

**IDENTITY**

**Week 3:** ID in JC

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 5:17, Acts 9, Galatians 5:22-23; John 13:34-35; John 16:22; John 16:33; James 1:19-20; Ephesians 4:31-32; Galatians 6:9-10; Hebrews 13:8; Titus 3:1-8; Proverbs 25:28

**Bottom Line:** in Christ, you have a new identity that looks like Him!

**What’s That to Me?** When we become followers of Jesus, we shed our old ways and become more like Him.

**SUPPLIES**

**OPENING ACTIVITY: STRAIGHT LINE, SQUIGGLY LINE**

* Pens or markers
* 1 sheet of paper for each teen

**TEACH: NEW FRUIT**

* Bibles
* Clothesline hung across an area
* Clothespins
* 18 11X17 pages with the following words written on them:
  + Jealousy, Gossip, Hate
  + Worry, Sorrow, Sadness
  + Anger, Fighting, Unhappy
  + Impatient, Compulsive, Intolerant
  + Greed, Bitterness, Heartless
  + Evil, Mean, Nasty
  + Dishonest, Flaky, Inconsistent
  + Unforgiving, Wicked, Argumentative
  + Impulsive, Careless, Violent
  + Love
  + Joy
  + Peace
  + Patience (forbearance)
  + Kindness
  + Goodness
  + Faithfulness
  + Gentleness
  + Self-Control

**LESSON OVERVIEW**

Saul was the chief persecutor of Christians; that is until he met Jesus Christ. After he met Jesus, he was transformed. His name was changed from Saul to Paul, but the change in his lifestyle was even more amazing. He received a new identity. Paul’s conversion made him the perfect author for the words of 2 Corinthians 5:17: “This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”

**OPENING ACTIVITY: STRAIGHT LINE, SQUIGGLY LINE**

**Supplies:**

* Pens or markers
* 1 sheet of paper for each preteen

**What to Do:** Divide students into small groups. Give each student a blank sheet of paper and a pen or marker. Have them pass the paper to the person on their right. Instruct that person to draw a straight line anywhere on the page. The line can be any size and point in any direction. Next, pass the paper back to the original owner.

Instruct students to now pass the paper to the person on their left. Instruct that person to draw a squiggly line anywhere on the page. The squiggly line can be any size, shape, or direction. Next, pass the paper back to the original owner.

Give each preteen 3 to 5 minutes to make a “new creation” using the lines drawn on their page. After students have finished, judge the drawings and choose a winner for “Most Creative” or “Best Drawing.”

**TEACH: NEW FRUIT**

**Supplies:**

* Bibles
* Clothesline hung across stage area
* Clothespins
* 18 11X17 pages with words pre-written on them (see supplies list)

**Say:** Welcome! We’re in the middle of a series called “Identity.” Each week, we’re looking at the Bible to discover who we are and why we’re here.

In Week 1, we talked about how God has uniquely and wonderfully made each of us. Because He made us, He is the only one who can show us our true identity. Then, in Week 2, we talked about how identity is not determined by how good we are or even by how bad we are, It is determined by how much God loves us and what He was willing to do to give us a relationship with Him.

Today, we’re going to talk about the radical transformation that happens when we believe in Jesus Christ. Like the drawings you did earlier, God makes us something completely new when we believe in Jesus. He gives us a new identity.

Before we move further into our lesson, I want to share about when I met Jesus and received a new identity in Him.

(Share your personal testimony now with students. Try to speak in terms that they will understand or define terms they may not understand. To highlight the new identity that is found in Christ, tell your testimony in three parts: Life before Christ, How I Met Christ, and Life With Christ. As you prepare your testimony, plan for a transition back into the lesson.)

**Say:** I’m so thankful for the life-changing experience of knowing Jesus. He has given me a new identity. When I think about Jesus giving someone a new identity, I can’t help but think of the Apostle Paul.

We know that Paul was a great missionary of Christ. He traveled all over the place spreading the Gospel, and he wrote several books that we have in the New Testament of our Bibles. But before he was Paul, there was Saul—the chief of sinners. Open your Bibles to Acts 9 and let’s look at the life-changing experience of Saul.

