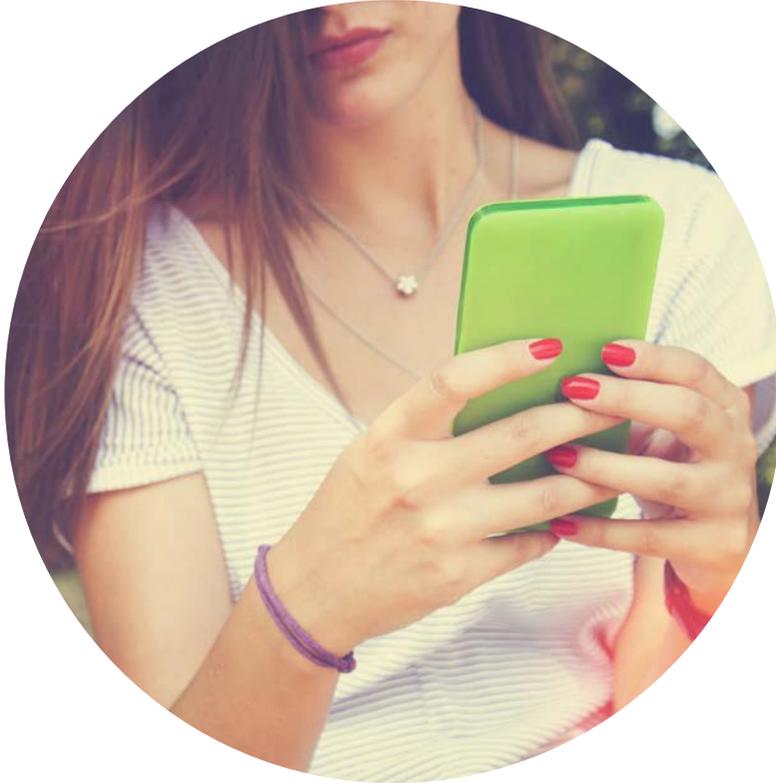
A scenic view of a coastal town at sunset, with a large white number '1' overlaid in the center. The background shows a bay with several boats, a town with buildings, and a church spire on the right. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue.

**SESSION**

**1**

**LIFE IN CHRIST**



**WHAT WORD  
OR PHRASE DO  
PEOPLE USE TO  
DESCRIBE YOU?**

?



# THE POINT

## MY IDENTITY IS FOUND IN CHRIST.

### THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

#### FACT:

ONE WAY WE PROVE OUR IDENTITY IS BY PRESENTING A VALID DRIVER'S LICENSE. THERE ARE OVER 215 MILLION LICENSED DRIVERS IN THE U.S. TODAY.<sup>1</sup>

*Who am I?* That's an awfully big question, and one that's not always easy to answer. Many things make up who we are. You may be a student, an athlete, or a musician. Perhaps you see yourself as attractive, skinny, or funny. How I define myself—my identity—affects my thoughts and actions.

#### ➤ **What three words would others use to identify you?**

The biggest factor affecting our identity is our view of God. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" This is the most important question followers of Jesus will ever consider. Knowing who Jesus truly is changes our lives, including our values and behaviors, and it ultimately changes the way we see others and ourselves.

How we see Jesus shapes how we define ourselves. Without correctly understanding who Jesus is, we will never truly understand who we are. Consider, then, life's most important question: Who is Jesus?

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?



## ▶ LUKE 9:18-26

<sup>18</sup>While he was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, “Who do the crowds say that I am?”

<sup>19</sup>They answered, “John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, that one of the ancient prophets has come back.”

<sup>20</sup>“But you,” he asked them, “who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “God’s Messiah.”

<sup>21</sup>But he strictly warned and instructed them to tell this to no one,

<sup>22</sup>saying, “It is necessary that the Son of Man suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day.”

<sup>23</sup>Then he said to them all, “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.

<sup>24</sup>For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life because of me will save it.

<sup>25</sup>For what does it benefit someone if he gains the whole world, and yet loses or forfeits himself?

<sup>26</sup>For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and that of the Father and the holy angels.

## THE SETTING

For a year and a half, the disciples followed Jesus and heard Him teach with authority like no one had ever heard. They saw Him cast out demons, heal the sick, raise the dead, feed thousands with one boy’s small lunch, and a host of other miracles. They even heard Him say to a paralyzed man, “Your sins are forgiven.” They believed Jesus was a great teacher, but they had trouble wrapping their minds around the full extent of Jesus’ identity. Then Jesus asked them, “Who do you say I am?”

## ▶ LUKE 9:18-20

The climate during this time was one of deep spiritual and moral confusion. Among the thousands of people coming out to see Jesus' miracles, there were a lot of opinions about who He was. Jesus asked His disciples, "Who do the crowds say I am?"

**They listed three popular opinions:**

- > \_\_\_\_\_
- > \_\_\_\_\_
- > \_\_\_\_\_

Despite the varying views, they all held one thing in common: Jesus was a very important man. Many people today believe Jesus was an important historical figure. For instance, your Muslim neighbor would likely see Jesus as a prophet. To your Buddhist friend, He was an enlightened teacher. Even atheists often believe Jesus' teachings have good moral value.

But what others say isn't nearly as important as how you answer the question, "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered boldly and emphatically that Jesus is God's Messiah. For Peter to understand his own purpose and identity, he first had to clearly know who Jesus is. And the same is true for us today.

