

SESSION ONE: WHO WAS I?

'I have come that they may have life, and
have it to the full.'

John 10:10

WHO WAS I? CORE

PREPARATION

This is the first of three sessions in Part A of Freedom In Christ For Young People in which we are looking at basic truths. Even though we are calling them 'basic', we find that many Christians can go for decades without really grasping them. You will be doing your young people a huge service in helping them get hold of them at a relatively young age. However, if you don't first 'get it' yourself, you can't pass it on! That's why this "Core" section is so important. It summarises the principles you need to have at your fingertips. Please make sure you are familiar with them before leading the session. It is written in such a way that you could take sections of it and teach them at appropriate points in the session.

The best way of making sure you yourself have got hold of the principles before trying to teach them is to go through the adult version of this course or to read some of Freedom In Christ's main books. Steve Goss has written four short books, collectively known as The Freedom In Christ Discipleship Series, that correspond to the four parts of the course (see page 319). The first in the series, Free To Be Yourself (Monarch 2008), corresponds to Part A (the first four sessions). Read up to page 35 in the book for the material that relates to this session.

KEY VERSE

John 10:10: 'I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.'

AIM

To understand how Adam and Eve's disobedience in the garden led to humanity being born spiritually dead; with every one of us having a deep need for significance, security and acceptance.

KEY TRUTH

Before we became Christians we were driven by the need to be accepted, secure and significant. Now, in Christ, we are spiritually alive children of God who are accepted, secure and significant.

OVERVIEW

When Adam and Eve were created, they had life in all its fullness. They had legitimate needs - to be accepted, secure and significant - which were completely fulfilled in their relationship with God. However, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God (sinned), the deep connection they had with him was lost. Subsequently all of humanity has inherited this loss of relationship and we were all born separate from God, 'spiritually dead', yet still had that huge need for acceptance, security and significance. Thankfully and amazingly, Jesus came to give back to us the spiritual life that was lost so that we can have the acceptance, security and significance that Adam and Eve had with God, through the restoration of our relationship with him.

WHO ARE YOU?

This course is all about learning to live in the freedom that Christ has won for us. But how are we freed?

Jesus said in John 8:32: 'You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.'

Jesus means that we need to know truth like we know a person, not just head-knowledge like we know about a subject at school like chemistry or English literature.

The first truth we need to find out about is where we have come from and who we really are.

So, who are you? You might think that's an easy question to answer!

If I say, 'Well, I'm John', you might say 'No, that's just your name. Who are you?'

'I go to such and such school/college.'

'No, that's what you do.'

'I'm British/American/African.'

'No, that's where you live or where you were born.'

Does the fact that I have dark hair, freckles and a wonky nose make me me?

You could try to put me on an operating table to find out who I really am.

If you chopped off one of my arms, would I still be me?

If you chopped off one of my legs as well, would I still be me?

What if you transplanted my heart, kidneys and liver, would I still be me?

Where am I then? If you keep chopping, will you eventually find me in there, somewhere?

What makes up the real 'me', the real 'you'? Is it my body? What I have? What I do? What I think?

Often, we tend to identify ourselves and others by the way we look, by how well or badly we do in school or if we're popular or not.

What does the Bible say?

In Genesis 1:26 we read that we are made in God's image. And God is spirit. That means that we're not just bodies that look a certain way or are popular or not, but we are spiritual beings – there's more to us than just bones, blood and skin.

So to answer the question of who we are properly we would need to say that fundamentally deep down inside we are spiritual. The bit of us deep down inside us that makes us who we are is referred to in the Bible as our 'soul' or our 'spirit'. When my body dies, this is the bit of me that will live for ever.

HOW YOU WERE DESIGNED TO BE

When God created Adam, Adam was physically alive. We too are physically alive:

- we have a body in which our spirit/soul lives
- we can taste, touch, smell, feel, see

But Adam was also spiritually alive which meant that the 'real him' (his spirit/soul) was connected to God.

We were created to be spiritually alive too, not just with our soul/spirit connected to our bodies, but also connected to God.

For Adam, being spiritually alive meant that he was:

1. Significant

God asked Adam to give names to the animals and rule over creation. He didn't have to search for the meaning of life or be worried about his own importance – he already knew it!

2. Secure

Adam didn't know what it meant to have a need that wasn't met – everything was taken care of by God, including his need for human companionship, provided by Eve. Adam was completely safe and secure in God's presence.

3. Accepted

Adam had a close relationship with God, he could talk to him at any time - Adam knew that he was accepted by God. Once Eve was created, Adam and Eve also experienced acceptance from one another.

This is how God created you to be – significant, secure and accepted. You were specifically designed for this kind of life: complete security; a real purpose; no need to worry about anything; and a sense of belonging to God and to other people. God loves you and originally designed you for this purpose.

