

Module 1 Rooted: Knowing and Believing Who You Are

“Rooted: Knowing and Believing Who You Are” is the first module for a very distinct reason. The three teachings in this module are based around setting the scene for deeper conversations about issues that have the ability to penetrate our identity, so much so that sometimes we allow them to define us. First, we talk about the importance of identity, then about the distinguishable difference between love and infatuation. Finally, we dive into “God, Guys, and Girls” and getting our relationship right with God before we get our relationships with others right. Who we think we are really affects how we live into other relationships.

- *Teaching 1: Identity*

- Theme: When you know whose you are, you begin to truly believe in who you are. The world will ALWAYS remind you of what you are not, and you must constantly remind yourself who you eternally and innately are in Christ. When you come to believe your identity in Jesus is ALL that defines you, it changes everything. It changes how you live, what you believe, and how you do relationships with others. God’s spoken your identity over you before you’ve even realized it; let’s talk about how to live into that identity and allow it to transform our lives.
- **MAIN QUESTIONS:** Who are you? Does what you do determine who you are? Does what other people think of you determine who you are? Does what you are good at or what you’re not good at determine who you are? In a world full of opinions of what is right and what is wrong, how do we know who we are?
- **Main Points:**
 - *Creation v. Evolution topic* - Who do you believe you are?
 - *Bottom line of the Gospel* - you aren’t worthless, you’re worth it.
 - *Woman at the well discussion* - This is the kicker... when she [the woman at the well] learned that Jesus was right in front of her, offering her eternal life, she left the water jar – the vessel that held the water that would never satisfy. She left it behind – moved from a life driven by fear that she would be alone, a life in which she was not good enough and was rejected, to a life rooted in faith, to a life rooted in Christ, because she had an encounter with the God that made her. She left the vessel and became a vessel – drawing people to Jesus. She runs back into the town, full of people who have condemned her for her sins, and says ... “come and see this man who fully knows me and yet still loved me!” She was amazed that God knew all of her deeds, good and bad, yet He didn’t label

her by what she had done. He offered her eternal life anyway. That caused her to stop filling her vessel with worldly things to her being a vessel filled with God's love. We dig wells in the world and seek to be filled with purpose and satisfaction, and then we are shocked when they don't deliver on their promises.

- *Ask students:* What's filling your water jar?
- *Main Scriptures:*
 - Genesis 1:27, Genesis 2:7 (humanity)
 - Psalm 139 (creation)
 - Galatians 5:19-20 (acts of flesh, sin, and fallen humanity)
 - John 3:16
- *Small Group Questions*
 1. Take some time and think about these questions in light of the Gospel: Who am I, and what am I doing here?
 2. Who do you think that Jesus is? Do you believe He is who He says He is? Do you believe you are who He says you are?
 3. What vessel have you been looking to for purpose and satisfaction?
 4. What did Jesus mean when He said that He could offer her "living water?" Did He require anything from her before He offered it to her?
 5. What would it look like if you lived your life as a vessel already full with Jesus?

- *Teaching 2: Love v. Infatuation*

- Theme: There are a lot of ways to define love. So many in fact, that when it comes to loving people, we WILL get it wrong... unless we look to the Bible. Real love is often tainted by what we see to be normal in movies, books, and music; instead of investing in relationships, "hooking up" has become the new norm, and commitment is not something that many people either desire or know how to do well. Statistics show that about 60% of married people will eventually be divorced. That statistic is daunting, but there is a way to do relationships better. That way is made clear when we don't see love as an emotion, but when we see it as a choice. This week, we're going to tackle how we get to the bottom of what it really means to love.
- **MAIN QUESTIONS:** What is a good model for a healthy relationship? What's the difference between love and infatuation? Have you been defining attraction incorrectly? What does Jesus teach us about love?
- **Main points:**

