



ACFS Courses
Study Guide

Identity Course



APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN
Counseling and Family Services
Helping the hurting. Nurturing hope. Encouraging growth.

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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Lesson 1: Identity's Impact	3
Lesson 2: Identity's Profile	6
Lesson 3: Identity's Mindset	9
Lesson 4: Identity's Skill Set	12
Lesson 5: Identity's Center	16

These course notes were created to accompany participants enrolled in the ACCFS Identity Course.

Introduction

Welcome to the Identity course!

Watch the lesson intro video linked in the course.

I am excited about the positive impact these lessons have in store for you. Identity affects us all very directly. Yet, often much goes without our notice. I hope to help you see the role identity plays in your life and how you can more healthily walk in light of it.

This course has four goals:

- Participants will learn what identity is and why it is important.
- Participants will identify who they are and who they are not, thus bringing self-awareness.
- Participants will understand where identity forming inputs come from so as to walk with better awareness in their future.
- Participants will understand the role played in identity formation.

I'm so glad you've joined me on this journey for identity. God very much wants to settle your identity. He did it for His Son, Jesus. When Jesus was baptized, coming out of the water, the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him. A voice came from heaven, which said,

"Thou art my beloved Son."

Luke 3:22

Lesson 1: Identity's Impact

Metamorphosis is quite astounding. A caterpillar, lives a life completely consistent with that of a caterpillar. It's diet, purpose, movement, decisions and view of the world all are consistent to its caterpillar identity. Then one day it falls asleep in its cozy cocoon. Only to wake up days later with a new diet, purpose, movement, choices and view of the world. These changes all springing from its new identity. The identity of a butterfly. In this stark and profound example, nature teaches us the importance of identity. It makes a difference. Furthermore, we are all, like the caterpillar and butterfly, living out our identity. This lesson highlights the importance of identity. Our attempt will be to get our minds around this very real part of our lives.

This lesson has two goals:

- Understand what identity is.
- Understand the importance of identity.

Watch the lesson intro video in the course.

Video notes:

Information Part 1: Identity Video

1. Every human being has common needs which includes these three:

-
-
-

2. Define identity.
3. List examples of aspects that may make up your identity.

Information Part 2: The Photographs

Consider the photograph of the young boy in the course.

It is Thomas Moore before and after his entrance into the Regina Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan in 1874. Notice the different conclusions you have regarding Thomas from the pictures. Might you guess at what he's thinking? how he might behave? This illustrates the profound effect of identity. Identity attempts to bring cognitive closure on the question "Who is this person?" These photographs speak to the role culture plays in our identity.

Information Part 3: Identity Characteristics

Get a feel for "identity" by the stem "X's are..."

We can often place our finger on identity characteristics of person or thing X by finishing the phrase, "X's are _____"

- Countries: Americans are... French are...
- Ethnicities: Hispanics are... African-Americans are... German-Swiss are...
- Regions: People from the New England are... People from the deep south are...
- Economic Classes: Blue-collar workers are... Doctors are...
- Subcultures: Amish are... Hippies are... ACs are...
- Families: The Wolenskis... The Chans... The Smiths...
- Clothing: Cowboy boots... Designer clothes... Handmade clothes...
- Food: Meat and potatoes... Rice and sushi... Kale salad...

Information Part 4: Boundary Markers

Understand the term “Boundary Markers” as it concerns identity.

“Highly visible, relatively superficial practices – matters of vocabulary or dress or style – whose purpose is to “distinguish between those inside a group and those who are outside.” - J Ortberg

Two types of Boundary Markers:

- “Overt signals or signs that people look for to exhibit and show identity. Often such features include dress, language, house-form, or general style of life...”
- “Basic value orientations. The standards of morality and excellence by which performance is judged.”

These concepts are fleshed out in the chart below. Consider the examples below to further understand boundary markers.

Identity Group	Examples of Identity Boundary Markers	
	Overt Signals or Signs	Basic Value Orientations
Country boy	Drives a truck	Loves the outdoors
Educated	Has credential letters behind their name. “PHD, MD, MDiv”	Loves theory
Blue collar worker	Wears boots	Loves “hands on”
Republican	Elephant	Believes in small government
Christian	Modesty	Identifies self with Christ

Conclusion

Identity gives us “self worth, self grounding and belonging”. All of these are basic human needs. Fortunately, healthy identity work can be done so that people have those three needs met. In the next lesson you will begin to investigate those elements that make up your identity.

