

# Prayer Ministry Small Group Study Guide

## Lesson 2. Identity

This lesson is designed to increase our understanding that we are created in the image of God, and that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. The way we live and the things we believe determine our active identity. The way we were designed and God's plan for our life is our true identity. Where there is conflict between who we are being and who God designed us to be there is pain. We experience health and wholeness when our active and true identities are aligned. Reconciliation resolves the conflict.

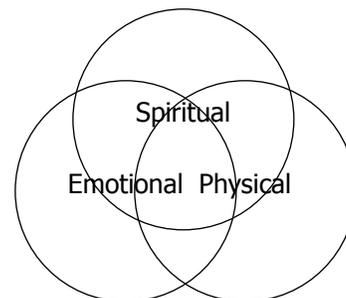
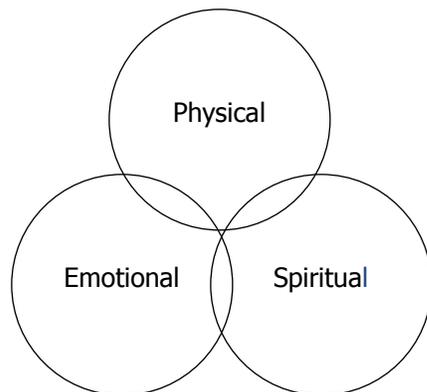
### Instruction

You are who God says you are. God created you on purpose, for a purpose. Your identity is expressed through your design and calling. For instance, Adam and Eve were created with design and purpose. Genesis 1:26 describes their design: "Let us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. And let them have dominion over ... all the earth..." Then in verse 28 their purpose is given: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over ... every living thing that moves on the earth." They were designed with dominion, or authority, and their calling, or purpose, was to multiply and exercise it.

Similarly, in Jeremiah 1:5 God clearly stated his design and purpose: "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." The scripture goes on to say that the Lord put words in Jeremiah's mouth and gave him authority over nations and kingdoms.

Before you were born, God had a plan for your existence. You were created with genetic predispositions and raised into values and strengths. You can discover your sweet spot by understanding your gifts and opportunities from God's perspective. When a person is not living in that sweet spot a whole host of problems arise, leading to distress, discontent, and disease.

The human construct consists of three parts: body, soul and spirit. Each part operates in the physical, emotional and spiritual realms, respectively. The body is the physical container of the person and operates by the five main senses. It is easily measured. The soul is made up of the mind, will and emotions which are the subjective parts of a person. They are unseen. The spirit is the eternal part of a person that interacts between the Holy Spirit and the soul.



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Each of the three realms is distinct, yet overlaps the others. They are completely interrelated so what happens in one realm will ultimately affect the other realms. We can isolate the physical realm, as western scientific method tends to do, but we cannot disconnect it from the emotional and spiritual realms. What happens in the body has an impact on the spirit and soul.

An integrated person recognizes the interrelated nature of the realms and is able to address the root cause of distress, dysfunction and disease. The dis-integrated person tends to look for the source of a problem in just one realm, often missing the true nature of the problem and its cure.

For example, alcoholism can be viewed through the lens of the physical realm. This is the perspective of most doctors, scientists, and rational or logical thinkers. They view the problem of alcohol as rooted in the genetic makeup of a person. The victim inherited the disease from parents, and has a physical inability to resist or effectively process alcohol. They think in terms of genetic markers and the resulting function of the body's systems, such as chemical imbalances or physical dependencies.

The person who views alcoholism through the lens of the physical realm will search for solutions in that same realm. They may require abstinence as a way to eliminate the effects of alcohol, or introduce other drugs to rebalance chemical imbalances, or suggest behavior modification as a way to treat the symptoms.

Alcoholism can be viewed through the lens of the emotional realm. This is the perspective of most counselors and psychologists. They see the problem of alcohol as stemming from the nurture of the individual, brought on by feelings of weakness or traumatic experiences. The victim may have learned to abuse alcohol through a family dynamic, or had been introduced to it by outsiders. They think in terms of dealing with harmful emotions or hateful feelings as the solution to the problem.

The person who views alcoholism through the lens of the emotional realm will search for solutions in that same realm. Typically they will approach the problem by trying to help the victim change his or her circumstances and deal with their feelings and memories of trauma. Talk therapy and techniques for controlling emotional responses are often used to treat the symptoms.

Alcoholism can be viewed through the lens of the spiritual realm. This is the perspective of some pastors or those engaged in deliverance ministries. They see the problem of alcohol as coming from the "demon alcohol" or another unclean spirit. They will try to resolve the alcohol problem by exorcising the demon and establishing spiritual authority over the devil.

Whether a person begins to abuse alcohol because of a genetic disposition, learned behavior at home, or through spiritual oppression, the disease has its effect in all three realms. It may begin with a chemical imbalance in the physical realm that leads to outbursts of anger in the emotional realm and estrangement from God in the spiritual realm. Just as likely, it could begin as a solution to emotional pain that becomes a physical addiction and spiritual burden.

An integrated person sees the interrelated nature of the three realms, but we call a person disintegrated when he or she tends to maintain separation between the realms or completely disregard one of them. For instance, the scientific worldview of western civilization tends to be disintegrated by emphasizing the physical realm and dismissing the

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effects of the spiritual realm altogether. The problem arises when they address the pain only in the realm of their focus. If the real root of the conflict originated in another realm it remain unattended.

Whatever a person regards as his highest authority is the best he can hope for. Consider, for example, a disintegrated woman that suffers from headaches but only treats it through the physical realm. She may place her medical providers as her highest authority, and will apply physical treatments to the pain. If the root of that conflict is in the spiritual realm, it will be unresolved by the treatment plans. Unfortunately, the woman is out of hope when the doctors advise her that there is nothing more they can do. For a gospel example see Mark 5:25-26.