Acts 9 tells us the story of Saul. Saul did not believe in Jesus. In fact, Saul was so opposed to Jesus that he persecuted people who did believe in Him. He made it his mission to arrest and punish those that preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ. On one occasion, Saul had permission to go and hunt down Christians in the city of Damascus. This is where Saul’s life would change. On the way to Damascus, something happened. Look at Acts 9:3-4.

Acts 9:3-4

“*As he was approaching Damascus on this mission, a light from heaven suddenly shone down around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul! Saul! Why are you persecuting me?’ ”*

(Read Acts 9:3-4 to teens.)

**Say:** Saul was knocked off his horse by this bright light. We don’t know how bright it was, but it must have been pretty impressive to startle the horse and send Saul tumbling to the ground. Saul was probably terrified. Still, he asked who was speaking to him. Now, find Acts 9:5-6.

Acts 9:5-6

*“ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ Saul asked. And the voice replied, ‘I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting! Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.’ ”*

(Read Acts 9:5-6 to teens.)

**Say:** It was Jesus! Jesus was the light that had knocked Saul off his horse and stopped him from going to Damascus. Then, Jesus gave him specific instructions on what to do next. You see, Jesus had a different plan for Saul. Instead of persecuting Christians, Jesus was calling Saul to follow Him and lead others to Christ.

The whole incident left Saul blind for three days. God sent a man named Ananias to confirm the calling that Jesus had given Saul—to preach the Gospel to others. After Ananias spoke to Saul, he could see again.

This experience was life changing for Saul. The Bible says Saul believed in Christ and was baptized. Afterward, his name was changed to Paul so that everyone would know about his new identity in Christ. Saul was an enemy of God, but now Paul was a follower of Christ. His life was 100%, completely, absolutely, positively changed!

The story of Paul is a great illustration of what happens when we believe in Jesus. When Paul believed, his life totally changed. Everything about “Saul” was gone, and he had a new life as Paul. Listen to these words that Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17.

2 Corinthians 5:17

*“This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”*

**Say:** When we trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior, he makes us new!Jesus didn’t die on the cross for our sins so we could just keep on living the same life. Jesus didn’t die on the cross so we could just feel better about the times that we mess up. Jesus died on the cross so that we could have new life, new purpose, and new identity!

God’s grace isn’t just something that we add to our life to make it better. It 100%, completely, absolutely, positively changes us. That is what happens when we trust in Jesus Christ as Lord; we are changed. The old has gone; the new has come!

Just like the radical change in Paul’s life, Jesus brings radical change to our lives as we learn to live in our new identity. But what does this new identity look like?

The Bible says our new identity makes us look more and more like Jesus. This change doesn’t happen overnight. But by the power of the Holy Spirit, our words, thoughts, and actions are changing to look more like Jesus.

The Bible gives specific examples of how our new identity changes us to be more like Jesus. Galatians 5:22-23 gives us nine words that describe how the Holy Spirit is changing our words, thoughts, and actions. These words are generally called the Fruit of the Spirit, and we’re going to look at how each is a part of our new identity.

**What to Do:** For this teaching section, you’ll need the clothesline hung across the stage or focal wall. On the line, hang 11X17 sheets of paper with the following negative words. Create another set of 11X17 sheets that have the Fruit of the Spirit listed on them.

1. Jealousy, Gossip, Hate, Love

2. Worry, Sorrow, Sadness, Joy

3. Anger, Fighting, Unhappy, Peace

4. Impatient, Compulsive, Intolerant, Patience (forbearance)

5. Greed, Bitterness, Heartless, Kindness

6. Evil, Mean, Nasty, Goodness

7. Dishonest, Flaky, Inconsistent, Faithfulness

8. Unforgiving, Wicked, Argumentative, Gentleness

9. Impulsive, Careless, Violent, Self-Control

As you point to each card, use the following information to explain how our flesh displays the negative words hanging from the line. Then explain how the Spirit works in our new identity to produce Christ-like fruit. As you describe the Spirit’s work, hang the corresponding Fruit of the Spirit card over the flesh card. Emphasise the difference between the actions of the flesh and the actions of the Spirit in us.

Be clear that this is not a list of “Do’s and Don’ts.” Paul is listing some changes that occur in us by the work of the Spirit, but there are many other changes that come in our sanctification.