Lesson 2 Identity's Profile

We all have a facial profile. Those characteristics and features that resemble you. In like manner, we all have an identity profile. Characteristics and features that make us, us. What exactly are those characteristics and features? What forms up our identity? How should I understand those things that contribute to my identity? Before we can live out a healthy identity, we need to first see our identity. This lesson attempts to help us see just that.

This lesson has three goals:

- Learn the various characteristics that form up your identity.
- Understand the nature of how these characteristics come to us.
- Reflect on your personal identity profile.

Watch the lesson intro video in the course.

Video notes:

Information Part 1: Identity Video

Selected	Unselected	Welcome	Unwelcome

Knowing who you _____ helps us to know where our _____ comes from, what _____ us to that and where we _____.

Information Part 2: Culture & Identity

Culture’s role in how we understand identity.

It is a worthwhile fact to understand that identity construction is different depending on cultural values. Cultures push a process for how one understands and evaluates their identity. Consider the table below that compares and contrasts Ancient and Non-Western cultures with Modern Western cultures.

	Ancient/Non-Western Cultures	Modern/Western Cultures
Where does identity come from?	By looking to the group, the family, the clan and identifying one’s role in them.	By looking into oneself and identifying one’s desires.
What does success look like?	Successfully fulfilling one’s role in the group, family, or clan.	By living according to one’s “authentic” self.
What does success depend on?	Achievement - living up to one’s role. One lives out the role and then receives stability.	Achievement - living out one’s desires. One lives out their self-expression and then receives stability.
What is required of self to live out one’s identity?	Self-sacrifice “Live up to the group.”	Self-assertion “Live up to your dreams.”
Who validates one’s identity?	The group, family, or clan.	One’s own self.

Information Part 3: Identity Profiles

In the videos in the course, I step through some hypothetical identity profiles.

Hopefully you can begin to see the characteristics that contribute to an identity. A personal identity profile is a caricature unique to you that sketches out your identity from its many varied sources. The video's below are examples of what you will be doing to apply the concepts of this lesson.

Information Part 4: Personal Testimonies

What does identity look like in real lives? Enjoy the personal testimonies in the video linked in the course.

Conclusion

Like looking in a mirror to see your facial features, this lesson has held up a reflective surface whereby you were able to see the features that make up your identity. In the next lesson, we will begin to understand the image you saw.

Lesson 3

Identity's Mindset

Let's recap. We've learned what identity is. We understand it is a stabilizing force in our lives. We increasingly are understanding the wide variety of ways identity comes to us. Now, what are we to make of this? How should we think about our identity? Identity attempts to answer two questions for us:

1. Who am I? (self-understanding)
2. How should I feel about myself? (self-regard)

This lesson has three goals:

- Identify what healthy thinking about my identity profile looks like.
- Identify what unhealthy thinking about my identity profile looks like.
- Prioritize my identity characteristics.

Watch the lesson intro video linked in the course.

Video notes:

