



SENIOR CURRICULUM SAMPLE

FULLER YOUTH INSTITUTE



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Title: How Do I See Myself After Graduation?

The big idea: having a Scripturally-informed view of our identity will help us keep our faith at the center of who we are and what we do.

You'll need:

- To wear two layers of shirts (i.e., a T-shirt plus a blouse or sweatshirt)
- Copies of the **You, Me, and Us** handout on page XX
- Pens or pencils
- Index cards
- Copies of the **God's Vision for My Identity** handout on page XX
- Copies of the **Identity That Sticks** handout on page XX
- A small safe or lockbox, or if that's not possible, a suitcase or briefcase
- A mailing envelope for each student
- Bibles
- MORE WORSHIP AND PRAYER: copies of the **Naming** handout

NOW

Welcome your students and check in with them to see how they are doing. Ask your students to form groups of three and give each group a pencil and a copy of the **You, Me, and Us** handout.

Explain: **On this handout, there are four squares. Write each of your names in the first three squares and note that “all of us” is written in the fourth square. I’m going to give you a few minutes to share interesting facts about yourself, such as “I play soccer” or “I love scary movies” or “I hate cheese”. If you’re the only person in your group with that characteristic, write it in the box with your name on it. If all of you share that characteristic, write it in the “all of us” square. If two of you share that quality, don’t bother to write it down. You might want to clarify that the “facts” should move beyond mere biology, such as “I have skin” or “I eat with my mouth”.**

Give your students a few minutes to share facts about themselves. As soon as the energy in the groups starts to fade, reconvene everyone and invite each group to share a few of their most unusual “all of us” facts.

Transition to a deeper level of conversation: **I’m glad you’ve all gotten to know a bit more about yourselves, and each other, already today. But I want to take us to a deeper level. I want you to think about how you view yourself—beyond just what you do and what you like.**



Distribute an index card to each student and give out the remainder of the pencils so that each student can write their own thoughts on their index card. Explain: **I'd like you to write "I am" at the top of the index card, and then I want you to make a list of the words that come to your mind that help you finish that sentence as quickly as you can.** As students are writing, you should also write your own list of "I am" words.

After students seem to have finished their lists, continue by asking rhetorically: **I'm curious where your faith fell on your list. Was it toward the top? Somewhere in the middle? Toward the end? Or maybe even left out of your list?**

As we learn together about sticky faith, today we're going to spend some time thinking about our identity, meaning a mix of what we think about ourselves and what others think and portray to us about ourselves.

Q: How do you think we who follow Jesus view our identity differently than folks who don't?

Dr. Tim Clydesdale, a sociologist from the College of New Jersey, has studied teenagers and has found that right after seniors graduate from high school, they often encounter new situations that seem to clash with who they were in high school. As a result, they often place important parts of their identity—like their family, their friends, and even their faith—in an "identity lockbox".¹ Those important parts of themselves end up locked away, separate from their day to day life.

Demonstrate the "identity lockbox" by explaining: **I'm wearing two shirts. For many graduating seniors, faith is like my exterior shirt. It hasn't become core to who I am. And if it hasn't become core to who I am, I can take off my faith and put it in a lockbox.** At this point, demonstrate by taking off your shirt and putting it in your safe or suitcase.

Q: How, if at all, does the identity lockbox help describe what you've seen in other high school students, college students, or adults?

Q: How, if at all, is this identity lockbox concept relevant to your own faith?

Continue: **What types of decisions do you think you will be making after graduation?**

Q: How are those decisions affected if your faith ends up locked up in an identity lockbox?

¹ Tim Clydesdale, *The First Year Out: Understanding American Teens After High School* (University of Chicago Press, 2007).



NEW

Continue: **The good news is that God intends much more for us than the identity lockbox. In fact, our relationship with God has the potential to change our identity dramatically and transform us into people who experience the amazing life God has designed for us.**

At this point, distribute the rest of the pencils and the **God's Vision for My Identity** handout. Go around the group, asking students to read aloud the names God intends for us one at a time.

Take a few minutes to share a few of the identity statements listed that have been especially helpful to you. Be as specific as you can, sharing tangible examples of how they have made a difference in the way you view yourself.

Scripture Sidebar

Throughout history, many leaders and theologians have believed that the “image of God” referred to some unique quality of characteristic that is part of our nature as humans. These “substantive views” tend to describe God’s image in us as either a physical resemblance, or a spiritual quality, or even our ability to reason. More recently (in theological terms, “recently” means in the last two centuries), an important additional definition of the image of God has gained support. The “relational view” suggests the image lies not in who we are or anything we possess, but in our capacity to have relationships with God and others. That means that our identity is inherently tied to our relationship with God, and with each other. **END SIDEBAR**

Ask students to silently re-read the list of identity statements on their own and take a few minutes to draw a star next to any of the names or phrases that have made a difference in their own life. When they are done, invite students to share the identity statement they starred, and why they did so. Try to nudge them toward giving a specific example of that name’s meaning in their own life.

Next, share personally about a few of the identity statements that you would like to experience fully but only seem to have dabbled in up to this point. Explain how you think truly embracing that vision(s) would change your reality and your identity. Invite students to take a few minutes to draw a question mark next to any phrases that they have only somewhat experienced, or perhaps not experienced at all. See if anyone would be willing to share which identity statements they noted with a question mark, and why.

Finally, give students a few minutes to circle the specific names or phrases on the handout that they think are going to be most important for them in the future. They won’t know for sure, but they can make educated guesses.



