

FIELD-TESTED SERMON RESOURCES

SERMON SERIES

TRUSTED | BIBLICAL | FIELD-TESTED

Thank you for downloading this sample PDF from our Sermon Series line of resources.

When you stand up in front of students proclaim the Word of God, you need trusted, creative, Biblically solid content. YM360's Sermon Series is exactly what you're looking for.

Field-tested, from-the-trenches of youth ministry, YM360 Sermon Series are complete sermon outlines and graphic packages designed to help you lead students closer to God through proclaiming His Word.

SERIES OVERVIEW FOR IDENTITY CRISIS

The journey of finding out who we are and where we come from is one of humanity's most deeply rooted needs. As we seek, if we can discover where our name comes from — whose namesake we are — we can begin to find our God-given identity and live with God-given authority in the context of God-given community.

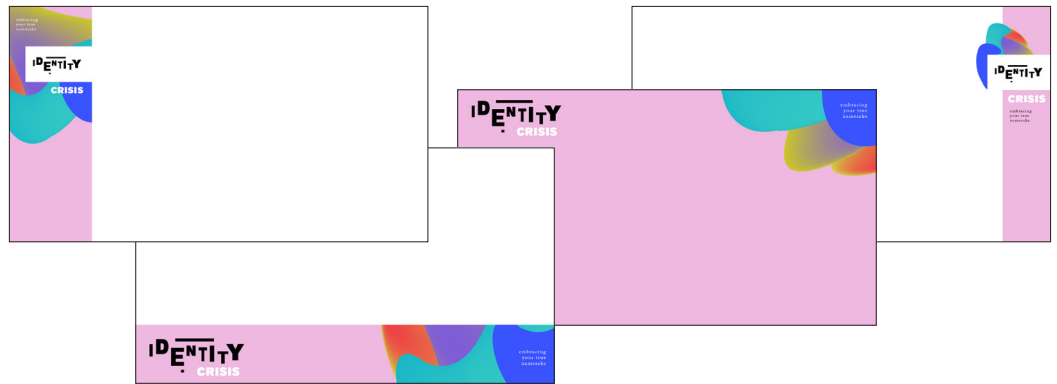
- **SESSION 1:** Are We in Crisis?: You'll help students understand that when we believe in Jesus, the foundation of our identity is found in Him and being a part of His family.
- **SESSION 2:** What Does It Look Like? To show students that believers are identified by their passionate spirituality and their radical community, which infuses their lives with missional zeal.
- **SESSION 3:** What is My True Name?: You'll show students that we cannot do anything to earn our identity, as it is a God-given gift.
- **SESSION 4:** How Can I Live Up to It?: Students will learn that namesakes of Christ are commissioned to exercise God-given authority.

Identity Crisis is an invitation to understand where you come from, who you are, and why it matters so that students can be themselves in Christ, and fully embrace their true namesake.

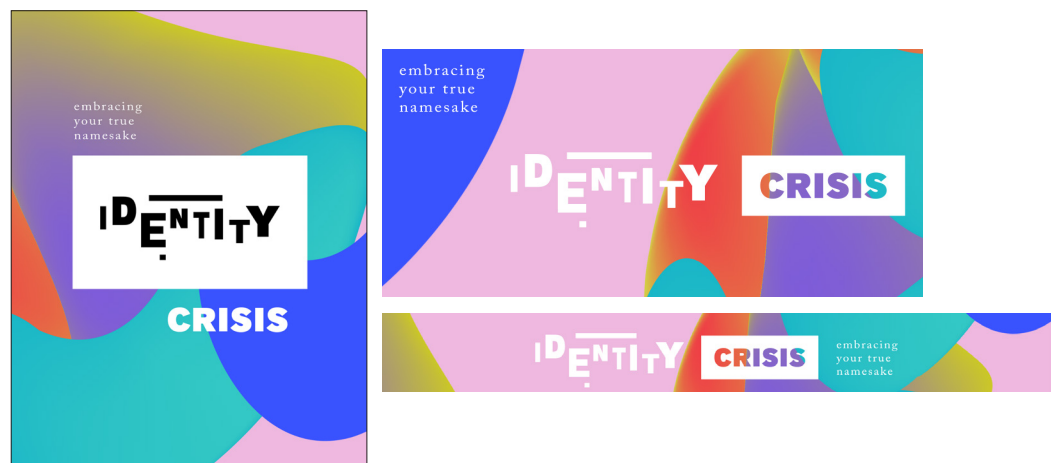
BACKGROUND SLIDES, PROMOTIONAL ARTWORK, AND MORE . . .

Each YM360 Sermon Series comes with title and background slides, promotional art (including Instagram images), and logo treatments. Here is what to expect.