ADAM AND EVE MESSED UP

When Adam and Eve were tricked by Satan into eating the fruit, and disobeying God – what the Bible calls sin – God said they would die. They didn't die physically (at least not immediately). So how did they die? Spiritually.

The spiritual connection between God and the core of their being was lost. Everyone born after Adam and Eve has inherited this disconnectedness. Even though we were designed to be spiritually alive we were all born spiritually dead, separated from God.

The effect of this spiritual death was enormous, both for Adam and Eve and for us.

These are two of the symptoms:

1. Lost knowledge of God


People who are spiritually dead don't know who they are and they don't know God. They have to work out the meaning of their life and their identity without God's input.

Knowing God was never meant to be a brain exercise. Imagine that you met someone over the internet. Romance blossomed and after a few years of intense web-based flirting, you decide to get married. Imagine that you got married and then kept just chatting and meeting online, never seeing each other in person – what kind of relationship would that be? In the same way, knowing God needs to be a close heart relationship, not just head knowledge.

Paul in the New Testament is a good example of this. Before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, he knew a lot about God, but afterwards he knew God for real. Paul himself claimed that this relationship was the most important thing in his life and that everything else was 'rubbish' in comparison (Philippians 3:8).

2. Negative Emotions

At their spiritual death, for the first time in their lives, Adam and Eve started experiencing negative



emotions. They started feeling scared (Genesis 3:10), guilty and ashamed. They felt rejected, weak, depressed and angry.

- Do you ever experience any of these feelings?
- Do you ever feel the desire to be accepted?
- Shame over something you've done?
- Anger over how someone has treated you?

Like Adam and Eve we instinctively do everything we can to get back to how things were before they messed up. We want significance, so we try and prove ourselves with good grades, by winning a TV talent show or becoming a pro footballer. We want security, so we try and make lots of money and get a good career. We want to be accepted, so we try and look our best and hope to be admired by those around us.

But we can't get back to how things were by trying harder, because the problem is that we were born separated from God.

In the Old Testament we see how God's people worked really hard to follow lots of rules and laws, and so get back in touch with God. But if you read about it, you'll see that it didn't work. God set up the Law specifically to show that on our own we cannot reconnect ourselves to God.

So God sent Jesus, to undo the work that Satan had done when he tricked Adam and Eve. Jesus was like Adam – he was both physically and spiritually alive – but unlike Adam, Jesus didn't sin.

Because of this, Jesus could both model spiritual life to us and give that spiritual life to us. Why did Jesus come? Yes, he came to forgive our sins but that was just the beginning. He himself put it like this, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). What did Adam lose? Life. What did Jesus come to give us? Life!

1 John 5:12 says: 'He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son does not have life.'

When we become Christians we receive life.

Real life.

Life to the full right now.

And life forever in heaven when we die.

When we get that spiritual life back, the real us – our soul/spirit – is reconnected to God, and we can have the same relationship with God that Adam and Eve did before they messed up.

As a result we are instantly significant, secure and accepted. This is an amazing truth! Even if it doesn't feel like it, when we decided to follow Jesus we became completely secure, significant and accepted. On page 46 there is a whole list of truths from the Bible that demonstrate clearly that we are indeed secure, significant and accepted. These are key things that young people really need to know are absolutely true about them if they know Jesus.

Throughout the course we are going to look at these truths and others and make sure we really know them, not just in our heads but in our hearts. Jesus said it is when we know the truth - not just know about it - that we will experience true freedom (John 8:32). Jesus himself is the Truth (John 14:6) and his Spirit will guide us into all truth (John 16:13).

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT AS YOU PREPARE

1. Imagine what life must have been like for Adam and Eve before they messed up.
2. How would it have been different from yours?
3. What do you think they thought about as they dropped off to sleep each night?
4. How did the fact that Adam disobeyed God affect us?
5. Do you ever experience those emotions that Adam and Eve experienced for the first time after they sinned (fear, guilt, shame, depression and anger)?
6. What did Adam lose and what did Jesus come to give us? What would it look like and feel like?
7. Thinking about our list of truths on page 46 if God says something about you, does that mean that it's true even if it doesn't feel true?

WHO WAS I? 11-14

LEADER'S PREPARATION

Read through the truths on page 46 with your team. Pick the one that most stands out to you and share it with the rest of the team.

Then pray together as a group:

“ Father God, thank you for sending Jesus to give us life. Please, share this life with us as we meet, as we worship and as we hear your word. Please help each young person to choose to believe the truth about who you are. Amen.

