

# True Identity by John Majors

## Small Group Leaders Guide

This discussion guide is designed for a 12 week schedule. (There are 14 chapters in the book, but chapters 1 & 2 and chapters 9 & 10 are combined for the discussion questions). The discussion can also be done in 8 weeks by grouping chapters 1-3, 7-8, 13-14, and attaching the discussion of chapter 6 to either chapter 4 or 5. If you're really pressed for time, a 5 week discussion would simply follow each major section. For simplicity purposes I've only structured this guide around a 12 week discussion.

There are probably more questions than needed, so select from the pool as desired. The questions are written on the assumption that group members have read the chapters.

### Where to Focus

Though this book deals with a number of issues that shape a teen's identity, one of the main areas of concern for parents in this stage of life is gender identity. There's much confusion on the topic, so chapters four and five attempt to define manhood and womanhood from a biblical perspective. That lays the foundation for chapter six, which tries to address the challenging issue of transgenderism. So make sure to allow time to dig deep into the chapters 4-6, as those are the meat of the book.

Please give me feedback. Print this out. Circle questions that worked for you. X over those that didn't. If you want to add any notes along the way, please do so! Scan and email me the final results to [jmajors@familylife.com](mailto:jmajors@familylife.com).

## Section One: Who Am I?

### WEEK ONE

Section Intro, What Is Identity? (Ch1), The Ultimate Source of Identity (Ch2) – pp.11-25

- When people talk about their “identity,” what do you think they mean? Discuss *how we are defining identity for this discussion - it's how you view yourself or describe yourself to others.*
- What are some of the words people would use to describe their identity?
- What about some of your friends? Where are they finding their identity?
- What are some of the most important influences in a person's life in terms of shaping their identity? (*see topics in book pp.15-20: Family, Culture, Male/Female, Friends, Books/Mentors*)
- If someone asked, “who are you?” How would you answer?
- Read Colossians 3:2-3 on p. 23. What does it mean for someone to have their life “hidden” in Christ?
- Why is it important to find your ultimate identity in Christ vs. in yourself?
- How do you “set your mind on things that are above”?

## WEEK TWO

### Independence without Isolation (Ch3) – pp.26-34

- What are some of the areas where teens and parents tend to argue?
- What's one of the main areas where you find yourself struggling with your parents right now? *Consider recommending some categories to prompt the conversation - "How about your phone? Or the car? Or curfew? School? Dating?" - You know your group, so think about what is relevant to them.*
- Why do you think that is? Meaning, why do you think you're arguing more over that now, versus when you were younger? *Try to draw the connection to their desire to be in charge of their own life - make their own decisions... growing up.*
- Where's an area you desire more freedom in life? (Refer to the question on p.29.)
- Can you think of any good reasons why parents might want to restrict your freedoms? *This will help them to try and see their parents side of the situation.*
- Discuss ways they can work together with their parents to help them grow into more responsibility in this area.
- Read Luke 16:10. What's the connection between freedom and responsibility that this verse highlights? *That if you show yourself able to handle small freedoms, that's a sign you can handle greater responsibility.*
- Let's look at these three keys to successful independence... what are they? *Wisdom, Relationships, Practice over time.*
- Let's discuss each of these three.
  - WISDOM: How does Dennis Rainey define wisdom? (p. 30)
  - What are some ways to get wisdom?
  - RELATIONSHIPS: Why are relationships important when it comes to gaining a sense of identity? *You could also point ahead to the quote on p.102, "You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with." What do you think of this? Is it true or not?*
  - PRACTICE OVER TIME: What role does "practice over time" play in helping you become more independent?
  - Is there a specific area where you need to "practice," or get more experience?
- What's the difference between isolation and successful independence?

## Section Two: Gender Identity:

### What Does it Mean to be a Man or a Woman?

#### WEEK THREE

##### Section Intro, Manhood (Ch4) – pp.35-50

- What does it mean to be a man?
- Who comes to mind as someone you think of as being “manly”? Why? What are some of the attributes that define them?
- What are some unhealthy definitions of manhood?
- How does a boy know when he has become a man?
- Look at I Corinthians 16:13-14 (p.41). What do you learn about manhood from this verse?
- Let’s look at the **STEP** definition of manhood (see pp. 42-49).
  - **S:** What does it mean to Stand Firm? Who comes to mind who does this well?
  - **T:** What about Taking the Initiative? What are some ways a man should be taking initiative? *Talk about what this has looked like in your own life... how you have tried to take initiative... maybe at work or home or school.*
  - Why would this be a trait that God emphasizes for men?
  - **E:** How would you describe what it means to “Engage Others with Wisdom and Grace”? Who comes to mind that does this well?
  - Some also describe this attribute as “servant leadership” - the point is do you make others better around you or worse? Are you a giver or a taker? Which kind of person would you rather be around?
  - **P:** Plan Ahead and Provide: How does the author define Pro-vision? Note the reference to Stu Weber’s picture of the old west scout who goes out ahead of the wagon train party and finds the problems and takes care of them before anyone knows about them. Also break down the word in two parts: pro = “before,” and vision = “to see.” Thus, “Pro-vision” is more about “seeing ahead” rather than just financial provision.
  - How does this differ from a standard view of a man as the “provider.” It expands beyond the limited scope of mere financial provision.
- In which of these four areas do you want to grow?
- Are all of these distinctly manly traits? I mean, don’t women sometimes also display these traits? *Point out that these traits can certainly be displayed by either sex, yet these are areas where the Bible emphasizes that men should be strong and take the lead.*