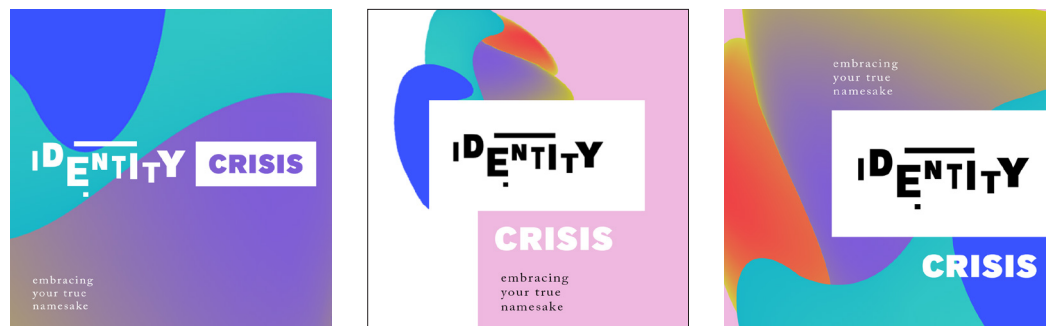
BACKGROUND AND TITLE SLIDES



PROMOTIONAL ARTWORK



INSTAGRAM IMAGES



LOGO TREATMENT



NOTE: Each YM360 Sermon Series also comes with the native files of the logo in case you want to replicate the design for other uses.

Identity Crisis Sermon Series Overview

The Sermon Series Overview is a one-page glimpse of the stuff you need to know to begin preparing to preach.

- **Session 1 Purpose:** To understand that when we believe in Jesus, the foundation of our identity is found in Him and being a part of His family.
- **Scripture Passage(s):** Acts 19:8-20
- **Session Snapshot:** Who are you? Are you defined by your family? By your accomplishments? By your social status or your ethnicity? By what others say about you? If we try to anchor our sole identity in these things, we will find ourselves falling into an identity crisis. But when we believe in Jesus, we move from identity crisis to an identity in Christ.
- **What You May Need:** Optional clips or images for “What’s In A Name” illustration; optional image for “The Great Imposter” illustration.

Details on *Identity Crisis* Sermon Series Outlines

The journey of finding out who we are and where we come from is one of humanity’s most deeply rooted needs. As we seek, if we can discover where our name comes from — whose namesake we are — we can begin to find our God-given identity and live with God-given authority in the context of God-given community.

- **Session 1: Are We in Crisis?:** You’ll help students understand that when we believe in Jesus, the foundation of our identity is found in Him and being a part of His family.
- **Session 2: What Does It Look Like?:** To show students that believers are identified by their passionate spirituality and their radical community, which infuses their lives with missional zeal.
- **Session 3: What is My True Name?:** You’ll show students that we cannot do anything to earn our identity, as it is a God-given gift.
- **Session 4: How Can I Live Up to It?:** Students will learn that namesakes of Christ are commissioned to exercise God-given authority.

Identity Crisis is an invitation to understand where you come from, who you are, and why it matters so that students can be themselves in Christ, and fully embrace their true namesake.

How To Use the *Identity Crisis* Sermon Series

This sermon series outline is designed for use by a communicator in a large group setting. It provides various elements such as suggestions on illustrations or images, Scripture passages, background information, and application points that you will need to prepare your lesson. It also includes discussion questions that could be used in a small group following the message, and artwork for promotion or message support.

These sermons are designed to be useful for all types of groups and churches, and you should feel free to make adjustments that benefit your particular circumstance.

1. Optional Illustration: What's In a Name?

On the birth certificate of one of the most famous and influential men of the 20th century, there is a hand-written note in black ink. The man we all know as Martin Luther King, Jr was born with the name Michael King, and everyone just called him "Mike." When Michael King's father was a pastor in Atlanta, his church sent him on a worldwide trip that ended in Berlin to attend a large meeting of church leaders. Reverend King saw the place where in 1517, a German monk named Martin Luther nailed his famous list to the door of the church, sparking the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. This experience profoundly changed Reverend King, and when he returned home to Atlanta in 1934, he decided to change both his name and his son's name. Young Mike King became the namesake of Martin Luther at a young age.

[Tip: Take a moment to show students Martin Luther King, Jr's original birth certificate and some images of King as a child.]

King biographers note that this name change during MLK's childhood was a biblical act. "Jacob became Israel, Saul became Paul, Simon became Peter..." We know that in the case of Martin Luther King, Jr., he certainly lived up to his namesake. He became the leader of civil rights reformation in the United States in the 1960s, helping to end segregation and work toward equality for all men and women, despite their race.

