather, three tensions. When we face a conflict of identity—an identity *crisis* where life pulls us in different directions—we will feel at least one of three kinds of tension.

**Teacher's Note:** If possible, draw the diagram below on a whiteboard to serve as a visual aid.



## Tension 1: Christlikeness vs. Sin

As long as we live in a sinful world, we will live in a state of conflict between Christlikeness and sin. If we have trusted Christ, He has given us the Spirit of God, so God works within us to fight our sinful nature. At any given moment, we can choose to walk with the Spirit and do right—or we can choose to submit to the carnal part of our humanity and therefore sin.

**Read Galatians 5:16–23.** If we want to identify with God, we must avoid selfish, undisciplined behavior and instead become people of love, joy, and peace.

This first tension is a moral one—a battle between right and wrong. But the other two tensions aren't necessarily moral.

## Tension 2: Subject vs. Object

For this second tension, we should stay aware of both directions and keep them in balance. As image-bearers of God, we exist as both *subjects* and *objects*.

- **We are subjects in that we have a free will.** We can make choices. We can grow and change. Much of our identity is chosen by us.
- **But we are also objects in that we have physical bodies that exist with limitations.** Some of our identity is predetermined for us. After all, we didn't choose our background, our parents, our biological makeup, or our physical disabilities. We are not superheroes. We get sick, tired, and old. We can't always do or be everything we want.

Many people let these ideas fall out of balance, but we must recognize both sides of this tension.

### **Illustration—Objectification**

In today's culture, you've probably heard people, often women, talk about being "objectified." Here they mean that someone views them like a mere object—a mere body or a mere tool, without a will or choice. People feel objectified when others override their will and treat them like cattle or commodities—just one more product to be used, rated, and then thrown away.

### **Illustration—Pure Freedom**

At the same time, some people think of themselves as pure subjects. They believe they can change or edit any part of themselves. They try to ignore the blessings or challenges of the way that God made them.

**Discussion:** What can happen if people lean too far toward the subjective or objective?

- What happens if people think they have no choices? What if they believe that their life and identity are entirely predetermined?
- What happens if people think they can do or become anything they want? How might they disconnect themselves from objective reality?

In Scripture, we learn that we are dust (see Ps. 103:13–16; Eccles. 3:18–20), but we also have freedom in Christ (see Gal. 5:1, 13–14). We have both agency and limitations, spirit and flesh, opportunities and challenges. We can accept the gifts that God gave us at birth, but we can also grow and change and serve for His glory.

### **Illustration—Paul's Weakness**

The Apostle Paul struggled with this tension while he served as a missionary. He traveled, he taught, he wrote, he worked—all things that benefit from good health. But God allowed him to suffer some kind of ongoing physical issue, a "thorn in the flesh." Paul viewed this limitation as an opportunity for God to reveal Himself. **Read 2 Corinthians 12:9.**

## Tension 3: Individual vs. Community

Finally, we must recognize a third tension—the potential conflict between our individual integrity and our membership within our families and communities.

- On the one hand, we are unique individuals with a responsibility to work, grow, mature, and follow Christ no matter what other people around us do.
- But on the other hand, we are also part of a family, a community, a people, a nation, a world. Sometimes we have to sacrifice our needs to help the group as a whole. We have to recognize the ways that our family, our friends, and our culture shape our sense of self.

Like the other two tensions, this one can be terribly difficult to manage.

- How do you choose between studying hard by yourself or hanging out with your friends?
- How do you choose between staying close to your family or moving to a different city to get a better job?
- How do you choose between forming your own opinions or respecting the opinions of others?

Christians must keep their individual integrity and their communal identity in balance.

- Sometimes, we should listen to the advice of people around us (Prov. 11:14). But sometimes, we should stand alone and do what's right (1 Cor. 15:58).
- Like Jesus, we should sometimes go out and show compassion to the crowds. But sometimes, we need to withdraw into the wilderness to be alone and pray (see Matt. 14:13–23).

## Conclusion

For the remainder of this study, we'll look at different ways these conflicts present themselves. But no matter how we navigate the challenges and opportunities of this world, we can be who God first made us to be—His child, made in His image, a unique vessel carrying His Spirit, learning to live and love like Jesus did.

We can't do this on our own. We are weak, but again, our weakness gives us the chance to see God's strength (2 Cor. 12:9). We can depend on God, learning and growing, step by step, day by day. It'll take a lifetime to explore the fullness and depth of our identity, and only in eternity will we discover all the ways God worked through us in this world.

# WHO AM I?

What's your favorite work of fiction?

.....  
.....

What is your *least* favorite pizza topping—that you've actually eaten?

.....  
.....

What did you have for dinner yesterday?

.....  
.....

Have you ever traveled outside this country? If so, where?

.....  
.....

How many of your siblings currently live in your home?

.....

What's the last movie you watched?

.....  
.....

If you could choose the song or ringtone that would play whenever you called someone, what would it be?

.....  
.....  
.....

What is your eye color?

.....

Name: \_\_\_\_\_