8. Freedom and Identity

Learning Objectives

- To know our purpose & identity in Christ as beloved sons & daughters.
- To understand that there is an enemy and how he works.
- To learn tools that bring freedom: repentance, forgiveness & truth.

Welcome [5 mins]

Welcome the group to this session, recap the last session and review how the challenge went.

The challenge was to read the same passage of the Bible as the rest of the group before this session.

🏸 **Bonus Game: [10 mins]**
Select a game that will best suit your group and setting. Consider games this week that fit with the theme of identity such as "guess who" games.

> ***Pray for the session***

Introduction [5 mins]

Today we're thinking about who we are: our identity in Christ, and what it means to have freedom in Christ.

📌 **Activity: Who are you wearing?**

[Prepare this before the session]

Get a leader to dress in a particular style such as 'hipster', 'superhero' or 'nurse' and ask the young people 'Who am I?' – The funnier, the better! The young people simply have to guess who they are. Then take off your top layer to reveal another style and again ask 'Who am I?'

Do this three times and then make the point that you can often tell a lot about people from the clothes they wear.

The clothes we choose to wear often reflect our status, our values, and even our priorities. The Bible talks about how, as Christians, we're given a new identity. Colossians 3 provides the analogy of clothing, and Paul talks about "taking off" our sinful nature, and "putting on" our new identity.

📖 Galatians 3:26-27 says "*So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*"

We aren't defined by the physical clothes we wear, the appearance we create for others, or how we present ourselves on social media. As Christians, we have a new identity because of what Jesus has done for us.

📽️ **Bonus Video: [6 mins]**
"Fake Facebook Prank – Your Secrets Exposed"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ymHssBzuLEY

Bible Focus [30 mins]

Identity:

In the Calling session, we talked about how we can discover the purpose of something by learning from its creator what it was designed for.

We talked about the two "Great" commands in the new testament: *The Greatest Commandment* and *The Great Commission*. Our main purpose in life is to know God and participate in his plans for the world.

That ***purpose*** forms part of our ***identity.***

Another way we learn who we are is by understanding who our family is. For example, in the film Moana, what helps Moana find strength and gives her hope is when she discovers that she comes from a family of voyagers and it is this realisation that helps her grow confidence in her own identity. So, let's explore who our family is.

📌 **Activity**:
Split the group into two or three smaller groups and give each group a bible verse and have them answer the question ***'How do these Bible verses describe us as Christians?'.***
After which, get them to feedback to the rest of the group.

Give them either
Romans 8:14-17, Galatians 3:26-27 or Ephesians 1:4-5

When we become Christians, the Bible says we become fully adopted into God's family as his sons and daughters. And He doesn't do it reluctantly, He doesn't love us because he HAS to - these verses all express how God has chosen us! He chooses to love us.

For example, remember the parable of the prodigal son, where the younger son disowns his Father, runs away with his inheritance and wastes it on wild living. How the Father responds is an amazing picture of what sort of Dad, Father God is. Despite how that younger son treated him, the Father ran to meet him and didn't even wait for an apology before welcoming him back into the family.

