

Session 1

Welcome to *OVERCOMER Bible Study Session 1*. We have this opening activity that will help us build community and get to know one another better.

Begin by jotting down ten things that describe who you are. For example they could be titles you bear, marks of personal interest, or character traits. (For example, I'm a husband. I'm a technician. I'm a student. I'm an artist. I'm a dreamer.) Use the space blank paper provided for your list.

Now, let's go around the group and allow members to name a single item on their lists. Follow that pattern again, allowing members to read the second item on their lists. Repeat the process until each person has read aloud each of his or her items.

The identifiers from the lists composed and shared are likely positive attributes or roles. Some may even reflect God's calling, making our simple descriptions of who and what we are acts of obedience. In those cases, bravo! There's a balance between following God's will and choosing our own adventure. Yet most of what we identify about ourselves tends to be self-defined and self-designated.

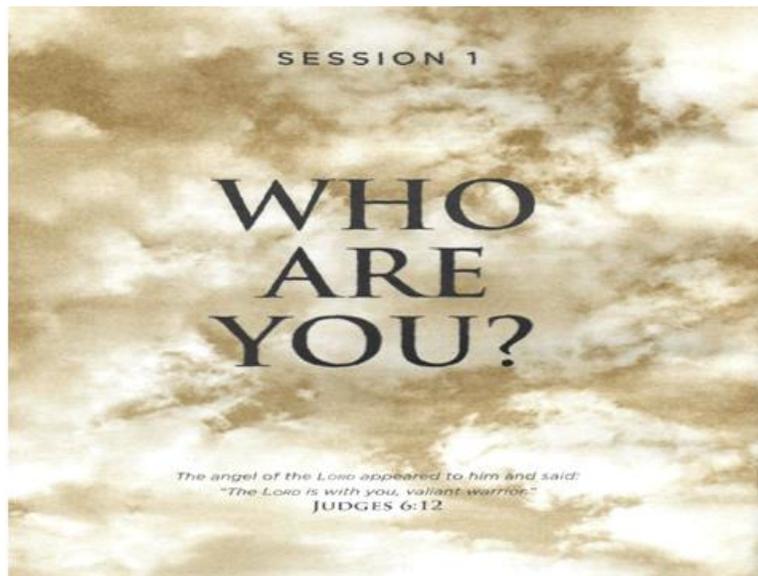
We are going to watch our first film and in this clip it not only introduces key characters but also presents the fundamental question that fuels the entire narrative. Following the clip, we will discuss the theme.

WATCH MOVIE CLIP (Movie clip now)

SUMMARY

Basketball coach John Harrison enters Principal Olivia Brooks' office and learns that the football program has been terminated. The main factory in town has closed its doors, eliminating more than five thousand jobs.

This closure is shrinking the town and crushing high-school enrollment. Without enough players, athletic programs are being cut. Olivia sees an opportunity to salvage the cross-country team by having John take over. In his mind cross country isn't even a real sport. But John is given the responsibility, and it begins to unravel his identity.



What bad news does John receive in this segment?

Do you feel that John's reaction is to be expected and normal or too severe, considering the situation?

OVERCOMER

What's John forced to give up, and what's he asked to assume responsibility?

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Read aloud Exodus 2:10-22.

Exodus 2:10 The child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter and he became her son. And she named him Moses, and said, "Because I drew him out of the water."

11 Now it came about in those days, when Moses had grown up, that he went out to his brethren and looked on their hard labors; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren. 12 So he looked this way and that, and when he saw there was no one around, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand. 13 He went out the next day, and behold, two Hebrews were fighting with each other; and he said to the offender, "Why are you striking your companion?" 14 But he said, "Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you intending to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses was afraid and said, "Surely the matter has become known."

15 When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he tried to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh and settled in the land of Midian, and he sat down by a well.

16 Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters; and they came to draw water and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. 17 Then the shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and helped them and watered their flock. 18 When they came to Reuel their father, he said, "Why have you come back so soon today?" 19 So they said, "An Egyptian delivered us from the hand of the shepherds, and what is more, he even drew the water for us and watered the flock." 20 He said to his daughters, "Where is he then? Why is it that you have left the man behind? Invite him to have something to eat." 21 Moses was willing to dwell with the man, and he gave his daughter Zipporah to Moses. 22 Then she gave birth to a son, and he named him Gershom, for he said, "I have been a sojourner in a foreign land."

