

Session 4 Leader Guide

1. This study is focusing on identity. Let's discuss what it means to identify as a Christian.

- Transformed by rebirth

John 3:5-6 :*Being born of water and spirit which speaks of Baptism.*

Isaiah 55:11: *God's Word will accomplish what it sets out to do.*

Mark 16:16: *Whoever is baptized and believes is saved.*

Acts 2:38: *Repentance and Baptism in Jesus' name gives us forgiveness and the Holy Spirit.*

Summarize how you are transformed by Baptism.

- Joined with Christ in death and resurrection

Romans 6:4: *Because of our Baptism, we have new life in Him.*

Galatians 2:20: *Because we have been baptized in His name, we can live this life in the flesh in faith with Christ living in us.*

2 Corinthians 5:17: *When we are in Christ, we are new creations.*

1 Peter 1:3: *Through Jesus' resurrection, we are born again to a living hope.*

Summarize how you are joined with Christ in His death and resurrection.

- New genealogy

Romans 8:15-17: *We are now children of God and heirs with Christ.*

John 20:17: *We are now brothers and sisters with Christ.*

Matthew 28:10: *Jesus specifically referred to disciples as His brothers.*

Summarize how Baptism gives you a new genealogy.

2. What does it look like to live out our Christian identity day to day?

- How do the ten commandments help us to live day to day? *They provide a mirror for us so that we know we need daily confession and forgiveness; a guide for us to know what we are to believe, teach, and confess to others; and a curb for us to keep us protected and in order because God is a God of order.*
- What does the Lord's Prayer teach us about how to live? *The prayer teaches us how to pray and what to ask for. It teaches us that prayer is essential for a relationship with God because He loves us so much and He knows we need to reach out to Him daily. It also teaches us that we can call Him our Father.*
- How does the Apostle's Creed help us in our daily life? *The creed is a complete summary of who we are (creatures made by God) and what we believe. It reminds us every time we say it who God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are and what each part of the blessed Trinity has done and continues to do for us.*
- How do all of the above show us the gift of orderly life God has given us? *Because God is a just God as well as gracious and merciful, He has*

*provided us with these gifts in order to live full and meaningful lives with Him and each other. The order He has provided keeps us from living chaotic, meaningless lives which only cause destruction. God's orderly way provides purpose and eternal life. Even though we can't live perfectly in this time, **God gives us His Spirit through Word and Sacrament which enables us to daily crucify our Old Adam and be raised in Christ.** Christ's Spirit works in us to gain His fruits. This is the reason we must make it a priority to go to church regularly to hear His Word and receive His sacrament.*

3. How can we reclaim chastity in our daily living and show others that we are set apart from the world? How can we deal with our own struggles with sexual sins and identity and confess the truth to our hurting neighbors who are confused about their identity?
- Confess and receive forgiveness

Proverbs 28:13

James 5:16

1 John 1:9

Psalm 32:5

Summarize what these verses say about confessing sins. Confession leads to mercy, forgiveness, and healing from God through Jesus, the Christ.

Explain how hearing the words of absolution from a pastor or a friend can affect you. Since you come to faith by hearing, the words coming from your pastor's mouth to your ears can give you peace beyond understanding. When you hear the pastor's words, remember they are just like hearing them from Jesus, Himself. Also, when hearing the actual words "I forgive you for ..." instead of "It's no big deal..." from a friend or family member, it makes the bond even stronger.

- Forgive as we have been forgiven

Matthew 18:21-35

Luke 15:11-32

Mark 9:23b

Psalm 51

Why is it hard to accept the free grace that God has given us through Christ? We are so wrapped up in thinking we can earn God's grace by our own actions. The danger is that we become convinced that these are things that we come up with on our own through our own efforts. This can lead to either pride as we become confident in our selves or despair as we become discouraged due to our failures. So, we pervert the free gift by attaching our own strings to it, by thinking we can only obtain forgiveness if we forgive others. However, we are forgiven without those strings through the death of Jesus on the cross. He took care of it for us. When Jesus told us to "forgive as we have been forgiven," He was giving us the way to live as free in Him, not to get into His kingdom. How will the reception of this gift free us to be able to love and forgive those who do us wrong? Sometimes it helps to think in terms of "paying it forward." When someone does a kind thing for

me, I often find myself being kind to someone else as a result. I know it doesn't get me anything, and that's okay. Of course, it's much different when we have been wronged, deeply wronged. Being able to forgive those wrongs doesn't always obtain for us anything such as forgetfulness or even reconciliation, but it can give us freedom from bitterness and anger. Releasing those emotions can provide healing in ways unimaginable. It's only through the gift of being forgiven ourselves that the Holy Spirit works in us the ability to forgive others. It is a gift we need to receive and accept with no strings attached; that is faith.

