

**Group Study on Life, Identity and Purpose**

*What you will need:*

* A print out of this document
* A Bible

*Read aloud the following excerpt and use your Bible to look up the passages cited in the text*

Whether you believe it or not, your life is a gift from God. God thought of you before the creation of the whole world and, when He created you, He made you in His very own image (Ephesians 1:4; Genesis 1:26).

Even now, God knows more about you than you know about yourself. He even has a plan for you - perhaps one you can’t see – but a plan *“to give you hope and a future”* (Jeremiah 29:11). Your life, and death, are ultimately in his hands.

We enter into God’s hands in a special way when we are baptised. Through water and the word, God calls us into his family. We are enveloped into the love of God, as God’s own precious child. Our identity is made secure.

As Gilbert Meilaender writes: ‘In baptism God sets his hand upon us, calls us by name, and thereby establishes our uniquely individual identity and destiny.’

This is an important reality to reflect on. We are so often tempted by the world to find our identity in other, more transient, things: our job, our level of education, our sexual orientation or relationship status, our family, our appearance, our skills. Perhaps we even find identity in our failures?

Yet to build our identity on such things is to build our identity on shaky ground. These things come and go. Rather, God calls us to root ourselves in something deep and secure. Something unchangeable; God himself, through the person of Jesus Christ.

This is a profound truth which deserves much reflection.

The author Gilbert Meilaender tells us: ‘We are most ourselves not when we seek to direct and control our destiny but when we recognize and admit that our life is grounded in and sustained by God.’

Understanding who we are in Christ, we are free to stop turning in on ourselves in an attempt to define “who we really are”. We can instead receive the things that life throws our way – whether it is life as a married or a single person, children or no children, whole or broken families, and all of our unique gifts (and even weaknesses)– as gifts from God, to use for his divine purposes.

Sometimes it is hard to see how our life, and the lives of others, are intended for God's purposes. We can be tempted to view ourselves and the tasks before us as ordinary or worthless. Yet this is a lie. All people have a place in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12), and God works through each and every one of us in our day to day lives, including through our seemingly mundane tasks.

So, the next time someone does something kind for you or serves you in some way, consider this: God is working through that person to bless and serve you. Or the next time you do an act of kindness or service to someone around you, consider this: God is working through you to bless and serve others. How incredible is that! Moreover, when we love and serve others, we also love and serve Christ himself (Matthew 25:40).

*Discussion Questions*

* Does your life seem like a gift from God? Try now to think of all the blessings in your life. It might be easier than you think.
* God our Father knows more about you than you know about yourself. Does this make it easier to go to God in prayer more often and to seek His ways?
* Sin is inside every one of us and can lead us to despair. When we are made new and given God’s name in baptism, our identity is obvious: child of God. How can we act as a child of God as we struggle against the sins of the flesh?
* God says that His power is made perfect in weakness. How have you experienced this in your life?
* Do you know what part of the body of Christ you are? Does this change your approach to life?
* The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) are things that naturally occur when we live as Christians. The Holy Spirit does them through us. Can you name an example of the fruit of the Spirit in your own life?

*Close with prayer*