Q. Brainstorm all of the titles and character traits that could apply to Moses.

A. Maybe favored to be alive and privileged (vs 10) judge, jury, executioner, murderer

Read aloud Exodus 3:1-6, 9-14. What do these verses reveal about Moses' identity?

What changed about Moses' nature between chapters 2 and 3?

Moses lived a life of luxury as a prince in Egypt, having been rescued and raised by the daughter of Pharaoh, Consider his boldness to both the Egyptian caught in abusing a Hebrew kinsman and the Hebrew whose behavior he addressed. That's hardly the reluctant leader we encounter in chapter 3, in which we learn that Moses

had become a shepherd and an everyday husband, father, and son-in-law. Moses was living a simple life under the radar until God revealed His plan to use Moses to deliver the Israelites from slavery.

Q. Moses offered a series of reasons he couldn't serve God and lead Israel. Why?

The presuppositions Moses believed about himself and the opinions others would undoubtedly perceive about him outweighed who the Creator made Moses to be. He was living out an identity of his own making.

Read aloud Judges 6:6-16.

6 So Israel was brought very low because of Midian, and the sons of Israel cried to the LORD.
7 Now it came about when the sons of Israel cried to the LORD on account of Midian, 8 that the LORD sent a prophet to the sons of Israel, and he said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'It was I who brought you up from Egypt and brought you out from the house of slavery. 9 'I delivered you from the hands of the Egyptians and from the hands of all your oppressors, and dispossessed them before you and gave you their land, 10 and I said to you, "I am the LORD your God; you shall not fear the gods of the Amorites in whose land you live. But you have not obeyed Me.'"

Gideon Is Visited

11 Then the angel of the LORD came and sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash the Abiezrite as his son Gideon was beating out wheat in the wine press in order to save it from the Midianites. 12 The angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, "The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior." 13 Then Gideon said to him, "O my lord, if the LORD is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, 'Did not the LORD bring us up from Egypt?' But now the LORD has abandoned us and given us into the hand of Midian." 14 The LORD looked at him and said, "Go in this your strength and deliver Israel from the hand of Midian. Have I not sent you?" 15 He said to Him, "O Lord, how shall I deliver Israel? Behold, my family is the least in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house." 16 But the LORD said to him, "Surely I will be with you, and you shall defeat Midian as one man."

Q. What are the similarities and differences you see between Gideon and Moses?

Israel's tribe of Manasseh, named for Joseph's elder son, came in sixth of the twelve tribes in the number of fighting-age men (see Num. 26)—hardly the smallest tribe. When combined with Joseph's younger son, Ephraim, they surpassed any of Jacob's sons. However, when Israel was oppressed by Midian, Gideon claimed to be among the weakest clan in his tribe and the weakest man in his family. Yet God described Gideon as a mighty warrior.

Now let's look at your homework

DAY 1
WHO YOU ARE STARTS WITH WHERE YOU COME FROM

Create a list of people and priorities in your life that are important to you. Be as specific as you like, but in some cases a category will suffice. For example, you can record "My family" instead of listing each individual member.

Take inventory to make sure your list is complete, including items of even nominal importance.

Now the exercise becomes more challenging. Start marking entries off your list in order, from least to greatest importance. Which ones can you live without? Narrow your list to only two or three of your top priorities. Those indicate not only what's of great worth to you but also what's absolutely vital in making you who you are.

The old expression "You are what you eat" reminds you to make wise choices about healthful eating, but it holds little weight in creating an identity. A truer phrase is "You are what's important to you."

You define yourself by your values. The problem with that truth is the word *your*, which implies your own sovereignty despite your vast limitations as a mortal. Who are you to determine who you are? Even if you have that authority, where was it derived from? Scripture has the answer.

Read Genesis 1:26. God said, "Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth,

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GENESIS 1:26**

What description of humanity's inherent nature and position did God offer in this verse? GENESIS 1:26

None...God made man in his image!

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God didn't wait to confer with the man to determine what his nature should or shouldn't include and what his calling or direction in life should be. God also created you to bear His image. Right from the beginning, before any of us were formed, God had a plan. For the couple in the garden, that included a definitive purpose.