In many ways, Martin Luther King Jr. is the perfect example of a namesake. Like the man after whom he was named, Dr. King became a great reformer who worked for the freedoms of many people. This is what a namesake is meant to do: they take up the work and passions of the person they are named for.

We begin this series by talking about namesakes because they point to the issue of identity, which is one of the foundational needs for humans. We want to know where we came from. As we seek to discover our identity, we look in a lot of places, such as a family tree. In the search, if we can find where our name comes from – whose namesake we are. In this moment we can begin to see our God-given identity and live with God-given authority in the context of God-given community.

When we become believers, we become the namesakes of Christ. Our identity comes from Him. We look around and see others frantically working to establish some kind of identity, but for us as namesakes of Christ, we can work from the identity we've already been given. As we do, we discover that living in our true identity means exercising the Kingdom authority that He gives us.

As we discover whose namesake we are, we will find that our covenant with God points us toward others, not away from them. We will find identity in covenant community, and we discover that identity is not the same as individualism. Instead, our identity as namesakes of Christ leads us to be interdependent with other believers instead of independent followers of Christ. Also, we learn that we exercise Kingdom authority for the benefit of others, not for ourselves.

I want to invite you to find yourself in the family so that as we look up to receive our God-given identity, we live in covenant community and live out kingdom authority by living as namesakes of Christ. Let's begin this journey by answering a foundational question: Who are you?

II. Background

This story takes place in Ephesus, where Paul had gone on his third missionary journey. Ephesus was a central location in Asia because it had both a harbor and trade routes into the interior, and as a result, it was an incredibly important city. So, Paul strategically chose to invest there. It was a wise move because the church at Ephesus became the most important church in the world for the next 400 years.

Paul quickly found that while people in Ephesus had heard of Jesus, they did not wholly understand His saving work and therefore, did not fully follow Him. So, he preached in the synagogue and then, when opposition there grew too stubborn, moved on to the public square. For two years, Paul preached the word of the Lord in Ephesus.

Paul didn't only preach; the Holy Spirit at work in Him also led to many miracles in Ephesus. Those who didn't fully understand the way of Jesus sought to imitate this portion of Paul's ministry instead of His true discipleship. The sons of Sceva fell into this trap.

Sceva was a well-known Jewish chief priest, so his sons likely had a high profile. They desired to gain the same kind of affirmation that Paul had through healings. But they quickly learned that using Jesus' name and being Jesus' namesake are two very different things.

III. Explanation

[Read Acts 19:8-20]

During his two years in Ephesus, it was clear that Paul was a namesake of Christ. He spoke and taught persuasively, helping many people come to understand and join the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit was evident through Paul's teaching, and it was also apparent through miracles connected to Paul. Paul's life was a testimony to the name of Jesus because he did the same kinds of things that Jesus did.

Others in Ephesus wanted to be like Paul. They wanted to be powerful and influential. But instead of seeking to follow Paul's footsteps by joining the family of believers in Jesus, they tried to use Jesus (and Paul's) name to cast out demons. They wanted to make a splash, but they didn't know that Jesus was the source of the splash. So, while they invoked the right names to try to cast out demons – "In the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out" (v. 13) – they didn't try to live as namesakes of Jesus or even of Paul. They tried to use the names of powerful people to create a powerful magic spell.

But it didn't work. When the sons of Sceva, a Jewish high priest, tried to cast out a demon using the name of Jesus and Paul, the demon fought back, saying, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" (v. 16) The demon-possessed man then beat up the sons of Sceva, leaving no doubt that they did not have the power that went with Jesus' name.

This scary episode served as a corrective for many in Ephesus, and they began to treat the name of Jesus with great honor. They stopped treating the name of Jesus like magic and instead got rid of their tools for sorcery and the occult. In the process, they destroyed sorcery scrolls worth more than 135 years of daily wages.

As the people in Ephesus began to repent and following God's commands in this manner, the word of the Lord spread throughout Ephesus. Jesus' true namesakes now demonstrated the power that many had tried to usurp.

This story may seem a bit strange to us as modern readers, but it raises a crucial question: Are we following Jesus' name or merely trying to use His name? This is the question that causes an identity crisis like the one the sons of Sceva had when the demon asked, "Who are you?"

Let's see what we can learn from the question "Who are you?" so that we can move from an identity in crisis to an identity in Christ.

IV. Optional Illustration: The Great Imposter

[Tip: Show an image of Ferdinand Demara, otherwise known as the Great Imposter.]

Ferdinand Demara ran away from home to be a monk at the age of 16. Soon after, he joined the United States Army. And that's where the trouble began. Demara became famous because he was an incredible imposter. Throughout his life, he impersonated medical doctors, an engineer, law enforcement officers, a psychologist, a hospital worker, a lawyer, two different types of monk, an editor, a pastor, a cancer researcher, and a teacher. He's faked suicides, stolen the identities of friends and strangers, founded a state-chartered college, and even performed successful surgeries as a trauma surgeon aboard a naval destroyer during the Korean War (amazingly, no one under his care ever died).

