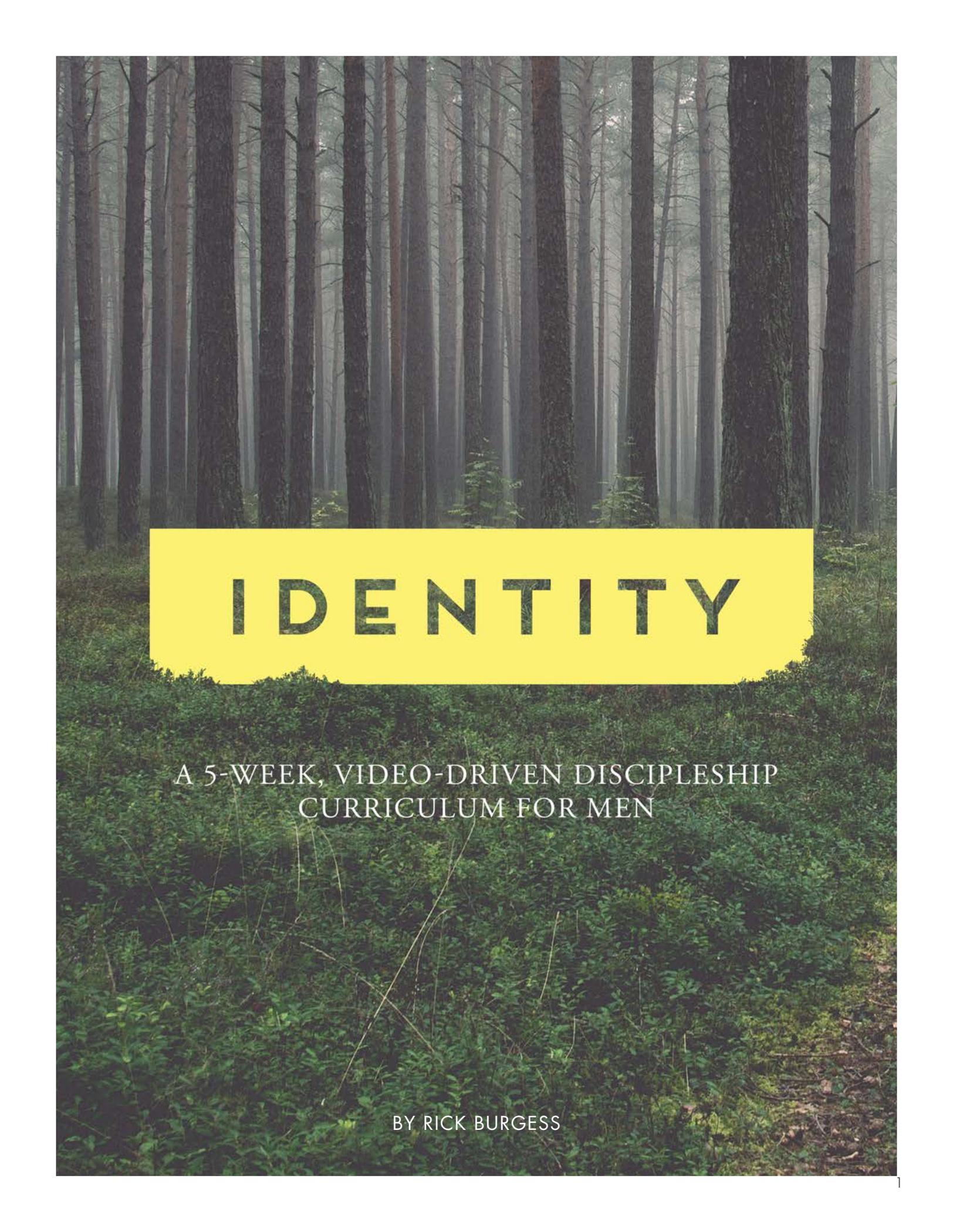


Thank you for downloading one of the eight, five-session small group studies from *The Pursuit*.

The Pursuit is a 40-week, video-driven small group study for men. Each session features a video from best-selling author, Rick Burgess, and a small group leader guide. You can purchase all 40 weeks, or purchase the eight, five-week sessions independently.

If we can help answer any questions about *The Pursuit* or any other of the Iron Hill Men resources, please don't hesitate to email (customercare@ironhillpress.com) or call (800) 307-9366



IDENTITY

A 5-WEEK, VIDEO-DRIVEN DISCIPLESHIP
CURRICULUM FOR MEN

BY RICK BURGESS

**IDENTITY: A 5-WEEK, VIDEO-DRIVEN DISCIPLESHIP
CURRICULUM FOR MEN**

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CURRICULUM FOR MEN

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IRON HILL
MEN
A MINISTRY OF IRON HILL PRESS

**LUKE
9:23**
THE MAN CHURCH
BE A MAN...FOLLOW JESUS

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DISCIPLESHIP MATTERS

DISCIPLE MEN, CHANGE EVERYTHING.

