PWOC

Protestant Women of the Chapel

WORKSHOP: IDENTITY: Who I am in Christ

by Stefanie Cole

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

RELEVANCE: It is vital for us, as Christians, to truly know and believe who we are in Christ. We may often remind and encourage others of who Christ created *them* to be, but it's harder to apply these truths to ourselves- it's time to change that mentality based on the truth of who we are in Him. This workshop serves as a reminder, or possibly a first-time realization, that we are more than who we believe ourselves to be when we belong to Christ.

INTRO: Take a Selfie!

- **Psalm 139:14** (NIV) *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful,* ***I know that full well****. (Emphasis added)*

- **Ephesians 2:10** *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

POINT 1: How I See Myself

Our perception of ourselves and the self-talk that we listen to impacts our thoughts, responses, and overall life.

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ACTIVITY 1: Name Tag Models

- **What are some negative terms that you might use to describe yourself?**

- **What's a belief that may dictate your actions?** For example, "I'm not a good mom."

- **What is it that you think defines your worth? What determines if you do or do not have value?** For example, maybe a *college degree* is a sign of your worth. Or maybe *a pristine home*.

POINT 2: How I See Others

There are several quotes about first impressions:

- "First impressions last."
- "You'll never have a second chance to make a good first impression."
- "How you present yourself, is how people first view you. What are you showcasing?" – Mama Zara
- "Almost everyone will make a good first impression, but only a few will make a good lasting impression." – Sonya Parker
- "It takes a moment to judge someone, but a lifetime to understand them." – Writings by Tina Ng
- "It's pretty simple, pretty obvious: that people's first impressions of [others] are a really big mistake." – Vincent D'Onofrio

When we form friendships, or begin to understand people better, baggage will likely be exposed. An unsafe friend will not treat this information carefully and may cause additional emotional baggage. A safe friend will use the information to begin to gain insight and understanding of another's personality, their experiences, and will begin to comprehend why an individual may respond the way that they do. A safe friend will see the heart and will honor it by encouraging them to become who God created them to be.

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Consider these questions when it comes to our view of others.

- **What struggles are common in friendships/relationships?**
- **Does social media play a role in your thoughts toward others?**
- **Are you in a comparison role with someone else who likely has no idea you're comparing yourself to them?**
- **Do you criticize others' strengths when it's an area of weakness for you?**
- **Do you find it easier to encourage others when they feel weak or lost, but can't necessarily do that for yourself? Why do you think that is?**

ACTIVITY 2: What would you say?

We are going to look at some real-life scenarios that could happen and some possible responses to them. For each scenario, work in a group of no more than 4 to answer the following questions:

- What would you say to your friend in this situation?
- Would you encourage her or would you give her advice on how to fix her problems?

Scenario #1: Your friend comes to you feeling defeated as a mom. She tells you she feels like a failure because her kids aren't as smart as other kids, matter of fact, her kids are always a mess and are wild. The other moms she sees look so put together with well-behaved children that excel at so much.

Scenario #2: Your friend starts bashing her husband. He never picks up after himself, he works all of the time, and he comes home late. When he gets home he doesn't help around the house because he's exhausted after working all day. She feels resentful that he gets to come home and relax and she doesn't get a break because she's picking up the slack at home after a full day too.

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Scenario #3: Your friend leads a study at PWOC, but she comes to you doubting her abilities and spiritual maturity. She tells you she feels unqualified to teach a study when she feels like she's not very far in her walk with the Lord.

Scenario #4: You go walking with your friend one evening and she begins to pour out her contempt toward another sister in your PWOC body. She's annoyed with how this lady can lead so well, keep her house clean and presentable, can shuffle her kids to all of their activities, and has the "right" answer for everything. Your friend sees this lady's life as completely put together and wants her life to be as perfect as this lady.

Read this quote and mark what stands out to you:

> *The degree to which I am at peace with myself- embracing who I am in Christ, is often the degree to which I am at peace with others- in my words, in my actions, in my thoughts. Every person I encounter, no matter their behavior, is made in the image of God and deserves to be treated as such. We all fall equally short of the glory of God and yet we are all equally loved by Him. Do we truly believe this?*
>
> *We tend to build our hierarchies, deciding who is better than whom, but at our best, we are sinners saved by grace. This is the great equalizer- and there is tremendous freedom in living life under this umbrella of truth. I am dearly loved as I am. You are dearly loved as you are. I can extend God's love to you because He lavishes His love on me, on both of us.* ~ Julie McCammon

POINT 3: How God Sees Me!

