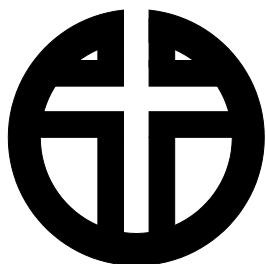


CONFIDENT **IDENTITY**

Group Leader Study Guide

CONFIDENT IDENTITY

Christian Strategies
to
Forget Who You Aren't and
Discover Who You Really Are

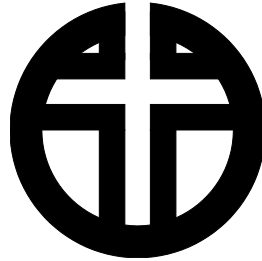


Christian Concepts
New Reflections Counseling, Inc.
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MATT PAVLIK MA, LPCC-S
BRINGING YOUR POTENTIAL TO LIGHT

Group Leader Study Guide

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The author offers Internet addresses as suggested resources but does not guarantee the validity of the content. Because of the dynamic nature of the Internet, any links may have changed since publication and may no longer be valid.

This book is not intended to be a replacement for professional counseling.

Planning Your Group

The primary benefit of a *Confident Identity* group is the immediate feedback group members can give and receive to each other. The group provides the positive experiences that everyone needs to heal from an infected identity and grow into a confident identity.

Consider the following best practices for a healthy *Confident Identity* group experience.

Book

Confident Identity is available for purchase online for \$21.95 (paperback). I recommend the printed version so the exercises can be written out in the workbook but a Kindle version is also available. Visit <http://confidentidentity.com> for details.

Group packages are \$160 with shipping and handling included. The package contains eight autographed copies of *Confident Identity* shipped to your US address (shipping and handling takes up to two weeks). For quantities less than eight, please order online. For eight or more copies, inquire via email: mpavlik@christianconcepts.com.

Format

Due to the seriousness of the topic, I suggest moving through the chapters sequentially and discussing no more than one chapter per meeting. Ideal group size is four to eight people. Each meeting should last 1 to 1 ½ hours.

Outcomes

I'd like to know how your group turns out. The group's feedback will help me continue to improve the book and this guide. After you're done with the group, please take the survey at <http://www.confidentidentity.com/group-feedback>.

Preparation

As the group leader, you should read each chapter ahead of time and have worked through the end of the chapter exercises. Additionally, read through the study guide's chapter to familiarize yourself with the questions. Plan to spend 1-2 hours per meeting.

Each chapter of the study guide has two sections. The purpose of the Main Point is to give you a goal to reach through the group discussion. By the end of the meeting, everybody should have an understanding of the main point, without you necessarily reading the main point to them.

The purpose of the Focus Points is to provide supplementary questions that build community. Your job as facilitator is to encourage members to share their insights from the book (reading and exercises) and engage the other group members in discovering and affirming each other's identities.

If you want the meetings to last longer, encourage members to share more details from the book exercises. You can also come up with some of your own group questions.

Participation

You might consider discussing the following during a brief interview to determine if the person is ready for a group experience:

As a group member, you should plan enough time to read and complete the end of chapter exercises. Sharing personal, sensitive information is essential for an effective, life-changing experience. While sharing is optional, the more members share, the more they will gain.

You're encouraged to share your feelings. Others may share their feelings. This is part of the growing and healing group process. Most people want the assurance of a safe environment before they share sensitive information. All information revealed in the group is to be kept confidential. This includes factual information (names, dates, personal history) as well as observable information (emotions, expressions).

Everyone helps to create this safe environment by upholding this rule: "What happens in the group, stays in the group." Participants can share their personal information outside the group. It is okay to share a generality about what you are learning, but, "Who you see here, what is said here, when you leave here, let it stay here."