You may need to move quickly through this portion of the teaching or break it into two segments.

**LOVE**

**Say:** The first card hanging here on the line says, Jealousy, Gossip, and Hate. What feelings do these words give you? When you are put into a situation with a friend who has done something wrong to you, these feelings are natural reactions you might have. Because we are sinful, we react in a sinful way. We get jealous. We talk about others and spread gossip about them. We might even go so far to really hate that person in our hearts.

(Cover the first card with the “Love” card.)

**Say:** So how does this change in our new identity? The Spirit helps us to love. Instead of reacting with jealousy, gossip, hatred, or any other sinful attitude, the Spirit helps us respond with love.

John 13:34-35

**Say:** In John 13:34-35, Jesus said to his disciples,

*“‘A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.’ ”*

To be like Christ and to help others know that we are His disciples, we must respond to all situations with love. It means we put the needs of others before our own needs. If someone wrongs us, we must be willing to forgive and to love that person, even in his or her faults, just as God loved us. The fruit of love helps us see and know that we are being transformed to be more like Jesus.

**JOY**

**Say:** The second card on our string says Worry, Sorrow, and Sadness. Do you ever feel these emotions? Sometimes life is stressful. There are times when school or home life is just overwhelming. There are times when all your friends seem to turn on you or abandon you. In those times, we tend to worry a lot and become upset about our situation.

John 16:22

**Say:** When the disciples learned that Jesus was leaving them, they began to worry and get upset. In that moment, Jesus said to them:

*“Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy.”*

**Say:** Jesus wanted them to remember His promises and trust in Him. Even though things seemed to be going sour, they could still have joy in that situation.

(Cover the second card with the “Joy” card.)

**Say:** The Holy Spirit is with us and in us to remind us of God’s promises. In the worst times, we can still have joy because we remember who God is and all that He has done for us. Joy helps us to look past the struggles of today, and focus on the promises God has made to us.

**PEACE**

**Say:** Has anyone ever gotten under your skin? Is there someone in your family or at your school who just makes you angry? We all face people who make us Unhappy, Angry, or want to Fight! Our flesh tells us it’s okay to get angry and to fight with that person.

John 16:33

**Say:** On the other hand, Jesus taught his disciples to turn the other cheek. He said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” In John 16:33, Jesus said:

*“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

(Cover the third card with the “Peace” card.)

**Say:** As we see how Christ loved others, the Spirit helps us to change our attitude and behavior to be more like Him. Instead of arguing and fighting, we can choose to forgive and make peace because we know that Jesus has overcome the world. When things are getting under our skin, we can go to God for help.

Philippians 4:6-7

**Say:** Philippians 4:6-7 says:

*“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

As the Spirit changes us and makes us more like Christ, we can respond to difficult situations with peace.

**PATIENCE**

**Say:** The next card on our string shows some sinful attitudes and actions that come from our flesh. It says Impatient, Compulsive, and Intolerant. Sin makes us selfish. It makes us want things that will make us feel good. When we don’t get what we want when we want it, we often become impatient. We can also become impatient with others. When others don’t do what we want them to do or just don’t do it fast enough, we become impatient and intolerant.

(Cover the fourth card with the “Patience” card.)

James 1:19-20

**Say:** James 1:19-20 says,

*“My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.”*

Over and over, the Bible reminds us to be patient with others just as God is patient with us. We are called to be like Christ, and that means we must listen to others and respond to their needs with patience. Patience requires us to use the other Fruit: love, peace, kindness, and self-control. All of these traits work in us to show the love of Jesus to others and make us more like Him.

**KINDNESS**

**Ask:**

* What do these words mean?
* What is *greed*?
* What is *bitterness*?
* What does it mean to be *heartless*?

Ephesians 4:31-32

**Say:** We can all have a tendency to be selfish. We spend our time caring for our own wants, instead of looking at what we can do for the needs of others. Ephesians 4:31-32 says,

*“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

The Bible says this is a sign of our maturity and growth as we become more like Jesus.

(Cover the card with the “Kindness” card.)

**Say:** The Holy Spirit helps us to be more aware of others needs and how we can show kindness to them. Whether we are giving forgiveness or caring for their physical needs, we have the opportunity to show them the kindness that Jesus showed us.