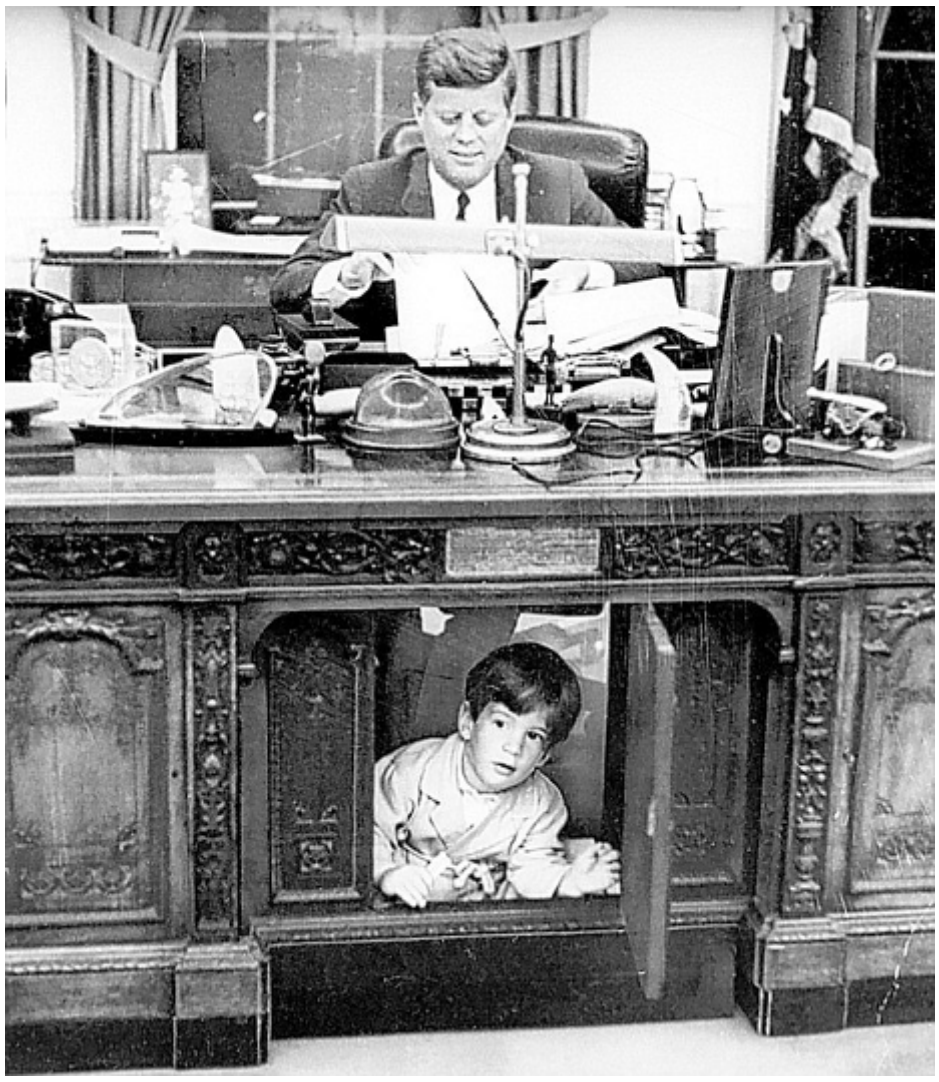
ASK the group, in pairs/small groups:

Imagine learning one day that you were actually a child in the Royal Family or the heir to a multi-billionaire. **How would it change how you lived your life? What would you do differently?**

Draw out some silly and serious answers, but recognise that it would totally change your life!

Have a look at this picture -

"*Kennedy's son under the Resolute desk" in the appendix*.



Ask - Does anyone recognise who is in the photo or where it is?

It is President Kennedy at the “Resolute Desk” in the Oval Office of the White House.

That is one of the most challenging rooms to get into in the world. Decisions have been made in that room which have changed the world and changed history. Only special people are invited to meetings in that room. They are either people who are very intelligent, who hold positions of power or who have worked very hard and usually are a combination of all three.

And yet a little boy, who hasn’t got a degree, hasn’t achieved much in his life, doesn’t have any money or power of his own is playing underneath the desk.

ASK: Any guesses who that boy is?... He’s the president’s son.

A child can have access to positions of power that no amount of achievement or money can bring, simply because of who they are, because of their Identity.

📖 **Read**
Ephesians 3:12 "In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence."

Hebrews 4:16
"*Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*"

The Bible says we can boldly and confidently come into the presence of the King of the universe. That should change how we live and how we view situations we face in life.

Therefore, we have learnt that as Christians, we have a new purpose, a new identity that is found in our new family with our heavenly Father.

FREEDOM:

But there is a problem. There is an enemy.

Read John 10:10 and 1 Peter 5:8-9

ASK: Who do you think the enemy is?

What does our enemy want to do in our lives & what does Jesus want for us?