The following summarizes each participant's responsibilities to the group:

Participant's Responsibilities to the Group:

- Regular Attendance
- Promptness
- Take Risks
- Be willing to talk about yourself
- Give others Feedback
- Maintain confidentiality
- Ask for what you need

8 Laws of Participation:

- Spend time preparing (do the assignments)
- Stay focused upon you (don't rescue)
- Speak up (share whether you are up, down)
- Share feelings
- Show support
- Seek Jesus
- Submit to the process
- Safety is a priority (confidentiality)

Facilitating Group Progress

Groups take time to grow just like any person or community. The main role of the group leader is to facilitate the development of the group from infancy to maturity.

Participants may start off tentative, then test the waters with challenging questions or behaviors. A healthy group will eventually resolve conflict and move into a fruitful stage.

Encourage positive, honest feedback. Constructive, challenging comments can be equally life-giving. However, don't allow unsolicited negative comments, at least not without investing the time and attention to repair any damage to the group relationships.

If your group members are reluctant to provide more challenging comments, you can suggest that members request honest feedback. If someone asks for feedback, they are accepting responsibility for their feelings. If someone received unsolicited feedback and appears uncomfortable, you might need to empower the members to decline feedback. If necessary, you can insist that all feedback must be solicited.

Managing Group Conflict

Sometimes hurt feelings or conflict arise that cannot easily be resolved during the group. Prior to the group starting, you can also present a way for members to handle their potentially controversial feelings (while hopefully eliminating gossip):

If at any time you feel a need to process what has happened in the group but aren't sure if you want to share with the group, contact your group leader to set up a private meeting. This is the appropriate way to handle your feelings about the group. Your leader can help you find a way to share your feelings with the group, or help you process your feelings privately.

Journaling

Journaling super-charges a group experience. Regularly journaling thoughts and feelings will improve the group experience. Members can journal about what happens in each meeting as well as what happens in-between each meeting:

- What they read
- How they think and feel about what they read
- What happened during the previous group meeting
- How they think and feel about what happened in the previous group meeting

Journaling can include positive and negative thoughts. Members can write about what God is saying to them through the group. Members can write down any questions they have about the material.

Additional Resources

If you would like further help creating a healthy group atmosphere, consider one of the following books:

- Leading Life-Changing Small Groups*, Zondervan
- Making Small Groups Work*, Zondervan
- Small Group Leaders' Handbook*, InterVarsity Press
- The Big Book on Small Groups*, InterVarsity Press

Part I — Understanding Your Identity

Chapter 1 Ashamed or Confident

Chapter 2 Fearful or Secure

Chapter 3 Doubtful or Hopeful

Chapter 4 Rejected or Accepted

Chapter 5 Isolated and Desolate

Chapter 6 Connected and Fruitful

Chapter 1

Ashamed or Confident

Main Point

Life is demanding. To meet the demand, you must come to a greater knowledge of who you are. In particular, you must understand who God made you to be.

Identity is what something *is*, as distinguishable from everything else. *Confidence* is the assurance of something. To have a Confident Identity means you're living with the assurance of knowing who you are. You know yourself and aren't ashamed.

Focus Points

1. What is your definition of identity? (state in your own words)
2. Why is identity important?
3. Matt says, "When you belong, you're in your proper place." Rate on a 0 to 10 scale how much you feel you belong. If you choose a value less than 5, do any of these words describe how you feel: outcast, rejected, loner, isolated, worthless, hidden.
4. Matt says, "In order to belong, you need to be able to share who you are." What are the implications of this in your life?
5. In what community do you feel you belong the most?
6. Share where you are at in the flow chart at the end of the chapter.
7. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Chapter 2

Fearful or Secure

Main Point

To accept your identity, you also need to learn and accept your limits. Who you aren't is an important part of who you are.

Focus Points

1. What images do you see in the snowflake? Notice how both the black (positive space) and the white (negative space) is needed to form the shapes.
2. Matt says, "By definition and by God's design, your identity has serious limitations." When are limitations constructive and when are they destructive?
3. Share one of your identity defining limits with the rest of the group. How does your awareness of this limitation change how you live?
4. How has accepting your limitations resulted in security instead of fear?
5. What You Version are you at? If you're at 2.0, share how you know this. All Christians are part of the 2.0 family. You belong in this family.
6. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Chapter 3

Doubtful or Hopeful

Main Point

Few things are eternal but they're all important. God is eternal. You, your identity, is eternal. God's other children are eternal. Real hope, hopes in the eternal because everything else is doubtful. We doubt what won't stand the test of time.

