

**Port City Community Church**  
**Small Group Material**  
**U-Walk Series**  
**Week #1 "Finding the Right Fit"**

**Introduction to U-Walk Series**

It starts with a simple invitation, "Come and follow me." Our relationship with Christ involves movement, forward momentum and a drive towards intimacy with Him. Yet, we are incapable of intimacy unless there is a pursuit. Pursuit at its core requires motion. We must put feet to our faith. Along the way we'll have to switch out our shoes for the new terrain, appropriate for what we will encounter. Together we'll embark on this trek, this pursuit of God, putting one foot in front of the other.

We are invited to walk with God. Jesus did not come to create a religion, but to extend a personal invitation – an invitation to follow. God has created us to know Him and to live in a relationship with Him. This requires that we approach Him very differently than we might be used to. In this series, U-Walk, we are going to dive into what happens to us and in us as we learn to walk with God.

**Insight, Discussion Question and Activities**

Our favorite pair of shoes is usually an old pair. They are broken in and worn soft in all the right places. They're the ones we grab when we want to feel comfortable and not have to think about our feet. Our old patterns of behavior are like that too – they may not be all that pretty, or even smell all that good, but they're comfortably familiar and we don't have to think about them much.

Embracing our new identity in Christ can be as hard to get used to as a new pair of shoes. It feels a little awkward at first, and initially it may seem binding in spots, like it needs breaking in. When walking with Christ in this new identity feels difficult, or feels like it's rubbing us in spots that are tender, it's easy for us to grab for the old shoes, our old selves. We will find, however, that our new shoes, even if they are a little uncomfortable at first, ultimately fit us a whole lot better than the old ones.

Have you ever looked in the mirror and wondered about the person staring back at you: "Who exactly am I and how did I get to be this way?" You're not looking at your physical image in those moments, but looking beyond at your sense of self and self-worth. God has a lot to say about our worth. But for now, let's examine our own sense of self.

❖ **In the space provided below, describe how you see yourself.**

**Questions for Reflection**

- ❖ **What led you to answer the above question in this way?**
- ❖ **How do you think others identify you?**
- ❖ **How does the way you view yourself affect your actions and the way you view life?**

One of the first steps to a vibrant walk with God is to understand who we are in Christ. We can gain tremendous confidence when we realize that we are designed by Him, there are places he intends for us to go, and He invites us to walk with Him.

Unfortunately, many people don't live fully out of this confidence. Instead of throwing our old pair of shoes out, we stash them away in the back of our closet, just in case we might need them. We allow that

old identity to hold us captive, preventing us from truly experiencing the beautiful journey that is a life with Christ.

One of the key reasons we cling to our old identity may be that we don't truly comprehend what Christ has done on our behalf. In Ephesians 2 Paul speaks about the drastic changes that take place within us when we accept what Christ did on the cross and decide to walk with Him. Paul goes as far as using the imagery of our old self passing away and a new self being made alive through Christ. This has nothing to do with us being good in our own power, but everything to do with Christ being able to transform us.

As hard as we try to be good on our own, we have a tendency to sin. This sin is what separated us from God in the first place, and it does not discriminate between the young and the aged, or the poor and the wealthy. Everyone sins and the simple fact is that no one is good enough to earn salvation. Therefore, something had to be done with our sin or we would never be able to connect our souls to God. Jesus took upon himself the penalty of our sin and its power over us when He was crucified. He took our sin and gave us His righteousness to wear instead.

Think back to the description you wrote of yourself. "Saint" was more than likely not a word you used in your description. That's because we don't often feel like saints, do we? In many of Paul's letters in the New Testament, he addresses the Christians as "saints" – although if you read the letters, his audience often isn't acting very saintly, and probably doesn't feel deserving of the title.

It's interesting that in the Greek language the same root word is used for both "holy" and "saint." In fact, a working definition for the word "saint" is "to be set apart as holy." When we became Christians, God sets us apart as holy and identifies us in Christ, based on what Christ did for us and not our own behavior. God sees us through the shed blood of Jesus and deems us holy. This can profoundly shape our own view of self, and allow us to respond to God with gratitude.