- **Hebrews 4:12** *For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

God desires to walk with us and to commune with us; after all, we are His creation, His workmanship! We see this example in Genesis, from the very beginning, with the first human beings, Adam and Eve, in perfect relationship with each other and with their Creator.

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- **Genesis 1:26a and 1:27** *Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness…So, God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

- **Genesis 2:25** *Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.*

Jesus Christ coming for us and dying in our place was always Plan A. He paid the price for our sin and covered over our shame.

None of our failures, none of our struggles, not even our thoughts surprise Him. He knows us fully, as if we are naked before Him, yet He loves us completely.

- **Hebrews 4:13** *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

If we accept God's gift of grace to us, then our hearts can rest. When God the Father looks at us, He sees the righteousness of Christ. It's not about me- what I have done, what I have accomplished, how I have failed- It's about Christ whose work is complete.

- **Romans 5: 8** *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

In our sin, while we were sinning, He died for us, giving us eternal life.

- **Romans 10: 9-13** *If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, 'Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.' For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'*

How do we realign our thoughts to match who God says we are:

- **First** of all, prayer. Pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal when negative thoughts begin to creep in so that you can stop them in their tracks. Ask Him to bring a Scripture to mind that counteracts your negative thoughts.
- **Second** of all, choose to talk to yourself in a positive manner. We must begin to replace our negative thoughts with positive words, especially with truth straight from Scripture! Those lies need to fall out of our thought patterns as truth takes its rightful place there instead.

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- **Third**, stop "shoulding" all over yourself! Stop worrying about what you should've done, and start locking your eyes on Jesus and looking to Him for your worth, for your value, for the truth of *who you are* and *whose you are.* He's your meter, He's your foundation, He's your guide.

ACTIVITY 3: **Who Am I Scriptures**

Self Reflection: Look at "**Who Am I?**" in the Appendix. Read through and mark the verses you *know to be true* for you right now, today.

APPLY IT TO LIFE:

Respond: Find a space to be with the Lord where these words can sink in. Allow Him to envelop you in His arms as you listen to this song. *Words are printed on the following page.*

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Come Out of Hiding

by Steffany Gretzinger

Come out of hiding you're safe here with Me
There's no need to cover what I already see
You've got your reasons but I hold your peace
You've been on lockdown and I hold the key

'Cause I loved you before you knew what was love
And I saw it all, still I chose the cross
And you were the one that I was thinking of
When I rose from the grave
Now rid of the shackles, my victory's yours
I tore the veil for you to come close
There's no reason to stand at a distance anymore
You're not far from home

I'll be your lighthouse when you're lost at sea
And I will illuminate everything
No need to be frightened by intimacy
Just throw off your fear and come running to Me

And oh as you run what hindered love
Will only become part of the story

Baby you're almost home now
Please don't quit now
You're almost home to Me

Out of Hiding lyrics © Bethel Music Dba Bethel Music Publishing

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Appendix: Who am I?

God's smile is upon ME and I light up His face as much as anyone has ever lit up a lover's face.

