



# LIFEgroup Study Guide

October 10 - November 7



# LIFEgroup Study Guide

This study guide follows along with LBF Church's current Sunday message series, and is intended to be a supplement in your daily passionate pursuit of Jesus.

- *Watch last Sunday's message video:*  
*[[www.lbf.church/messages](http://www.lbf.church/messages)]*

## **Great Cloud of Witnesses**

Hebrews 12:1-3 • Pg. 4-6 • October 10

## **Lesson 5: I Determine My Identity**

Genesis 1:26-28 • Pg. 7-9 • October 17

## **Lesson 6: My Race Is Who I Am**

Acts 17:24-28 • Pg. 10-12 • October 24

## **Lesson 7: My Sexual Desires Are Who I Am**

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 • Pg. 13-15 • October 31

## **Lesson 8: All Authority Is Oppressive**

Romans 13:1-5 • Pg. 16-18 • November 7

Is your group stumped? Did you come to a question that you feel needs clarification? Our church isn't too big. Contact Pastor Dan with your questions.

- *Contact Pastor Dan:*  
*[danfranklin@lbfchurch.com](mailto:danfranklin@lbfchurch.com)*



## Great Cloud Of Witnesses

### October 10 • by Dan Franklin

---

### Main Point

God's faithfulness in the past inspires us to trust him with the future.

### Introduction

Life Bible Fellowship Church became an official organization in 1971. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the church, and this leads us to want to look to the past while also looking to the future. We want to remember God's past faithfulness so that we can be empowered to trust him with our future.

Hebrews 12 comes on the heels of Hebrews 11, which is the famous passage often called "The Hall of Faith." In Hebrews 11 we read story after story of men and women who lived "by faith." They trusted God and faithfully obeyed him, believing that he would richly reward them in the end.

As Hebrews 12 begins, the author refers back to these men and women of faith as "a great cloud of witnesses." The words conjure the image of a stadium full of cheering fans as runners prepare for a race. But the fans are not simply a group of people from the same city. The stadium is full of those men and women who lived "by faith." Their presence is telling the runners that God is trustworthy and that he will reward—in the end—those who live by faith.

The author encourages all of us—the runners—to throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. When we watch runners today, they are often in minimal, form-fitting clothes. In the first century, runners often wore nothing at all. They shed all clothes so that nothing could hinder them. The author tells believers to cast off not only the sins that entangle us, but also everything—whether sinful or

not—that can hinder us as we look to run the race by faith.

We are then told to run with perseverance the race marked out for us. We do this by fixing our eyes on Jesus. Just as runners want their eyes fixed on the finish line, our eyes are to be fixed on Jesus. He is the pioneer and perfecter of faith. Not only is Jesus the object of our faith, but he is also the greatest example of a man who lived fully by faith in God and his promises. He even endured the suffering of crucifixion because he saw the joy of reward before him. And just as he was rewarded by being seated at the right hand of the Father, we can expect reward if we live by faith.

The author ends with the command to consider. This is a thinking command. He says that we should think about him—Jesus—who endured such opposition from sinners, so that we will not grow weary and lose heart.

So, we look backward. We look to the past to see the great cloud of witnesses who are reminding us of God's faithfulness. And we look to the future, placing our hope in the fact that Jesus will bring fulfillment to all his promises. And we fix our eyes on Jesus as we run the race that God has placed before us.

### Getting Started

1. Why is it valuable to know—and think about—the past?

2. Share a story of God’s faithfulness to you in the past and how that story impacts you today.

5. Verse 1 talks about the sin that entangles and also “everything that hinders.” What are some things that might not be sinful, but might still hinder you from following Jesus closely?

## Digging In

Read Hebrews 12:1-3.

*1 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

6. According to verse 2, what specific actions and attitudes of Jesus should be the focus when we fix our eyes on him?

7. According to verse 3, what is the result if we consider Jesus and his actions?

4. The “therefore” in verse 1 alludes back to all the men and women in Hebrews 11 who lived “by faith.” Read back through the chapter. Whose story most stands out to you, and why?

## Wrestling With Big Ideas

8. Jesus is depicted in this passage, not only as the object of our faith, but also as the greatest example of a man of faith. How could Jesus—the Son of God—have lived by faith?