YOU MAY NEED

Pens and Paper

CD of worship music

Post-its

Bibles

Blu-tac

Card

The first Biblical Truth postcard to hand out (optional)



PRAYER AND DECLARATION

Start by encouraging everyone to join together in saying the following prayer and declaration. You can download the PowerPoint slides with the words for these from the website.

It would be good to suggest that the young people stand up and speak out the declaration clearly and confidently to the heavenly realms. They could shout it out and use appropriate actions!

PRAYER

“ Father God, I want to thank you for sending Jesus to give me life. Please, share this life with me by your Holy Spirit as we all meet, worship and hear your word. Amen

DECLARATION: IN A CLEAR, CONFIDENT TONE!

“ As a Child of God I speak to any and all evil and tell you that you have no right or authority to be here. I command! I don't suggest! I command you to leave this place now! You are not going to annoy or distract me. Go now in Jesus' name. My mind will be a quiet place just for the Lord Jesus and me to talk.



STARTING POINT



INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

DEFINE ME

Divide the group into teams of 4 to 8 people. The objective of the game is to line themselves up in the right order as quickly as possible. The teams get a point per win, and the team with the most points at the end wins the game.

Sample categories:

- height
- age
- house number (no number counts as zero)
- length of hair
- length of name (first, middle and surname combined)
- number of brothers and sisters

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Ask the young people to pair up with someone they don't know very well. Get them to try to find out as much as possible about each other in two minutes.

Either: Give each young person pen and paper, and ask them to write down the answers to the questions below. Ask the partner to check the answers. The pair with most correct answers win.

Or: If your group is small enough, you can ask everyone in turn a question about their partner and eliminate the people that answer incorrectly. You can obviously repeat the questions for different people.

Sample questions. What is your partner's...

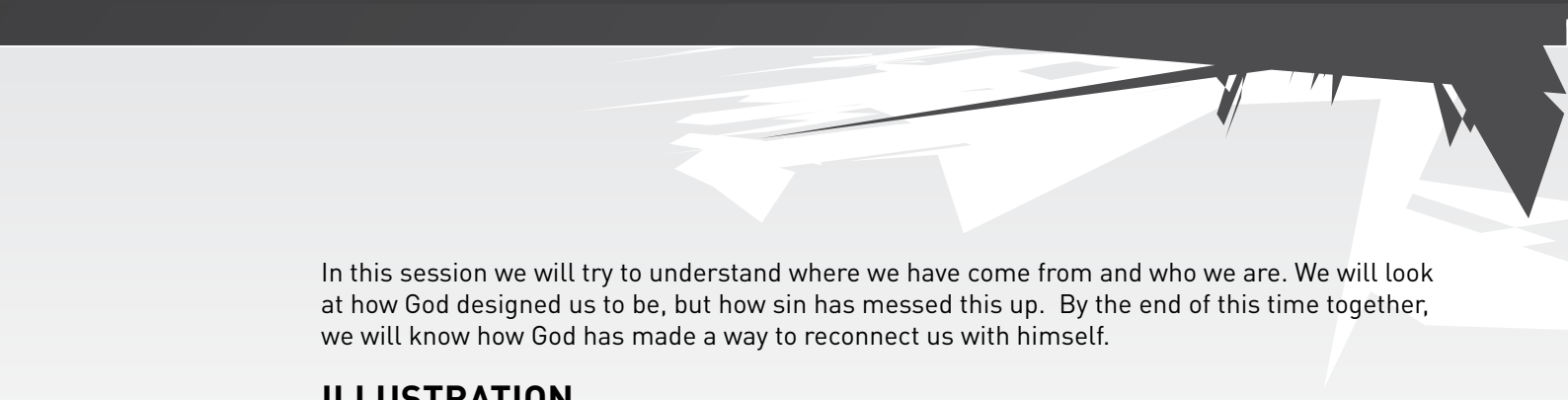
- name?
- date of birth?
- best-loved food?
- parents' name?
- best movie ever seen?
- school?
- most detested food?
- best subject in school?
- home address?
- ambition in life?
- preferred style of music?
- email address?



DVD CHAPTER 1

Play Session 1, Chapter 1 - 'Who am I?' - of the accompanying DVD.

The game/s we just played got us to share information about ourselves but do we really know what makes us, us?



In this session we will try to understand where we have come from and who we are. We will look at how God designed us to be, but how sin has messed this up. By the end of this time together, we will know how God has made a way to reconnect us with himself.

ILLUSTRATION

[Before the session starts prepare a white card on which you have written with lemon juice: 'The invisible things are as real as the stuff that's visible'.]

Show the white card to the young people, then light a candle and gently heat the card up as you speak, until they can see what is written: 'The invisible things are as real as the stuff that's visible'. Then explain that you will come back to that later.