I am God's child (John 1:12). **I have been justified** (Romans 5:1). **I am Christ's friend** (John 15:15). **I belong to God** (1 Corinthians 6:20). **I am a member of Christ's Body** (1 Corinthians 12:27). **I have been established, anointed and sealed by God** (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). **I am confident that God will perfect the work He has begun in me** (Philippians 1:6). **I am a citizen of heaven** (Philippians 3:20). **I am hidden with Christ in** God (Colossians 3:3). **I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-discipline** (2 Timothy 1:7). **I have purpose; I have hope; I am included** (Ephesians 1:9, 12, 13, 3:11). **I have been chosen and God desires me to bear fruit** (John 15:1, 5). **I am God's coworker** (2 Corinthians 6:1). **I am a minister of reconciliation** (2 Corinthians 5:17-20). **I am alive with Christ** (Ephesians 2:5). **I am raised up with Christ** (Ephesians 2:6, Colossians 2:12). **I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realms** (Ephesians 2:6). **I have been shown the incomparable riches of God's grace** (Ephesians 2:7). **I am God's workmanship** (Ephesians 2:10). **I have been brought near to God through Christ's blood** (Ephesians 2:13). **I have peace** (Ephesians 2:14). **I have access to the Father** (Ephesians 2:18). **I am a member of God's household** (Ephesians 2:19). **I am secure** (Ephesians 2:20). **I am a holy temple** (Ephesians 2:21; 1 Corinthians 6:19). **I am a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit** (Ephesians 2:22). **I share in the promise of Christ Jesus** (Ephesians 3:6). **God's power works through me** (Ephesians 3:7). **I can approach God with freedom and confidence** (Ephesians 3:12). **I know there is a purpose for my sufferings** (Ephesians 3:13). **I am completed by God** (Ephesians 3:19). **I can bring glory to God** (Ephesians 3:21). **I have been called** (Ephesians 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:9). **I am a light to others, and can exhibit goodness, righteousness and truth** (Ephesians 5:8-9). **I can honor God through marriage** (Ephesians 5:22-33). **I can parent our children with composure** (Ephesians 6:4). **I can be strong** (Ephesians 6:10). **I have God's power** (Ephesians 6:10). **I can stand firm in the day of evil** (Ephesians 6:13). **I am dead to sin** (Romans 1:12). **I am not alone** (Hebrews 13:5). **I am growing** (Colossians 2:7). **I am His disciple** (John 13:15). **I am prayed for by Jesus Christ** (John 17:20-23). **I am not in want** (Philippians 4:19). **I possess the mind of Christ** (1 Corinthians 2:16). **My heart and mind are protected with God's peace** (Philippians 4:7). **I am chosen and dearly loved** (Colossians 3:12). **I am blameless** (1 Corinthians 1:8). **I am set free** (Romans 8:2, John 8:32). **I am a light in the world** (Matthew 5:14). **I am more than a conqueror** (Romans 8:37). **I am the righteousness of God** (2 Corinthians 5:21). **I am safe** (1 John 5:18). **I am part of God's kingdom** (Revelation 1:6). **I am not helpless** (Philippians 4:13). **I am overcoming** (1 John 4:4). **I am persevering** (Philippians 3:14). **I am protected** (John 10:28). **I am a new creation** (2 Corinthians 5:17). **I am qualified to share in His inheritance** (Colossians 1:12). **I am victorious** (1 Corinthians 15:57). **I am a sheep of His pasture. Therefore, I have everything I need** (Psalm 23 & 100).

God rejoices over ME with gladness, He will quiet me with His love, He will exult over me with singing.
Zephaniah 3:17

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PWOC

Protestant Women of the Chapel

Materials:
-Name tags, marker
-Trash can
-White board/chart paper, markers
-Means to play a song

WORKSHOP: IDENTITY: Who I am in Christ

by Stefanie Cole

LEADER'S GUIDE

RELEVANCE: It is vital for us, as Christians, to truly know and believe who we are in Christ. We may often remind and encourage others of who Christ created *them* to be, but it's harder to apply these truths to ourselves- it's time to change that mentality based on the truth of who we are in Him. This workshop serves as a reminder, or possibly a first-time realization, that we are more than who we believe ourselves to be when we belong to Christ.

CONTEXT: This workshop would serve well as a devotion, as a board training, for a workshop, or the topic could be expanded for a retreat theme.

TIME: 70 minutes

HOOK YOUR AUDIENCE: (5 minutes)

Today we will explore who we really are, and what it means when we say we are a child of the King! How do I see myself? How do I see others? How does God see me?

Note to Trainer: This workshop is bound to press your participants outside of their comfort zone, which will be a good thing, if done carefully. The first activity below will be a challenge to some. Keep the atmosphere positive. Encourage everyone to participate but be careful not to be too forceful. Let your participants set their own boundaries. Your job is to create an environment in which they feel welcome, valued and safe.

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The first thing I want you to do is take out your cell phone and take a selfie. Even if you hate photos of yourself, take it, please! You don't have to show anyone and if you must, you can delete it when you leave today. *(Give your participants a few moments to complete this task. If there are ladies who do not have phones, or are reluctant to participate, encourage them to team up with someone else, but don't pressure them. After a minute or two, give the group further instructions.)* Take a look at your picture. Think about how you look in the selfie in comparison to how others see you- how you actually look. Often, a selfie gives us a mirror image of ourselves. If you have writing on your shirt, you may notice it is backwards. If your hair parts on the left, you may notice it parts on the right in your selfie.