## **Connecting To The Gospel**

9. What do you think is the difference between (1) trying as hard as you possibly can and (2) fixing your eyes on Jesus?

## **Taking It To Heart**

10. As you reflect back on what you know of the history of LBF Church, how does this history inspire you to trust God's faithfulness in the future?

11. In what ways do you think God is leading both you and LBF Church to follow him today?



# I Determine My Identity

## Lesson 5 • October 17 • by Dan Franklin

---

### Main Point

#### The Cultural Message

I determine my own identity.

#### The Biblical Message

Our identity is given to us by God.

### Introduction

In our current culture there is nothing more sacred than our idea of identity. Whether that identity has to do with our race, our ethnicity, our gender or gender identity, our sexual orientation, our personality, our Enneagram number, our strengths and giftings, or our career and family, we all long to stand solidly in our identity.

Because of our longing to know who we are, we are often willing to grab onto just about any identifier. We even use the term, “I identify as . . .” to describe ourselves. It has become more and more common for biological men to identify as women, and for biological women to identify as men. And the prevailing cultural sentiment is that this self-identification is truer than any objective data.

While many of us might be tempted to see this trend as harmless, it undercuts the most important factor in understanding our identity: God. If we don’t know God, then we don’t know who we are, we don’t know what we were made for, and we don’t know how to relate to the world. If figuring out our identity is important to us, then the solution is not to self-identify, but to receive the identity that God has graciously given us.

In the passage accompanying this lesson, we see God make mankind in his image. Our identity is different than any plant, any animal, or any celestial

object. Mankind alone bears the image of God. This means that we reflect him to the world, and that we are—in some sense—like him. And it is not just “special” human beings who bear this image, but each and every one of us.

Because of our special status as image-bearers, the first man and woman are told to rule and subdue the earth. We are meant to take charge and to settle this land that we’ve been given. With all the creativity and strength that God has given us, we are meant to take benevolent control of the planet. This doesn’t mean that we flippantly destroy what we’ve been given. But it also doesn’t mean that we owe the earth anything (certainly not our worship). As image-bearers we are set up to rule and subdue for the good of mankind.

On top of this, we also see God creating mankind as male and female. This is part of his good creation, and this is a core part of our identity. And this makes sense not only for the very different ways that men and women relate to the world, but to the biblical instructions about how men and women are meant to relate to one another, to the church, and to the world.

In this passage we are invited to abandon the foolish quest to choose our own identity, and instead to joyfully receive the identity God has given us, and to live in light of it.

### Getting Started

1. Why do you think identity is so important to people in our culture?

2. When you meet someone for the first time, what are some signals that you look for in determining what kind of a person they are?

5. God uses commands like “rule over” and “subdue” to talk about mankind’s relationship to both the land and the animals. What are some ways today that people can appropriately follow these commands?

## Digging In

Read Genesis 1:26-28.

*26 Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”*

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

*28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”*

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

6. God distinctly created mankind as male and female. What do you think it looks like for men and women to embrace their unique identity as males and females?

7. God also commands the man and woman to “be fruitful and increase in number.” What implications does this command have for how our worldview is today?

4. What do you think it means that mankind is created in God’s image?

## Wrestling With Big Ideas

8. If every human being is made in God’s image, how should this impact how you treat people who are difficult for you to be around?



# Connecting To The Gospel

9. The Son of God didn't simply become any creature, but he specifically became a human being. Read Hebrews 2:14-18. Why was it so important for the Son to become a human being?

## Taking It To Heart

10. What difference do you think it would make in your everyday life if you truly embraced your identity as one who bears the image of God?

11. In what unique way do you sense God calling you to embrace and live in light of your identity as a man or a woman?



# My Race Is Who I Am

Lesson 6 • October 24 • by Dan Franklin

---

## Main Point

### The Cultural Message

My race is who I am.

### The Biblical Message

God engages with us not based on our race, but based on our identity as part of the human race.

## Introduction

There are times in history when issues of race take center stage in a culture. That is certainly the current case in the United States. Questions of racial justice, racial history, and racial identity are consistently in the public eye. While many believe that racism—as evil as it is—is largely eradicated from public life today, many others feel questions about how our race impacts our identity. For some, racial identity seems to be near to the center of who they believe themselves to be.

What role does race have in our self-understanding? Is it indispensable to our identity? Is it totally unimportant? As we all continue in our quest to understand ourselves and our identity, we need to know what role race plays in this.