Draw out that the Enemy wants to steal, kill and destroy, and Jesus gives us life to the full.

We have an enemy who is seeking to stop us walking in our true identity and purpose. We can see that enemy at work in the world around us. We all know life isn't perfect; we have all experienced pain and suffering and see its impact in the world.

We get a picture of how this enemy works right back at the beginning of the Bible in Genesis in the garden of Eden. Feel free to read the scripture in Genesis 3 if your group don't know the passage, but you can simply refer to it if they do.

📽️ **Video – Bible project – Son of Man**

Please note the timings of the videos below

Part 1 - [1:20– 2:20] – https://youtu.be/z6cWEcqxhlI?t=80

Part 2 – [4:18 – 5:30] – https://youtu.be/z6cWEcqxhlI?t=257

We can see a pattern emerging:

> **Lies > Temptation > Actions/Sin > Shame & Consequences > Shackled & Trapped**

The number one way the devil attacks us is through lies & using them to tempt us to disobey God.

📖 **Read**
John 8:44
"You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

When we chose sin, the Bible says we become "slaves to sin" (Romans 6:20). We are trapped by it and its consequences. We are unable to escape on our own. That's why we needed and still need Jesus and the power of the cross and the Gospel to set us free from sin.

Because all of us are born into an imperfect world, at some point in your early life, you will get hurt emotionally. That pain often leads us to believe something untrue about ourselves and others:

We can see this pattern in our lives:

> **Wounds > False Beliefs/Lie > Entrenched Lie (Stronghold) > Habits/Behaviour**

An example could be:

You get bullied > You think "I'm different"> You feel "I'm worthless"> I can't or won't make friends.

But here is the good news! The Gospel brings us freedom from our sin and its consequences. Because of what Jesus did for us, because of our new IDENTITY in Him, we can be set free from sin.

> 📖 **Romans 8:1-2** says ***"...****there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death."*

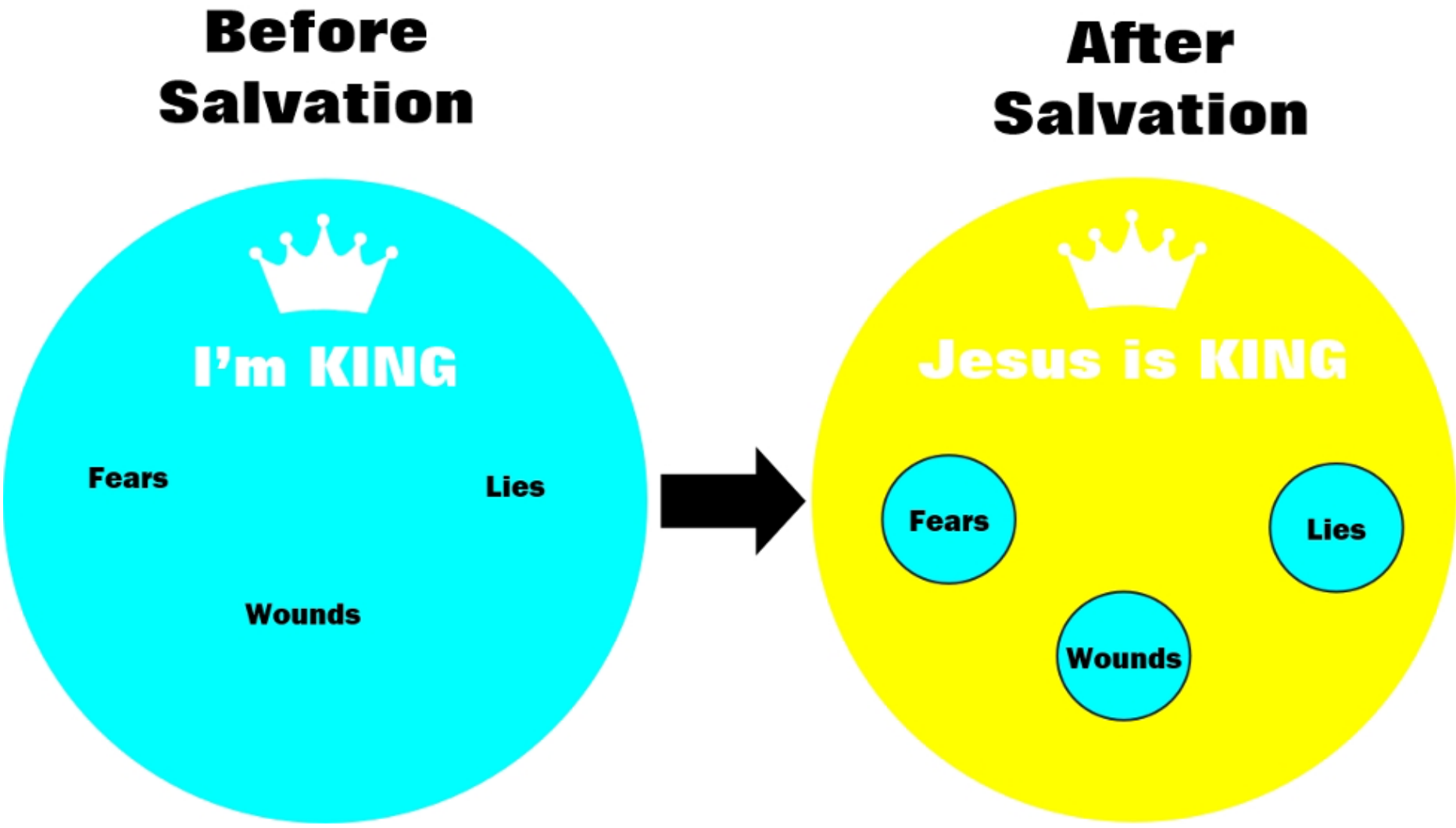
There is no condemnation for us as Christians!!