Leader's Warning: Please assess the risk of using the above illustration, bearing in mind your group and the surroundings / environment you are in. Can matches / lighter and a candle be safely used / stored?

WHO ARE YOU?

Go around the group asking this question - 'Who are you?' - and noting down answers (explain there are no right or wrong answers).

- Did you think that was an easy question to answer?
- Some of you said your names, but that's not who you are, it's just your name.
- You might answer with what you do: 'I'm a student' or 'I'm a skater' - but those are just activities you do, not who you are!
- Or you might tell me your nationality - but that's just where you were born, not who you are!

WHAT MAKES ME ME?

- Is it my freckles and wonky nose [describe your own appearance]?
- Or what I do?
- Or what I have?

You and I often give ourselves an identity - deciding who we are - based on how we look, if we do well in school or not, if we're popular or not.

This is not how God identifies us!

In Genesis 1:26 it says that we were made in God's image - that means that we are spiritual beings. And do you know what...?

Leader's Note: It is really good actually to get a Bible out and turn to the reading. You set the example that your young people will follow, so when quoting from the Bible try actually to read from it as it then becomes a resource book that can be accessed and used.

Pick up the white card with the now visible 'The invisible things are as real as the stuff that's visible'

In this course we will talk about things inside us, things that we can't see, but that doesn't mean they are not real!



THE MAIN POINT



DVD CHAPTER 2

At this point play Session 1 Chapter 2 – ‘Created by God’ – of the accompanying DVD.

Now lead straight into the Graffiti activity.

GRAFFITI

Hand out pieces of paper and pens to each group member and divide them into three groups. Ask one group to write ‘Accepted’, another to write ‘Secure’ and the final group to write ‘Significant’ in as cool a graffiti style as they can.

Display the words somewhere around the room with blu-tac and then ask the group what they mean.

- Significant: to be important and worthy of attention
- Secure: feeling safe, stable, and free from fear or anxiety
- Accepted: to be approved of and welcomed; to belong

EXPLAIN

These words are really important because they describe how God designed us to be.

But do you always feel like that?

GAME - CAN I COME TO YOUR PARTY...?

Now explain that you are going to play a game that explains what you mean.

Sit your group down in a circle and explain that you are going to have a party but people have to bring certain things if they want to be invited and accepted into the party. Tell the group that there is a logical reason why you will accept people and they must try to figure it out.

Each person has to say: ‘Can I come to your party if I bring a.....?’ They then have to suggest something to bring.

‘Can I come to your party if I bring a sweet?’ The answer to the first question is always ‘yes’.

Subsequent questions must use the last letter of the thing that the person before is going to bring. For example the first person asked if they could bring a sweet. If the next person asks, ‘Can I come to your party if I play the trumpet?’ or ‘Can I come to your party if I give you a tooth?’, the answer will be ‘yes’.

If they ask, ‘Can I come to your party if I give you money?’, the answer in this case will be ‘no’. As they have used an ‘M’ instead of a ‘T’.

For an added twist have crisps or sweets that only the ones accepted to the party can eat. You may need to control how many your ‘guests’ have so that everyone gets some by the end.

Keep going until everyone has been accepted or the group gets bored.

Leader's Note: Make sure that the leaders, or a couple of other people in the group, know the rules of this game before starting. Also explain that once you have understood the rule you have to keep it a secret and not give it away. If necessary double check with your existing 'guest' to make sure they understand how they got accepted by asking them to answer the question again following on from the last question. If they don't answer correctly throw them out of your party.

EXPLAIN

- How did it feel to be rejected?
- How did it feel to be accepted?
- How did it feel to be thrown out?

During our life we can often feel insignificant, insecure and unaccepted – just like during that game.

- If you didn't understand how to get into the party you were left out, rejected and insignificant.
- If you managed to get in but didn't really know how you managed it you could feel nervous about being found out, you could feel insecure.
- But once you were in and you knew why you may have felt confident – significant, secure and accepted.

But what about real life? Don't we all want to feel significant, secure and accepted? Why is that? The answer can be found thousands of years ago in a garden.



DVD CHAPTER 3

At this point play Session 1, chapter 3 – 'Significant, Secure, Accepted' – of the accompanying DVD.

Now lead straight into the overview.

OVERVIEW

It was in a garden that Adam and Eve – the first humans – stopped trusting in God and decided to disobey him. They broke the one rule designed to keep them safe. It changed the future for all human beings! Because of their actions they died, not physically but spiritually. They lost their relationship and their knowledge of God and because of them so have we.

Instead of feeling good they felt all these negative emotions - fear, anxiety, guilt, shame, rejection, powerlessness, weakness, depression and anger.

Can you think when you've had any of those feelings?

The result?