**Goodness**

**Say:** The next card has the words *evil, mean,* and *nasty.*

**Ask:**

* What do these words mean?
* What are some of the ways or behaviors that make you evil, mean, and nasty?

Galatians 6:9-10

**Say:** Galatians 6:9-10 says,

*“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”*

(Cover the card with the “Goodness” card.)

**Say:** “Doing good” is not just doing good things. Goodness is more about our heart and our motives. A lot of times, we’ll do good things to try to cover up all the other bad stuff we do. It makes us feel better for being evil, mean, and nasty dudes. The Holy Spirit helps us to realize that we represent Jesus with our actions. This changes our heart and motives. We’re no longer doing good to make up for the bad—we’re doing good to show the goodness of Jesus to others.

**FAITHFULNESS**

**Ask:**

* Have you ever known someone who was flaky?
* What does it mean to be flaky?

**Say:** The other words on this card are dishonest and inconsistent.

Many followers of Jesus forget to follow him during the week. We go to church on Sunday and we get our Jesus on. Then, we go to school or work on Monday and we forget about Him. That is flaky. That is not the faithfulness that God wants from us.

We also struggle with faithfulness to our friends. We change our minds and decide to not be friends. Most of the time that leads to fights and hurt feelings. If we want to be like Jesus, that has to change. That is not the model that Jesus Christ gave to us.

(Cover the card with the “Faithfulness” card.)

Hebrews 13:8

**Say:** Hebrews 13:8 says,

*“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”*

It’s very comforting for us to know that Jesus won’t change his mind. The Holy Spirit works in us to help us show that same faithfulness to others and to Him.

**GENTLENESS**

**Ask:**

* Do you like to be around a person who is unforgiving, wicked, and argumentative?
* Are those qualities that you look for when you’re seeking a new friend?

**Say:** Probably not!

When we hear those words, they sound terrible. But they all come pretty naturally to us. When others make mistakes, we hold it over their head to make them feel bad instead of offering forgiveness. When someone does the opposite of what we expect, we become wicked and argue over who’s right!

Titus 3:1-8

**Say:** Listen to the way the third chapter of Titus begins,

*“Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone. At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.”*

(Cover the card with the “Gentleness” card.)

**Say:** Paul took time to remind the people of what Jesus had done for them. They have been saved through the gentleness and kindness of God. Because of that, we should be gentle and kind with others. The Holy Spirit helps us by reminding us what Jesus has done for us, and then pushing us to be “gentle toward everyone.”

**SELF-CONTROL**

**Say:** The opposite of self-control is *impulsive, careless, and violent.*

**Ask:**

* What do these words mean?
* Are these qualities that imitate the actions of Jesus?

**Say:** We talked earlier about how this is like a game of Tug of War. On one side, the Spirit is changing us and growing us to be more like Jesus. On the other side, our old sinful nature is still causing us to struggle. That side of things is all about selfishness and pride. It’s wanting what I want, and not what God wants. It makes us like wild animals that have no self-control because we just want what we want…and we want it now!

Proverbs 25:28

**Say:** Proverbs 25:28 says,

*“A person without self-control is like a city with broken-down walls.”*

Cities used to be protected by large walls that surrounded them. This kept wild animals and enemies from getting into the city. If the wall was broken, the entire city was unsafe. It was a huge problem.

(Cover card with the “Self-Control” card.)

**Say:** The Bible says anyone who lacks self-control is just as unsafe as that city. The Holy Spirit trains us and helps us to practice self-control. Self-control is keeping a level head in all situations. It means we restrain all these other sinful behaviors and we work hard to live by the Spirit with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and gentleness. The Holy Spirit helps us practice self-control so others can see the fruit in our lives.

So, here is the Fruit of the Spirit. Look at these words and think about how you are changing to be more like Jesus. Each of these qualities represents Jesus, and each of these qualities should represent us as we learn to live in our new identity.

The Bible tells us that anyone in Christ has a new creation. They have received a new identity.

**The Bottom Line is:** In Christ, you have a new identity that looks like Him!

When you believe in Jesus, you receive a new identity that makes your words, thoughts, and actions look more like Him. Let’s pray and then break into small groups for an activity.