While you're looking at your selfie, listen to these verses:

- **Psalm 139:14** (NIV) *I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful,* ***I know that full well****. (Emphasis added)*
  Without raising your hand, how many of you today, can confidently say that you *know full well you are wonderfully made?!*

- **Ephesians 2:10** *For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

You are His *workmanship*, His *work of art*; *skillfully and artfully created* in Christ. Think about what that means! Do you struggle with accepting this for yourself? Do you see this when you look at your selfie? *(Maybe pause to allow a general consensus here.)*

MAKE YOUR POINT 1: **How I See Myself** (5 minutes)

We can often have a misconstrued view of ourselves, can't we? We tend to be harder on ourselves, more critical of ourselves, and more negative to ourselves than we are to others. I want you to think for a minute about what you believe to be true of yourself. This is likely not an easy or comfortable place to go, but it's necessary to recognize who we tell ourselves we are and what we believe about ourselves.

> *Note to Trainer: Think about your own life experiences and insert your own personal example here. Showing some vulnerability with your participants will go a long way towards building trust with them and creating a safe place.*

There was a season in my life where I found myself flailing. Three months after I had given birth to our third child, my husband came home from deployment. We packed up our house and moved across the country to a new duty station where my husband would

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be attending school. As it turned out, he was so immersed in his studies that we only saw him for a few minutes during a few meal times each week. Among other life obligations, I began to really question my purpose in life and really truly believed that I was an utter failure at this mom and wife thing. I saw no value in what I brought to our home or to our community and began down a dark path of wanting to leave my family behind. Thankfully, the Lord brought a wonderful Christian counselor into my life, and as a last-ditch effort, I began meeting with her, hoping for some help in how to escape this feeling of drowning in life. I quickly realized that my self-perception and the projections I put on others- in how I perceived they felt about me- were completely wrong. This counselor continually pointed me back to Christ and exposed the lies I was telling myself. She made me realize that my perception was all about *me*, it was all about what I could (or really couldn't) bring to the table, in life. I'm hoping to remind each of you of the truth today as well, so that you can find the freedom in Christ from lies you believe about yourself.

ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS 1: **Name Tag Models** (10 minutes)

Our perception of ourselves and the self-talk that we listen to impacts our thoughts, responses, and overall life. Let's think about the story I just shared with you. What were some of the thoughts I was telling myself? What were lies I believed to be true? Give me a word or a few words to represent a thought I believed about myself. *(Allow your participants to come up with some answers. Some possibilities would be: purposeless, failure, bad mom, bad wife, no value, nothing to offer… As each answer is given, write it on a name tag and stick it to yourself.)*

Look at me *(gesture to the name tags)* is this how you perceive me? Are these things true of me? *(Allow a general response.)* Do you think these things were true of me at the time I completely believed them to be true? *(Allow a general response.)*

How about you? Let's brainstorm some things that we have believed to be true about ourselves. I need some Name Tag Models to come up and join me *(choose three volunteers to join you up front).*

Note to Trainer: The workshop writer, Stefanie Cole, used her tween/teen daughters and one of their friends as her Name Tag Models. The Participants noted that it was particularly powerful to see the negative words and statements adhered to those beautiful young ladies. It emphasized the offensiveness of the lies we embrace. All the adults in the room were motivated to offer protection and encouragement for the girls, which is exactly what we need to do for ourselves and our peers, based on the truth of who we are in Christ.

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- **What are some negative terms that you might use to describe yourself?** *(Examples: ugly, fat, skinny, worthless, stupid… Write each answer on a name tag and hand it to Name Tag Model #1 to stick on herself.)*

- **What's a belief that may dictate your actions?** For example, "I'm not a good mom." *(Write each answer on a name tag for Name Tag Model #2. You can choose someone else to write on the name tags if you'd like to involve another volunteer. Some other possible answers for this question may be: "I'm a poor leader," "I am incapable of being forgiven," "I deserve what I get," "I'm not good enough.")*

- **What is it that you think defines your worth? What determines if you do or do not have value?** For example, maybe a *college degree* is a sign of your worth. Or maybe *a pristine home*. What else might you use as a measure to assign or decline value? *(Write each answer on a name tag for Name Tag Model #3. Some other answers for this category may be: certifications, awards, societal/military status, having it all together, well-behaved children…)*