> 📖 ***2 Corinthians 5:17 says "...****that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!"*

We get made new when we become Christians!

But that process doesn't happen instantly the moment you become a Christian. None of us become perfect disciples overnight. Discipleship is a lifelong process of being changed to look more like Jesus.

Show Freedom diagram in the appendix. You could draw this on a whiteboard or flipchart paper or use the PowerPoint image.



Before we follow Jesus, no areas of our lives are submitted to Jesus as King. When we become Christians, we choose to make Jesus King of our lives. However, there are still areas of our lives that won't be fully submitted.

Freedom is about firstly discovering who we are and secondly about dealing with those things in our life that stop us walking like it.

📽️ **Video: “Skit guys Baggage” [**from 4:05 – 10:24]

https://youtu.be/wITzgTW3WaE?t=245

ASK - So, what do you think was going on in that video?

The trash/baggage represented the sin and lies we believe, it weighs us down, traps us, holds us back, it occupies our minds. The fantastic news is that, through Jesus, we have a choice to walk free of those things!

🔑 **Bonus: The Keys to Freedom: [5 mins]**

[You may find it helpful to make some visual aids, or write these out a whiteboard or flipchart]

The Bible gives us some keys that help us get free.

1. **The key of Truth**

John 14:6 says "*Jesus is the way the truth and the life*"

John 8:31 says *“…and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”*

- When we notice a negative belief in our lives, we can ask God what the truth is
- This may be in the Bible, or he may speak to you directly.

(Refer to Hearing God’s voice session)

2. **The key of forgiveness**

For others and ourselves.

Unforgiveness can hold us in bondage (Matthew 18:21-35) and harbour bitterness. When we forgive others, we are releasing them to Jesus and choosing not to be bound by the need for an apology.

Forgiving ourselves can be even more challenging. Sometimes we can think our sin is too bad to be forgiven. But we need to remember our sin isn’t greater than the cross. We need to accept Jesus’ complete forgiveness for our sin.

🔑 3. **The key of repentance**

“Repent and be baptised.” **Acts 2:38**

A key to releasing the power of the cross in your life is repentance. Turn from your way of doing things, choose to believe the truth and to live life God’s way.