## WEEK FOUR

### Womanhood (Ch5) – pp. 51-68

- What are some common ways people define “womanhood” today?
- Who comes to mind as the ultimate woman? Why?
- Read Proverbs 31:30. What does this verse have to say about being a woman? How does that compare with popular definitions of womanhood?
- Discuss the four aspects of biblical womanhood in the following questions.
  - What does it mean to have “Holy Beauty”?
  - How would understanding where real beauty comes from help with body image? Or can it?
  - What are some of the reasons people might struggle with an eating disorder?
  - Who are some people you think of as truly beautiful? *It’s really important here to think of someone you have thought of as being beautiful – and it didn’t really have anything to do with their looks. Also contrast this with someone who was pretty on the outside but miserable (to themselves and others).*
  - Heart of a Helper: What do you think of when you hear the word “Helper”?
  - What about the fact that God is referred to as a helper? What kind of meaning does that give the word?
  - How about the idea of doing work together – how is that better than doing it alone? (*i.e. God’s design might actually be a good thing here...*)
  - What are some ways you can begin practicing being a helper? (*Point them to Barbara Rainey’s ideas on page 60 and ask what they think of these ideas or if they have others.*)
  - What are some of the ways women are “Life-Givers.” *Note the obvious: birth, but also how this applies to those that have not given birth. See ideas on p.63.*
  - What are some words that describe a person who is “life-giving”?
  - Who is one of the most life-giving people you know? Why?
  - Eternal Focus: What kind of influence did Natasha have in the lives of others?
  - How can young women keep an Eternal Focus in the midst of daily life?
- Are all of these distinctly womanly traits? I mean, don’t men sometimes also display some these traits? *Just like with the manhood chapter, point out that most traits discussed for women can be displayed by either sex (except the ultimate expression of ‘life giving’), yet these are areas where the Bible gives greater emphasis for women.*

## WEEK FIVE

### Transgender (Ch6) – pp. 69-74

I encourage you to spend time praying before each group meeting, but especially before this crucial week of discussion. Ask the Holy Spirit to be at work in the lives of the teens, planting truth deep in their hearts.

- The last couple of weeks we talked about manhood and womanhood. Let's review. What are some ways that we can define manhood? How is womanhood different?
- I'm going to name a few things and you tell me if it's for girls or boys. Football. Ballet. Wrestling. Cake Decorating. Classical Music. Reading. Hunting. Sewing. Nursing. Doctor. Engineering. Painting. Construction. *Pick a few and ask them why they said what they said (boy vs. girl). Point out that many of these activities or vocations are often preferred by men or women, but that doesn't make the activity inherently "masculine" or "feminine." For instance, some of the most revered men of Russian culture were ballet dancers (Baryshnikov), composers (Rachmaninoff), and authors (Tolstoy).*
- What are some things people you know like to do that others might consider more stereotypical of the opposite gender?
- Yet are there important differences between men and women?
- How do we know? *Because the Bible says - "God made them male and female." We want to be careful not to equate how our culture express gender with a definition of manhood/womanhood, yet at the same time not minimize the reality that God created us male and female - that was HIS design for humankind.*
- What do you think about the word "Transgender" (see ch6). What does it mean?
- How should a Christian think about transgender-like feelings if he or she is experiencing them?
- How would you counsel a friend that is experiencing transgender-like feelings? Would you advise her differently if she were not a Christian?
- Do you think it's wise to have major surgery or hormone therapies to deal with painful gender related feelings? Why or why not? *Point out that most teens work through these feelings by the time they are adults. Also that the current culture makes it cool to be transgender. Making significant changes to your body when so much of the way you view life is still developing might not be wise.*

## Section Three: Spiritual Identity: *The Main Thing*

Chapters 7-8

### WEEK SIX

Section Intro, Making Your Faith Your Own (Ch7) – pp. 75-89

- What do you think it means when someone says, "I have to make my faith my own"?
- How does one go about "making your faith your own?"
- When does that happen for most people (at what age)? Why?
- Do you feel like that's something you've done? If not, why?
- What are some of the main objections to following Christ that people your age are facing or mentioning?
- How would you encourage someone to go about finding answers to these issues?
- *I'd encourage you to help your group pick one issue that is especially thorny or relevant to your group and have everyone research on their own during the week and come back and share what they discovered.*