When we deal with issues that seem to defy diagnosis or are resistant to treatment in the physical realm, it is wise to take a new approach from the emotional and spiritual realms. This is particularly the case with autoimmune diseases and allergies.

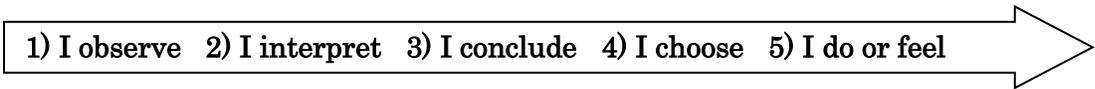
The Holy Spirit can guide a prayer session to the root of the problem in any of the realms, and then healing is able to manifest in all three.

You are what you believe. In other words, your active identity comes out of your paradigm, and what you believe to be true will act as if it is true to you. If you believe you are sickly and frail, then you will experience sickness and frailty. Your active identity will take on those characteristics. If you believe you are rejected then your mind will interpret events and circumstances to confirm rejection. Your active identity will be one of rejection.

How you think and what you believe determines how you view yourself. Your belief system, paradigm, worldview, or grid governs your thoughts and becomes the framework through which you make choices, respond to situations, and forms your identity.

This is what the thought to identity process looks like:

**1) I observe 2) I interpret 3) I conclude 4) I choose 5) I do or feel**



The first step is observation. Your mind receives input primarily through the five physical senses. Observations are objective since they affect all people the same way, and they are value neutral being neither good nor bad.

The next step is interpretation, a process in which the mind personalizes the information by making associations and assessments. The mind sorts out what this means to you and whether a personal response is appropriate.

Then the mind comes to a conclusion. It compares the current information against a frame of reference compiled from things it already believes. Then it either activates a response previously assigned to that kind of information, or goes through a strenuous process of creating a new response. The mind is resistant to change because of the energy required to complete the thought process.

The next step is an act of will. You choose how to act and feel based on the conclusion that has been drawn. The only way to change the way a person acts or feels is to adjust the paradigm. This is the process we call “renewing the mind.” When a person renews his or her mind with truth then true freedom is expressed in the way he or she can act and feel.

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This process of mind renewal reconciles a person's active identity with his true identity. The paradigm of the active identity must be changed so that it matches God's truth. We accomplish this by identifying and interrogating beliefs. It is the practical expression of "taking every thought captive" as commanded in 2 Corinthians 10:5.

We can discover an errant belief by testing the way we act or feel. Our true identity, the way God designed us to be, is our pure personality. If our actions or emotions are out of character for our pure personality then we know an errant belief is polluting the paradigm.

Here are some classic questions for interrogation:

- **Who are you?** Identify and clarify the action, emotion, or belief. It is helpful to assign a name for the thing that is being questioned. Do not accept vague answers, but drill down to a precise description. You can then use that name to focus the investigation.
- **Where are you from?** Discover the source of the action, emotion, or belief. If you know how it was introduced you can devise an effective strategy for addressing it.
- **What is your mission?** Learn the purpose of the action, emotion, or belief. In most cases it exists for self-preservation, which is to protect the active identity. Effective mind renewal will solve that purpose, but do so God's way.

Mind renewal happens when we take a thought or belief captive to obey Christ. This is done through prayer by simply confessing the thought or belief as one that you have held as true, then ask God to reveal His truth to you in the matter. He will respond with a message in your heart, and that new truth will overtake your mind.

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## Exercise: Identity

Watch Bart's video testimony ([www.mastersmindministry.org](http://www.mastersmindministry.org)) found on the Testimonials link. Read Psalm 139:13-16 and consider who God says you are. Ask Him in prayer about your design and purpose: Lord, who do You see me as?

Interrogate an action or feeling to discover an errant belief. Ask God to reveal a behavior or emotion that represents a pain you feel in any of the three realms. Write that action or feeling on the left side of the table below. Be specific in what you name it. (Who are you? Where did you come from? What is your purpose?).

What do you believe to be true about yourself that causes you to act or feel this way? Ask God in prayer, and listen for Him to reveal the errant belief. Write it down on the right side of the table below.

I Feel / Behave	I Believe

Interrogate the errant belief (Who are you? Where did you come from? What is your purpose?). Invite God to reveal His truth to take its place. You can use a simple prayer like this one:

*Dear Lord, I recognize this feeling or behavior \_\_\_\_\_ . I feel or act this way because I believe \_\_\_\_\_ to be true. Please show me how I came to believe this... (listen and confirm).*

*Now that you have called this to my mind, please give me Your truth... (listen and confirm) I accept Your truth and ask You to renew my mind with it. Amen.*

## Sharing: Identity

Choose a presenting symptom (alcoholism, depression, fear, addiction, etc)

- Describe it from the perspective of the physical realm
- Describe it from the perspective of the emotional realm
- Describe it from the perspective of the spiritual realm

Share your answers to these questions in your small group:

- What is your primary realm? In other words, which realm is your default for understanding or explaining things?
- How did your thinking change with each lens shift of the realms?
- What were you able to communicate through the lens of the spiritual realm that was difficult to communicate through the physical or emotional realms?
- When is it beneficial to talk with another in terms of their primary realm?
- How can communication be enhanced by intentionally using a non-primary realm?
- How have you seen integration of the realms provide healing to the whole person?

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### **Caring: Identity**

Put one sheet of paper on a table for each person in your group and label it with their name. Spend a little time praying silently for each person, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal a spiritual gift or character trait He has given him or her. When you are ready, write that gift or trait on the appropriate paper. Distribute the pages to their owners.