We attempt to get back to what God intended for us by trying really hard in our own strength. We try to be popular, attractive, hard-working and nice, all to feel significant, secure and accepted.

In TV talent shows we see hundreds of people searching for significance, security and acceptance in fame and stardom.

- We want to be accepted, so we try to look our best, get lots of boyfriends or girlfriends and to be admired by the people around us.
- We want to feel secure, so we try to make lots of money or become really popular.
- We want to feel significant, so we try to prove our worth by getting good grades in school or by trying to win a TV talent show.
- No matter how hard we try all too often we feel negative emotions instead of feeling good about ourselves.

But can we ever get back to how we were created to be just by trying harder, hoping that it will make us feel better?

Something had to happen in the invisible – which, as you’ll remember – is just as real as the stuff that’s visible. What Adam lost was **life**. So God sent Jesus to give us **life**

When we become Christians, God gives us back the eternal life that Adam messed up and lost for us. If you thought that you got eternal life just when you die you are going to be pleased to hear that it’s much more than that, it’s a whole different quality of life **right now**.

You and I can have the same relationship with God that Adam and Eve had before they disobeyed him. We can know God. And our needs to be accepted, secure and significant can be completely met because Jesus came to give us the spiritual life we were always meant to have.



RESPONSE

Try to think of three things that struck you personally as you watched the DVD or read the overview. Can you form them into questions for your group? If they were challenging or thought-provoking to you, they will be to your group too and through this shared experience you can connect with your group and really get to the root of feelings and thoughts. Then go on to explore what your group feels about the truths (below).

THE TRUTH ABOUT WHO I AM IN CHRIST

Read aloud as a group the list of things that God says about us if we are alive in Christ (pages 8 and 9 in the Youth Guide 11-14). If appropriate to your group, use this as a declaration of truth over their life. Be confident and sure, and be willing to repeat them as a reminder.

If young people have difficulty reading they could repeat them after the leader.

Ask the young people to pick out the truth that they find hardest to believe and copy it onto a piece of card. Encourage them to put this card somewhere where they will see it every day, maybe on a mirror, or in their pocket.

Emphasise: all these things are true about you if you are a Christian even if they don’t feel true, and throughout this course we will understand these truths more and more.

Note that the lists of key truths from the first three sessions are also available on cool postcards that young people can take home and stick on their wall etc. You may like to order these before running the session. This would be an appropriate time to hand them out.



AND THERE'S MORE!

Draw the young people's attention to the 'Challenge' and 'Think' sections on page 7 of the Youth Guide.

Challenge: Learn at least one of the truths about who you are in Christ. Keep saying it over and over again to yourself until you remember it without looking.

You could ask them to pick one now that means the most to them.

Think: What do you do to try and feel significant, secure or accepted? Know that you are significant, secure and accepted just because of what God has done for you and your relationship with him.

Use this to emphasise the main point. Suggest they focus on this every day this coming week.



WORSHIP ACTIVITY

Get hold of a copy of some contemporary worship music – preferably a song containing plenty of words that describe God's character.

Hand out pens and a number of post-its to each group member.

Ask the young people to listen to the song and think of words or phrases from the song that stand out to them when they think of God. Ask each member to write them down on individual post-it notes and to stick them around the room. Alternatively ask for feedback after the song and write up the post-its yourself.

Then pray something like this:

Father God, we worship you for who you are. You are... [fill in with the words and phrases picked by the young people]. Amen

If possible, display the post-its in your meeting room for the rest of this course, as a reminder of who God is.

NB: You know your group so be aware of 'Christian' experience, choose your song carefully especially if some of your young people have limited worship experience. Make sure you explain simply and even give an example of a couple of words that stood out to you, once you have played the song.

CLOSING QUESTION

Draw the young people's attention to the question on page 9 of the Youth Guide 11-14: 'Imagine that you're talking to someone who is not a Christian. Can you think of a short way to share your faith in a few sentences?' Ask them to come prepared to share their thoughts on this next session.

This would be a good time to let the young people know the date for the Steps To Freedom Away Day/Weekend.

WHO I AM IN CHRIST

11-14

I AM SIGNIFICANT

I am no longer worthless, inadequate, helpless or hopeless. In Christ I am deeply significant and special. God says:

- I am a temple of God where God's Holy Spirit lives (1 Corinthians 3:16).
- I am God's workmanship, created for good works (Ephesians 2:10).
- I may approach God with freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12).
- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13).

I AM SECURE

I am no longer guilty, unprotected, alone or abandoned. In Christ I am totally secure. God says:

- I am free from any guilty charges against me from God (Romans 8:31-34).
- I cannot be separated from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39).
- I am sure that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected (Philippians 1:6).
- I am kept safe with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3).
- I am a child of God and I am safe from any evil (1 John 5:18).