❖ **Take some time and read the following verses.**

### **Ephesians 2:1-10 (New Living)**

*1 Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. 2 You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. 3 All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else.*

*4 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, 5 that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) 6 For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. 7 So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus. 8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. 9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. 10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.*

### **2 Corinthians 5:17, 18 (New Living)**

*17 This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! 18 And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him.*

### **Colossians 3:8-15 (New Living)**

*8 But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. 9 Don't lie to each other, for you have stripped off your old sinful nature and all its wicked deeds. 10 Put on your new nature, and be renewed as you learn to know your Creator and become like him. 11 In this new life, it*

*doesn't matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbaric, uncivilized, slave, or free. Christ is all that matters, and he lives in all of us.*

*12 Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. 13 Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.*

### **Questions for Reflection**

- ❖ **How does God identify you?**
- ❖ **Why can God call us holy even though he knows us?**
- ❖ **Why do you think we often identify ourselves by our old sinful nature?**

There is a misconception that when we accept Christ all of our struggles and sinful tendencies will or should disappear. God no longer sees our sin or counts it against us, but that does not mean our inclination towards sin vanishes. There will be times when we feel like sinning and will actually give in to those temptations.

Rather than finding ourselves perfect or sinless after coming to Christ, we often find ourselves in limbo – knowing that we are no longer our old self but not really seeing how the new self is all that different. Sometimes we question if a change really did take place. Doubt creeps in, and we wonder if our experience was genuine.

This is right where Satan wants us. He realizes that through our acceptance of the cross, he has lost power over us and we no longer have to be slaves to sin. But, if the enemy is able to paralyze us through doubt, then he knows there is a good chance we will put back on our old shoes and maybe even stop moving forward with God.

### **Questions for Reflection**

- ❖ **When you struggle with old tendencies, what thoughts and emotions stir within you? How do these feelings affect your belief that change that has taken place in you?**
- ❖ **How would your life look different if you lived with confidence in your new identity?**
- ❖ **What area(s) of your life are you struggling to see your new identity in Christ? Why is it so hard for you to give up this way of thinking about yourself?**
- ❖ **How can you begin to see yourself as Christ does in these areas?**

There are no shortcuts to Christian maturity. We can, however, experience a deep, joyful relationship with God throughout the maturity process. This can begin at any point along the way (Galatians 5:22). During the long road of maturing in Christ, we can jog along side God, receiving direction and encouragement, and enjoying His companionship. Remember that maturing us is God's job (Philippians 1:6), and we simply partner with Him. God's power enables us to walk with Him, but our surrendering to His will—moment by moment—allows us to keep a steady pace and to run with joy, knowing that each step brings us into a deeper intimacy with God.

We have to decide to keep the new shoes on and keep walking with God, whether we *feel* very different or not. We have to settle it in our hearts that God has set us apart and that transformation is possible. We simply have to believe that our old self has been thrown away like old shoes, and then walk in that confidence.

### **Truths About Our New Identity**

- Christ satisfied the wrath of God. (1 John 2:2 and Hebrews 9:11-15)
- We have been adopted into the family with full rights and privileges. (Ephesians 1:4-6)

- We were bought back at a price. (Ephesians 1:6-8 and Colossians 1:13-14)
- We were brought back into a right relationship with God. (Romans 5:9-11 and Colossians 1:19-21)
- We are declared righteous. (Romans 3:23-25 and Romans 5:1-3)
- We are set apart as holy (1 Corinthians 1:2 and 1 Corinthians 6:11)

### **Questions for Reflection**

- ❖ **Which one of these truths do you find hardest to accept about your new identity in Christ?**
- ❖ **Which one of these truths brings you the greatest comfort and hope along the journey?**

### **Additional Insights**

#### **Scripture Passages**

Ezekiel 36:25-27: We have been given a new heart.

Romans 3:21-28: We are made right in God's sight.

Romans 8:1-17: We are set free from the grip of sin.

Galatians 3:17-21: We died to the law so we can live for God.

Titus 3:3-7: We are declared not guilty