

THE NEW I.D.

YOUR NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST



BIG IDEA: As Christians, we are supernaturally given freedom from sin's control and given freedom to live for God.

Despite this new identity—of being dead to sin and alive to Christ—many Christians continue to live their lives as if they haven't been freed from sin's control. These Christians are basing their identity on past defeats, recurring sins, or harmful and untrue messages. But our identity as believers is not rooted in our past—it is rooted in the one with whom we've been united ... Jesus Christ.

As new creatures in Christ, we are no longer controlled by our former taskmaster. Like a pardoned convict, we are no longer under the power of a wicked prison guard. Our transformed identity and union with Christ brings us freedom from sin's control; in other words, *we don't have to live the way we used to live because we're not who we used to be!*



DESIRED LIFE CHANGE: As a result of this study, the students in your group should begin to understand the practical implications of the believer's identity with Christ (i.e., what it means to be "dead to sin" and "alive to God").



AUDIENCE: This lesson is designed for growing Christians who are digging deeper in God's Word and applying the Bible's truths to their lives.



LEADER'S PREPARATION: Work through the entire study with the leader's guide, taking extra time to examine the biblical passages. Read through Romans 6 three times, and read Romans 5, 7 and 8 to understand the context from which Paul is writing. For helpful resource material, see *Unger's Bible Dictionary*, *Vine's Dictionary* and a good commentary on Romans. Be prepared to share your story related to this topic. Let your group see how these truths have changed your life.



AT A GLANCE

As your group interacts in this study, they will observe . . .

This is my **WORLD:** My view of myself significantly affects my behavior.

This is my **NEED:** I often fail to live out my new identity in Christ.

This is my **ANSWER:** Being united with Christ in His death and resurrection frees me from living under sin's control.

This is the **DIFFERENCE:** If I understand my identity in Christ, I can live a new life.

This is what I'll **DO:** I will apply the truths of my identity in Christ to my areas of struggle with sin.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - WHY IS THIS STUDY IMPORTANT?



Many Christian students experience frustration and confusion on a daily basis because they feel helpless in dealing with sin. For them, life seems no different than life without Christ because they are either unaware of, or have forgotten about, the new identity they received when they placed their faith in Christ. They are not living in light of their true identity as believers.

It is crucial for students in your group to grasp the truth that the foundation of the Christian life is the believer's

identification with Christ. Accepting this truth by faith is the necessary starting point for consistent obedience. Confession of sin and the filling of the Holy Spirit are essential, but they need to be understood in the context of the believer's permanent death to sin's rule through the Christian's identity in Christ.

This lesson on Romans 6 will help your students realize that as a believer *you don't have to live the way you used to live because you're not who you used to be.*

1 OPENING STATEMENT: Today we're going to explore one of the most transforming truths you'll ever discover about yourself.


2 READ

3 READ & DISCUSS: Have each member state whether they agree or disagree. Then discuss why.

4 ASK: According to this verse, what is true of our identity as a believer in Christ?

6 READ & IMAGINE: Read the scenario, pausing after each segment to have the group imagine what might be shown.

7 ASK & DISCUSS: After each segment.


VERSION 2.3

THE NEW I.D.

AGREE/DISAGREE

Who you are determines how you live.
What you believe about who you are determines how you live.

YOUR IDENTITY

2 Corinthians 5:17

IN CHRIST

Being in Christ, and all that it means to Christian maturity and freedom, is the overwhelming theme of the New Testament. For example, in the six chapters of the book of Ephesians alone there are 40 references to being in Christ and having Christ in you. Being in Christ is the most critical element of our identity.
—Neil Anderson, *Victory Over The Darkness* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1990), pp.41,42.

DEFINITION

Identity

1. characteristics by which a thing is definitely recognized or known
2. characteristics by which an individual is recognized as a member of a group
3. the condition of being exactly the same as something else

INITIATION

John could hardly believe it. After a long summer of rush functions, he received a bid from the only fraternity he cared about—and now he was a *Nu Gamma Chi* pledge.

He soon realized that being a pledge wasn't exactly what he had expected. Amidst a handful of positive experiences, pledgship was demanding—but it wasn't impossible, and he wasn't going to be the only person to complain. As he endured all-Saturday work sessions and running errands for "the brothers" he thought, *I guess this is what it means to be in a fraternity.*

At last, the night of initiation arrived, and John reveled in this momentous event in his life. He was now a member of *NIX*—the most prestigious fraternity on campus.