Read Ephesians 2:10 and rewrite it in your own words.

These words by Paul follow a powerful description of salvation (see vv. 8-9). God has miraculously and graciously saved us to accomplish the purpose He intended.

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Eph 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

..These words by Paul follow a powerful description of salvation (see vv. 8-9). God has miraculously and graciously saved us to accomplish the purpose He intended

How does knowing and being reminded of where you come from and why you were created shape your identity?
Revisit your lists for the week, both the one you created in the group session and the one you recorded at the beginning of this personal study. Which descriptions of you and values you hold are consistent with the image of God in you and the good work God planned for you?
Which ones might you need to reevaluate? End today's study by asking God to show you the priorities and pursuits you need to eliminate and the ones you need to embrace in order to define yourself by His purpose for you.

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DAY 2

WHO YOU ARE INCLUDES WHERE YOU'VE BEEN

An important exercise for any Christ follower is to compose a gospel testimony. A basic formula is to answer the following three questions. Take time to answer these if you haven't done so lately.

What was your life like before Christ?

How did you encounter and begin to trust Christ?

What's life like now as a follower of Christ?

A well-formed Christian identity comes from an understanding of the distinct truth that God Almighty created us to bear His image and to follow His purpose. It also includes a keen, ready recognition of where we've been. All of us began by living a life of sin and rebellion. Only when we trust Christ does He begin to redefine our identity.

Along the way Israel suffered many consequences for its frequent refusal to live according to God's plans. That disobedience was sin. Why did people who had tasted God's goodness drift and adopt an identity apart from God's design?

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DAY 2

WHO

An important exercise is to answer the following questions lately.

What was your life like?

How did you end up here?

What's life like now?

A well-formed character is the result of a well-formed understanding of the world.

Understanding the world is the first step to bearing His will.

Understanding the world includes a keen awareness of the world.

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Examine Genesis 3:1-6. In this early snapshot of human history, the first man and woman chose to believe a lie. Why did they do that? Based on what you read, specifically in verse 6, why did the couple succumb to the serpent's temptation?

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Gen 3:1-6 CHAPTER 3

The Fall of Man

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?" ² The woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; ³ but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.'" ⁴ The serpent said to the woman, "**You surely will not die!** ⁵ **"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."** ⁶ When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.

Satan gave them partial truths, **You surely will not die!** ⁵ **"For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."**

Partial truths always lead to deception and the one being deceived is us. We will now investigate some questions about our own lives. You may choose to not answer these out loud, however I encourage you to respond to the principals we uncover.

Are there patterns of sin in your life that formed because you've believed lies? Explain.

Are there patterns of sin in your life that formed because you chose your own pleasure and what you perceived to be good? Explain.

Read Daniel 1:1-7.

It wasn't enough to take over a nation in Nebuchadnezzar's day. To ensure long-lasting dominance, the culture of the ransacked nation had to be replaced by that of Babylon. It was an effective leadership strategy. Nebuchadnezzar selected leaders from the displaced people group and set out to influence them first.

Q. Are there patterns of sin in your life that formed because you've believed lies?

Explain. Perhaps, these patterns of like include, telling half-truths, or things listed in Galatians chapter 5 “¹⁹ Now the deeds of the flesh (or patterns of life) are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Q. Are there patterns of sin in your life that formed because you chose your own pleasure and what you perceived to be good?

Explain. Here and now pleasure is a prime method of feeding our wants, instead of relying on god for our needs.

Read Daniel 1:1-7.

1 In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. **2** The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.

3 Then the king ordered Ashpenaz, the chief of his officials, to bring in some of the sons of Israel, including some of the royal family and of the nobles, **4** youths in whom was no defect, who were good-looking, showing intelligence in every branch of wisdom, endowed with understanding and discerning knowledge, and who had ability for serving in the king's court; and he ordered him to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. **5** The king appointed for them a daily ration from the king's choice food and from the wine which he drank, and appointed that they should be educated three years, at the end of which they were to enter the king's personal service. **6** Now among them from

the sons of Judah were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. 7 Then the commander of the officials assigned new names to them; and to Daniel he assigned the name Belteshazzar, to Hananiah Shadrach, to Mishael Meshach and to Azariah Abed-nego.