Focus Points

1. Matt says, "Your power is in your identity, not in your costume." What does he mean? What is the difference between an ability, a role, a career, a job, and a project?
2. Name something about yourself that is part of your identity — something that can't be lost or stolen from you.
3. What is a way you're doubtful like Brooks? How does this limit you?
4. Share a way you're hopeful like Andy. How does this benefit you?
5. How strong is your hope?
6. Matt says, "You need a deeply rooted reason to go on living." What is your deeply rooted reason to go on living?
7. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Chapter 4

Rejected or Accepted

Main Point

To grow a Confident Identity, you must experience powerful, positive moments of connection in your relationships.

Focus Points

1. Matt says, "Self-image is vulnerable to negative influences." Share your self-image and life-experience ratings.
2. Which of the eight zones are you in currently?
3. What was your lowest and highest point in your life so far?
4. What is your greatest need? In what way can the group help?
5. If you want to, ask a specific member if they are willing to help meet your need.
6. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Chapter 5

Isolated and Desolate

Main Point

To overcome the effects of the curse, and heal, you must do more than cope. Failure to do more than coping results in fruitless labor. Fruitless labor doesn't produce any eternal significance.

Focus Points

1. Matt says you participate in fruitless labor when you, “dig your own wells” or “put on a costume.” What is your definition of fruitless labor?
2. Share a way that you have attempted to fill the infinite abyss in your heart with finite objects.
3. Share a way you've invested in a false image (costume)?
4. For you, when has coping served a purpose and when has it become fruitless labor?
5. Trace your fruitless labor to its source. What false identity produced fruitless labor? What wounding relationship created a false identity? What aspect of the curse wounded you?
6. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Chapter 6

Connected and Fruitful

Main Point

Before you can be filled, you must empty yourself of what is false. Problems outside your identity aren't your problems. A neutral identity doesn't exist. If you don't have a positive identity, you will have a negative one.

Focus Points

1. How do you define enduring work?
2. What blocks you from achieving enduring work? (review chapter 5 if necessary)
3. Are you taking on any problems beyond your identity? What are they? How close are you to letting them go?
4. Matt says, "God is committed to seeing you through to the end, no matter what you've done." In what ways are shame or guilt keeping you from being fruitful?
5. Share all or part of your lament.
6. What enduring work has God set aside for you?
7. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Part II – Discovering Your Identity

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Chapter 7 | Digging for Identity Clues |
| Chapter 8 | Your Physical Identity |
| Chapter 9 | Your Gender Identity |
| Chapter 10 | Your Cognitive and Emotional Identity |
| Chapter 11 | Your General Spiritual Identity |
| Chapter 12 | Your Specific Spiritual Identity |
| Chapter 13 | Your Personality |
| Chapter 14 | Your Strengths at Work |
| Chapter 15 | Assembling Your Identity Clues |

Chapter 7

Digging for Identity Clues

Main Point

Discovering your identity takes intentional effort and time. You must revisit your identity frequently to keep your self-image updated.

Focus Points

1. Matt says, "There are serious consequences to not finding and using your identity." Which of the three servants in the Parable of the Talents do you identify with more?
2. Do you have anything about yourself you wish you could change?
3. Explain the difference between the four categories of tools. Which category does this group fall in?
4. Which category works best for you at this time in your life?
5. Share the details about one positive and one negative childhood experience. How have these contributed to your self-image and influenced your thoughts or actions?
6. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Chapter 8

Your Physical Identity

Main Point

Physical abilities are a part of identity. God designed each person's physical attributes exactly as He wanted them. Life scars and deformities shouldn't impact self-worth because they are temporary.