Information Part 1: Identity Mindset Video

Belonging

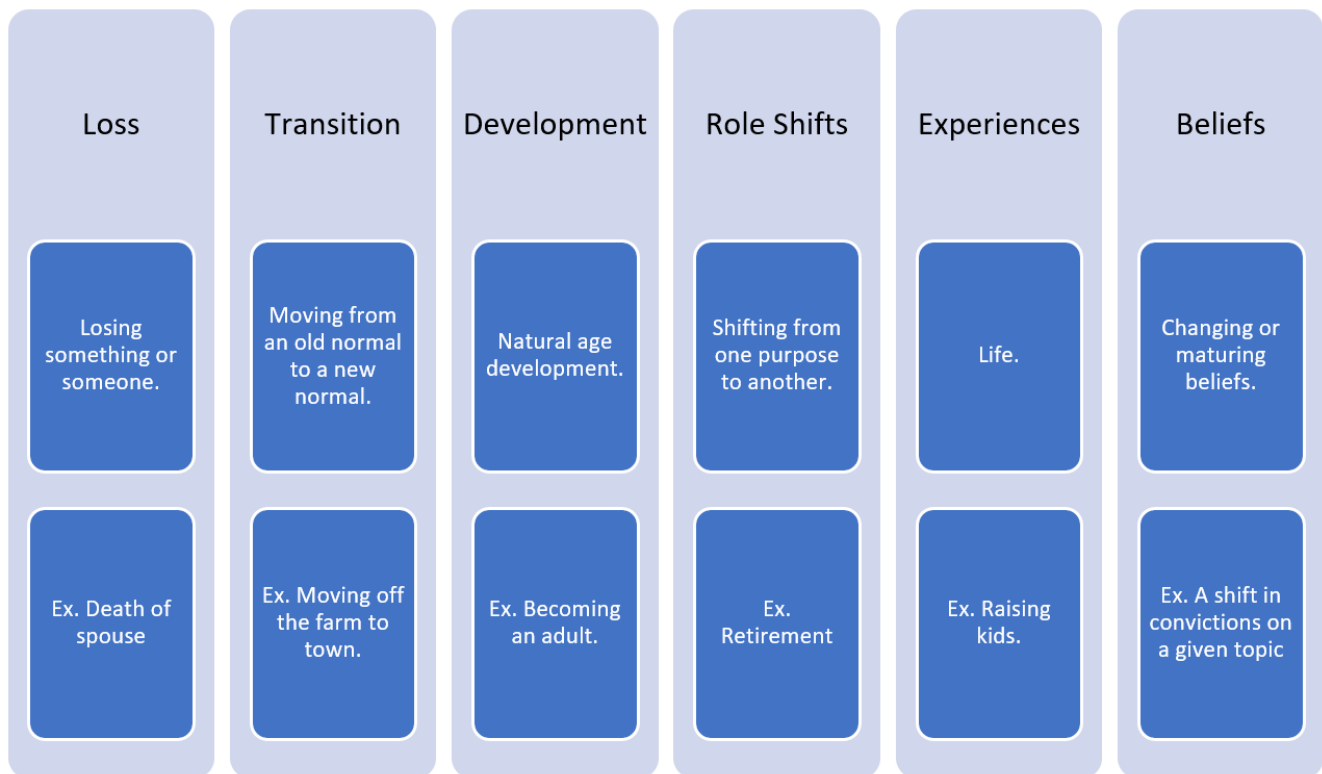
Being Unique

Growth

Information Part 2: Identity Ebbs & Flows

Understand how identity ebbs and flows:

Now that we understand what contributes to our identity profiles, let's look at just how dynamic our identity profiles are. Apart from the very significant role God plays in our identity, we will find most of our profiles are subject to change. Life is made up of losses, promotions, terminations, and graduations. Moves, changes, disappointments and joys are sometimes sprung upon us without notice and without choosing. All of these will impact our identity profile. The one who stewards their identity well, will understand the impact of the below realities and will want to be mindful of their identity during these episodes.



Information Part 3: Prioritizing Identity Characteristics

Later in this lesson you will be asked to “prioritize” your identity characteristics on your identity profile chart. There are a few examples included in the course.

Video notes:

Information Part 4: Personal Testimonies

What does identity look like in real life? Jot down any comments that stand out to you from Marcia’s testimony.

Conclusion

Like our physical reflection in the mirror, not all of our identity features mean the same thing to us. Some are more significant than others. Can we change what we don’t like? Just like our physical image where some changes can be made, we can do something about our identity image also. That responsibility will be addressed in the next lesson.

Lesson 4

Identity's Skill Set

So what can we do about our identity? Actually, there is meaningful action we can take to become more grounded and settled. This process is called "Identity Formation."

This lesson has three goals:

- Participants will learn what identity formation is.
- Participants will understand the four different states of experiencing identity.
 - Moratorium
 - Foreclosure
 - Diffusion
 - Achievement
- Participants will understand the process of exploration to commitment.

Watch the lesson intro video.

