

Who Does God Say I Am? – Seventh Grade

In this session, we want to help students cultivate a biblical worldview of self. The world has very loud opinions about who they are, but Scripture's voice rings purer and truer if we have the humility to listen for it. We won't be able to contain all of Scripture's teachings on the self and the nature of man in one session, so this is absolutely a session that could get spread out. But we don't want this critical year of development to go by without addressing identity with our students. The structure of this session is topical in nature, we will go through a list of identity statements with our students all rooted in Scripture, and hold those truths up to lies they are tempted to believe about themselves. Key truths we want them to take away from this session are that we are all made in the image of God and created with a plan and a purpose, and for those of us who are in Christ Jesus, our lives are set apart and holy, redeemed by God for the glory of His name and for our good.

Introducing the Subject

Our students are in a critical period of identity formation, even if they are not consciously aware of it. We want to create some space at the beginning of this session to help students put words to their thoughts on their own identity. We want to talk big picture about what culture says about a good and bad identity, about success and failure, and then we also want to take time to personalize the discussion, and talk about what they believe about themselves.

-Introduce the topic of identity, ask your group, "what are the big things a seventh grader in our culture gets their identity from?" Answers may include things like family, extracurriculars, friends, grades, but encourage them to keep sharing.

-Now, give everyone in your group a piece of paper. Have them split it in half, and on one side, title it: "Who I think I am".

-Ask your group, "Now how would you describe yourself? Where do you get your identity from?". Encourage your group to share or write down as many sources of identity as possible under the column, "Who I Think I Am".

-Now tell your group something like this: All these things may be true about us, but if we're being honest, they don't represent a full picture of how we see ourselves. The way we think about ourselves and talk to ourselves tells us a LOT about who we really think we are. What are some of the things you think about yourself? Good or bad. *This may be hard for students to put into words, so you may help by giving them examples of things you think about yourself- the point of this exercise is to help them articulate lies they believe about their identity. Ex: "I am awkward, and people don't want to hang out with me." "I have to do well at school", etc.*

-Now tell your group: So now we have talked about where the world tells us to look for identity, we've talked about what we think about ourselves, and now lets look back over that list... Do you feel like who you are is represented well here? What would you add or take away?

-Ask your students, "Do you like the person you've described here?"

Scripture Study

As you transition to the Scripture Study portion of this session, remind students that Scripture is where we turn for truth. We want to continually reiterate that we study Scripture not just for the "Christian take" on a matter, but God's revealed word, given to us out of love for our good. In this session in particular, this is what God says about us, this is what the One who made us says about us.

-Now, on the other side of your paper, title the remaining column "Who God Says I Am"

-Take a look at the list provided [here](#)...This is a list of all the things the Bible says "we are" as believers. Let your group look through it together and find some that stick out to you and add them to the new column. Read the verses that they reference and talk about what those verses mean as a group.

-Keep going until you have ten or so for everyone. Encourage them to give more than the "right" answer for what each verse means for them. Ask them to go deeper, ask them what that verse would look like lived out in their lives as seventh graders.

Practical Application

Now, we want to compare these lists to each other. The goal is not to tell them that they don't know anything about themselves, but to help them see what parts of their identity are built on things that change, or on lies, and what parts are good, and reflect the love of their Father for them. We want to teach them to combat lies with truth. We want to teach them to celebrate the good things about themselves as reflections of the goodness of God. We want to teach them to be comfortable with their weaknesses by the mercy of God. We want them to be able to own who they are and bring all of themselves as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God. We want them to know that God loves all of them, and so do we.

-Ask your group to look back on the list of things on the "Who I Think I Am" side of their paper. Tell your group you're going to take some time to evaluate that side. Ask them:

-What things on that list will change with time? *Ex. You won't always be in school, won't always be doing your current extracurriculars, won't always have the same friends...*
Cross those things off your list.

-What things on your list contradict what God says about you? *Help students identify things they think about themselves that are lies. Ex: I'm always left out, God says His children are chosen and set apart, they are more precious than diamonds to Him.* Cross those things off your list as well!

-Remind your students that our weaknesses are not untrue about us, but our identity is not found in them.

-Instruct students to turn their sheets over, title this new, fresh list "Who God Says (their name) Is". *We want them to understand that not only do we all have a common identity in Christ, we are all uniquely made as well. Our identities are rooted in Jesus, but they grow out of that firm foundation in so many beautiful and unique ways! We want to help students reflect on their lists of things that make them who they are and see how the Gospel truth transforms those things, it doesn't erase them.*

-Go back over all the things they said made them who they are, and help them write out identity statements that reflect the truth they studied together in Scripture as well as the unique stories and personalities God has given them. *For example, a student may have said that their friends family is a big part of who they are. A christ-rooted identity statement out of that could be "I have been sent out into my friend groups and my family to love them as I have been loved by God, and I get to experience God's love through them." If a student has said that they often feel like they're not enough, a Christ-rooted identity statement for them could be, "I am not enough on my own, but in Christ I am complete and by His Spirit I have more than enough."*

-Encourage students to include Bible verses or the references in their identity statements. That way when they doubt the truth of those words, they can go back to Scripture, which is perfect and true and unchanging!

-Pray with your students that they would know and get to experience and believe the truth of what you all studied together today. Pray that they would come to know more and more what it means to be who they were created to be.