

**LESSON 3 - IDENTITY**  
**I AM LOVED AND ACCEPTED**

**To the Teacher:** Spend time this week with the Lord asking him to bring back incidences in your own life where you were more concerned with pleasing others than pleasing God. It is something that we all fall prey to at different times in our life. Our need for love and acceptance is a major driving force in our lives and Satan is very much aware of that fact. However, your students need to understand that those needs were put there by God to drive us towards Him and the plans and purposes he has for our lives. His love for us and acceptance of us is unconditional.

**Concept:**  
**True Identity**

**Follow up:**

Have the students share what they discovered about themselves as they read the “Who I Am in Christ” bookmark.

**Objectives/Goal:**

- To understand that God’s love and acceptance of us is unconditional.
- To understand that Satan is always trying to influence us to make something in our life bigger and more important than God so that we miss out on what God has for us.
- To learn how to identify and overcome the thoughts and feelings that make us vulnerable to peer pressure.
- To understand why we cannot allow people to fill needs in us that were put there by God for Him alone to fill.

**Plan Ahead:**

- Meditate this week on the scriptures for discussion in the Looking Forward section and the student handout.
- Make copies of the handout for the students.
- Make a list of how God’s unconditional love for you made a difference in your life.
- Write down your own thoughts as to how the questions on the handout relate to peer pressure.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to show you times when you have allowed the opinions of others to become more important than God’s opinion.

**Launch Out:**

**Introduction:**

“For a long time, I didn’t have any self-esteem,” Scott began. “If I didn’t have a \$200 pair of sneakers and a \$90 sweatshirt then I didn’t want to go to school because I didn’t feel good about myself.” Who would have thought that beneath Scott’s cool, confident image that his ego could be crushed if he had to wear a cheap pair of sneakers and a generic sweatshirt?

Of course Scott's shoes were not the problem. The problem was Scott's so called "reputation." The problem was that Scott felt that if he didn't have the most expensive shoes people would think less of him. There are so many ways that we are controlled by other people. We have a lot of names for it – reputation, peer pressure, people-pleasing, codependency (living your life trying to help or fix someone else), etc.

In our teens, we usually call it peer pressure. The Bible has a lot to say about peer pressure. It asks you questions such as: Whom will you fear (need approval or be controlled by)? Will you fear God or people? Understand that peer pressure is simply defined as a "fear of people." The Bible gives three basic reasons why we fear people.

- 1) We fear people because they can expose or humiliate us.
- 2) We fear people because they can reject, ridicule, and hate us.
- 3) We fear people because they can attack, persecute, and threaten us.

Peer pressure is largely about insecurity and a desire for acceptance by everyone). It is only in learning to value God's opinion over man's that we will ever be able to stand against the enemy's tactics and gain victory. God's love for us is not based on what we wear or what we do. Because he created us, He knows we will make mistakes. However, the scripture tells us that NOTHING "can separate us from His love."

With the help of God, we can learn not to give in to peer pressure. Throughout history, those who have been unafraid to stand on unpopular beliefs have been the ones to change the world and make things happen. There is so much in this world that we need to change, and so many people who need to experience God's love through us. Letting other people decide what we do and how we behave is exactly what Satan hopes we will do; if we never stand up for what is right because of peer pressure, we are actually standing up for what is wrong and the world will not see Christ through us.

### **Looking Forward:**

#### **Teacher Introduces whole group discussion and elicits student responses:**

What does the Bible say about dealing with peer pressure? The Bible never uses the words "peer pressure," but it does tell us how we should deal with those very issues.

#### **Teacher introduces main scripture:**

1 John 4:18 (NKJV) "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love."

(Understand that we are made perfect in love because of what Christ did for us. We only need to accept it as truth to become courageous.)

## **What does the Bible say about our relationship with God?**

Please look up Romans 8:31-39 (NIV):

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? <sup>36</sup> As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.” <sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## **What does this mean for our life today? Who has the real power?**

How can knowing that God loves you overcome fear?

How can we allow fear to motivate us?

How does this scripture relate to peer pressure?

### **Break Out:**

#### **Teacher introduces small group activities:**

1. Have the students discuss the scriptures on their handout.
2. Have each group list ways that peer pressure negatively affects their lives.
3. Then have each group make a second list of how things would be different if they stood on God’s unconditional love and did not allow peer pressure to motivate or control them.
4. Bring them back into the whole group and discuss.

### **Take Away:**

Our desire to please God has to be more important to us than pleasing man. He accepts and loves us unconditionally.

**Going Forward:**

(Activation) There is a book called When People are Big and God is Small by Edward T. Welch who challenges us: “Need People Less. Love God More.” In other words, let God fill your need for love and acceptance more than you let people in your life fill those needs. Consider that challenge this week as you go about your daily routine. Bring an example of what you have learned to class next week.

**Teacher’s Summary:**

We have discovered that God wants to be the one who has influence in our life. The fear of the opinions of others can cripple what God wants to do in and through us. The more we realize God’s unconditional love for us, the more we trust Him to be the person of influence in our life.

**Teacher ends with prayer:** “Let us end this lesson with a prayer.”

Father, help me to recognize your unconditional love for me and show me every area of my life that I have allowed others to influence my actions, beliefs, opinions, motives, desires, choices, etc. in ways that are not pleasing to you. (Confess what God has brought to your attention and ask His forgiveness.) I pray that you, Lord, would give me the strength and wisdom to not fall into that same trap again but to walk courageously in your plans for my life. In your power, I can be a world changer.

**Lesson 3 - Handout**  
**I am Loved and Accepted**

How do the following scriptures relate to peer pressure?

Proverbs 29:25 (NCV) says, “Being afraid of people can get you into trouble, but if you trust the LORD, you will be safe.”

---

---

---

---

Romans 12:1-2 (MSG) says, “So here’s what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work (school), and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don’t become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

---

---

---

---

Romans 12:14-16 (MSG) says, “Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they’re happy; share tears when they’re down. Get along with each other; don’t be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don’t be the great somebody.”

---

---

---

---