

EQUIPPED

Five Foundations of the Faith



Salvation and
Identity



The Word
of God



Spiritual
Disciplines



The Local
Church



Mission &
Purpose

Personal Study Guide

Salvation & Identity

Lesson Question: I know that something is different, but what is it?

Main Idea: Now that you are saved, your relationship to God is different, you are different, and the way you live and think about life and eternity is different.

Key Terms

Justification: A legal term where God declares the sinner to be right with Him.

Imputation: A banking term that describes Christ's record being credited to us.

Reconciliation: The process of bringing two parties, formerly at odds, together.

Sanctification: The process of being made more like Christ as we grow in Him.

Coming to faith in Christ is one of the most important decisions a person can make. It is one of a very few decisions that come with an eternal blessing. You might make certain decisions that point others to Christ, but there is no decision of greater personal significance. It is so important but our modern church faces a great challenge.

Often, when people make a profession of faith, they are full of energy and ready to break down a brick wall for the glory of God. They are so excited to blaze this new frontier of the Christian walk. The problem is they have no map. They know they want to run the race, but can't determine its route. This may be exactly your experience. The goal of this study is that you will be equipped to run this race.

I want to help you lace up your shoes, grab your map, and strike out from a firm foundation and solid sense of direction. As we navigate, you will notice that each section will begin with the title "A New ____." 13 unique ideas will fill that blank. This will help you organize the way you think about faith and the many new and exciting concepts that accompany your walk with Christ.

Question 1:

Think back to when you first got saved, did you have desire without direction?

A New Status

Bible Verses

Ephesians 2:1-4, Romans 5:1-2, 2 Corinthians 5:21

When we get saved, it is usually easy to see that something is different, though it might be hard to pinpoint. The reality is that a few things are different. One difference is in the way God sees you.

Your relationship to God is different; it has a new status. People always live in one of two relationships to God: separated or reconciled. Before we are saved, our sin causes us to be separated from God. More specifically, one sin is enough to separate us from God for all eternity. You might think, “but sins are different, murder is not the same as lying. How is that fair?”

The idea that one sin can cause eternal separation from God says more about God than it does our sin. He is not like us. In Him, there is no sin, and no sin can dwell in His midst.

The beauty of it all is that God Himself came to our rescue. Ephesians 2 describes us as being “dead in the trespasses and sins in which we once walked” (Ephesians 2:1-2a, English Standard Version). This is us before Christ, and thankfully, the passage does not end there. The passage continues, “But God,” such a powerful phrase. “But God being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ, by grace you have been saved” (Ephesians 2:4).

In Christ, we, though sinful and separated, have been made right with and reconciled to God. The Bible uses a specific term to describe this: justified (Romans 5:1-2) We have been justified. Preachers in our modern Southern Baptist context often declare, “justified, just as if I’d never sinned.” This play on the word perfectly captures what has taken place. We have been made as though we never sinned, because Christ, though He had never sinned, took our guilt upon Himself (2 Corinthians 5:21). When God looks at us, He no longer sees our sinful record, but Christ’s perfect record imputed or given to us.

Question 2:

We discuss how sin separates us from God. Before you came to Christ, how did God reveal that separation to you?

Question 3:

Ephesians 2:4 begins with “But God.” Did you have a “But God” moment in your life? How did God reveal your need for Jesus and His redeeming love?

A New Identity

Bible Verses

2 Corinthians 5:17, John 1:12

After salvation, the way in which God views you is different, but you are also different. There is both an external and internal component to this new reality. You have received a new identity. Your identity constitutes who you are. Paul, writing to the Corinthian Church, said, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17). There is a very interesting phenomenon taking place behind the scenes with these words.

Sometimes, our modern, concise, and maybe even a little lazy English fails to capture the fullness of what a sentence was saying in the original Greek. For example, in Greek, there are four words for love: agape, storge, phileo, and eros, though agape and phileo are the only terms used in the New Testament. Agape describes an unconditional love (God’s love), whereas Phileo describes brotherly love (think Philadelphia, The city of brotherly love). Our lazy English just says love, whether discussing dessert, hobbies, careers, or spouses, it’s all just love.

A similar phenomenon is happening in this passage with the word *new*. There are two Greek words for new: *Neos* and *Kainos*. *Neos* refers to something young and brand new, but *Kainos* refers to something that is superior in quality to what previously existed. *Kainos* is the word used in 2 Corinthians 5:17.

This is because God has transformed us from what once was into something qualitatively superior to what existed before. We have gone from rebellion to reconciliation. We have gone from separation to salvation.

You might say, “I am not very different.” The paradox of change is interesting. In one sense, you have come to the end of a very long road, and in another, you have started a lifelong journey. At the moment of your salvation, God transforms you into something new, and yet, in the process of sanctification, God is shaping you as a potter shapes clay. You are as saved as you possibly can be, but you are not today who you will be in one year or one decade or one half-century. You are being progressively shaped into the image of Christ.