4. **The key of prayer**

We are in a spiritual battle (Ephesians 6:10-18).

Sometimes we can struggle to believe the truth on our own and we need to pray on our own and with others to help us hear God, believe the truth and break the power of the lies in our life.

5. **The key of obedience**

In **John 8:31** Jesus said “I*f you continue in My word, you are truly My disciples. Then, you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*”

The key to walking in continued freedom is to walk in obedience to Jesus’ commands. Otherwise, it would be like getting rid of all the baggage we were carrying, only to pick up a new set of luggage.

Testimony: [3 mins]

Have one of the leaders share a short testimony about how God has brought them freedom in an area of their life.

Application: [15 mins]

🙏 **Activity 1: "The Four R's" (Taken from pg.30 "Salvation Encounter" by Brian Brennt)**

If you notice an area of sin in your life or where you are struggling to believe what the Bible says about your identity, the 4 R's below can be a helpful tool to pray through.

1. **Repent** of the sin – This means to turn from your way of doing things, choose to believe the truth and to live life God's way.
2. **Receive** God's forgiveness and cleansing.
3. **Rebuke** the enemy's hold on you. Renounce any false "comfort" from this sin.
4. **Replace** all lies with God's truth. Declare all old attitudes and actions dead and fill your heart and mind with God's truth.

[*Practice with one area and go through the 4 R's as a group.]*

We're now going to wait on God for a moment and ask him to highlight an area of our lives we need freedom in. This could be an area of sin or a false belief we have about ourselves.

We're now going to write down a prayer about that area.
[*Give space to wait on God for a moment.]*

Now pray together; encourage participants to repeat each phrase together out loud after you.
"Lord we repent of this sin. We receive your forgiveness and cleansing. We rebuke any hold the enemy had on us because of this. We renounce any false comforts we got from it. We choose to replace all lies with God's truth. Holy Spirit fill my heart and mind with your truth."

Choose another prayer activity below depending on how much time you have left in your session.

✍️ **Bonus activity**
Pick another activity from those listed below to do in any remaining time.

🙏 **Activity 2: ""Who am I?"**

Put some music on in the background, e.g. "Who you say I am" by Hillsong would be appropriate.

Get the participants to draw the outline of a person in their journals/on a piece of paper.

*Ask God **"What do you think about me?" and "Who do you say I am?".***

Encourage the participants to write single words inside the outline, or whatever they feel God saying. Refer back to "Hearing God" session and how to test if a word might be from God.

The exercises below encourage the young people to pray for each other. Refer back to the Hearing God's Voice session and ask them to focus on asking God what he wants to say about another person's identity. Have them share with them and encourage that individual to write it down.

🙏 **Activity 3: Anonymous bowls**

Have the same number of bowls as people, stick their name on the bottom of the bowl so it can't be seen.

Make space for the young people to pray wait on God.

Ask the young people to write down something they have felt God say for someone in each bowl.

🙏 **Activity 4: Paper with names**

This is similar to the bowl idea, but instead of the names being hidden, write each person's name at the top of a piece of paper.

Leave the pieces of the paper in the middle of the room.

Take some time to pray and wait on God.

Encourage the participants to write down anything they have felt God say for that person or something encouraging for that person on the bottom of the paper and then fold it up so the next person can't see what is written.

Conclusion & Challenge [2 mins]

Today we've been looking at what our identity is as Christians. If we are followers of Jesus, the Bible says our old life and identity has gone, and we are now new creations! We are now sons and daughters of God, with all of the authority and access to God that comes with that.

But we do have an enemy who doesn't want us to walk in our new identity but instead wants to keep us connected to our old way of life and thinking. One of the ways we can walk in freedom is to use the 4 R's of Repentance, receiving God's forgiveness, rebuking the enemy and replacing lies with truth.

Challenge:

Hand out "Identity in Christ" bible verse sheets to take home.

Your challenge from this session is to pick one verse from the sheet each day and reflect on it for a couple of minutes. Ask God to help you believe that truth it in a deeper way.

> ***Pray to end the session***