[Tip: Tell a story about a time you wished you could be someone else. Did you follow-through on your wish? If not, what stopped you?]

Ferdinand Demara only spent eighteen months in jail for his impersonation crimes (and it wasn't even for posing as a fake surgeon in the Korean War!) and lived his life by an interesting code. He was quoted as saying there are only two rules: "the burden of proof is on the accuser" and "when in danger, attack."

Demara was good at one thing: he successfully used the names of others falsely. It reminds us of what the sons of Sceva were doing in the passage. They wanted to use the names of Jesus and Paul to accomplish their purposes, but they quickly found out that trying to manipulate the name of Jesus was a bad idea.

V. Application

Who are you? Are you defined by your family? By your accomplishments? By your social status or your ethnicity? By what others say about you? If we try to anchor our sole identity in these things, we will find ourselves falling into an identity crisis. But when we believe in Jesus, we move from identity crisis to an identity in Christ.

The truth is that none of these identifiers are sources of identity. At best, they are bite-sized samples. If we try to find our identity in these things, we will find ourselves falling into an identity crisis. Henri Nouwen says, "The world tells you many lies about who you are, and you simply have to be realistic

enough to remind yourself of this: every time you feel hurt or offended or rejected, you have to dare to say to yourself: ‘These feelings, strong as they may be, are not telling me the truth about myself. The truth, even though I cannot feel it right now, is that I am the chosen child of God, precious in God’s eyes, called the Beloved from all eternity, and held safe in an everlasting belief.’”

We can move from an identity in crisis to an identity in Christ. Who we are is rooted in Christ. This foundation becomes our starting point, our origin, and the cornerstone that every gift, every quirk, every trait, every identifier is built upon. You can use this foundation to test every single label the world wants to place on you. If it doesn’t sing in harmony with your identity in Christ, then it’s just not true.

Jesus wants us to live as His namesakes. He wants us not just to do His work, as the sons of Sceva tried to do, but to live in His way. He wants to give us an identity and join His community. When we do, He will empower us so that we exercise His authority, in much the same way that Paul did.

This is the journey of our *Identity Crisis* series. We’re going to see that we need to join a community of Jesus’ namesakes because our identity is unique but not independent. We’re going to see that our identity is a gift from God, not something we earn, and in the process, discover what our true identity is. And then we will seek to live out our God-given identity with authority by joining the family business, which for namesakes of God is bringing His Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

This is what an identity in Christ looks like. Thanks be to God that we can live this way instead of in an identity crisis.

VI. Optional Illustration: Samples

One of the most popular marketing strategies for companies today is the idea of a free sample. We see this everywhere – at the food sample stations in a big-box discount store, in the 30-day free trials on Internet services, or the tiny little sample cups you get at a serve-yourself frozen yogurt store. These samples are designed to get you to tap into the source from which they came by purchasing or subscribing. Once you’ve had a taste, the company figures, you’re more likely to buy in. But sometimes, people try to live on the samples without tapping into the source. It seems to work for a while, but a dinner made of one Swedish meatball at a time or setting up your 17th Netflix password grows tiresome. That’s because the sample can’t ever substitute for the source.

The sons of Sceva, and others like them, tried to sample Jesus without tapping into the source. The result of doing this, however, was not the power of Jesus but instead an identity in crisis. Let’s try to learn from their mistakes to see how we can avoid an identity crisis and instead find our identity in Christ.

VII. Closing

We don’t have to live in an identity crisis. Instead, we can receive and live out an identity in Christ by being part of a family of people who function in God-given identity and with God-given authority.

But to do this, we must move from an identity in crisis to an identity in Christ.

So where are you right now? And where do you want to be?

If you are not yet where you want to be, there is good news. An identity crisis can be just the thing we need to start the journey toward an identity in Christ. So, let us all journey toward this kind of identity together so that we can live as namesakes of Jesus Christ.

Small Group Discussion Questions

You can use these discussion questions to facilitate small groups after your sermon, or even create handouts for students to work through the message as you go. These questions are designed to help students think critically about the sermon and what it means to them.

1. What did Paul's ministry in Ephesus look like?
2. How did Paul operate as a namesake of Jesus? How did he do things like Jesus did?
3. How do we know that the sons of Sceva did not operate as namesakes of Jesus?
4. Why did the people in Ephesus come to hold the name of Jesus in high honor? How did they do this?
5. How do you determine your identity? Has this ever led to an identity crisis?
6. What is the real source of our identity?
7. What does it mean to be a namesake of Jesus? How can we live this way?