**As we seek to know our own identity, it's necessary that we answer the same question. Answer honestly: Who do you say Jesus is?**

**WHAT ARE  
SOME WORDS  
OR PHRASES  
PEOPLE USE  
TO DESCRIBE  
JESUS TODAY?**

?

*How you answer this question is central to your own identity: Who is Jesus? #ChristID*



## ▶ LUKE 9:21-22

Peter finally understood and confessed what we sometimes think the disciples should have picked up on sooner. Now that they understood, it's off to change the world! Right?

Wrong! Jesus said surprisingly, don't tell anyone. Period.

*But wait, aren't we supposed to tell people about Jesus?* Yes, we are, and later Jesus would tell His followers to be witnesses. But at that particular point, there were many things Jesus still needed to fulfill and a widespread witness would have interfered. There was a specifically appointed time Jesus would die. Publicly claiming to be Christ would likely have angered the religious leaders, limiting Jesus' ability to travel freely sharing His good news. Perhaps the religious leaders would have been angered to the point that they would have killed Him sooner.

The Jews were expecting a political and military leader to deliver them from Roman oppression. A revolutionary leader and His followers should expect certain risks, even death. The disciples were likely crushed when Jesus told them He would indeed die.

**However, Jesus then shared an even greater truth. He would rise in victory over death.**

**WHAT WOULD YOUR REACTION HAVE BEEN TO HEARING JESUS' INSTRUCTIONS AS ONE OF HIS DISCIPLES?**

?



*"If our identity is in our work, rather than Christ, success will go to our heads, and failure will go to our hearts."<sup>2</sup> —Tim Keller*

**Instead of the word "work," you may want to replace it with the word popularity, sports, academics, or something else. Either way, how are you impacted by:**

▶ **Success**

▶ **Failure**

# ACTION POINT

LUKE 9:23

JOHN 10:10

IN YOUR OWN WORDS, REWRITE THESE VERSES.

WHAT DOES EACH VERSE SAY ABOUT LIFE AND DEATH?

HOW CAN BOTH BE TRUE?

## WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE ON A PRACTICAL LEVEL TO DAILY TAKE UP A CROSS AND DENY OURSELVES?



### ▶ LUKE 9:23-26

As hard as it was for the disciples to hear of their Teacher's death, it was about to get worse. Jesus told them, not only will I die, but anyone who desires to be My follower must die as well.

➤ **We live in a world that teaches every person to serve him or herself first. What ways do you see this is true today?**

However, Jesus teaches that His followers must be different from the world. We are not to serve ourselves, but rather deny ourselves. Jesus ultimately demonstrated this by dying for those God would save, and in order to follow Jesus, we must be willing to follow Him in death.

We can choose to be full of ourselves and die, or we can choose to die to ourselves and be full of Him. This is the only way to have the full and abundant life He provides.

**List two ways God is calling you to die to yourself today:**



Luke 9:23 is one of the most important verses for any follower of Jesus. We will never understand who we are, and truly identify with Jesus, until we understand what this verse means for our lives. When we experience this reality, we can't help but share Jesus, and our identity in Him, with others.

## ACTION POINT



With the introduction of Apple's iPhone 5s and its home button fingerprint scanner, biometrics became a part of everyday life for many Americans.<sup>3</sup> It definitely has its benefits, but many fear there are risks involved with this type of technology. For instance, if someone steals your ID number, you can get a new one, but if someone steals your fingerprint or iris scan, that can't be changed.

One reality of the Christian life is that God looks not at our physical characteristics, but at our hearts. We cannot forge false identification before God; He knows us fully.

➤ **How does this make you feel?**

➤ **Do you ever seek to falsify your identity before others, or are you open and authentic?**



# LIVE IT OUT

**“THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS THE LIFE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST LIVED TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO, LIVED NOW BY HIM IN YOU!”<sup>4</sup>**

—W. IAN THOMAS

## BIBLE READING PLAN



**DAY 1**  
MARK 14:1-11

**DAY 2**  
MARK 14:12-26

**DAY 3**  
MARK 15:1-15

**DAY 4**  
MARK 15:16-32

**DAY 5**  
MARK 15:33-47

**DAY 6**  
MARK 16:1-8

**DAY 7**  
MARK 16:9-19

## ▶ CHRIST

Disciple means one who learns from and follows a teacher. Jesus lived as the perfect example of what it means to live in obedience to the Father, even to the point of death. This week as you read about the life and death of Jesus, make note of the riches and comforts Jesus sacrificed and how He's calling you to reflect those in your life.

### JESUS' SACRIFICES

### MY SACRIFICES

## ▶ COMMUNITY

With your group, discuss one way you can collectively die to self this week. Examples include: overcoming the fear of sharing your faith, refusing to overindulge in video games or social media, or abstaining from language that is disrespectful and destructive. Commit together to living this out and make sure to encourage one another throughout the week.



## ▶ CULTURE

Living sacrificially before a watching world is a powerful witness. What will you, for the sake of the gospel, sacrifice this week?

**FOR A  
FAMILY  
MEMBER:**

**FOR  
SOMEONE  
IN YOUR  
STUDENT  
MINISTRY:**

**FOR AN  
ELDERLY  
MEMBER  
OF YOUR  
CHURCH:**

**FOR A  
LOST  
FRIEND AT  
SCHOOL:**