In the passage that accompanies this lesson, the apostle Paul is speaking to philosophers in Athens. He had previously walked through the city and seen that it was filled with idols. He even saw an idol that was dedicated to “The Unknown God.” Paul uses this as a way of telling them about the God they do not yet know—the true God.

Paul tells them that this unknown God is the one who made everything. He is not simply one of many; he is the one and only. And he can’t be contained by a temple or an altar. And he doesn’t depend on human beings for his well-being. Instead of being dependent

upon us, this God is the one on whom we all depend. We don’t have life or breath—or anything—without him.

Paul then says something profound. The Athenians most likely believed that each nation and people group and occupation should have its own God. But Paul says that this one God he is speaking of made all people from one man. In other words, all human beings are connected because we all are descendants of the original man and woman—Adam and Eve—that God created. Different nations may see their identities differently, but ultimately we are all offspring of this one true God. We don’t need separate gods for different nations and peoples and ethnicities. There is one God who made us all.

And not only did God make all nations from one man, but he is the one who sovereignly directs their lives. And he does this not so that they would be far from him, but so that they—as his offspring—would seek him and find him. After all, he is not far from us.

We don’t need separate religions, or a separate temple, or a separate church for people of different races or ethnicities. We are all part of the human race, and we all have a common ancestry. And God’s desire is that all of us would seek him and find him through Jesus Christ.

## Getting Started

1. Share (respectfully) why you think race is currently such a big issue in our culture.

2. What are some advantages and disadvantages of identifying closely with the racial or ethnic group to which you belong?

5. In verse 25, Paul speaks of a God who doesn't depend upon us, but rather we depend upon him. How does it make you feel to know that God does not depend upon you?

## Digging In

Read Acts 17:24-28.

*24 "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. 25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. 26 From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. 27 God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 28 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'"*

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

6. Focus on verse 26. What do you think this verse tells us about how we are meant to understand our racial and ethnic differences?

7. According to verses 27-28, what is God's intention for all nations and all people?

## Wrestling With Big Ideas

8. Read Galatians 3:28-29. In light of these verses, do you think there is any appropriate way in which Christians can identify with their ethnic or racial group? Explain your answer.

4. In verses 24-25, what foundational truths does Paul say about the one true God?

# Connecting To The Gospel

9. According to Acts 17:27, God's desire for all people is for them to seek him and find him. How have God's actions in the world through Jesus made this possible?

## Taking It To Heart

10. How can we as Christians protect ourselves against the danger of treating people differently based on their race or ethnicity?

11. How can we as Christians protect ourselves against the danger of putting greater emphasis on our racial identity than on our identity in Christ and with his people?



# My Sexual Desires Are Who I Am

## Lesson 7 • October 31 • by Dan Franklin

---

### Main Point

#### The Cultural Message

My sexual desires define who I am.

#### The Biblical Message

My identity in Christ defines how I respond to my sexual desires.

### Introduction

A core part of how we talk about identity in our culture relates to sexual orientation. We not only define ourselves by our skin color, our political affiliation, our personality, our work, our family, and our hobbies. We also define ourselves based on whether we are gay, straight, lesbian, queer, bisexual, transgender, or gender fluid. We see our sexual orientation and our sexual desires as a core part of who we are. In fact, people will be accused of denying someone's existence if they question the validity of any of these identifying marks.

For some of us, we may want to deal with this simply by telling people that they are wrong and they should get over it. God created a man and a woman and defined marriage as being between a man and a woman, so people who believe differently are simply wrong. They're deluded and they're acting in perverted ways.

While much of the above paragraph may be factually accurate, it does not deal with the root problem. Instead of simply being dismissive of others (or ourselves) we need to fight fire with fire. If it is true that these identities are based on lies and deception, then we need to tear down these strongholds through the powerful truth of who we really are before God. And instead of allowing ourselves to believe that our sexual desires tell us something

deeply true about us, we can look deeper at what God says is true about us.

There is no doubt that different people have different sexual desires and inclinations. That is not the question that is up for debate. The question is whether or not the presence of these desires means that we should automatically seek to fulfill them.