- Live with a clean conscience

1 Timothy 3:9

2 Timothy 1:3

Ezekiel 11:14

1 John 3:16-21

Romans 8:1

How can our reception of God's forgiveness help us to live the new lives we have in Christ with a clear conscience? *When we receive the free gift God has given us through His means of grace, we are given a new heart. God replaces our heart of stone, hard and lifeless, with a heart of flesh--one that can have compassion, one that can stand uncondemned through Jesus. This new heart gives us a new life which can recognize our sin, confess it, receive absolution for it, and live for others with a clean conscience.*

- Pray

Psalms 4:1, 6:9, 54:2

Psalms 50:15

Isaiah 65:24

1 John 5:14

Philippians 4:6

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Romans 8:26-27

What does God promise about prayer? *He promises that He hears our prayers. He promises that through prayer in Jesus' name, we can approach Him in confidence. In prayer to Him, we have a safe place to lament our sorrows and complaints. Who is there in all the heavens and the earth that can relieve us of those burdens? Only the Triune God can fulfill this need.*

Summarize how prayer can be helpful in reclaiming our chastity and helping our neighbors as we live out our Christian identities. *Since God has promised to hear us and He has given us the gift of salvation through His means of grace, He will not fail to answer our prayers. His Word does not fail us. He is steadfast in His love and promises. His Word is efficacious.*

- Confess the faith to others

Psalms 19:1

Psalms 96:3

Psalms 145:4

Ephesians 2:10

1 Corinthians 7:17

Philippians 1:6

Matthew 10:16-17

How can God's Word help us to become stewards, as it were, of His truth and inspire us to share it with others around us? *We can live out our faith in our daily lives through our vocations. God uses us to proclaim His glory, and the beautiful creation itself speaks of His love and care for everything. Yet it is the Holy Spirit Himself who converts hearts. Therefore, trusting that He will use us the way He wants to gives us the comfort and knowledge we need.*
How is being aware of false teaching not the same as loving and spending time with unbelievers? *Matthew 10 tells us to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Understanding the world around us and facing persecution for our Christian worldview, which is opposed to all others, is being wise. Being innocent as doves is having the assurance that the Holy Spirit will help us to know what to speak and will soften the hard hearts of unbelievers when we are with them and ministering to them.*

- Set an example: Live sacrificially

Romans 8:1-11

Romans 13:14

1 Peter 2

Colossians 3:1-11

As parents, grandparents, married, single, divorced, or whatever your vocation in life regardless of your past mistakes, how can living a chaste life now show others that we love them regardless of their mistakes? *Whatever our vocation in life at any given moment, living chastely as a holy priesthood for the benefit of others means that we are a beacon of light to the darkness of the world. Our actions and sacrifices can set examples for all. Living in the orderly way that God has designed for all to live can show love for others in this way: When we interact with others, our humility, born out of a love we have because God first loved us and because the Holy Spirit gives us His fruit, will give us the ability to extend that grace to everyone we meet.*

- Show compassion: Speak the truth in love

Colossians 3:12-14

1 Peter 3:8

Ephesians 4:32

Matthew 7:1-6

Proverbs 19:11

1 Corinthians 10:23-30

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

How do we guard against false teaching yet still love those who abide by it? *The adage "hate the sin and not the sinner" is helpful, but it is truly hard to do because we allow our own prejudices and misunderstandings to influence us. This is a life issue because when we are not seeing everyone as a person whom God loves, one whom Jesus died for, we are belittling a creation of the Most High God. Approaching those who continue to abide in their sin takes courage and tact. Always remembering that God loves them helps us to love them, too, and enables us to use gentleness in our language, admitting that we, too, struggle with sins daily.*

What does it look like to be tolerant as opposed to speaking the truth in love?
Tolerance gives a sense of “putting up with” something. The world uses the term to get everyone to agree that people can do whatever they want if it doesn’t hurt someone else. The problem is, we are not all little islands, and almost everything we do or doesn’t do affects others. Rather than just tolerate, we need to love. Love means making the sacrifices of the words in Corinthians 13: patience, kindness, no boasting, rudeness, or arrogance, and no rejoicing in someone’s struggles with sin, but rejoicing in sharing the truth which can set us all free. Loving our neighbor is our calling.

How can Sue and John manage the pain they have from the aftermath of their daughter’s choices?
Continuing in prayer and supplication to the Lord of Life will never disappoint. Often through the pain and suffering that we endure, more hope is produced in us when we turn to God for lament.

Do you think Sue should accept her daughter’s “marriage” and keep the peace in the family? Why or why not?

- **Read Luke 14:26.** How do you think we are to interpret this Scripture? *When Jesus said these words, He did not expect us to be cruel to the families He has given us. The point He is making is that we should love Him first above all others. False priorities will cripple us in our ministries.*