### WEEK SEVEN

Growing in Your Walk with God (ch8) – pp. 90-100

- What are some ways people continue to grow in their faith? *Point them to the various "spiritual disciplines" mentioned in the book on pp. 91-97.*
- Which of the Spiritual Disciplines have been meaningful to you? (Look at the ones listed on pp.91-97.)
- Which Spiritual Discipline do you need to grow in? *Discuss ways to help them grow in this discipline.*
- Why is it important to be growing in your faith? *Growth is usually a sign of health. For instance, you wouldn't want to stay a kindergartner at school.*
- What do you think of that crazy loaded Francis Schaeffer quote at the end of the chapter? (page 100). *Talk about the importance of having something you can stand on and build upon and pass on to others.*

## Section Four: Relational Identity: *The People Who Shape You*

### WEEK EIGHT

#### Section Intro, Friends (Ch9) AND Mentors (Ch10) – pp. 101-116

- Who are some of the most important people in your life right now? *Some categories you could suggest, one at a time: Friends, Mentors, Opposite Sex.*
- Do you feel like you have a “Band of Brothers” (for the boys) or a “Squad of Sisters” (for the girls)?
- Are there any people that can help sharpen you and make you a better person? *Think of both peers and mentors.*
- Are there any people that are leading you astray that you should spend less time around?
- Why are Mentors important?
- What should one look for in a Mentor?
- Is there anyone you think of as a Mentor in your life? What are some of the qualities you admire in them that you want to emulate or see in your life as well.
- *Help them think of ways to increase time around good influences and limit time around bad influences. Talk about ways this played out in your life. Was there a bad influence in your life that you were able to get away from?*
- *Also be ready to share about friends and mentors that have had a big influence in your life. The more specific the better. Or an area of life where you wish you would have had more insight/guidance from a mentor. A word of caution: be sure as the leader not to talk too much or too long but definitely share something to help build trust and an atmosphere of transparency.*

### WEEK NINE

#### Romance and Dating (Ch11) – pp. 117-136

- What do you think the purposes of dating is?
- How did the author describe the purpose of dating? *To find someone to marry.*
- What did you think of that definition?
- Why is it important to know what the point of dating is? *So that you can go about it in a meaningful way. If you don't know what the point of something is, then how can you go about it rightly?*
- What does the Bible have to say about the types of relationships we have in life?
- What does the author mean by the “myth of the dating relationship”? *See pp. 123-125.*
- What are some boundaries that you think are important when it comes to dating? *These could be physical boundaries, but also emotional. Also what displays of affection are appropriate? How to communicate intentions, etc.*
- Look at the seven tips to succeed at dating (pp. 126-130). Which of these do you want to live out?
- How does Romans 12:10 apply to dating? (See pp. 134-135.)

**WEEK TEN**Same-Sex Attraction (Ch12) – pp. 137-145

- What did you think of Sam’s story? *His story begins the chapter.*
- What about Rosaria’s story? *Her story appears at the end of the chapter*
- In what ways were they similar? *Both sought to submit their attractions to Christ.*
- How were they different? *Her attractions changed. His did not.*
- How do the sections titled “Big picture of the Bible,” and “Clear Message of the Bible” (pp. 139-140) relate to a Christian’s understanding of same sex attraction?
- Which of the author’s six reasons on why you can apply the Bible to same sex attraction make the most sense to you (pp. 140-143)? Why?
- How might you approach a friend who is struggling with same sex attraction in light of what you learned in this chapter?

**Section Five: Missional Identity: A Bright Future****WEEK ELEVEN**Section Intro, The Age of Opportunity and Road Hazards (Ch13) – pp. 147-167

- Why did one author call the teenage years the “age of opportunity”? Do you agree or disagree?
- What are some of the things that can derail teenagers today? *Discuss the categories that appear in the book, pp. 154-166, but also ask them for others that aren’t listed.*
- What are some good reasons to avoid these things?
- Of the ones listed or mentioned, which do you see others struggling with most often?
- Why do you think that is?
- What are some strategies for getting through this season without being derailed by these? *Discuss strategies specific to some of the challenges. Also reference other strategies in the book, like the power of a ‘band of brothers,’ and strong mentors and role models that can help you through a season.*
- Which of these Road Hazards do you need to watch out for in the coming years? *Know thyself - know what you are most likely to be tempted by.*

**WEEK TWELVE**Finding Your Mission in Life (Ch14) – pp. 168-175

- In what ways did C.S. Lewis embrace his mission or purpose? *Look back at story on p.147-149.*
- What are some of the important things to consider when figuring out your mission in life? *See principles on 168-172.*
- What are three questions to ask to help you figure this out? *(see the middle of p.171).*
- How would you answer these? *Leader: be prepared for how you thought about these questions at their age.*
- Is there an area of life where you want to grow in skill or knowledge? *Help them develop an action plan for growing in this area, which may involve saying no to other things.*
- *Leader, if you know the group well enough, draw out a student who excels in something. Ask how they knew they would like it? How did they decide to devote more time to developing the skill?*
- What do you feel your "mission," or "purpose" in life is?
- How should you handle criticism?
- Is God more pleased with people who become missionaries or pastors instead of something in the business world or a teacher or something like that? Why or Why not?