It wasn't enough to take over a nation in Nebuchadnezzar's day. To ensure long-lasting dominance, the culture of the ransacked nation had to be replaced by that of Babylon. It was an effective leadership strategy. Nebuchadnezzar selected leaders from the displaced people group and set out to influence them first.

What were the criteria for Nebuchadnezzar's chosen influencers among the Israelites?

The elements of the royal table in Babylon would have been prohibited by Jewish dietary laws. Later in the chapter Daniel and a few friends requested permission to avoid the rich diet. The implicit fact is that many of Israel's elite gave in. Was it the lust of the eyes, the lies of the enemy, or the overwhelming pressure from their new surroundings that caused the unnamed young men to give in?

All of us have been in a place where something or someone has lured us away from God's plan. Although that's an awful place to remain, it's not a bad place to recall. Knowing where you've been points you to forgiveness and gives God an opportunity to display the attributes of His character that you need most.

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Perfect in every way according to verse 4

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Nebuchadnezzar needed to change their identity to accomplish his goals.

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Q. Was it the lust of the eyes, the lies of the enemy, or the overwhelming pressure from their new surroundings that caused the unnamed young men to give in?

A. We know there were many taken, and we know that four remained faithful to God because their identity was in God... but what about the others who were taken?

All of us have been in a place where something or someone has lured us away from God's plan. Although that's an awful place to remain, it's not a bad place to recall. Knowing where you've been points you to forgiveness and gives God an opportunity to display the attributes of His character that you need most.

If your sinful state has been repented of and forgiven, recalling the darkness of that place provides good motivation never to return. An identity characterized by forgiveness makes the best foundation for your life today.

Pray about any patterns of sin you identified today. Confess and ask God to forgive you and to show you changes you can make to align your life with His plan. If you've already received God's forgiveness for ways you've departed from His purpose, thank Him in prayer today.

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DAY 3
WHO You ARE ULTIMATELY
INDICATES WHERE
YOU'RE HEADED

In the group session you described who you are with declarative titles. Perhaps you identified yourself by your family role, such as a parent, or by a professional role, such as a teacher. Maybe you opted for more personal characterizations or hobbies, like a dreamer or a reader.

How does the way you describe yourself shape the direction of your life?

When a person operates in an identity other than the one God intended, how does that identity affect the direction his or her life takes?

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When a person operates in an identity other than the one God intended, how does that identity affect the direction his or her life takes?

Recall your study of Moses and Gideon from the group session. Both Old Testament heroes were blessed by a relationship with God. He defined who they were and determined where they went.

Read Exodus 3:12-14. What promise did God make to Moses?

What did knowing God's name provide for Moses?

Read Judges 6:16-22. What similar promise did God make to Gideon?

Recall your study of Moses and Gideon from the group session. Both Old Testament heroes were blessed by a relationship with God. He defined who they were and determined where they went.

Read Exodus 3:12-14. What promise did God make to Moses?

¹² And He said, "Certainly I will be with you, and this shall be the sign to you that it is I who have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God at this mountain."

¹³ Then Moses said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?" ¹⁴ God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM"; and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Q. What did knowing God's name provide for Moses?

It presented the identity of God

Read Judges 6:16-22. What similar promise did God make to Gideon?

¹⁶ But the LORD said to him, "**Surely I will be with you**, and you shall defeat Midian as one man." ¹⁷ So Gideon said to Him, "If now I have found favor in Your sight, then show me a sign that it is You who speak with me." ¹⁸ "Please do

not depart from here, until I come *back* to You, and bring out my offering and lay it before You." And He said, "I will remain until you return."

¹⁹ Then Gideon went in and prepared a young goat and unleavened bread from an ephah of flour; he put the meat in a basket and the broth in a pot, and brought *them* out to him under the oak and presented *them*. ²⁰ The angel of God said to him, "Take the meat and the unleavened bread and lay them on this rock, and pour out the broth." And he did so. ²¹ Then the angel of the LORD put out the end of the staff that was in his hand and touched the meat and the unleavened bread; and fire sprang up from the rock and consumed the meat and the unleavened bread. Then the angel of the LORD vanished from his sight. ²² When Gideon saw that he was the angel of the LORD, he said, "Alas, O Lord GOD! For now I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face."

In other words, I have experienced the identity of Almighty-God

Next week's study, You are Broken