There is a discipleship problem affecting Christian men today. Too often, men are absent from both the church pews and from the vital work the church is doing in the world. These men are not engaged spiritually in their homes and aren't making a Kingdom impact in their workplace. And it all points back to one major issue:

Many men aren't being disciplined.

But when men ARE being disciplined, powerful things happen as a result. They impact the church, their family, and culture. We have seen the influence godly men can have. The purpose of *The Pursuit* curriculum is to equip and empower men to become the man God has called them to be.

WHAT IS THE PURSUIT?

The Pursuit is a 40-week, video-driven curriculum designed to help men live out a masculinity that is found in the person and example of Jesus. *The Pursuit* takes eight core characteristics that Jesus embodied and fleshes each one of them out through video and small group Bible Study.

Rick Burgess, best-selling author and co-host of the nationally syndicated radio show *The Rick & Bubba Show*, starts off each session with a 10-15 minute video introducing the session's focus. Then, for each small group session, there is a leader guide to help facilitate a meaningful time of discussion and Bible study.

The reason men aren't living a more authentic faith is simple: they have yet to embrace the call to real discipleship. By leading a group through *The Pursuit*, you're a part of the growing tide of men who are looking to awaken men to embrace their calling as Christ-followers.

START GETTING STARTED

“Who are you?” It’s one of the most important questions you can answer. But to answer it, you have to dig down to your foundation. You have to know who you are at your core. And if you call yourself a Christian, then who you are is rooted in who Christ is.

You can’t pursue Christ-centered masculinity without understanding who you are in Jesus. This, before anything else, is the key to becoming the man God intends you to be. Who are you? The key to answering this question is found in discovering who you are in Christ.

The next five sessions of videos will help you and your group discover exactly what it means to have your identity found in Jesus. Here’s how to get started.

WHAT YOU NEED TO GET STARTED

FIRST, preview your video. Every *Pursuit* session starts with a video. You’ll need to preview your video ahead of time and be prepared to show it to your group. You can access your videos through your Iron Hill Press account.

THEN, get ready for your small group discussion and Bible study by preparing your lesson. Use this leader guide to help lead a time of discussion based on the video and Bible study based on the passage Rick covered. Pray that God would lead your preparation and your facilitation of the material.

FINALLY, lead your time of small group Bible study using this leader guide. It’s that simple.

If you have any questions or feedback, don’t hesitate to let us hear from you at feedback@ironhillpress.com.

- **Main Passage:** 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
- **Purpose:** To grasp that our identity is rooted in the new life made possible by our saving faith in Jesus.
- **Session Snapshot:** One of the most important things a man can do is to know who He is. For those who have professed faith in Jesus, the answer to “Who am I?” is easy. You are God’s. You belong to Him. Your identity is hidden in Christ with God (Col. 3:3). This powerful truth is foundational for us as Christ-followers. Before we can lean-in to what it means to be a man, we must first grasp what it means to have our identity found in Christ.

GETTING STARTED

Kick-off your time together by introducing a new theme or reviewing what you did in the last session.

FIRST, explain to your group that they will be beginning a video series on identity that is part of a larger study on what it means to pursue a masculinity that is centered in Christ. Remind them that the world sends many messages about what it means to be a man. Culture is no guide, as the target is always moving. We must look to Christ and strive to imitate His example in our context. This pursuit of a Christ-centered masculinity starts with knowing who we are.

If this is your first session as a group, consider introducing yourself, if necessary, and having the men in your group introduce themselves. Then, ask for volunteers to share what they want to get out of their time in this study. If you want to pass around a contact sheet or do any other first-session “housekeeping tasks,” this is the time to do it.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader’s guide.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week’s video.

FIRST, as this is the first session, explain to the group the basic structure of your time together. Explain that you will watch a video that is usually about 15 minutes long, followed by a short discussion of the video. Then, you’ll spend a few minutes in Bible study, followed by a closing activity. Consider encouraging men to take notes as they watch the video.

THEN, play the video. You can access the video by logging into your Iron Hill Press account.

When the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **Put yourself in the shoes of your family members, or your co-workers. Ask yourself: If I could see myself through their eyes, what would I say my identity is found in? Be honest with yourself. How does your response make you feel?**
- **Give some examples of where men tend to look to find their identity.**
- **Think about the response you just gave. Why do you think men are tempted to look at these specific areas as a source of their identity?**
- **Why is finding our identity in anything other than Christ such a harmful approach? What is at stake if we get this wrong?**
- **Did Rick’s words about “new” vs. “improved” resonate with you? Why do you think some Christians tend to think of a relationship with Jesus as something that merely “improves” them?**
- **What is the foundation of our identity in Christ? In other words, what has to happen**

for an individual to become a new creation?

- **Rick gave an example of what it looks like when our identity is rooted in our faith in God. Think of a man in your life who has a solid understanding of their identity in Christ. How does this impact the way they live their lives?**

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- **When we come to saving faith in Christ, Paul says we are made new. Let's spend a few moments looking more intently at that passage and see precisely why this is such an essential aspect of our identity.**

OPENING THE WORD

Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.

FIRST, explain that you're going to take a more in-depth look at 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. As Rick stated in the video, understanding who we are in Christ is the key to understanding our identity. In this passage, Paul paints a vivid picture not only of who we are in Christ, but WHY this is such an important reality.