I AM ACCEPTED

I am no longer rejected, unloved or dirty. In Christ I am completely accepted. God says:

I am God's child (John 1:12).

I am Jesus' chosen friend (John 15:15).

I am a saint, a holy person (Ephesians 1:1).

I have been forgiven for all the things I've done wrong (Colossians 1:14).



WHO WAS I? 15-18

LEADERS' PREPARATION

Read through the truths on page 46 with your team. Pick the one that most stands out to you and share it with the rest of the team.

Then pray together as a group:

““ Father God, thank you for sending Jesus to give us life. Please, share this life with us as we meet, as we worship and as we hear your word. Please help each young person to choose to believe the truth about who you are. Amen.

YOU MAY NEED

Large Mirror

Large sheet / flipchart paper & Pens

Accompanying DVD / DVD player / TV / projector

CD / MP-3 / worship music

Bibles

The first Biblical Truth postcard to hand out (optional)



PRAYER AND DECLARATION

Start by encouraging everyone to join together in saying the following prayer and declaration. You can download the PowerPoint slides with the words for these from the website).

It would be good to suggest that the young people stand up and speak out the declaration clearly and confidently to the heavenly realms. They could shout it out and use appropriate actions!

PRAYER:

““ Lord thank you for sending Jesus so that we can be re-connected with 'you' and know that we are truly significant, secure and accepted because we are in relationship with the Living God. Amen.

DECLARATION: IN A CLEAR, CONFIDENT TONE!

““ I belong to Jesus and therefore no enemy of his has authority over me. They must leave now in Jesus' name. Get out of here!



STARTING POINT

Have a large mirror centrally located in the room that you meet in. Make no comment about it but make a mental note of how the young people interact with it (e.g. checking hair / make up, pulling a funny face, avoid) when they enter the room.



DVD CHAPTER 1

Play Session 1, Chapter 1 – ‘Who am I?’ – of the accompanying DVD.

SALESPERSON OF THE YEAR

Stand in front of the mirror as you start to speak as if checking / admiring yourself, then explain this activity.

- Divide your young people into teams of threes or fours and give them four sheets of large paper/flipchart paper.
- On one sheet ask them to write down all they know about you.
- On the second sheet get them to prepare, and then present, a promotional poster about you.
- On the third sheet ask them to write up a 50 word advert describing and promoting you as an amazing person.
- Host presentations, asking the teams to use the fourth sheet to make comments about what they thought.

Standing in front of the mirror, pass comment to the effect that, ‘Many of us find it difficult to talk about ourselves and prefer to stay in the back ground, whilst there are others of us who are happiest (it would seem) when we are in the spotlight.’

But we need to discover where we have come from and who we really are.

So, who am I? Was it an easy question to answer?

- Reflect back on some of the comments that they made trying to promote you
- Refer back to the Core section to help you unpack this line of thought.

Ask the group how they would like other people to sum them up/promote them.

What makes up the real ‘me’, the real ‘you’?

- Is it my body?
- What I have?
- What I do?
- What I think?

Often, we identify ourselves and others by the way we look, by how well or badly we do in school, or how popular we are.

In this session we will try to understand where we have come from and who we are. We will look at how God designed us to be, but how sin has messed this up. By the end of this time together, we will know how God has reconnected us with himself.

SOAP BOX

MY OPINION - WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In Genesis 1:26 we read that we are made in God's image – that means that we're not just bodies that look a certain way or are popular or not, but we are spiritual beings – there's more to us than just bones, blood and skin. Because fundamentally God is spirit.

Who we really are is deep down inside. It is the spiritual part of us that makes us who we are – the Bible refers to it as our 'soul' or our 'spirit.' Even though my body will die one day, my spirit will live forever.

Divide the young people into pairs, and ask them these questions. Then either encourage them to write down their responses or give them a few moments to discuss and feed back their thoughts.

- How do I know I am physically alive?
- What does it mean?
- How do I know I am spiritually alive?
- What does it mean?

When God created Adam, Adam was both physically and spiritually alive. We too are physically alive; our soul/spirit is connected to our body and we can taste, touch, smell, feel and see.

The fact that Adam was spiritually alive, meant that the real him - the spiritual bit - was connected to God. We were created to live like that too, connected to our bodies but also to God.



ACTIVITY

Stick three large sheets / flipchart paper around the room,

Write the word SIGNIFICANT across the top of one sheet, SECURITY on another, and ACCEPTANCE on the third sheet.

Then hand out marker pens and ask the group to go round each sheet and write on them what they feel that particular word means generally and/or what it means to them.

Go through this exercise yourself first so you can share your own thoughts as well as reflecting much better on what they have written. Remember to consider the thickness of the paper and the type of pens – will the ink go through onto the wall?! Also if wall space is difficult simply use the floor space.

