



UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

Culture Wars

February 16-22

Genesis 1-2

Things to Know

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Studying God's Word *In Community*

Reminder: The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.

Sermon Recap

Your true identity isn't shaped by culture or personal choice. Instead, your true identity is created and redeemed by God as His unique image-bearer.

Our culture is increasingly confused about identity. Culture forces us to ask questions like *Who am I?* and *What defines me?* Genesis 1:26-28 reminds us that identity is not something we invent or discover

within ourselves, but it's something we receive from God.

From the beginning, God intentionally created humanity in His image as male and female. This design is not accidental, outdated, or oppressive. His design is good, purposeful, and reflective of God's wisdom and goodness. Though sin has distorted how we see ourselves and others, the gospel offers hope. In Christ, the image of God is being restored, and our truest identity is redeemed, secured, and made whole in Him.

1. We are Created By God

Genesis 1:26

Human identity begins with God, not with self. We are not accidents or autonomous beings. We are also not the final authority. We are intentionally created by a personal Creator. Being made in God's image gives every human inherent dignity, worth, and purpose.

Identity is received, not achieved.

2. We are Defined by God

Genesis 1:27

God created humanity as male and female. This distinction is not a cultural invention but a divine design. Both men and women reflect God's image equally in value and dignity, while expressing that image in distinct and complementary ways. In a culture that treats gender as fluid and self-defined, Scripture calls us to trust God's wisdom over our feelings or societal pressure.

Gender is not something we construct. Gender is a gift God defines.

3. We are Redeemed by God

Sin has distorted our understanding of identity, but it has not erased God's image. Through Jesus, what was broken can be restored. Redemption means that through Jesus we can experience forgiveness, healing, renewal, and transformation. Our ultimate identity is not found in gender, success, sexuality, or self. Our true and ultimately identity is being made new in Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think identity has become such a central and confusing issue in our culture?
2. What does it mean to believe that identity is something we receive rather than construct or achieve?

3. How does Genesis 1 challenge the idea that gender is self-defined or fluid?
4. How can Christians hold biblical conviction while still leading with compassion and grace in this conversation?
5. Where are you most tempted to find identity apart from who God says you are?

Read

Read Genesis 1:26-28 and make observations about the text.

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
 - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
 - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
 - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
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Scripture

Genesis 1:26-28

²⁶ Then God said, “Let us make man^[a] in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.”

²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”

[The Holy Bible, English Standard Version](#). ESV® Text Edition: 2016. Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.
Genesis 1:26-28

Living on Mission In Community

Speak Truth with Grace

As followers of Jesus, we are called to be both clear and compassionate. This means holding firmly to God's design while loving people who are confused, hurting, or struggling with identity.

Live from Your Identity in Christ

When our identity is anchored in God's Word and redeemed by Christ, we are freed from the pressure to define ourselves or seek validation from culture.

How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?

Optional Breakout Questions

Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:

1. How did you feed yourself?
 - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
 2. How did you feed others?
 - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
 3. How did you feed your flesh?
 - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*
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Leader Resources - February 16-22

Small Group Curriculum - Genesis 1:26-31; 2:15

1. Session Overview

Genesis 1:26-28 gives a clear and compassionate foundation for understanding gender and identity. God is the Creator, the Definer, and the Redeemer of humanity. Identity is not fragile or fluid. Identity is anchored in God's unchanging design and restored through Christ.

Leaders should help group members see that this conversation is not about winning arguments, but about grounding identity in truth that leads to freedom, hope, and healing.

This is a gospel issue, not merely a cultural or political one. Some group members may carry personal pain or confusion. Emphasize that identity in Christ is the invitation.

2. Opening

Prayer:

"Father, You are our Creator and Redeemer. You made us with intention, dignity, and purpose, and You know us more fully than we know ourselves. As we open Your Word, give us clarity where there is confusion, humility where there is pride, and compassion. Help us listen well, speak truth in love, and live in biblical conviction. Teach us and remind us that encountering Jesus changes everything. In Jesus' name, Amen.."

Icebreaker question:

Break into groups of 2-3.

Ask:

"Where do you think people today most often look to answer the question, 'Who am I?'"

3. Scripture Reading

Have someone read Genesis 1:26-28 out loud.

4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)

1. We are Created by God (v. 26)

Human identity begins with God, not with self. We are intentionally created in God's image, which gives every person inherent dignity, worth, and purpose. We are not accidents, experiments, or self-made individuals. We are the result of Divine intention.

Leader Emphasis:

Identity is something we receive, not something we construct.

Helpful Prompt:

“What changes when we believe our identity starts with God rather than ourselves?”

2. We are Defined by God (v. 27)

God defines humanity as male and female. This distinction is not a cultural idea or social invention, but a deliberate part of God's good design. Men and women are equal in value and dignity, while distinct in how they reflect God's image.

Leader Emphasis:

God has the authority to define identity.

Helpful Prompt:

“Why is it difficult for our culture to accept the clear definitions God has placed on identity?”

3. We are Redeemed by God (Colossians 3:10)

Sin has distorted our understanding of ourselves, but it has not erased God's image. Through Christ, our identity is restored and renewed. Redemption heals and brings us back to who God designed us to be.

Leader Emphasis:

Our truest identity is not found in gender, performance, or feelings, but in Christ.

Helpful Prompt:

“How does the gospel bring hope to people who feel confused or broken in their identity?”

5. Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think identity has become such a central issue in our culture today?
2. What does it mean to say that identity is received rather than achieved or constructed?
3. How does Genesis 1 challenge the idea that gender is self-defined or fluid?
4. How can Christians hold biblical conviction while still leading with compassion and grace?
5. Where are you most tempted to find identity apart from who God says you are?

6. Application

Encourage the group to move from **information to application**.

Ask:

“What is one way God is calling you to live from your identity in Christ this week?”

Examples may include:

- Releasing the pressure to define or prove yourself.
- Choosing to trust God’s design even when it’s difficult.
- Speaking truth with gentleness in conversations about identity.
- Grounding your sense of worth in Scripture rather than feelings, emotions, or man’s approval.

7. Closing Reflection and Prayer

Reflection:

1. Where have I allowed culture, feelings, or fear to shape my identity more than God’s Word?
2. What would it look like to rest in who God says I am?

Prayer:

“God, thank You for creating us with intention and love. Help us trust Your design, receive identity from You, and walk in the freedom Christ offers. Where we are confused, please bring clarity and conviction from Your Word. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

8. Memory Verse

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” – Genesis 1:27