Let's look at our name tag models. How does it make you feel to see these words attached to them? Let's look at Name Tag Model #1. She has the words *(read all of the words posted on Model #1).* Are you comfortable with these words attached to our friend? *(Allow a general response.)* Let's move on to Name Tag Model #2 *(repeat the process).* And last but not least, Name Tag Model #3 *(repeat the process).* How does this make you feel to see these words attached to our friends? *(Allow responses. There should be a pretty universal repulsion in the room.)* What about you? Are you OK with these words or phrases being attached to you? Would the people sitting next to you be OK with these words attached to you? Ask them; see what they say *(give them a moment to do so)*. Were they OK with these words being attached to you? *(No.)* What should I do with the words that are attached to my friends here? *(The consensus should be to remove them and throw them away. Allow your Name Tag Models to pull off their labels and throw them in the trash before taking their seats. You may want to leave your name tag notes on, as it will tie into the end of the workshop).*

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MAKE YOUR POINT 2: **How I See Others** (15 minutes)

When you first meet someone, what is it that you notice about them right off the bat? *(Allow for responses- hair style, eye color, style of clothing, body language, how they speak to you, etc.)*

There are several quotes about first impressions:

- "First impressions last."
- "You'll never have a second chance to make a good first impression."
- "How you present yourself, is how people first view you. What are you showcasing?" – Mama Zara
- "Almost everyone will make a good first impression, but only a few will make a good lasting impression." – Sonya Parker
- "It takes a moment to judge someone, but a lifetime to understand them." – Writings by Tina Ng
- "It's pretty simple, pretty obvious: that people's first impressions of [others] are a really big mistake." – Vincent D'Onofrio

Do you agree with any of these? What has life taught you about meeting people? *(Allow feedback.)* I believe that first impressions are not always accurate. First impressions can be nerve-wracking, persuaded by the social setting, clouded by emotional baggage, dripping with manners, etc. What happens when we get to really know people though?

When we form friendships, or begin to understand people better, baggage will likely be exposed. An unsafe friend will not treat this information carefully and may cause additional emotional baggage. A safe friend will use the information to begin to gain insight and understanding of another's personality, their experiences, and will begin to comprehend why an individual may respond the way that they do. A safe friend will see the heart and will honor it by encouraging them to become who God created them to be.

I want us to consider these questions when it comes to our view of others.

- **What struggles are common in friendships/relationships?** Let's name a few. *(Allow responses. You may want to record these on a white board or poster paper. Take your time on this question. The remaining questions below are mostly yes/no answers, so the meat of the discussion will be in answers to this question.)*

> *Note to Trainer: Be sure to acknowledge each participant as they respond. Thank them for their answer; if possible, build on their idea. If recording on white board/chart paper, try to use their exact wording, which is a sign of respect. Affirm your participants as much as possible- in doing so, you are modeling some of the elements that you are trying to get across in this workshop- like seeing yourself and others as Christ sees you/them.*

- **Does social media play a role in your thoughts toward others?**
- **Are you in a comparison role with someone else who likely has no idea you're comparing yourself to them?**
- **Do you criticize others' strengths when it's an area of weakness for you?**
- **Do you find it easier to encourage others when they feel weak or lost, but can't necessarily do that for yourself? Why do you think that is?** *(Allow responses. You may have opposing answers, which is just fine.)*

I often try to see others with God's eyes, but that's not always easy. I can play the comparison game easily, especially when on Facebook (or let's be honest, in real life too) when it looks like individuals have everything all together and their family life is picturesque. Even here at PWOC, I may see how one lady leads, and if I'm not careful, I may begin to put her on a pedestal, thinking she's more holy than I am and longing to be her instead of being who God created me to be and allowing Him to continue to shape me.

ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS 2: **What would you say?** (15 minutes)

We are going to look at some real-life scenarios that could happen and some possible responses to them:

Scenario #1: Your friend comes to you feeling defeated as a mom. She tells you she feels like a failure because her kids aren't as smart as other kids, matter of fact, her kids are always a mess and are wild. The other moms she sees look so put together with well-behaved children that excel at so much.

Scenario #2: Your friend starts bashing her husband. He never picks up after himself, he works all of the time, and he comes home late. When he gets home he doesn't help around the house because he's exhausted after working all day. She feels resentful that he gets to come home and relax and she doesn't get a break because she's picking up the slack at home after a full day too.

Scenario #3: Your friend leads a study at PWOC, but she comes to you doubting her abilities and spiritual maturity. She tells you she feels unqualified to teach a study when she feels like she's not very far in her walk with the Lord.