Video notes:

Information Part 1: Identity Formation Video

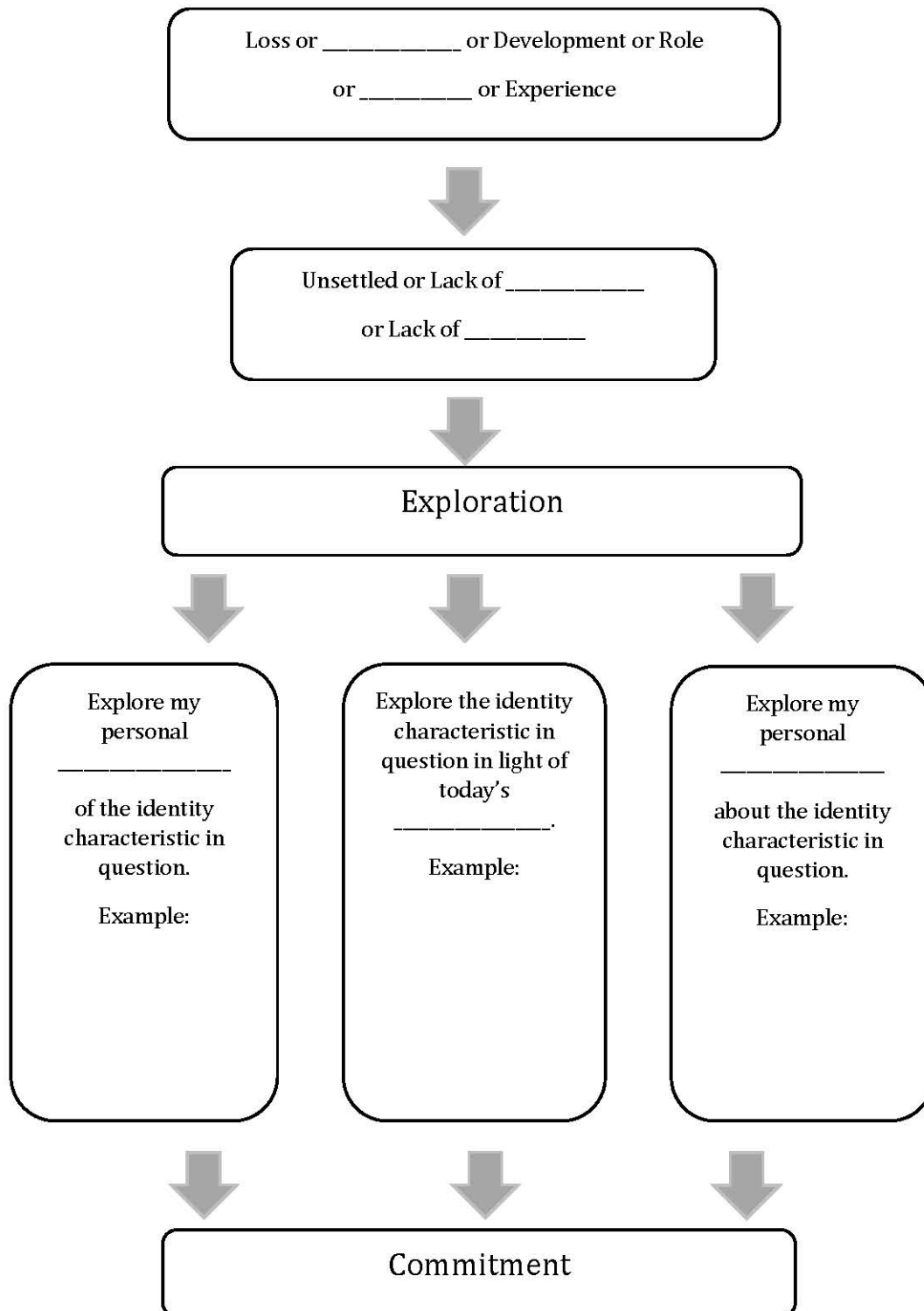
Video notes:

Information Part 2: Understanding 4 Stages of Identity

Marcia's Four Identity Statuses		
	High Commitment to an Identity	Low Commitment to an Identity
High Exploration of Identity	<p>Q.1 Identity Achievement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options are thought through • "This is who I _____" • "This is what I _____" • Healthy Place 	<p>Q.2 Identity Moratorium (Identity Crises)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be seen as _____ • Important and non-_____ • "Where am I going to _____?" • "What am I going to _____?" • "Who am I going to _____?"
Low Exploration of Identity	<p>Q.3 Identity Foreclosure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Options are _____ thought through • "I am who others say I _____" • "I am who others say I should _____" • Can feel safe, but is also quite _____ 	<p>Q.4 Identity Diffusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity confusion • Wandering through _____ • No exploration, no _____

Information Part 3: Exploration

Consider the flow chart below to see what exploration looks like.