After about five minutes reflect with the group on what they have written under each of the three words.

Discussion

What do you think about these three words?

Do you feel you are searching for significance, security, acceptance?

MAKES ME MAD

Do you ever get annoyed that someone thinks they know you and what you are going to do/say?

Do you ever feel boxed or labelled?

Do you ever do that to someone else?

What about that old man at church who always moans about young people not helping?



DVD CHAPTER 2

Play Session 1, Chapter 2 – ‘Created by God’ – of the accompanying DVD.

Genesis 1 & 2 – the creation story right at the beginning of the Bible, really helps us to understand how God went about designing the whole world, including you and me.

It describes humanity – that’s us. And it says that we were created in the very image of God. And God says that He saw it all and it was good.

How do you imagine God?

What does he look like? Happy? Sad? Big beard? Wearing sandals?

Do you agree?

- God is spirit. And if we are made in his image then we too are fundamentally spiritual beings.
- The ultimate statistic is death. Unless Jesus returns first, 100% of us will one day die.
- That means that one day our body, what you can see, our outer physical person will stop working and die.
- So is that it? Is that the end?
- No because our inner spiritual person - ‘the real us’ - goes on living.

So who are you?

You are not just what others see, or think they see on the outside. Deep down inside you are a spiritual person.

God made the most beautiful garden in the history of time with all kinds of trees, rivers, animals and birds. And into this garden God placed this couple; Adam and Eve. He said to them, ‘this is just for you. Enjoy.’

They were physically alive. But they were also spiritually alive: they were connected to God. And that spiritual life, that connection to God, meant that they would have felt so significant, so loved, so secure, so accepted.

That’s how God created us to be.



WORSHIP ACTIVITY

Get hold of a copy of some contemporary worship music – preferably a song containing plenty of words that describe God’s character.

Hand out pens and a number of post-its to each group member.

Ask the young people to listen to the song and think of words or phrases from it that stand out to them when they think of God. Ask each member to write them down on individual post-it notes, and then, as the song plays again, ask them to stick them around the room. Alternatively ask for feedback after the song and write up the post-its yourself.

Then pray something like this:

Father God, we worship you for who you are. You are... [fill in with the words and phrases picked by the young people]. Amen

If possible, display the post-its in your meeting room for the rest of this course, as a reminder of who God is.

NB: You know your group so be aware of ‘Christian’ experience, choose your song carefully especially if some of your young people have limited worship experience. Make sure you explain simply and once you have played the song give an example of a couple of words that stood out to you.



THE MAIN POINT

Refer to page 6 of the Youth Guide 15-18.

God designed us to be secure, significant and accepted and we often search for these things in the wrong places. When Adam and Eve messed up they lost spiritual life which had given them security, significance and acceptance. Jesus, through his life, death and resurrection, came to restore this to us by giving us back spiritual life. When we become Christians we automatically become secure, significant and accepted in Jesus even if sometimes it doesn’t feel like it.

What difference does it make?

For Adam, being spiritually alive meant that he knew his...

1. Significance

God asked Adam to give names to the animals and rule over creation. He didn’t have to search for the meaning of life or be worried about his own importance – he already knew it!

2. Security

Adam didn’t know what it meant to have a need that wasn’t met – everything was taken care of by God, including his need for human companionship, provided by Eve. Adam was completely safe and secure in God’s presence.

3. Acceptance

Adam had a close relationship with God, he could talk to him at any time - Adam knew that he was accepted by God. Once Eve was created, Adam and Eve also experienced acceptance from one another.

This is how God created you to be – significant, secure and accepted – you were specifically designed for this kind of life. Complete security, a real purpose, no need to worry about anything and a sense of belonging to God and to other people. God loves you and originally designed you for this purpose.

Ask the group to be really honest and to turn to the person next to them and finish these sentences

- 'One day I will...'
- 'One day I hope to see...'
- 'One day I will be...'
- 'One day there will be...'
- 'One day I hope...'
- 'One day I'm going to...'

There is so much more to us than we can imagine and today we will be trying to understand a little more how we can tap into the potential we have.



DVD CHAPTER 3

Play Session 1, Chapter 3 – 'Significant, Secure, Accepted' – of the accompanying DVD.

Discussion

Think about what was said in the DVD. Can you imagine what it must have been like for Adam and Eve?

Text from DVD: 'Adam and Eve died. Not physically. But spiritually. Deep down inside they died. They were still physically alive. They looked the same. But they were cut off from God. For Adam and Eve, suddenly all these new feelings started appearing. Like fear, and guilt, and shame, and emptiness, and loneliness. Things they had never, ever felt before.'

