



TRUE IDENTITY: April Overview

Pastor Derek Sanford

April 2024

In this series, we're going to explore how our authentic selves, our true identities as children of God, have been stolen by the labels we assign, the tribes we belong to, and the broken systems of the world around us. We're going to dig beneath the surface of some prevailing identity markers (politics, race, and sexuality) to discover God's truth for who we are and how we are called to live that truth.

As LifeGroup Leaders, these topics could be very challenging for your group, if you have some with strong and differing opinions. We want to give you some helpful tips for this series. First, take a moment to pray over your group and ask for God's discernment. Is your group ready to talk through this sermon series? Is there enough relational equity within your members to work through disagreements? If the answer is not right now, we encourage you to choose a [RightNow Media study](#) to do together instead.

If your group is in a place where you are ready to work through this series together, please watch this [video from Pastor Derek and Diane Wright](#) about how to navigate the discussions and consider implementing the tips for navigating controversial topics in your small group from Pastor Derek below.

1. Establish ground rules and stick to them: Make sure everyone agrees on some ground rules. Some examples are: No name calling / assume the best / goal is unity not uniformity / back up statements with facts/ no yelling – take a break if needed/ no gossip, slander. It's okay to fight, but fight fair. Respect the other person and speak in a way that expresses your concern without placing blame.
2. Less news - more Bible. Every message out there is trying to divide. What does God's word have to say about this issue?
3. Find the common ground - What do we all agree on? What are we all pulling for? There are different opinions about "how-to" but let's remember what we're all committed to. Resist the political extremes. Worldview vs. Ethics - we have the same worldview but may have different opinions about how it plays out ethically.
4. Less opinion, more action. What do you think you are being called to do about it? Not what do you think Derek should do about it, the president, the media - All action should be local action. Start here - you're not going to change anything in Seattle with a social media post - start locally with specific actions.
5. Speak for yourself and not some unnamed group of people - People speak in more extremes when they suggest they are representing a group of people who are not present in the circle of your small group. Redirect group members who are speaking representatively by asking, "Setting aside your passion for advocacy, what is your personal opinion based on your personal experience?"

TRUE IDENTITY



Pastor Derek Sanford
April 7, 2024

Life Group Discussion

Encouragement: How would you describe the person sitting to your right? (Or be creative- for example, write names on popsicle sticks and draw them randomly) Think about what you know about their personality, character, hobbies, passions, etc.

Scripture:

Theory: Identity formation involves three key tasks: Discovering and developing one's potential, choosing one's purpose in life, and finding opportunities to exercise that potential and purpose.

-How have external and internal factors influenced the formation of your identity?

-How has your growing faith and your relationship with God influenced your identity?

Read [Ephesians 1:1-23](#) (consider reading in more than one translation)

-How does Paul identify himself? How does he identify the recipients of this letter?

-Carefully look through verses 3-14. What aspects of our identity are found here?

-From Derek's sermon, what does it mean that we are adopted (:5), redeemed (:7), and sealed (:13)?

Read [Ephesians 4:1-7](#); [2:8-10](#)

-Knowing that Paul is writing to the church as a body, not just to individuals, what are the implications of our identity in how we live, work, and play?

Prayer: Allow this quote from Jackie Hill Perry to lead you into reflection, praise, and prayer:

"If he is the Creator, then we are created. If he is Master, then we are servants. If he is love, then we are loved. If he is omnipotent, then we are not as powerful as we think. If he is omniscient, then there is nowhere to hide. If he cannot lie, then his promises are all true. It is faith in the truths of God's character that has the power to completely revolutionize how our lives are lived out."

Next Steps:

- If you truly accepted the truth that you are adopted, redeemed, and sealed, how would you go about your life differently?

-Find the True Identity reading plan (pdf or YouVersion link) at whoisgrace.com/read

-Take it Further- [Your Identity in Christ: How God Sees You](#), a Cru resource



TRUE IDENTITY: Politics

Pastor Derek Sanford

April 14, 2024

Life Group Discussion

Encouragement: “I’m going to say a few words. When you hear them, go ahead and make a face or change your posture (thumbs up/down, etc) according to how you feel about these things. Here we go: Vacation, Church, Naps, Gardening, Cilantro, Politics.” [Take a few minutes to acknowledge the reactions and point out the differences and similarities within the group. Then take a moment to review the group’s ground rules for navigating controversial topics.]

Scripture:

Review the definition and history of the “citizenship” at [Britannica.com](https://www.britannica.com).

- How would you describe citizenship in the United States? In the state of Pennsylvania? In Erie county?

In your town/neighborhood?

-How do you think the Bible describes our citizenship in God’s Kingdom?

-What are the similarities and differences?

Read [Mark 12:13-17](#); [Philippians 3:20-21](#); [Matthew 5:16](#); [2 Corinthians 5:20](#); [Jeremiah 29: 4-7](#)

- Take in all these verses together. What does the Bible say about our citizenship in God’s Kingdom? How does earthly citizenship rank with heavenly citizenship?
- What guidance do these verses give to how we should relate to our earthly community and nation?
- How does viewing yourself as an exile in this country shift your perspective about politics?
- What would it look like for you (or your LifeGroup) to love your neighbor locally?

Prayer: Read [Revelation 5:9-14](#) and [Revelation 7:9-10](#) and allow these scriptures to lead you into a prayer of praise to King Jesus and humble commitment to live as citizens of His righteous Kingdom.

Next Steps:

-If you truly accepted the truth that you are adopted, redeemed, and sealed, how should I interact with someone who is different politically?

- Take it Further- [For the Health of the Nation](#), a RightNow Media study