Information Part 4: Personal Testimonies

What does identity look like in real life? Listen to the personal testimonies video and note anything that stands out to you.

Video notes:

Conclusion

Exploration to commitment is the route we take to increasingly settled identities. You have identified areas where this might be helpful for you. But there is a reflection in the mirror that we would be amiss if we ignored. Sometimes our image grows so large we cannot see the most important one... Jesus. For the believer, we have an identity that puts in context all the rest. We will devote ourselves to this Christ centered identity in the next lesson.

Lesson 5

Identity's Center

For the child of God, their biggest identity questions have been answered. Who they are and who they are not has been carefully spelled out throughout the New Testament epistles.

"You once were alienated and enemies of God. Now you are reconciled, holy and unblameable." Colossians 1:21-22

In addition, our identity in Christ makes a difference.

"If you are risen with Christ, then seek those things that are above." Colossians 3:1

There is so much to be gained by a strong identity in Christ.

This lesson has three goals:

- Participants will understand what a Christ-centered identity is.
- Participants will see a vision for the Christ-centered identity.
- Participants will write a personal identity statement.

Watch the intro video in the course.

Video notes:

Information Part 1: Identity in Christ Video

Watch the video in the course.

You are either out of Christ or IN Christ. List some of the aspects that come with being in Christ.

First and foremost, we are Christ's. When that is in place, then the other _____ becomes a way to serve and live out our identity in Christ and serves to keep the right balance.

Information Part 2: Identity Table

Learn about the Christ-centered identity by comparing and contrasting it from the cultural identities in the table below.

	Ancient/Non-Western Cultures	Modern/Western Cultures	Christian
Where does identity come from?	By looking to the group, the family, the clan and identifying one's role in them.	By looking into oneself and identifying one's desires.	By repenting of our sin and baptism into Christ's death and resurrection.
What does success look like?	Successfully fulfilling one's role in the group, family, or clan.	By living according to one's "authentic" self.	Receiving Christ's identity as his brother or sister.
What does success depend on?	Achievement - living up to one's role. One lives out the role and then receives stability.	Achievement - living out one's desires. One lives out their self-expression and then receives stability.	Reception - we receive a stable identity and then we live it out.
What is required of self to live out one's identity?	Self-sacrifice "Live up to the group."	Self-assertion "Live up to your dreams."	Self-identification "With Christ"
Who validates one's identity?	The group, family, or clan.	One's own self.	Jesus.

Information Part 3: Personal Testimonies

Watch the video, 'Personal Testimonies: How did I transition my identity to Christ?' & 'Personal Testimonies: What effect has a Christ centered identity had on my life?'

Video notes:

Information Part 4: Christ-Centered Identity

Watch Video 1.

Who we are in Christ is _____ and not based on _____ or what we are able to achieve.

Who we are in Christ provides stability, _____ hope, and _____.

Watch Video 2.

List three things that a Christ-centered identity is NOT:

-
-
-

Our worth comes from Christ and what He says about us. It takes quiet _____ and purposeful _____ to remind yourself what is the truth.

Practical ways to grow a Christ-centered identity.

- Know and rehearse the gospel to ourselves
- Read and meditate on His Word
- Surround yourself with a Christ-centered community
- Find joy in Him
- Live out truth

Identity Statement Activity

Conclusion

At the close of this course, now would be a good time to reflect on the goals you set for yourself in the introduction of this course. Take a few moments to reflect on them.

Take a few moments to write or say a pray that as you experience changes, transitions or loss in your life that this material will come to mind and that you will be strengthened and grounded in Christ-centeredness as you go through those identity formation experiences.