In the passage that accompanies this lesson, the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians about who they were and who they are. In the list of sins that defined their pre-Christ lives, Paul even mentions homosexuality and other forms of sexual sin. But he does not say that either their past or their inclinations defined them. He says instead that they were washed clean through the blood of Jesus and that they are now part of God's family.

Our desires—sexual or otherwise—don't tell us who we are at the core. In fact, these desires might need to be fought, combatted, and repented of. Thankfully, God is a God who loves to make us new, and he does not define us on the basis of our sexual desires. He loves all of us and invites all of us sinners to be made new and to be welcomed into his family.

### Getting Started

1. In our culture, how do people talk about the connection between sexual desires and identity?

2. Why do you think there has become such a strong link in our culture between sex and identity?

6. In what ways are Paul's words about sex counter-cultural today?

## Digging In

1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

*9 Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men 10 nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

4. In verse 11, Paul says that some of the Corinthian believers used to be marked by the sinful activities that he names in verses 9 and 10. What does this say about the role that sinful activities play in our identity?

5. As you look at the list of sinful activities in verses 9-10, what most stands out to you?

7. According to verse 11, what happens when someone becomes a believer in Jesus?

## Wrestling With Big Ideas

8. How do Paul's words in this passage contrast with the way our culture talks about homosexuality?

## Connecting To The Gospel

9. According to verse 11, a person needs to be "washed," "sanctified," and "justified" in order to enter God's kingdom. What does this say about our condition apart from the gospel of Jesus?

## Taking It To Heart

10. How does this passage lead you in how your sexual desires—and all your desires—relate to your identity in Christ?

11. How does this passage lead you in how you can relate to people who have tied up their identity with a sinful activity?



# All Authority Is Oppressive

## Lesson 8 • November 7 • by Dan Franklin

---

### Main Point

#### The Cultural Message

All authority is oppressive.

#### The Biblical Message

God sovereignly establishes all authority.

### Introduction

It is popular in our culture to question authority. But many go beyond questioning authority. Instead they call for the rejection of all authority because, they claim, all authority is inherently oppressive. The police are inherently oppressive to citizens. Employers are inherently oppressive to employees. Even parents are inherently oppressive to citizens. And the thought of God as an authority figure seems oppressive as well.

While some of us will shake our heads at the total rejection of authority, it is not hard to see why there is widespread suspicion of people in authority. We have seen many abuses, whether it is Hollywood executives taking advantage of actresses, politicians taking advantage of interns, or even priests and pastors taking advantage of congregation members. There can be little doubt that people in authority frequently misuse their power for their own advancement.

But does this mean that, as Christians, we reject all authority as oppressive? The passage in this lesson is one of many biblical passages that deals with God's attitude toward authorities. The passage does not give people in authority free reign to do whatever they want. But it also does not give permission for us to reject all authority. Instead it gives us guidance concerning the purpose of authority and of how we are all called to respond to those in authority.

### Getting Started

1. Why do you think so many people in our culture are suspicious of those who are in authority?

2. What advantages and disadvantages do you think could come if we tried to have a society without any people in authority over others?

### Digging In

Read Romans 13:1-5.

*1 Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. 2 Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from the fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you*



*will be commended. 4 For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.*

3. What stood out to you in this passage? If you listened to the sermon, feel free to share something significant that you remember.

4. In these verses, what is Paul's straightforward reason for commanding believers to be subject to those in authority?

5. What does it tell you about God if Paul is right that "there is no authority except that which God has established"?

6. According to verses 3-4, what is the legitimate role of governing authorities?

7. Paul knows well that those in authority can abuse their power (he was consistently imprisoned for

preaching the gospel). Why then do you think he speaks in such sweeping terms about the motives of those in authority?

## **Wrestling With Big Ideas**

8. Read Ecclesiastes 5:8-9, which speaks of how common oppression is among those in authority. How do you reconcile the frequent corruption of authority with God's command to be subject to authority?

9. Acts 4:18-19 makes clear that there are times when it is appropriate to disobey human authorities. What are some modern scenarios in which you think it is appropriate not to submit to an authority?

## **Connecting To The Gospel**

9. Through the gospel we have hope for eternal life. How does this hope impact our ability to endure under difficult authorities?

# Taking It To Heart

10. In situations in which you are under authority, how do you think God is calling you to embrace your situation instead of rebelling?

11. In situation in which you hold some level of authority, how do you think God is calling you to steward that authority?