Scenario #4: You go walking with your friend one evening and she begins to pour out her contempt toward another sister in your PWOC body. She's annoyed with how this lady can lead so well, keep her house clean and presentable, can shuffle her kids to all

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of their activities, and has the "right" answer for everything. Your friend sees this lady's life as completely put together and wants her life to be as perfect as this lady.

Response for every scenario:

- **What would you say to your friend in this situation?**
- **Would you encourage her or would you give her advice on how to fix her problems?**

To wrap up our thoughts on how we interact with others, read this quote and mark what stands out to you: *(Allow your Participants to share their findings.)*

> *The degree to which I am at peace with myself- embracing who I am in Christ, is often the degree to which I am at peace with others- in my words, in my actions, in my thoughts. Every person I encounter, no matter their behavior, is made in the image of God and deserves to be treated as such. We all fall equally short of the glory of God and yet we are all equally loved by Him. Do we truly believe this?*
> *We tend to build our hierarchies, deciding who is better than whom, but at our best, we are sinners saved by grace. This is the great equalizer- and there is tremendous freedom in living life under this umbrella of truth. I am dearly loved as I am. You are dearly loved as you are. I can extend God's love to you because He lavishes His love on me…on both of us.* ~ Julie McCammon

MAKE YOUR POINT 3: **How God Sees Me** (10 minutes)

So, who am I, truly? We know that we often can uplift others easier than we can ourselves, that our eyes are often blinded to who God made us to be. But, there is hope! We can reprogram our thinking to fully accept and believe that we are who the Bible says we are- that we are wonderfully made and that we are His workmanship. We need to align our self-perception with God's perspective.

I think one of the best places to turn to refocus our self-perception is the Word of God.

- **Hebrews 4:12** *For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

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We see countless examples of God using people that are broken, disobedient, disloyal, etc. Who do you think of from the Bible that fits this bill of imperfect people being used by a perfect God to lead and reach others? *(Wait for examples: Adam & Eve, Moses, David, Esther, Peter, etc.)*

God desires to walk with us and to commune with us; after all, we are His creation, His workmanship! We see this example in Genesis, from the very beginning, with the first human beings, Adam and Eve, in perfect relationship with each other and with their Creator.

- **Genesis 1:26a and 1:27** *Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness…So, God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

- **Genesis 2:25** *Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.*

It seems the Creator made it a practice to physically walk in the Garden (Gen. 3:8), to walk in personal relationship with Adam and Eve, in the cool of the day. He desired to be with His creation. God's voice calling out to Adam is haunting, "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9). They were hiding in shame because they had sinned and realized their vulnerabilities and faults; they saw their nakedness. God, in His mercy, clothed them.

God is sovereign; He knew that Adam and Eve would fall for the devil's schemes, and that there would have to be a sacrifice for their sins. The Fall simply put God's plan of the ultimate Sacrifice in motion. Jesus Christ coming for us and dying in our place was always Plan A. He paid the price for our sin and covered over our shame. It's as if He puts His finger under our chin to lift our eyes up to meet His, and all we see there is Love. No condemnation, no disappointment, just Love. The barrier between Creator and creation is gone, and oh how He longs to walk with us again!

Think back to the examples we just gave of imperfect people used in God's perfect plan. God knew when and how each of these leaders would falter and show their imperfections. Jesus called Peter out for betrayal before Peter even betrayed Him! God knows, and nothing surprises Him! Let that sink in for a moment…nothing surprises God! None of our failures, none of our struggles, not even our thoughts surprise Him. He knows us fully, as if we are naked before Him, yet He loves us completely.

- **Hebrews 4:13** *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.*

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God created us in His image and longs for us to rest in His love and grace. He knows our failures and has prepared a way for us to still commune with Him, through Christ, who gave His life for us on the cross. If we accept God's gift of grace to us, then our hearts can rest. When God the Father looks at us, He sees the righteousness of Christ. It's not about me- what I have done, what I have accomplished, how I have failed- It's about Christ whose work is complete. Suffice it to say that God has an entirely different opinion of me than I have of myself!

- **Romans 5:8** *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

In our sin, while we were sinning, He died for us, giving us eternal life.

- **Romans 10:9-13** *If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. As Scripture says, 'Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.' For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile – the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'*

So, we've seen proof that God loves us enough and desires a relationship with us in the fact that He created us, He sent His Son to die for us and desires for us to walk with Him.