The next semester rolled around, and the members of John's pledge class began to enjoy their new identities as *Nu Gam* brothers. But they noticed that John's schedule didn't seem to change much. He would sit for hours at the Fraternity house answering the phones. He was the only person around the house using the terms "Sir" and "Mr." to refer to the older members. He still was struggling to find time for studies and recreation as he continued to perform all the tasks he had done as a pledge.

One afternoon, after handing in a take-home test for a member's girlfriend, John began washing his former pledge trainer's car ...

As John's former pledge trainer left the house heading for a date, he spotted John. Both amused and embarrassed, he yelled, "Hey John, what are you doing?!"

"Well, Sir" John replied. "your car seemed really dirty, and—"

"No, John!" he interjected. "You're not a pledge anymore! Why are you acting like a pledge when you've already been initiated as a member? Don't you remember that ceremony we had the last week of school? What's wrong with you?"

IMAGINE

Suppose a docudrama about your life up till now was made and shown on TV.

Segment 1	Segment 2	Segment 3
Your life before you received Christ	Your new life after receiving Christ with only the parts which reflected your new identity	Your life after receiving Christ, including your thoughts and actions
What would you think and feel as this segment was shown?	What would you think and feel as this segment was shown?	What would you think and feel as this segment was shown?

TOOLBOX

- THINK
- OBSERVE
- CLOSE-UP
- WRITE
- DISCUSS
- FEELINGS
- BRAINSTORM
- REFERENCE
- PASSAGE
- ARTICLE
- BIG IDEA
- CROSSROAD

What did John believe about his identity? What difference did this make in his behavior?

8 ASK: Why is there such a contrast between Segment 2 (that which should characterize our lives) and Segment 3 (that which actually characterizes our lives)?

1 TRANSITION STATEMENT:
We need to understand and experience our identity in Christ. So let's explore one of the main texts dealing with this truth.

2 READ

3 ASK & DISCUSS

4 STATE: In Romans 6, Paul is dealing with a misconception about the Christian life shown in the CONTEXT window.

5 READ: As a group.

7 ASK (see verse 11—We are dead to sin, but alive in Christ.)

NOTE FOR THE LEADER: Refer to the GLOSSARY and DEFINITION boxes as needed for clarification of terms.

Exploring the Text

CONTEXT

Romans 5-6:1
Major premise: Christians have been justified by faith so they receive grace from God (Romans 5:1,2).

Minor premise: Grace abounds all the more where sin increases (Romans 5:20b).

Conclusion: Christians can continue in sin so that grace may abound all the more (Romans 6:1).

How would you respond to this argument?

GLOSSARY

SIN VS. SINS – In Romans 6:1-11, Paul refers to sin as a dominating rule of life rather than an individual wrong act. For example, in Romans 5:21, "sin reigned in death," in 6:12, "do not let sin reign in your mortal body," and in 6:14, "sin shall not be master over you."
BY NO MEANS – This phrase in the original New Testament Greek is the strongest language Paul could have used to state his opposition to the question in verse 1. Other translations say: "May it never be!" "Perish the thought!" "Unthinkable!" "What a ghastly thought!" "Not at all!", and "Certainly not!" Paul's point is to emphasize how unthinkable is the conclusion of "sinning more."
UNITED – Means to become as one or to be put together as one. It involves the biological concept of growing together as in the fusing of broken ends of a bone so that they are no longer separated in any way and are one.
CRUCIFIED – Graphic depiction of our death to remind us of our identity with Christ.
BODY OF SIN – Fleshly body no longer controlled by sin.
DONE AWAY WITH – Sin's control of the Christian's body is rendered inoperative. Because the old self is crucified, the body of the believer may have "rigor mortis" when it comes to sin.
FREE FROM SIN – The word "free" may also be translated "justified."

DEFINITION

The Greek word *bapto*, from which we get the word *baptize*, means literally "to dip," "to plunge," or "to immerse." The fuller (a person engaged in the cleaning and dying of cloth) took raw, undressed cloth and put it into the dye vat. When that cloth was brought out of the dye vat, its entire appearance was changed. When it is used literally, it had to do with dipping, plunging, putting something into something. But in its metaphorical usage it means to "to change identity," that is, to change appearance, to change the outward form in which this thing met the eye. Paul is not saying we have been dipped in a dye pot but, rather, we have changed our identity by forming our new union with Jesus Christ.
—J. Dwight Pentecost, *Designed to be Like Him* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972).

