

DISCOVER WHO YOU REALLY ARE

Week 1:
Who Defines You?

This includes:

1. Leader Preparation
2. Lesson Guide

1. LEADER PREPARATION

LESSON OVERVIEW

One of the most important things a teenager can do is develop a healthy self-identity. Culture promotes the message that identity is wrapped up in our physical, intellectual, and social abilities. But the Bible clearly teaches that God looks at something different—the heart. God has a different checklist. Using David as our example, your students will be encouraged to live life according to God’s expectations of who we should be, not our culture’s expectations.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. WHAT: Even though David was a talented young man, God chose him because of his inner character, not his outer image, skills, or abilities.
2. WHY: Our culture promotes images and ideals that contradict the way God sees us, and our teenagers need wisdom and discernment to recognize the difference.
3. HOW: Challenge students to see themselves from God’s perspective, with an emphasis on inner qualities—“inner strength” or “inner beauty”—over outward appearances.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

1 Samuel 16:7

SECONDARY SCRIPTURES

1 Samuel 16:18; Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 29:11; and Acts 13:22



LEADER
TIP

In this lesson, we use phrases like “inner character” and “intimate relationship with God.” If you’re leading a group of girls, consider using “inner beauty” as a theme for the lesson. If you’re leading a group of guys, consider using “inner strength.” Identity issues are quite different for guys and girls, so we’ve provided a different mix of questions during the application time to help you with your gender-specific group.



TEACHING PREP

The short overview below is designed to help you prepare for your lesson. While you may not want to convey this information word-for-word with your teenagers, you'll definitely want to refer to it in your own preparation for the lesson.

This week's lesson focuses on the first time we meet David in the Bible. God has rejected Saul as king because of his disobedience and rebellion. The prophet Samuel gets the assignment to find a man named Jesse in Bethlehem and anoint one of his sons as the next king of Israel.

Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13.

Jesse brings out his sons. They're all prepared for Samuel to offer a sacrifice. They don't know the true purpose for his visit. As Samuel starts meeting the guys, the first son fits the prophet's "image" of what a king should be. But God says no.

"But the LORD said to Samuel, 'Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn't see things the way you see them! People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart'" (1 Samuel 16:7).

The next son? Nope, not him. One by one, Samuel meets the sons, and one by one, God says no. After going through the whole line of brothers, Samuel must be a bit confused because God hasn't chosen any of these young men to be the next king. "Is this it?" Samuel asks. "Are these all your sons?"

Well, it turns out Jesse does have one more son, David (the youngest), but he's out caring for the sheep. Samuel wants to meet this last son. And when the young man arrives, God has a simple message for his prophet: "This is the one; anoint him" (1 Samuel 16:12).

"Who am I?" That's one of life's biggest questions. At a young age, David understood who he was, and his identity was rooted in a solid relationship with God.



THE BEFORE & AFTER [OPTIONAL]

Text Message Questions

We've provided a couple of different text message questions to send out to your students prior to your meeting. Feel free to use one, some, or all of the questions below. As with the rest of the curriculum, edit these questions to fit the needs of your ministry.

- How do you define beauty? How do you define strength? Let's talk about it tonight at small group.
- Do you want to get stronger? Find out what I mean tonight.

Parent Email

Dear parents,

One of the biggest challenges for teenagers is developing a healthy self-identity. I know that's one of the common topics I hear in my conversations with parents here in our church. This week, using the life of King David, our small groups started a two-week series that challenges our teenagers to develop identities based on God's standards, not culture's standards.

Our culture says we should identify ourselves by our physical, intellectual, and social abilities. But God is more concerned with our inner being—our hearts. Abilities and skills and talents matter, of course, but Christians can cultivate lives of character, and identities that reflect God's heart.

This week, find time to talk with your teenager about his/her identity. Here are some possible questions you could use:

- How do you define "inner beauty" or "inner strength"?
- What do you think it means to be a person "after God's own heart"?
- What plans do you believe God has for your life?

Talk about your own experiences in discovering God's plan and purposes for your life. Emphasize how you appreciate all of your teenager's gifts and talents and skills, but ultimately what matters is the condition of their heart.

Thanks for your love for your teenager. Have a blessed week!



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2. LESSON GUIDE

GETTING THINGS STARTED [OPTIONAL]

Welcome your students and invite them into your meeting area. Open in prayer, and jump right into teaching the lesson.



LEADER
TIP

If you came up with an opening activity, movie clip, or game that worked well with your group, and you'd like to share it with other youth workers, please email us at products@simplyyouthministry.com.



LEADER
TIP

TEACHING POINTS

The goal of the Teaching Points is to help students capture the essence of each lesson with more discussion and less lecture-style teaching. The main points we have chosen here are (1) God was the creator, (2) God was the definer, and (3) God was the planner.



LEADER
TIP

Remember: All throughout these lessons, it's up to you to choose (1) how many questions you use, and (2) the wording of the main points—keep ours, or change the wording to make it clearer for your audience.

Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13 together as a group. Consider allowing one or more of the teenagers to read the text.

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *Let's spend a few moments taking a look at how David knew who God was, and how that knowledge helped him be aware of who he was.*

1. God was the creator

You made all the delicate, inner parts of my body and knit me together in my mother's womb. Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex! Your workmanship is marvelous—how well I know it. You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed (Psalm 139:13-16).

ASK:

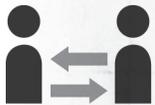
- *What do you learn about David's self-identity as you read these words he wrote in Psalm 139?*
- *Why do so few teenagers seem to have this kind of confidence in who God is, how God sees them, and who they are? Explain.*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *David is most likely the author of Psalm 139. Maybe he had times as a teenager when he struggled with putting all his trust in God. But we know from these words and other moments from his life that David was a young man who had a personal relationship with God and knew that he was the creator of the universe. This gave David a secure identity as a child of God.*

2. God was the definer

One of the servants said to Saul, "One of Jesse's sons from Bethlehem is a talented harp player. Not only that—he is a brave warrior, a man of war, and has good judgment. He is also a fine-looking young man, and the Lord is with him" (1 Samuel 16:18).

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *From this one verse we see that David was musical, brave, strong, had good judgment, was a fine-looking young man, and God was with him.*



PAIR SHARE

Form pairs. Ask your teenagers to look at this list of six characteristics from 1 Samuel 16:18. Have them discuss and then rank them in the order of importance—first, using our culture's standards and then using God's standards.

Bring everyone back together.

ASK:

- *Are you surprised by any differences between how you ranked the characteristics using God's standards and the world's standards? Explain.*
- *Imagine God asked you to write a job description for "Person God Can Partner With to Do Big Stuff." As a group, identify the qualifications for that job.*



SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *God wants to partner with handsome and pretty people, and average-looking teenagers, too. God will move through the world-class athlete and the most talented musician in town, but God will also move through the guy who can't carry a tune and the girl who can't make a free throw. Our culture places extra value on the people who are most athletic, most beautiful, most handsome, most powerful, most popular, most talented, most artistic, most wealthy—this is how the world says we should be defined. But God looks for the people who are most available, most willing, most faithful, most teachable, most obedient, most humble, most compassionate, most loving—people whose lives and whose identities reflect God's heart.*

3. God was the planner

“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11).

ASK:

- *What plans do you believe God has for your life? Why do you feel those are God's plans?*

SAY SOMETHING LIKE: *God had a purpose and future planned for David. God has a purpose and future planned for each of us, too. It's a unique plan that reflects his personal love for every person here. God created us, God defines what matters most in life, and God has planned an incredible future for us. David knew who he was because of the deep relationship he had with God. It was an intimate relationship, and you can see David's love for God reflected throughout the many psalms he wrote.*

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION [OPTIONAL]

ASK:

- *What surprises you about what God tells Samuel in 1 Samuel 16:7? If you had been Samuel, how would you have reacted? Explain.*
- *What criteria or qualifications do you think most people would have said a king needed? Why did God choose a shepherd boy (David) instead?*
- *Read Acts 13:22. What does it mean to be “after God's own heart”? How would you go about doing “everything God wants you to do”?*

APPLICATION

For Guys Only

ASK:

- *How would you define “inner strength”? How is it different from “outer strength”?*
- *How does popular culture define what a “real” man should be? What celebrities or athletes or entertainers have become role models for your peers? How have they achieved this status, and why are they admired?*
- *What messages have you heard about how a real, godly man looks and acts?*
- *What Christian man do you admire for his godly character qualities? What do you think you could learn from that man?*
- *What are some ways you can develop the inner strength God is seeking? Explain.*



- *Pair up with another guy in the group. Talk about your own definition of inner strength, and how God’s definition challenges you. Then take a couple minutes to pray for each other.*

For Girls Only

ASK:

- *How would you define “inner beauty”? How is it different from “outer beauty?”*
- *How do popular magazines for girls help you or hurt you as you pursue the inner beauty God wants to see in your life? Explain.*
- *Think about the six characteristics of David from 1 Samuel 16:18. Which ones, if any, would be removed if this was a godly female character, and which traits would replace them? Why?*
- *What Christian woman do you admire for her godly character qualities? What do you think you could learn from that woman?*



- *What are some ways we can develop the kind of inner beauty God is seeking? Explain.*



- *Pair up with another girl in the group. Talk about your own definition of inner beauty, and how God's definition challenges you. Then take a couple minutes to pray for each other.*

SUMMARY



End your small group lesson here. Provide your teenagers with a quick summary or take-home challenge based on (1) the content of this lesson, (2) the dialogue that took place during the lesson, (3) your understanding of the issues and struggles your teenagers are facing, and (4) the big picture of your youth ministry and what your leadership team wants accomplished with the teaching and discussion time.



FOR KEEPS [MEMORY VERSE]

Encourage and/or challenge your teenagers to memorize the verse below.

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