I want to give you a few tools to help you along in this journey.

First of all, prayer. Pray for the Holy Spirit to soften your heart towards your own self. Pray that He would reveal when negative thoughts begin to creep in so that you can stop them in their tracks. Ask Him to bring a Scripture to mind that counteracts your negative thoughts.

Second of all, choose to talk to yourself in a positive manner. Speak these verses over yourself. Stand in front of a mirror and say some of these verses to yourself, using your name, looking yourself in the eyes. No, this is not easy, it's not comfortable, it might feel a little weird, but it helps and it will work! In moments of negative self-talk or when you catch yourself criticizing others, stop, take a deep breath, and think of what you'd say to someone else if they were the ones ripping themselves apart in front of you. How would you encourage your friend and remind her of the new creation she is- that she is a holy temple, that she has God's power? Then, say those things to yourself, because girl, they're true for you too!

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Third, stop "shoulding" all over yourself!

- "I should've taken more classes in this area so I could be more knowledgeable!"
- "I should've read more of my Bible so I can keep up with these other ladies!"
- "I should've signed my kids up for more ballet, gymnastics, soccer, etc."
- "I should've exercised more so I wouldn't have gained this weight!"
- "I should've stayed up late and cleaned the house so it would be spotless."
- "I should've hired a decorator so my house is more appealing."

Let me give you some advice! Stop "shoulding" all over yourself! Stop setting expectations on yourself that aren't meant for you. Stop trying to live up to standards that you've put on yourself, based on your perceptions of others. Stop worrying about what you should've done, and start locking your eyes on Jesus and looking to Him for your worth, for your value, for the truth of *who you are* and *whose you are.* He's your meter, He's your foundation, He's your guide.

We must begin to replace our negative thoughts with positive words, especially with truth straight from Scripture! Those lies need to fall out of our thought patterns as truth takes its rightful place there instead- Much like the post-it notes have fallen off as we've talked.

Help me replace some of these lies with truth from God's Word. *(Choose one of your Post-its to replace. Pull it off and ask your participants what Scripture says. For example, if one of your Post-its says,* ***failure****, the counter for it could be that in Christ you are a* ***new creation****.*

ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS 3: **Who Am I Scriptures** (5 minutes)

We can reprogram our thinking, but first we need to assess what we believe and know to be true about ourselves. Then, we'll work on aligning our thoughts with Scripture.

In the Appendix, you'll find a ton of verses about our identity in Christ, but they have been altered by inserting feminine pronouns to fit us ladies. This is something I was given as a tool in that season of counseling that I went through to help me reprogram my thinking. It's impacting, it's deep, and it works. I want you to take a minute to do some self-reflection. Read through and mark the verses you *know to be true* for you right now, today- not the verses you've heard and feel like you *should* believe, but the ones you *know* in your heart are true for you. It's ok if today that's only one or two, it's ok if today it's half or all of them; we are all a work in progress. Philippians 1:6 is a comfort to me, "being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to

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completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Go ahead and begin. *(Pray for the ladies as they work; that they would be vulnerable to the process and honest with themselves, that the Holy Spirit would reveal things to them... After a few minutes of reflection, call them back together.)*

I hope that this activity opened your eyes to where you are with your self-perception compared to who Scripture says you are. I hope you see how vital it is for us to take our thoughts captive and to allow the Truth to seep in and take over. I think we need to be authentic with ourselves and realize that this is a process and will be hard at times- that it will take time, and that sometimes (especially at the beginning) it could be a "fake-it-till-you-make it" process. The old lies may feel more true than the newly applied truth of the Word.

APPLY IT TO LIFE: (5 minutes)

Before we leave, I'd like to play a song for you. I ask that you find a space just for yourself. Whether that's in your seat with your eyes closed, or on your knees at your seat, or (if space allows) a different spot in the room; but a space for you to be with the Lord where these words can sink in, and you can allow Him to envelop you in His arms.

Play the song "Out of Hiding" by Steffany Gretzinger
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFkDqQtfs0w

Note to Trainer: Go ahead and take a seat while your participants are listening to the song. That will give them another layer of privacy and will put you in an equal stance with them.

