SMALL GROUP



Living Out Your Identity in Christ

Small Group Leader Guide

The sermon at a glance

The sermon centers on the truth that Jesus does not call his followers to earn an identity through spiritual performance. Instead, he declares who they already are — salt and light — and calls them to live in a way that reflects that identity. The mission has not changed since Isaiah prophesied about light coming into the world. Followers of Christ are in a covenant relationship with him, and that relationship should be visible in everyday life. The goal of every good work and every honorable action is not personal recognition but pointing people back to the Father.

Six teaching points

01 Identity comes before activity. Jesus says "you are" — not "you will be" or "you could be." The moment someone accepts Christ, they receive a new identity. Works do not create the identity; they should reflect it.

02 The mission has not changed. From Isaiah to the New Testament to today, the call to be light in dark places and bring healing to those in bondage remains the same.

03 A covenant with Christ means bearing his identity. Just as marriage makes two people one, entering a covenant with Christ means that when people see you, they should see him.

04 Religion without relationship fuels division. Knowing rules without knowing Jesus leads to behavior that adds to cultural division rather than healing it.

05 Integrity matters when no one is watching. Who you are in private is who you truly are, and God sees it all.

06 Your life is your loudest testimony. People may come to know Christ not because of what you said, but because of how you lived.

Leader notes

Gather the group

Opening prayer

Open your time together in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to lead your discussion and help each person apply what they hear to their daily life. Encourage everyone to participate and remind the group that this is a safe space for honest conversation.

Scripture readings

Matthew 5:13-16

Jesus declares that his followers are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and calls them to let their good works point others to God

Ephesians 2:8-10

Salvation comes through grace and faith, not works, but believers are created in Christ for good works that God prepared in advance

1 Peter 2:9-12

Believers are described as a chosen people and a royal priesthood, called to live honorably so that others may glorify God

1 Peter 3:15

Believers are instructed to be ready to give an account for their hope with gentleness and respect, but only when asked

James 3:17

Wisdom from above is described as pure, peaceable, gentle, and full of mercy

Opening Question — Getting to Know Each Other

Think of someone in your life whose character pointed you toward God, even before they said a word about their faith. What did you observe in them?

Leader notes

Identity Before Activity

01 The pastor made the statement: "I don't have to earn the identity that Jesus gives me, but I am responsible for living it out." What is the difference between earning an identity and living one out? Why does that distinction matter?

02 The police officer illustration described someone who could wear a uniform with integrity or abuse the authority it represents. How does that picture challenge the way you think about your identity as a follower of Christ?

03 Religion says you must do A, B, C, and D before you can be something. Jesus says you already are. Where have you seen this religious mindset show up — in yourself, in a church, or in culture?

Leader notes

The Covenant and the Mission

04 The pastor described the covenant with Christ as similar to marriage — two becoming one, sharing an identity. What does it look like practically to be so close to Jesus that people recognize him when they encounter you?

05 Isaiah prophesied about light coming to open blind eyes and bring prisoners out of darkness. Jesus then tells his followers they are that light. How does it change your sense of purpose to know that you are part of a mission that spans thousands of years?

06 The pastor said, "You can't be an effective light source in an already lit room." Are there dark places in your everyday life — a workplace, a neighborhood, a relationship — where you are uniquely positioned to bring light? What has held you back?

Leader notes

Living It Out Practically

The sermon offered several practical ways to live honorably among those who do not yet know Jesus. Work through these as a group and discuss honestly.

07 "When someone insults you, refuse to insult them back." How does the culture around us push back against this? What does it actually look like to respond with dignity rather than matching someone's energy?

08 "When everyone else is gossiping, refuse to participate." The pastor acknowledged this happens in workplaces and also in churches. Why is gossip so easy to get pulled into? What is one practical way to exit a gossip-driven conversation without being self-righteous about it?

09 "When social media becomes toxic, refuse to add to it." The pastor said, "Your prayer is more powerful than your post." Has there been a moment when you typed something out and then deleted it — or a moment when you wish you had? What helped you make that choice, or what do you wish had stopped you?

10 The pastor referenced 1 Peter 3:15 and pointed out that we are called to give an account for our hope only when someone asks. He shared the story of the student who approached him and opened the door. What is the difference between forcing your beliefs on someone and being ready when they ask? How do you cultivate a life that makes people curious enough to ask?

Leader notes

The Closing Question

11 The pastor closed with this question: "If the people around you watched the way you live this week, what would they learn about your Heavenly Father?" Take a moment to sit with that honestly. What would they currently learn? What would you want them to learn?

12 He also shared the story of a man whose work ethic alone led hundreds of people to ask him about his faith. What is one area of your life — your work, your parenting, your finances, your relationships — where consistently honorable behavior could open a door for the gospel?

Leader notes

Put it into practice

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice before your group meets again.

Personal

Identify one habit or pattern in your life — online, at work, or at home — that does not reflect the identity Jesus has given you. Bring it before God in prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to help you change it.

Write down the closing question from the sermon and place it somewhere visible this week: "If the people around me watched the way I live this week, what would they learn about my Heavenly Father?"

Relational

Think of one person in your life who does not know Jesus. Rather than planning what you will say to them, pray for them every day this week and ask God to open a natural door.

If you have been part of a divisive conversation — online or in person — consider whether there is a step of reconciliation or a moment to simply stop adding fuel.

As a Group

Pray together for the people in each group member's life who do not yet know Jesus. Name them out loud if you are comfortable doing so.

Consider how your group as a whole can be salt and light in your community. Is there a practical act of service you could do together in the coming weeks?

Leader notes

Close in prayer

Close your time by praying the same prayer the pastor prayed over the congregation. Ask God to help each person in the group be salt and light this week. Invite anyone who wants to confess an area where they fell short to do so quietly before God. Then ask the Holy Spirit to empower each person to walk in the identity Christ has already given them.

"Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." — Matthew 5:16

Leader notes