Focus Points

1. Do you consider your physical abilities to be a part of your identity? In what way?
2. Do you have any physical abilities that you consider to be exceptional?
3. Share the insights you gained from taking the self-assessment.
4. Concerning your body-image, how much self-acceptance and self-worth do you have?
5. Read Psalm 139. Matt says, "You're fearfully and wonderfully made. You're perfect the way God made you." How believable is this to you?
6. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Chapter 9

Your Gender Identity

Main Point

God intentionally created you with the gender you have. Gender differentiation is important. You need affirmation from both genders. Gender specialization is an essential part of your identity. Don't ignore or downplay your gender.

Focus Points

1. Matt says, "Your gender identity is healthy to the degree you accept the gender God has assigned to you." Do you agree with Matt's three rules and two options? Why or why not?
2. Share your strongest gender instinct from the gender talent self-assessment.
3. Do you have any gender abilities that you consider to be exceptional?
4. How self-aware are you of your gender identity? Share a memory that influenced your gender identity. How did it strengthen or weaken it?
5. Concerning the four developmental phases, how complete do you feel you are in each phase?
6. Concerning your gender, how much self-acceptance and self-worth do you have?
7. Share any shame or uncertainty you feel with regard to your gender.
8. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Chapter 10

Your Cognitive and Emotional Identity

Main Point

While you likely favor one over the other, everyone can develop their thinking and feeling abilities so they work together optimally. Recovery from trauma requires restoring a healthy integration of the two.

Focus Points

1. Pick three words that describe your current emotional state (use the Emotional Identity Worksheet at the end of the chapter).
2. Do you have any cognitive/emotional abilities that you consider to be exceptional? How comfortable are you with these?
3. Matt says, "A healthy brain is well integrated. The thinking and feeling areas of the brain function optimally when they work cooperatively." How well do your executive and emotional brain centers function cooperatively?
4. When is emotion superior to thinking? When is thinking superior to feeling?
5. What are the downsides to too much lateralization (when your head dominates your heart, or your heart dominates your head)? Share about a time when you were more out of balance.
6. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Chapter 11

Your General Spiritual Identity

Main Point

Your identity has spiritual implications. You have a spiritual family. Being a new creation means you have spiritual abilities and a connection to God that allow your emotional needs to be met.

Focus Points

1. What does eternal security mean to you? Are you secure in your salvation?
2. Matt says, "Christians have spiritual blessings that define who they are." How does the armor of God strengthen your identity?
3. How are your relationships? Are they deep enough and diverse enough? Are you receiving, relating, and being a resource? Do you have a balance of all three?
4. How much do you experience that you belong and fit in the spiritual community?
5. Share your five core longing levels.
6. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Chapter 12

Your Specific Spiritual Identity

Main Point

Narrowing your specialization increases your value. You have a specific spiritual role to play in the Body of Christ (the community of all believers). Others may have the same spiritual gift, but your identity makes the expression of the gift unique.

Focus Points

1. What is the difference between a spiritual gift and a natural talent?
2. Which of the five categories do you seem to fit with the most?
3. Share one of your spiritual gifts. Ask for feedback from the group if you want. How well does the group's opinion match your opinion?
4. Matt says, "No one else can use your gifts the way you were designed to use them." What does your gifting say about your identity?
5. Pick one of your gifts and use it within the group. Take a risk to try out your gift in at least some small way.
6. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Chapter 13

Your Personality

Main Point

Personality is an expression of your identity. Personality is more complicated than physical or gender ability. It requires simplification to make it immediately useful. Remember that identity is what is consistent over time and changing circumstances.

Focus Points

1. Explain the difference between weakness and carelessness.
2. What is your four-letter code? How well does it summarize who you are?
3. How easy is it for others to identify your personality? Ask for feedback from the group if you want.
4. Matt says, "Every personality has strengths and corresponding weaknesses. Different doesn't equal inferior." Rate (0 to 10 scale) the self-esteem you have for your personality.
5. Have you ever been picked on as a child for an expression of your personality, and consequently felt ashamed?
6. Have you ever been affirmed as a child for an expression of your personality, and consequently felt confident?
7. What do you need to increase the level of self-esteem you have for your personality?
8. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Chapter 14

Your Strengths at Work

Main Point

Strengths have more potential than weaknesses. You can't be anything you want to be. You can only be more of who God designed you to be.