- We love a lot of things: pizza, friends, our families, our dogs, and the sports we play. I say “I love you” to my best girlfriends and send them all the heart-eyed emojis every time I end a conversation with them. But let’s ask an important question. Is the way I love my iced coffee the same type of love that I give my momma? Well, I’d sure hope not... but if we say we love all of these things, how do we know what love really is?
- *Four Greek words for love v. one English word for love* - what’s the big deal about that?
- *Leads to a misuse of the word* - love v. infatuation definitions
- *A greater truth:* We are all love-sick and love-diseased. Our views of romance, sexuality, dating, and marriage are killing us. We’ve been infected for years and haven’t even realized it. There are few things in this world that can cause you more pain, grief, and hurt than relationships and the pursuit of love. In order to realize where we went so wrong, we first need to see where it was all so right.
- *1 Corinthians 13*
- Why do we look at people who stink at love to teach us how to love, when we could be looking at the Creator of love to teach us how to love?
- *Why is agape love the type of love that we want to give and receive?*
- *Prayer* - “God, sometimes I don’t know what commitment looks like. Sometimes, I want to quit and give up. Help me to stay in the fight and not to act on my emotions. Help me to come to you first when I’m feeling discouraged and unloved, so that You can remind me of who I am. Grow endurance in me and make me dependent on You. Let me look to you and realize how loved and cherished I truly am. Shape me into an expression of Your agape love. I know that I can do none of this without You, and I thank You that You will never change and You’ll never leave me. I want to love people like You love me. Help me to do that, Lord. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”
- *Main Scriptures:*
 - 1 John 4:10, 16-17
 - 1 Corinthians 13
 - Romans 12:12 (World v. Word)
- *Small Group Questions:*
 1. What’s the difference between love and infatuation?

2. Have you ever thought you've loved someone when you've just been infatuated with them? (Leaders: share a funny story when you've experienced this).
3. What does Paul mean in the book of Romans when he says "do not conform to the pattern of this world?" What are some practical ways we can live different in our relationships?
4. What is agape love?
5. Have you ever been in a tough situation where you didn't know how to love someone because you didn't agree with them? What can God teach us about loving those we don't agree with or those who have hurt us?

- **Teaching 3: God, Guys, and Girls**

- *Theme: So often, we place too much emphasis on who we are attracted to in a romantic way. While feeling romantic love can be a beautiful gift we're given by God, should we actually be placing as much emphasis on these relationships as we are? Culturally, the pressure to date and pair off starts at a very young age, and it only grows greater as we mature and grow up. If we want to do relationships better than we have been, we must realize that they aren't all about us. Relationships are about the other person; we know this because that's what Jesus teaches us. In order to be a source of life and not a sucker of life, we need to make sure we're connected to the original source of life Himself. We must get our relationship with God right before we can get relationships with each other right. Once we're on the journey with Him, He will bring a companion alongside of us who is on the journey with Him, too! Sex is first and foremost a reference to our maleness or femaleness. We are either a son of God or a daughter of God. Therein lies all of our identity. We are His and uniquely designed to reflect Him as men and women. Male and female, we bear the image of God distinctively. In this teaching, we'll take a look at creation and how God speaks into our sexual identities from the very beginning.*
- **MAIN QUESTIONS:** What does creation have to do with relationships? Before I pair off with an individual, am I getting my relationship with God right? What happens if I'm attracted to the same-sex? How does that change how I navigate dating and relationships?
- **Main Points:**
 - What initial feelings do you have when I bring up dating? (It's important to talk about the fact that not everyone feels the same about dating & that's okay).
 - The list of opinions goes on and on and on. In a world full of opinions on dating, how do we know where the Truth lies? I for one

stand here knowing that the absolute truth about dating is found right in the Bible. I believe that everything in the Bible is true, including what it has to say about who and how we date. We aren't told exactly what decisions to make, but we are given parameters and boundaries, which are going to lead us to flourish and thrive in relationships. Because of God's Holy Spirit, we are able to call on His power, which lives inside of us. The Holy Spirit can help us discern what God's will is for our relationships as we grow deeper in our relationship with Jesus. The Holy Spirit comforts us, instructs us, gives us peace, and convicts us. All we have to do is ask for wisdom, and we will receive it, if we're willing to listen and obey out of love for the Father.