If you have time, ask each student to share one or two of the statements they circled and give a brief explanation as to why they chose them.

---HAVE MORE TIME: Feel free to distribute paper and crayons to your students and have them draw an image related to the identity statements that they'd like to focus on in their future. Students can take their drawing home with them now, or give them to you to be mailed back to them later.----END HAVE MORE TIME

HOW

Explain: **Steven Covey is a leadership theorist who popularized the phrase: “Begin with the end in mind.” How is that phrase relevant to you as you think about who you want to be as you begin this new phase of life after graduation?**

At this point, distribute the **Identity That Sticks** handout and explain that today students are going to take a first stab at writing a few sentences to describe who they want to be a year from now. Assuming you plan to follow our suggestion to give students time to modify and add to this **Identity That Sticks** handout in future lessons, let students know that today is their first step toward a vision of who they want to be and that they'll be clarifying and adding to that vision in future sessions.

Give students plenty of time to complete the handout. If you're going to give students a chance to edit and expand upon their **Identity That Sticks** handout in the future, collect them now. If not, they can take them home with them.

Explain that to help their visions for their divine identity stick, you're going to mail them their **God's Vision for My Identity** handout in the future. Give each student an envelope and have them address the envelope to themselves. (Note: you can decide whether you want to ask them to put the address where they'll be during the summer, or during the fall. Keep in mind that many of your students might not know their fall address yet.) Ask them to stuff the **God's Vision For My Identity** sheet into an envelope and hand that envelope back to you. (Note: you might want to leave them unsealed so you can include your own additional brief note later.)

Remove the second, exterior shirt from the safe or suitcase that you had placed it in earlier, explaining that having a clear sense of who we want to be in a year and embracing these identity statements can help keep us from locking up our faith in an identity lockbox.

Collect the envelopes and place them in the center of your group. Invite a few of your students to pray over the envelopes, that God would help each of you avoid locking up your faith and instead have a clear vision for who you want to be and that that vision would place faith in the center of all that you are and all that you do.



EXTRA WORSHIP AND PRAYER

Naming

You may want to plan for time in silent prayer focused on centering our identities in Christ. Consider using the following exercise either as a guided prayer that you lead out loud (and students respond silently), or as a handout for students to use in quiet reflection.

Introduce this exercise by saying something like: **As we begin our prayer time, consider the importance of names. Names are core to our identity because they are the primary symbols by which we know ourselves and are known by others. The Bible makes a big deal about names—the name of God and names of people who follow God are really important, and often names mean something specific. In fact, on more than a few occasions in Scripture, God changes someone’s name as a result of a significant encounter.**

In the God’s Vision for My Identity handout we looked at some of the names scripture gives us that call out different aspects of our identity with God. Now we’re going to reflect on one of those names: child of God. Distribute the **Naming** handout and invite students to read 1 John 3:1 (printed at the top of the handout) several times and then reflect upon the questions on the handout.

As students seem to be done with the handout, help them bring their prayer time to a close by giving them a one or two minute notice, then voicing a closing prayer or simple “Amen.” If you have time, it may be helpful to debrief this prayer by asking a few questions like:

What was that prayer like for you?

What kinds of images or feelings stood out during this prayer time?

What was uncomfortable for you?

What was enlivening or renewing for you?

What do you want to remember about this time with God?

You, Me, and Us

Name:

Name:

Name:

All of us

God's Vision for My Identity

Below is a list of names that describe God's vision for your identity from Scripture. Some of them may make you uncomfortable. Some of them may make you laugh. Good. Take time as you're reading to hear God say them about you, and about the Church.

Image of God	Genesis 1:26
God's Delight	Isaiah 62:4
The Redeemed of the Lord	Isaiah 62:12
Sought Out/Desirable	Isaiah 62:12
Not Forsaken	Isaiah 62:12
Salt of the earth	Matthew 5:13
Light of the world	Matthew 5:14, Ephesians 5:8
Beloved	John 15:9
Temple of the Holy Spirit	1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19-20
New Creation	2 Corinthians 5:17
Chosen	1 Peter 2:9
Royal Priest	1 Peter 2:9
The Holy People/Nation	1 Peter 2:9, Isaiah 62:12
Child of God	1 John 3:1, Galatians 3:26
Bride of Christ/God	Revelation 19:7,8

Identity That Sticks

Imagine yourself a year from now. Write down words or phrases that describe who you hope to be in the following areas...

In my relationship with God, I want to be...

In my relationship with my family, I want to be...

In my relationship with current friends, I want to be...

In my relationship with new friends, I want to be...

In the way I think and feel about myself, I want to be...

In my job or studies, I want to be...

Based on the words and phrases you've jotted above, write a 3-5 sentence description of who you want to be a year from now:

A year from now I want to be...

Naming

“See what great love the father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!” (1 John 3:1)

What do you think it means to be God’s child? How might that living as a child of God shape other parts of who you are?

For a few moments, imagine God as a loving father. Whatever your own father has or hasn’t been like, imagine what God as father might be like. What kinds of things does he say to you? How does he embrace you? How does he say your name?

Now imagine God “lavishing” his love on you. What kinds of images does that bring up for you? What kinds of emotions rise in you? How do you respond to that love?

Now imagine God as Father speaking these words to you before you close your prayer. Imagine him speaking your name in the appropriate places:

“See, _____, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands” (Isaiah 49:16)

“_____ , you are my child, whom I love; in you I am well-pleased” (Mark 1:11)