Focus Points

1. How happy are you in your current line of work?
2. What is the difference between identity and calling?
3. Matt says, "Not operating from your strengths has significant consequences." Which is a better investment — improving a strength or improving a weakness?
4. Share your 3-letter code and your top five strengths. How close of a match is your current work and the ideal work suggested by your assessment results?
5. What strength, when you use it, causes you to feel most alive?
6. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Chapter 15

Assembling Your Identity Clues

Main Point

Knowing your identity boosts your confidence. Self-awareness of your identity helps you know your vision and mission (purpose). You must return to and refine your identity statement because it is only your best understanding at this current point in time.

Focus Points

1. How does writing an identity statement help you?
2. Share your identity statement. Ask for feedback from the group if you want. Modify your statement if you hear something that sounds even more like you.
3. What patterns do you see in your identity as compared to other members' identities?
4. Read Revelation 2:17. What would a new special name from God mean to you?
5. What else are you noticing about your identity? Continue to ask for feedback if you don't feel satisfied you have a clear picture of your identity.
6. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Part III – Using Your Identity

Chapter 16 **Vision: How Far I Can Go**

Chapter 17 **Consecration: Be Prepared to Go**

Chapter 18 **Mission: Go Make a Difference**

Chapter 16

Vision: How Far I Can Go

Main Point

What you do doesn't define who you are. Your vision is a future version of you that you can work to develop. Accept yourself as you are today but don't limit yourself to who you are today.

Focus Points

1. Matt says, "Doing flows out of being (not the other way around)." Why is Rachel's statement, "It's not who you are underneath — it's what you do that defines you" potentially misleading?
2. What is a vision and why do you need one?
3. What is healthy vision? Share a time you've been nearsighted. Share a time you've been farsighted.
4. What is healthy comparison?
5. How is your identity also your authority?
6. Watch *Butterfly Circus* as a group. Discuss its relevance to identity.
7. Share your vision. Ask for feedback from the group if you want. Modify your statement if you hear something that sounds better.
8. Share your mask.
9. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Chapter 17

Consecration: Be Prepared to Go

Main Point

Addictions flourish because of idolatry. Idolatry is depending upon something beyond its capacity to fulfill you. Identity comes before true sacrifice.

Focus Points

1. Have you ever tried to sacrifice without knowing who you are? What happened? Why must identity come before true sacrifice?
2. What idols do you have in your life?
3. Share your God image. How does your view of God contribute to your reliance on idols?
4. Matt says, "Every moment of life consists of either preparation or fulfillment." Can you see how your past has prepared you for your present? How does this reframe your life experiences? Are you able to more clearly see your life purpose?
5. Share something you're waiting for. Pray about this as a group.
6. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Chapter 18

Mission: Go Make a Difference

Main Point

God has a vision and a mission for every Christian. As all Christians grow in their Confident Identity, the time will pass quickly as God's plans come to fruition. Then, we'll all be together in heaven, fully knowing each other and fully knowing God.

You have a spiritual inheritance. You receive it from those who have gone before you and you pass it on to those who will follow you. What you accomplish in your lifetime is significant to all those who come after you. You have a spiritual legacy.

Focus Points

1. What is mission and why is it important?
2. What is the different between service and mission?
3. Share one of your values. Share one of your interests. Share one of your passions.
4. Share your mission statement. Ask for feedback from the group if you want. Modify your statement if you hear something that sounds better.
5. Consider how your brothers and sisters are suffering around the world and throughout all time (1 Peter 5:9). What spiritual legacy do you hope to leave?
6. How can others help you fulfill your spiritual legacy?
7. What is your main take away insight from this chapter?

Celebrate

Celebrate who God has made each member and the vision He is developing in them. You can plan this for the Chapter 18 meeting or ask the group if they want to schedule a separate time for fellowship and food.

Provide Feedback

I'd like to know what you thought of Confident Identity and this group. Your feedback will help me continue to improve the book and this guide. After you're done with the group, please take the survey at <http://www.confidentidentity.com/group-feedback>.