DISCUSSION GUIDE

Week 1: A Disciple Knows Who They Are

Main Idea: Built Different: A disciple's identity is received from Jesus.
Discipleship Rhythm: The Image of God

1 Corinthians 1:1–9

"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought." (1 Corinthians 1:10).

OBSERVATION: WHAT DOES IT SAY?

Gather in groups of three to five people and discuss the Observation and Interpretation sections.

Observation Exercise 1: How Paul described himself

Read 1 Corinthians 1:1. How did Paul describe himself (who he was, how he became an apostle)?

Suggested Response: Paul described himself as called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God.

Observation Exercise 2: How Paul described the Corinthians

Read 1 Corinthians 1:2–3. Make a list of the words and phrases Paul used to describe the Corinthian believers and their relationship to God, Jesus, and other believers.

Suggested Response: Paul called them "the church of God in Corinth," "sanctified in Christ Jesus," and "called to be his holy people." He also placed them together with believers everywhere who call on the name of Jesus. Paul said Jesus was "their Lord and ours."

Observation Exercise 3: What God has done

Read 1 Corinthians 1:4–9. List the actions Paul said God had taken, was taking, or would take for the Corinthians.

Suggested Response: God had given them grace in Christ, enriched them in speech and knowledge, confirmed the testimony about Christ among them, and given them spiritual gifts. He would keep them firm to the end and make them blameless on the day of Christ. Paul also said God is faithful and had called them into fellowship with His Son.

INTERPRETATION: WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Interpretation Exercise 1: A calling that comes from God

Why did Paul emphasize that he was called to be an apostle "by the will of God"? What does this reveal about the source of a disciple's identity and calling?

Suggested Response: Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand that his role did not come from ambition, status, self-appointment, or being appointed other people. God called him and gave him his assignment. In the same way, a disciple's deepest identity is received from God rather than created through achievement or the approval of others.

Interpretation Exercise 2: A local church belongs to a larger story

Why did Paul connect the believers in Corinth with "all those everywhere" who call on the name of Jesus? How should this have affected the way the Corinthians thought about themselves?

Suggested Response: Paul reminded them that they were part of a larger group of believers than their local expression. This means they were not an isolated group, free to define faith according to local culture or personal preference. Besides being made in the image of God, like the rest of mankind, they also belonged to the worldwide people of God under one Lord. Their identity was both personal and communal: they belonged to Jesus, and they belonged alongside everyone else who calls on His name.

Interpretation Exercise 3: Grace before correction

Why did Paul begin by reminding the Corinthians of their identity?

Suggested Response: Paul grounded believers in identity first. This is foundational to who we are, in contrast to looking at behaviors as foundational. The Corinthians needed to change some behaviors, but they did not need to invent a new identity or earn God's acceptance. God had already called them, set them apart, gifted them, and promised to sustain them. Paul wanted them to live in a way that matched the identity they had already received in Christ.

APPLICATION: HOW DO I RESPOND?

Question 1: What words or phrases caught your attention from the passage?

Suggested Response: Responses will vary. As a leader, be prepared to share. Also, as follow-up questions to explore why a particular word or phrase was meaningful or challenging to your group.

Question 2: Paul began by affirming, in Christ, who we are, how we belong, and what we are supposed to do. What are some good things about your identity you are celebrating right now?

Suggested Response: Responses will vary. Some phrases to help prompt responses are: designed by God; an image bearer of God; commissioned to steward God's creation and world; sanctified in Christ; set apart in Christ; part of a global community of Jesus followers; saved by God in Christ; endowed fully; established in faith by God; gifted spiritually; alert to our future hope; sustained by God till Christ's coming; in relationship with God the Father through the Son, Jesus Christ; etc.

Question 3: What are you tempted to believe about yourself that goes against who God says you are?

Suggested Response: Responses will vary. Use follow-up questions to invite transparent discussion. "I am challenged to remember that I am fully designed and called by God. Therefore, I am established in faith and do not have to prove myself or earn a relationship with Him. But I feel like I need to prove myself, and jobs seem like a really big deal to demonstrate status. So I try to make my job sound like it is unique and carries a lot of importance. I spend a lot of time working myself into increasing levels of leadership so I am recognized."

Question 4: How does being made in the image of God (imago Dei) give your life purpose?

Suggested Response: The Maker and Designer sets the foundation for who I am and the purpose for how I live and what I do. Like an artist who creates a masterpiece or an engineer who designs a product, the Creator instills identity and provides purpose.

Question 5: What are you learning about God from this passage that is leading you into richer devotion?

Suggested Response: Responses will vary. "I am choosing to believe God will keep me to the end and present me blameless. I don't feel like I can be blameless. But God says He will do this! And what a mercy in my life to forgive

and remove my failures and rebellious behaviors! I worship Him! He is good. He is faithful!"

Question 6: Paul connected the Corinthians with believers "everywhere" who call on Jesus. How does our shared identity in Christ impact the way we view and treat other believers?

Suggested Response: Remembering we share one Lord should help me resist pride, competition, isolation, and unnecessary division. I can honor believers from different backgrounds, remain teachable, pursue unity, and remember that God's family is larger than my preferences or immediate group. Paul began by affirming common identity. I want to intentionally focus on this first, not differences with others.

Question 7: What can we do this week as a group to help one another remember and live from our identity in Christ?

Suggested Response: As a group, we can remind one another of what God says is true, pray for areas where insecurity or comparison has taken hold, and encourage one another when we see God's grace at work. We can also choose one truth from this passage to repeat and practice throughout the week.