We must make sure your people have a good understanding of the context of the passage you'll be studying. Provide the context for the passage using the following bullet points:

- **The Apostle Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to the church in Corinth.**
- **He wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia around A.D. 55 or 56, a year or so after writing 1 Corinthians and a year before he wrote his letter to the Romans from Corinth.**
- **According to the *ESV Study Bible*, the central theme of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians was "the relationship between suffering and the power of the Spirit in Paul's apostolic life, ministry, and message."**

THEN, read or have a volunteer read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21. When the volunteer has finished, direct their attention back to vs. 17. Lead the group in a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **What do you think of when you think of the phrase "new creation"?**
 - Answers will vary.
- **When Paul says, "the old is gone," what does he mean?**
 - Answer: The old "you" isn't hidden, covered up, or set aside until later. It's gone. Paul says in Colossians 3:3 that when we come to saving faith in Christ, we "die," and in place of our old life, a new life is born, a life "hidden in Christ." The old us that is a slave to sin is put to death when we come to faith in Christ. It's no more.
- **So, if this is true, why do you think we are sometimes still guilty of living the life of our "old self"?**
 - Answers will vary. For some people, it's because they may not have ever truly come to saving faith in Jesus. For others, it's simply that they don't take seriously God's call to holiness and resisting the sin that trips us up.

Before transitioning to the next question, say something like:

- **We know that we can't live sinless lives on this side of heaven. We all have a sin nature that we're born into. But living as "new creations" means we contend with sin. We strive for holiness. And with the help of the Holy Spirit, we pursue Christ-likeness. This is our call as Christians, and it's not possible without the new identity that comes with saving faith in Jesus.**

NEXT, direct your group's attention back to 2 Corinthians 5:18-19. Then, ask:

- **Just so we're all on the same page, what does the word "reconciled" mean? Give me an example of reconciliation from real life.**
 - Answers will vary. Spiritually speaking, to be reconciled means that God's wrath against sin was satisfied in the death of Jesus. There is peace between God and man because the unpaid debt of sin has been satisfied in Christ.
- **Why is this a big deal for us to understand? Why is it important for others to understand?**
 - Answer: Because without reconciliation, it means that we are separated from God, and that means an eternity apart from Him.
- **What does it tell you about the nature and character of God that He would desire to see this outcome?**
 - Answer: Sadly, many people do not see God as a loving, giving, caring God. They believe He stands ready to pour out His wrath. While the wrath of God does exist and is applied, these verses overwhelming show that God has a deep love for us. God thought enough of us to fix our sin problem through His Son, Jesus.

THEN, re-read 2 Corinthians 5:20. It's important to know who we are in Christ. It is just as important to know WHY God saved us and gave us new life. Explain to the group that even though there are several ways to answer this question, one of the most crucial answers is found in verses 20-21. These verses serve as a very theological yet practical look at how to embrace the mission of Christ to carry His offer of salvation and reconciliation to others. This is one of the main purposes of the new life we've been given. Ask:

- **What do you think of when you think of the word "ambassador"? What is the role of an ambassador on the political stage?**
 - An ambassador is a person that acts as a representation of something or someone. They speak with the full authority of the one they represent.
- **What are some practical ways we can function as ambassadors of Christ in our day-to-day lives?**
 - Answers will vary. Push them to talk about their interactions with people at work, people in their family, in the community, etc.

FINALLY, have a volunteer read 2 Corinthians 5:21. Then, say something like:

- **In verse 21, Paul emphasizes the main thrust of what he has been communicating in these verses. Christ did for us what we could never do for ourselves; He saved us. He gave us a new life and a new identity. With this new identity comes a new responsibility: leading others to Christ in our actions and words. We cannot do this, however, until we are fully on board with who we are in Christ.**

Ask if there are any questions, and if there are none, transition into *Accepting the Challenge*.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Focus your group's attention on one key takeaway from your time together.

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on one main takeaway from this session. Say something like:

- **Whenever we're faced with a concept like we have been studying today, it forces us to respond in evaluation. As we wrap up our time here, there are really three different questions we can ask to evaluate ourselves:**

- 1) After listening to Rick and studying Paul's words, some of us need to ask ourselves, "Have I ever actually surrendered my life to Christ through saving faith? Am I truly a new creation?"
- 2) For others of us, the evaluation we need to engage in is in the way we live our lives. Some of us need to ask,



IDENTITY

SESSION 1

- “Have I been guilty of trying to live two lives: The life of the ‘new life’ me and the life of the ‘old life’ me”?
- 3) Some of us need to evaluate how we’re embracing our purpose. We need to ask, “Am I living as an ambassador?
Do I live to bring reconciliation between God and those who do not know Him”?

Allow the group to consider where they find themselves on this spectrum of evaluation. If it feels appropriate, allow there to be some discussion about the kind of evaluation they find themselves considering.

FINALLY, encourage men to process these questions in the week to come. Challenge them to listen to what God is trying to tell them, and to respond accordingly. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.