ROMANS 6:1-11

1 What shall we say, then?
Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?

2 **BY NO MEANS!**
We died to sin: how can we live in it any longer?

3 Or
don't you know that all of us who **were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?**

4 We were therefore buried with him through **baptism** into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

5 If we have been **united** with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

6 **For we know** that our **OLD SELF** was crucified with him so that the **BODY OF SIN** might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin—

7 *because* anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

8 Now if we **died** with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.

9 **For we know** that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him.

10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

11 *In the same way,* **COUNT YOURSELVES DEAD TO SIN** but **ALIVE TO GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.**
(emphasis added)

6 ASK & DISCUSS

What phrases are used to describe involvement with sin?
-shall we go on sinning? (v.1)
-we died to sin. (v.2)

What activities do believers share with Christ?
-buried with Him (v.4)
-united with Him (v.5)
-raised with Him (v.5)
-crucified with Him (v.6)

What are some results of being united with Christ?
-united with His resurrection (v.5)
-old self was crucified (v.6)
-body of sin was done away with (v.6)
-no longer slaves to sin (v.6)
-freed from sin (v.7)

What do verses 9 and 10 say about the nature of Christ's death?
-cannot die again (v.9)
-death has no mastery (v.9)
-died to sin once for all (v.10)

What is the basis for the command in verse 11?
-Christ's death, burial and resurrection

SUMMARIZE

How would you summarize the central truth Paul is seeking to communicate?

1 TRANSITION STATEMENT:

Now, let's explore what is true of us regarding our new identity.

LEADER'S NOTE: The following questions are intentionally narrow and are not designed to generate much discussion. The goal is to help the group reach the conclusion that, as believers, they have died to sin, and a fundamental change in their identity has taken place.

REMEMBER: Paul's command.

2 ASK: What does it mean to count yourselves dead to sin?

3 DEFINITION: COUNT
This word means to "consider as true, to calculate, or to reckon to be so." This principle is a fact of spiritual reality to be recognized as true. The word has a present tense command with the idea of "keep on counting." This should be our continual attitude.

5 ASK & DISCUSS

6 READ

4 ASK & DISCUSS

Exploring Your New Identity

ROMANS 6:11

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The first command given in the book of Romans

DEAD TO SIN	ALIVE TO GOD
<p>When did you die to sin?</p> <p style="color: magenta;">The moment I trusted in Christ.</p>	<p>When were you made alive?</p>
<p>How did you die to sin?</p> <p style="color: magenta;">Through my baptism and identification into Christ's death and burial.</p>	<p>How were you made alive?</p>
<p>Why did you die to sin?</p> <p style="color: magenta;">On the basis of being crucified with Christ, we are as dead to sin's power as Jesus is. His victory over sin is ours also. (see verse 6)</p>	<p>Why were you made alive?</p>
<p>What does it mean that we are "dead to sin"?</p> <p style="color: magenta;">It means we don't have to respond to sin's influences any more than a dead person does.</p>	<p>What does it mean that we are "alive to God"?</p>
<p style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid gray; margin-top: 20px;">QUOTE</p> <p style="font-size: small;">The root of holiness is co-crucifixion and co-resurrection with Jesus Christ We need then, to realize and remember that the believer's holiness is a matter of learning to be in action what is already in the heart. —J.I. Packer, <i>Keep in Step With the Spirit</i> (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984).</p>	<p style="margin-top: 20px;">Because you have a transformed identity and are united with Christ, you don't have to live under sin's control.</p>

Exploring the Difference

IMAGINE

Imagine that you die and go to heaven where you receive your new, resurrected body—one without a sin nature. After enjoying your new life for a short time, God sends you to continue your new life back on earth. How would you live differently?

KEY

We don't have to live the way we used to live because we're not who we used to be!

ACTION PLAN

- In Segment 3 of my personal docudrama on page 1, what sin pattern (thought or action) causes me shame?
EXAMPLE: gossip or sarcasm
- What is the truth about my involvement in this sin?
I hurt others with my words.
- How can I apply the truth to this struggle?
Since I have been freed from sin's power (John 8:32,36), I should speak wholesome words, not unwholesome ones (Ephesians 4:29).
- What role does confession and the Spirit's filling play in this process?
Walking in the Spirit enables me to live in victory over sinful or fleshly desires and actions.

