

Lesson Plan – Identity

Text: John 2:1-11
Age group: JH and SH
Group size: 28 JH; 30 SH
Time: 30 min

Learning Goals

1. Identify key concepts from John 2:1-11.
2. Consider aspects of Jesus' identity.
3. Apply scripture to own lives by engaging considerations of own identity.

Materials Required

- Deep Blue Kid's Bible (or similar)
- Thumbprint print outs
- Cones or other markers for "I Love My Neighbor" game
- Optional: music to play during thumbprint activity

Session Outline

Gathering activities

- **I Love My Neighbor (7 min)** – Have students stand in a circle. Quickly go around the circle and say names. Each student should be standing at a cone or similar marker. One student is in the middle (which means you have one less marker than players). The person standing in the center of the circle begins the game by saying "I love my neighbor, especially my neighbor who..." S/he completes the sentence with a piece of information that is true for him/her. As soon as s/he is finished with the statement, everyone (including the person in the center) who this applies to moves from their cone to an empty cone that is not right next to them. The person who remains in the middle begins a second round of the game.

Exploration activities

- **Read scripture (3 min)** – Have students collectively read John 2:1-11 by passing a bible around. The first student should read the first paragraph, and then pass to their left. Continue reading paragraphs and passing the bible around the circle until the entire passage is read.
- **Discuss identity markers (7 min)** – Engage students in a discussion about the scripture with the following questions:
 - What are some of the most important features of this story?

- Why is this story in the Bible? (looking for: Jesus' first miracle; beginning of his ministry; got people to start believing in him – miracles were an important feature of Jesus' identity)
 - What are other aspects of Jesus' identity?
 - What about Montreat? What are things here that tell you about what Montreat is?
- **I Am Thumbbody (8 min)** – Now we are going to transition into looking at our own identities. No two people are alike. No two thumbprints are alike. No matter how much we might act or sound or look like our siblings – even twins – we are made of different cells, DNA and thumbprints, too. Recognizing that we are unique, and celebrating our differences (as well as our similarities), tell students that we're going to reflect on our own personal identities for a bit. Hand out copies of the thumbprint print out. Invite everyone to fill in their thumbprint with words, phrases, or drawings of what makes them uniquely them. Encourage everyone to completely fill the print with unique qualities.

Closing activities

- **Closing prayer (3 min)** – Ask everyone to pick three words total from their print page to share for closing. Standing in a circle, open with a brief word of prayer then have everyone take turns sharing only his or her three words. As the Leader, close the prayer when the whole circle has shared their words.

Lesson Plan – Identity Part 2

Text: John 2:1-11
Age group: JH and SH
Group size: 28 JH; 30 SH
Time: 30 min

Learning Goals

1. Identify key concepts from John 2:1-11 around Jesus’s identity.
2. Engage students in application of scripture to their own lives.

Materials Required

- Deep Blue Kid’s Bible
- Tape
- Small pieces of paper
- Markers

Session Outline

Gathering activities

- **Name Origins (5 min)** – Ask participants to explain what their name means (if anything) and where it comes from to two different people in the group. Explain that if they don’t know the origin of their name, they can make up something memorable to share about what they think might be the origin of their name. You should turn to the person on your right to introduce yourself as an example for the group. Once each person has shared with two people, seek a few volunteers who would be willing to introduce someone else to the larger group and to explain what their name means and where it comes from.

Exploration activities

Identities (15 min) – Ask students to remind you what we talked about last time. (Bible story: Jesus turning water into wine, which helped establish his identity as Son of Man. Overall theme: personal identities. If necessary, re-read John 2:1-11) So we talked about our personal identities. But in our society we aren’t the only ones who identify ourselves, right? In what ways does society identify people? (goal: to get to the idea of labeling people) We’re going to move past our own identities to talk more on a societal level.

Split the group up into 2 (SH) or 3 (JH) small groups.

Mark out a box on the ground with tape. The box represents what we define as normal or valuable or wanted and everything in the box is the social norm. Everything outside of the box is considered against the “social norm.” Give each person in the group a small slip of paper.

1. Ask about social norm. What does social norm mean?
2. Ask students to write a label they've heard someone else use or maybe they've used themselves on their slip of paper. If they need some prompting, have them do some out loud brainstorming of labels they've heard used in their school or church or other settings.
3. One at a time, invite students to place the words either inside the box because it is part of the social norm or outside the box because it goes against the social norm. Have the group decide together where a word belongs. Some might belong on the line of the box.

Then ask:

5. Why do we label people?
6. How do you think that makes people feel? How has being labeled made you feel?
7. How do you think God feels about human labeling?

To think about this more, tell students that we're now going to read a different piece of scripture.

Have participants read Isaiah 62:1-5 to the group one paragraph at a time (either from an International Children's Bible or from this) :

1 Because I love Jerusalem, I will continue to speak for her.

For Jerusalem's sake I will not stop speaking.

I will speak until her goodness shines like a bright light.

I will speak until her salvation burns bright like a flame.

2 Jerusalem, the nations will see your goodness.

All kings will see your honor.

Then you will have a new name.

The Lord himself will give you that new name.

3 You will be like a beautiful crown in the Lord's hand.

You will be like a king's crown in your God's hand.

4 You will never again be called the People that God Left.

Your land will never again be called the Land that God Destroyed.

You will be called the People God Loves.

Your land will be called the Bride of God.

This is because the Lord loves you.

And your land will belong to him as a bride belongs to her husband.

5 As a young man marries a woman,

so your children will marry your land.

As a man is very happy about his new wife,

so your God will be happy with you.

Questions:

1. What do you think this text means in terms of what we just discussed?
2. Any new thoughts about what God might call us to do about human labeling?
3. What do you think is the most important label we can give people is? (Child of God!)

Last time, we talked about the fact that all of us are made in God's image, and yet are individually unique. An image to think about: The box is solid, but our goal is to break it and provide space for all people (rip up some of the tape). Sometimes we are given labels that we don't get to choose and sometimes we place labels on people that they don't get to choose. We may forget about their names and who they are as a person and that we are all equal. But God asks us to call each other by name.

Another take: Isaiah lists several hurting names God's people have been called and the loving names God calls them. Think about the names people get called or the labels that are attached to them. You are dumb, silly, clumsy, weird... You can't sing, play soccer, do math, etc. ... The assumption is that not only are you that way now, but you will probably never be any different. You are hopeless. When we are called such names we can start believing them. Isaiah insists that we must not do this. Even when we look less than wonderful, God is at work in us making us into the amazing people God created us to be. We are to think about what God wants for us not the names we get called now. There is hope.

Closing activities

- Closing prayer (1 min) – Ask if someone would be willing to pray for the group.