

TALK ONE: Knowing our Identity in Christ

BUZZ GROUPS: List as many things as you can that make up your identity in Christ.

Introduction:

ILLUSTRATION: Start with an illustration that introduces the idea of identity. e.g.:

Jackie Pullinger's organisation looks after men and women who often don't know their identity – literally. They may not know who their parents are, some of them don't even have a birth certificate or know who old they are. They often have no proof of identity. – This makes it very hard to get started in life – with no identity, it is impossible to get a job and housing etc.

KEY INTRODUCTORY POINT – Without knowing our identity (name, birth certificate etc), it is hard to operate in life practically. It is the same with the Christian walk and our identity in Christ: if we do not know in our hearts (*we can have a tendency to only know this in our heads*) our identity in Christ, then it is very hard to get started in living out the Christian life. We need to start with knowing who we are in Christ. Paul wants us to *know WHO* we are in Christ, before we go on to think about *HOW* to live as Christians.

1. KNOW THE FACTS: What is our identity in Christ?

INTRODUCTORY POINT: For many of us it isn't a matter of having no identity to start with, but having our identity in the wrong things – work, material possessions, friends, family. These things aren't necessarily intrinsically wrong in themselves, but they become a problem when we place our identity in these things instead of primarily in Jesus. -Give a personal example to illustrate this.

KEY VERSES: Ch. 1 v. 4-5: *'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 to be adopted as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will.'*

KEY POINT: We need to know the facts:

- You were *chosen* by God
- You are *loved* by God
- You are *God's son/daughter*

ILLUSTRATION: Give examples of what these 3 aspects mean to you/how they have made a difference to you.

These are the core facts that make up our identity in Christ. So how do we come to know these facts in the core of our being?

2. ABSORB THESE TRUTHS BY SITTING WITH CHRIST:

ILLUSTRATION: About spending time with a parent/sibling/friend and how this was fundamental to that relationship and understanding what you meant to this person.

KEY POINT: The Christian life starts from a place of being with Jesus. It is from this place that we begin to understand and know who we are in Christ.

KEY VERSE: Ephesians ch. 2 v. 6: *'And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.'*

USEFUL QUOTE: Watchman Nee: 'Christianity does not begin with walking; it begins with sitting... We are invited at the very outset to sit down and enjoy what God has done for us...'

APPLICATION: We spend our lives running around being incredibly busy. So how do we stop and just sit with Christ? We keep ourselves busy even in our Christian lives – we jump from becoming a Christian to immediately wanting to know what we can do as Christians – which isn't bad – but sometimes we skip a step and miss out on being with Jesus. We need to regularly stop and sit with Jesus.

BUZZ GROUPS: HOW DO WE SIT WITH CHRIST? HOW CAN WE MAKE SURE WE SPEND TIME WITH JESUS?

3. STOP STRIVING AND RECEIVE.

ILLUSTRATION: About not striving, for example:

I went out to Hong Kong a few years ago to spend some time in one of Jackie Pullinger's houses for the brothers. What I quickly noticed was that lots of the brothers had been in the house before, having then relapsed into drugs and run away from the house. Jackie had then allowed them back into the house, to start again. And for some of the brothers this had happened time and time again. One of the brothers had been coming in and out of Jackie's houses since she first began them over 40 years ago! I asked Jackie about this and why she kept taking them back – and she said to me: 'That's what Jesus does for us; that's unconditional love.' I was so amazed when I heard this – I had been looking at this constant pattern of some of the brothers and thinking that they didn't really deserve to come back. But then I realised that this isn't how God measures out his love for us.

KEY POINT: We don't have to do anything to be loved by God – we cannot earn God's love.

KEY VERSES: Repeat these verses with the different emphasis: *Ch. 1 v. 4-5: '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 to be adopted as sons and daughters through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will.'*

EXPLANATION: God chose us *before the creation of the world* – we were chosen before we were physically born - a huge indicator that there is no way we could have earned God's love since he loved us before we were born!

USEFUL QUOTE: Watchman Nee: 'It is a grief to the heart of God when we try to provide things for him. He is so very, very rich. It gives him true joy when we just let him give and give and give again to us. It is a grief to him, too, when we try to do things for him, for he is so very, very able. He longs that we will just let him do and do and do.'

ILLUSTRATION: Imagine sitting in a chair - The way to fully sit on a chair is to fully relax into it – letting all of your muscles relax to the point where the chair is doing all of the work. You don't generally think, 'Well I'll just rest half of myself on the chair and hold the rest of the weight myself' – this is exhausting and completely unnecessary.

APPLICATION: This is what Paul is wanting us to do – to fully relax into God's love and receive it, without striving, without thinking we need to do something ourselves in order to earn this love of God's. When we finally allow ourselves to do this we will then begin to understand the true nature of God's love for us – that it is completely unconditional; that God loves us, as his children, completely unconditionally.

IDEAS FOR MINISTRY: Each person perhaps identify an aspect of identity in Christ that they particularly struggle to believe for themselves.