- *Dating tension: culture v. Truth* (**Dating isn't bad, it's just how we are doing it that is.** The truth is: It's really hard to find a companion on the journey of life when we don't even know why we're here or what we are doing here. Before we get into how to create and sustain a relationship with another person, we have to deal with us!
- The Bible actually doesn't have a lot to say about "dating" exclusively, because it is a fairly new cultural idea.
- The majority of the Bible is a different kind of love story - a love story between God and His people. **The golden rule for dating is this, and it's found in Mark 12:30...** *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*
- Sexual preference is no different than any other struggle; if you're struggling with something, you are told to bring it into the light. Either we choose to trust in His word or we trust our own feelings. Either I look to Him for the pleasure of what my soul craves, or I search for it in lesser things. Either I walk in obedience to what He says, or I reject His truth as if it were a lie. I'd argue that the struggle with homosexuality is not an identity battle but rather a faith battle. Is God your joy? Is He good enough? Or are you still looking to broken vessels to quench a thirst only He can satisfy? That is the battle.
- Depending on your group, feel free to dive into homosexuality struggles and other sexual sins and what the Bible says about them - don't ignore them.
- *Application:* After the fall, when Adam and Eve were separated from God, we see a trend within humanity. Cain and Abel, two brothers, are the next men named in the Bible... and if you know the story, you know that Cain ends up killing Abel. There was enough room for each of them (seriously, there were like.... very

few people on the Earth at this point), but Cain still felt the need to defend his honor, to be the best. Again, where there is scarcity there is desperation and where there is desperation there is exploitation. Cain wanted so badly to be better than his brother, that he was willing to exploit him to boost himself higher. In the same way, when we feel threatened, we become desperate, and we exploit others. Exploitation by definition is the action of treating someone unfairly in order to reap the benefits for yourself; in other words, exploitation means sacrificing someone else's well-being or happiness to ensure your own.

- In the same way, after the fall, the next two women who were named in the Bible by name were both appropriated by one man. We see the sexual misuse of women enter the world.
- What does this tell us? Selfishness came into play after the fall. When we break away from God, we break away from each other. Every person of the opposite sex becomes someone to fill the vacancy in us. Every person of the same sex becomes competition. Every person becomes someone to fill some sort of emptiness in us. We look at what we can get from someone and what they have to offer us. But we tell ourselves it's fine, as long as it builds our personal kingdoms. We see pornography – the objectification of women – running rampant in our culture. We see men just wanting to use their bodies and not putting in the effort it takes to care for their souls. Love has become cheap, and it's become easy. We're missing out on the love we were created for and trading it for a cheaper, superficial version. If we look closely enough at our culture, we see that too often we use each other as a means of filling the God-sized vacancy in our souls.
- **The question you need to answer is: Before I pair off with an individual, am I getting my relationship with God right? Do I know where to go for answers, or am I looking everywhere else BUT the Bible?**
 - This will take the desperation out of dating.
- *Main Scriptures:*
 - Proverbs 31:30
 - 1 John 4:7
- *Small Group Questions:*
 1. What type of feelings does dating bring up for you?
 2. Culturally, what does dating look like? What are some ways we talked about the Bible being countercultural when it comes to dating?

3. What does the Bible say about Jesus being a source of life? Do you believe that to be true?
4. How does it change the dating-game when you're connected to the source of life? How does the Holy Spirit come into play with our relationship with Jesus?
5. Where do you normally take your tough relationship questions? What do you think about taking them to God from now on? (*Youth Leaders: Lean into and discuss what this practically looks like*)
6. Take some time to reflect on your past relationships or your hopeful future relationships. What do you need to ask God to redeem in you, and what do you need to be more faithful in praying about for your future partner?