For further thought:

- Study Romans 6:11-14 in light of the truths you've learned today. Use a concordance or cross-references.
- Look up statements that are true of you in Christ. Begin with:
Ephesians 1:3-14 Ephesians 2:10
Ephesians 2:6 Ephesians 2:13

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture references are taken from the *New International Version*, ©1973, 1978, 1984 by the International Bible Society. Published by Zondervan Bible Publishers, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

1 TRANSITION STATEMENT: Finally, let's explore the difference these truths should make in our lives.

2 READ

3 DISCUSS: Share your responses with the group (e.g., I would live with more power and purpose because of my new identity).

4 TRANSITION: Let's look at how we can personalize these truths and apply them to our lives.

5 THINK & WRITE

FOR THE LEADER: Allow your group to reflect and write their responses to the questions. Have them share comments as they work through their action plan. **CAUTION:** Don't force your group members to share something they would feel uncomfortable discussing. **SUGGESTION:** 1) As the leader, be the first to share. Be as vulnerable as you feel comfortable being. Model openness. 2) Don't require anyone to share their personal sin pattern. 3) Ask for volunteers and state, "You're not required to share something." Make sure you work toward the solution.



BOOKS FOR FURTHER STUDY

The Search for Significance
– Robert McGee (Word)

His Image, My Image – Josh McDowell (Thomas Nelson)

Victory Over the Darkness – Neil Anderson (Regal Books)

Men Made New – John Stott (Baker)

Keep in Step With the Spirit – J.I. Packer (Baker)

Dynamics of the Spiritual Life – Richard Lovelace (InterVarsity Press)



TOPIC CONNECTIONS

Related *InterACTA* small group studies: *Walk This Way; Father Knows Best; Under the Influence*

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION

On March 29, 1971, 50-year-old Jim McDonnell borrowed a friend’s car to pick up relatives who were arriving at JFK Airport. When Jim returned the borrowed car at 10 p.m., he didn’t realize that the leather folder containing his identification had slipped out of his pocket onto the floor of the car. He declined the offer of a ride the short distance to his home: “I have a terrible headache, and the walk will help clear my head,” he said. Ordinarily, the walk home only took 15 minutes.

At 11:15 p.m. Jim’s wife—Anne—phoned the owner of the car, but he had no idea why Jim had not reached home. It was unlike Jim not to call if he was delayed. At 2 a.m., his wife called the police to report him missing.

As the search for him continued in New York, Jim was trying to get his bearings in Philadelphia; it was his first visit to the city, but that wasn’t as significant as the fact that no matter how hard he thought, he had no recollection of who he was or where he lived.

Seeing signs advertising the services of a real estate broker named James Peters, the bewildered man adopted the name of James Peters as his own. He obtained a social security card, and took a job in the luncheonette of a health club. Eventually he began work cleaning out animal cages at the Cancer Research Institute. He also got a job at the P&P luncheonette, where he became known for his omelets as well as his courtesy and good humor.

On December 22, 1985, Jim fell and banged his head. During work the next day he felt distracted, and in the late afternoon he fell and struck his head again. When Jim awoke on the 24th, he was somewhat confused, yet elated—after almost 15 years he realized who he was! ... James McDonnell of Larchmont, New York. ... his wife’s name was Anne. Suddenly he felt panic: *Is Anne alive? Has she remarried? If not, how will she greet me?* He was almost afraid to find out the answers to his questions.

A light snow began to fall as Anne returned from Christmas mass. When the doorbell rang she opened the door and almost immediately recognized the man with a full white beard who stood before her. She could hardly speak.

“Jim,” she gasped. “Is it true?” Her breathing came in bursts, as if she had been running. “Oh, I’m glad you’re home. Come in, come in, come in.” They were so stunned that they barely touched as she led him to his favorite chair. As Jim and Anne talked, they struggled to fill in the gaps in time. Before long Jim’s eyelids became heavy. Exhausted and happy, he dozed off. After 15 years, Jim McDonnell was home at last.

Adapted from Joseph T. Blank, “The Husband Who Vanished,” *Reader’s Digest*, January 1987.

**What did Jim believe about his identity?
What difference did it make in his behavior?**

O V E R V I E W O F M E E T I N G T I M E



Planning your group session

	INTERACTION AS A GROUP	INTERACTION WITH THE STUDY & WORD	INTERACTION WITH GOD	UPCOMING INFORMATION	OTHER IDEAS
	Ice breaker? Refreshments?	Provided. Add personal story?	Worship / Praise / Prayer time?	Next meeting? Special event?	Music / Video?
Allocating your time	_____ min.	_____ min.	_____ min.	_____ min.	_____ min.

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