Come Out of Hiding

by Steffany Gretzinger

Come out of hiding you're safe here with Me
There's no need to cover what I already see
You've got your reasons but I hold your peace
You've been on lockdown and I hold the key

'Cause I loved you before you knew what was love
And I saw it all, still I chose the cross

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And you were the one that I was thinking of
When I rose from the grave
Now rid of the shackles, my victory's yours
I tore the veil for you to come close
There's no reason to stand at a distance anymore
You're not far from home

I'll be your lighthouse when you're lost at sea
And I will illuminate everything
No need to be frightened by intimacy
Just throw off your fear and come running to Me

And oh as you run what hindered love
Will only become part of the story

Baby you're almost home now
Please don't quit now
You're almost home to Me

Out of Hiding lyrics © Bethel Music Dba Bethel Music Publishing

(Pray for ladies before they leave the room; that truth would sink into their hearts and take over their thoughts!)

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Appendix: Who am I?

God's smile is upon ME and I light up His face as much as anyone has ever lit up a lover's face.

I am God's child (John 1:12). **I have been justified** (Romans 5:1). **I am Christ's friend** (John 15:15). **I belong to God** (1 Corinthians 6:20). **I am a member of Christ's Body** (1 Corinthians 12:27). **I have been established, anointed and sealed by God** (2 Corinthians 1:21-22). **I am confident that God will perfect the work He has begun in me** (Philippians 1:6). **I am a citizen of heaven** (Philippians 3:20). **I am hidden with Christ in** God (Colossians 3:3). **I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-discipline** (2 Timothy 1:7). **I have purpose; I have hope; I am included** (Ephesians 1:9, 12, 13, 3:11). **I have been chosen and God desires me to bear fruit** (John 15:1, 5). **I am God's coworker** (2 Corinthians 6:1). **I am a minister of reconciliation** (2 Corinthians 5:17-20). **I am alive with Christ** (Ephesians 2:5). **I am raised up with Christ** (Ephesians 2:6, Colossians 2:12). **I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realms** (Ephesians 2:6). **I have been shown the incomparable riches of God's grace** (Ephesians 2:7). **I am God's workmanship** (Ephesians 2:10). **I have been brought near to God through Christ's blood** (Ephesians 2:13). **I have peace** (Ephesians 2:14). **I have access to the Father** (Ephesians 2:18). **I am a member of God's household** (Ephesians 2:19). **I am secure** (Ephesians 2:20). **I am a holy temple** (Ephesians 2:21; 1 Corinthians 6:19). **I am a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit** (Ephesians 2:22). **I share in the promise of Christ Jesus** (Ephesians 3:6). **God's power works through me** (Ephesians 3:7). **I can approach God with freedom and confidence** (Ephesians 3:12). **I know there is a purpose for my sufferings** (Ephesians 3:13). **I am completed by God** (Ephesians 3:19). **I can bring glory to God** (Ephesians 3:21). **I have been called** (Ephesians 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:9). **I am a light to others, and can exhibit goodness, righteousness and truth** (Ephesians 5:8-9). **I can honor God through marriage** (Ephesians 5:22-33). **I can parent our children with composure** (Ephesians 6:4). **I can be strong** (Ephesians 6:10). **I have God's power** (Ephesians 6:10). **I can stand firm in the day of evil** (Ephesians 6:13). **I am dead to sin** (Romans 1:12). **I am not alone** (Hebrews 13:5). **I am growing** (Colossians 2:7). **I am His disciple** (John 13:15). **I am prayed for by Jesus Christ** (John 17:20-23). **I am not in want** (Philippians 4:19). **I possess the mind of Christ** (1 Corinthians 2:16). **My heart and mind are protected with God's peace** (Philippians 4:7). **I am chosen and dearly loved** (Colossians 3:12). **I am blameless** (1 Corinthians 1:8). **I am set free** (Romans 8:2, John 8:32). **I am a light in the world** (Matthew 5:14). **I am more than a conqueror** (Romans 8:37). **I am the righteousness of God** (2 Corinthians 5:21). **I am safe** (1 John 5:18). **I am part of God's kingdom** (Revelation 1:6). **I am not helpless** (Philippians 4:13). **I am overcoming** (1 John 4:4). **I am persevering** (Philippians 3:14). **I am protected** (John 10:28). **I am a new creation** (2 Corinthians 5:17). **I am qualified to share in His inheritance** (Colossians 1:12). **I am victorious** (1 Corinthians 15:57). **I am a sheep of His pasture. Therefore, I have everything I need** (Psalm 23 & 100).

God rejoices over ME with gladness, He will quiet me with His love, He will exult over me with singing.
Zephaniah 3:17

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