Going Deeper

Greek Words for New

Neos: new in relation to time, brand new

Kainos: qualitatively superior to what previously existed

A New Identity

Bible Verses

2 Corinthians 5:17, John 1:12

Once, St. Augustine, a fifth-century theologian who led a life of youthful sin, was approached by a woman who knew him in his early, rebellious years. After a few moments, she believed that he did not recognize her, so she said, "Augustine, it is I." Augustine replied, "Indeed, it is, but it is not I." A somewhat unusual encounter, yet in a way, very real. The Augustine that the woman knew had long been replaced by an Augustine who encountered Jesus.

Adopted into God's Family

One of the biggest identity changes that takes place is our adoption into God's family as a beloved son or daughter. The apostle John wrote in his gospel, "but to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12). Paul affirms this notion of spiritual adoption in his letters (Ephesians 1:5).

God, having established the family and the role of Father, desires to relate to us as a Father. He is the Father that our earthly father is not. We all have different experiences with fathers. We all have unique experiences being parents ourselves. God is the picture of what a father should be. As Fathers (or parents) this translates into a weighty responsibility to act as a mirror reflecting the

character of Christ to our children, as well as those around us. The problem is that in varying degrees, we crack the glass. In God, there is no crack. There is no slack. He is the everlasting, perfect Father who receives us as His beloved sons and daughters.

Question 4:

Augustine said, "It is not I" when faced with his past. Can you relate? How does your life look different after you got saved?

Question 5:

Kainos means new in the sense of a better quality than before. How has God shaped you to look more like Jesus since you got saved?

Question 6:

God relates to us as a Father. As parents, aunts, uncles, or siblings, we are called to show Christ to others. What are some ways that we fail to show Christ to those closest to us. How can we do better?

A New Rest

Bible Verses

Hebrews 9:12, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 2:10, 1 John 4:19

When we first begin to think about faith, we often think of ourselves as having to “earn” God’s love. It feels like something we should have to work for. We have to be “worthy” of His love. This is a very easy mistake to make because merit makes the world go round. In society, we are taught that if we work hard, we will be rewarded.

Meritocracy. It is a great system for the advancement of society, but it is a terrible system when it comes to thinking about salvation. In society, merit fuels innovation and advancement, but when it comes to our faith, the idea of merit in earning our salvation is at best a fool’s errand and at worst, a source for pride or despair and a pathway to legalism.

Where we formerly thought of faith as a list of rules and rights and wrongs, the Bible calls us to see it as a means of rest and peace. Jesus did the work. He won the victory. The writer of Hebrews wrote, “He [Jesus] entered once and for all into the holy place, not by means of the blood and calves but by means of His own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12). Jesus completed the redemptive mission that we could not. His yoke is easy and burden is light. This is because “He [God] made the one who knew no sin [Jesus] to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

I know what you are thinking... All this talk of rest and peace, but what about James? That whole business about faith without works being dead? It is a valid question. It is not that the Christian never produces works. God calls His people to good deeds and good works. The difference? We are not relying on those good works to get us to heaven. To be saved is to be free from any notion of earning God’s favor for salvation. We still should seek good deeds and good works. We want to produce fruit as a means of glorifying Jesus.

Where we once thought of works as the secret code to earn God’s love, we should now see works as the natural outflow of the overwhelming love He showed us in the gospel. We don’t “work” to get something from God; we “work” because He has already given us more than we bargained for. It really is as John says, “We love because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19). Our work is the overflow of His example in the gospel. He stepped into our helpless situation, so we help others. He loved us with an overwhelming love, so we love others. He forgave us an immeasurable debt, so we forgive others. All of our works find motivation in the cross.

A New Rest

Bible Verses

Hebrews 9:12, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Ephesians 2:10, 1 John 4:19

Consider a closing illustration: Several years ago, I was working in an entry-level position for a company. An opening came for an individual to take over as operations manager for our local branch. The guy who got the job was an outsider. He did not understand the work we did on the “ground floor.” He gave orders, but clearly did not understand the way things truly “worked.” He was good with a spreadsheet, customer relations, and likeable but he did not have the respect of the guys. They voiced it often amongst themselves.

Years later, I was awarded the same position. I had been on the ground. I understood the struggles the guys faced. Were some of their complaints overblown? Sure. Still, they knew I had their back. They knew that if it came down to it, I would exchange my mouse and keyboard for work boots. Jesus embodies servant leadership. He did not simply shout orders from heaven. He stepped into the “ground floor.” He showed us how to love others. He got in the ditch with us. I wanted to be that for my employees. I knew that His example motivated my desire to serve Him. I wanted to be someone who knew their struggles and empathized with them. Someone who sought their success. Someone who wasn't afraid to get in the ditch with them when the time came.

Question 7:

Why is it hard for us to accept that we can't earn salvation? How does resting in God's provision bring freedom?

Question 8:

Consider the workplace illustration, which boss motivates the greatest response? Why?

Question 9:

How does the illustration compare with Jesus' example in the gospel?