- How did they feel?
- What did they think?
- What did they say to each other?

As a result, all of their descendants from that time on – that's you and me – would be born physically alive but spiritually dead. Without the amazing spiritual life we were meant to have.

What do you think?

Do you agree / disagree that:

- we were designed to be born into an amazing spiritual life, connected to God?
- we were designed to be spiritually alive knowing we are absolutely significant, where we always feel secure, and we always know that we are accepted?
- we find ourselves born without that spiritual life?
- we all still have those deep-rooted needs to feel significant, secure and accepted?
- everyone goes looking for the answers in different places, relationships, drugs, sex, alcohol, stardom, money, career.
- we can look there, but we won't find the answer there.

Do you believe there was only one way for God to restore the real relationship with us and that it was through sending his son Jesus to die a terrible death on the cross and then rising from the dead?

Adam and Eve died when they ate the fruit and lost their spiritual life but Jesus said "I have come so that they might have life". Spiritual life!

Because of Jesus, you can become the person God always intended you to be. When you become a Christian, you become spiritually alive as you were always meant to be. You become completely new deep down inside.

ALTERNATIVE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Imagine what life must have been like for Adam and Eve before the Fall. How would it have been different from yours? What do you think they thought about as they dropped off to sleep each night?
2. How did the fact that Adam disobeyed God affect us?
3. Do you ever experience those emotions that Adam and Eve experienced for the first time after the fall (fear, guilt, shame, depressed and angry)? What situations make you feel like this?
4. What was it that Jesus came to give us?
5. Look at the list of truths on pages 8 and 9 of the youth guide. If God says something about you, does that mean that it's true even if it doesn't feel true? Why? Why not?



RESPONSE

Leader's Note: Try to think of three things that struck you as you watched the DVD or read the overview. Can you form them into questions for your group? Perhaps ask them to discuss how they feel about the different truths outlined. If they were challenging or thought-provoking to you, they probably will be to your group and through this shared experience you can connect with them on a deeper level, really getting to the root of their feelings and thoughts.

Read aloud as a group the list of things that God says about us if we are alive in Christ (on pages 8 and 9 in the Youth Guide 15-18).

If it works with your group use the list as a declaration of truth over their life. Be confident and sure, and be willing to repeat them as a reminder

Leader's Note: If young people have difficulty reading they could repeat them after the leader.

Note that the lists of key truths from the first three sessions are also available on cool postcards that young people can take home and stick on their wall etc. You may like to order these before running the session. This would be an appropriate time to hand them out.



AND THERE'S MORE!

Draw attention to the journal activity on page 7 of the Youth Guide 15-18:

'What the Bible says about who we are in Christ is amazing. What are the truths on the next two pages that particularly stand out to you? Spend this week's journal page writing down the truths that mean the most and how they make you feel.'

CLOSING QUESTION

Ask them to consider the question on page 9 of their guide before the next session:

Imagine that you're talking to someone who is not a Christian. Can you think of a short way to share your faith in a few sentences? Come prepared to share your sentences next week.

This would be a good time to let the young people know the date for the Steps To Freedom Away Day/Weekend.

WHO I AM IN CHRIST

15-18

I AM SIGNIFICANT

I am no longer worthless, inadequate, helpless or hopeless. In Christ I am deeply significant and special. God says:

- I have been chosen and appointed by God to change the world around me. (John 15:16)
- I am a temple of God where God's Holy Spirit lives. (1 Corinthians 3:16)
- I am a minister of 'making peace' for God. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)
- I am God's workmanship, created for good works. (Ephesians 2:10)
- I may approach God with freedom and confidence. (Ephesians 3:12)
- I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me! (Philippians 4:13)
- I am part of God's family and I have my role to play. (1 Corinthians 12:27)

I AM SECURE

I am no longer guilty, unprotected, alone or abandoned. In Christ I am totally secure. God says:

- I am assured that in every circumstance God works for my good. (Romans 8:28)
- I am free from any guilty charges against me from God. (Romans 8:31-34)
- I cannot be separated from the love of God. (Romans 8:35-39)
- I am sure that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected. (Philippians 1:6)
- I am a citizen of heaven. (Philippians 3:20)
- I am kept safe with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:3)
- I am a child of God and I am safe from any evil. (1 John 5:18)

I AM ACCEPTED

I am no longer rejected, unloved or dirty. In Christ I am completely accepted. God says:

- I am God's child. (John 1:12)
- I am Jesus' chosen friend. (John 15:15)
- I am holy and acceptable to God. (Romans 5:1)
- I am a saint, a holy person. (Ephesians 1:1)
- I have been forgiven for all the things I've done wrong. (Colossians 1:14)
- I am complete in Christ. (Colossians 2:10)