

Seeing the Christian in the Perfect Mirror

Lesson Objective: That students begin to realize the excitement of who they are and what they have in Christ.

Bible Passage: 2 Cor. 5: 17 (see “Bible Application for other verses)

Bible Truth: God has made anyone in Christ a totally new creation.

Memory Verse: 2 Cor. 5: 17

What you need: either several rolls of toilet paper or quite a bit of newspaper [optional: scissors, tape, and/or straight pins]; a copy of handout “My Filters” and “in Christ I Am...” for each student; “God’s Mirror” verse sheet cut into individual “mirrors”; if possible, supplies for a “birthday party” i.e. a birthday cake, napkins or small plates and forks, drinks, etc.

Opening

Before class collect either several rolls of toilet paper or quite a bit of newspaper. You can also bring scissors, tape and/or straight pins.

Explain that each team is going to create a new outfit for one of their team members using the supplies available. Then divide the students into team of about five and give them ten or so minutes to “dress” one of their team mates in their creation.

If you do not have much time available, keep them posted on how much time is left [“five more minutes”] and when the time is up have each group stop where they are in the process.

If time is not a problem for your group you may decide to let them work until the first team is finished.

After you have called a stop to the activity decide on a winner and give them either a simple prize like candy or have everyone cheer for them. Then ask,

- *Was this fun or frustrating? Why?*

You just made a new outfit that totally changed the way your model looked. Most of you already know that God totally changes people when they give their lives to him. But although we know that “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Cor. 5: 17) we don’t let that knowledge change how we view ourselves or others.

Interactive Learning

In the second lesson, “Lost in the Fun House” we saw how difficult it is to see ourselves clearly in what those around us “reflect” to us because of sin in their lives that distorts what they show us about ourselves. Sometimes the problem is on our side, when we misinterpret what others are showing us because we’re either unable or unwilling to see ourselves as we really are. Our idea of the world and of ourselves forms a kind of filter or lens through which all of our perceptions pass. This filter causes us to have expectations of what we are going to experience, thus distorting our perceptions of what really happens. In other words, if you see yourself as dumb (a part of your filter), then when someone compliments you for doing something smart, you

think they're just trying to make you feel good. If they say you did something dumb, you believe them.

The purpose of the following activity is to help you identify the way you think about yourself and others. This is the "filter" that affects how you "see" what other people and God "reflect" to you.

Make sure students have pens/pencils and pass out the quiz, "My Filters" folded so they can only see the quiz and not the answer key. Explain that they should write the number that best represents their response in the column to the right of each statement. Then after each section (1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20) have them fill in the number of blocks corresponding to their answers [if their answers for statements 1-5 equal 12 they should color in 12 blocks from right to left.] Tell them that when they have finished they may open up the sheet and read the answer key. Mention that if anyone has a particularly high score or wants to talk about the test that you are happy to spend some time with them outside of class. When they have finished ask,

- *Was this quiz interesting? And if yes, why?*
- *Without getting too specific or personal, did anyone learn something about yourself that you hadn't realized before?*
- *How does a strong fear of failure, rejection, punishment or sense of shame distort someone's view of reality?*
- *Do you know any characters in a movie, TV show or comic book whose view of reality is affected by one or several of these "filters"? [It could be someone who is beautiful but thinks she is ugly, or one who is thin but thinks she's fat. It could be someone who assumes that everyone is criticizing her or a man who criticizes others all out of proportion. Example of distorted "filter": cartoon character Johnny Bravo sees himself as God's gift to women, but women actually despise him.] After several examples have been given discuss what effect the characters' distorted views have on them and their relationships.*

Explain that since the fall and due to our sin every unsaved human being has reason to have feelings of shame, fear of failure, rejection, and punishment. Each one of us experiences these in a way that reflects our life experiences, especially in our families. When we come into a personal relationship with God we are made a new creation, but frequently we still see ourselves through these filters, even though God has changed us totally.

In the second lesson we talked about how the people around us reflect to us a distorted image, and now we see that our perceptions can cause a distortion in how we see the world. The only way to know if what we're seeing is an accurate reflection is to know what we look like in a good, undistorted mirror and compare that with what we are seeing. Today we will look again into God's perfect mirror to help us see ourselves clearly. In the last study we saw what unsaved mankind looks like to God—valuable and important but sinful and deserving punishment for their sin. In this study we are

going to see how God views people who love Him and have been saved by Jesus' death on the cross.

Bible Application

Explain that this Bible application will be similar to the last lesson. Each group will look up the verses on the “God’s mirror” picture you will give them. They will write down on their paper how those verses describe sons and daughters of God, and then choose a verse which summarizes the passage to share with the rest of the class. Divide the students into groups and give each group a “God’s Mirror” verse. [Study the verses yourself prior to the lesson and use the notes below to help you guide the following discussion.]

	Verses	“Reflection” of Children of God
1	Ephesians 2: 1, 4, 5	We were dead in sins but have been made alive in Christ
2	Isaiah 53: 4-6, Romans 5: 9	Christ suffered and died in our place, taking on himself the punishment we deserved for our sins
3	2 Cor. 5: 21, Romans 10:4, Romans 4: 22-25	The perfect righteousness of Christ has been credited to us
4	Col. 1: 21-22	We were enemies of God, alienated from Him but in Christ we are reconciled with him (the problem between us has been solved)
5	2 Cor. 5: 16, 17	Anyone in Christ is a new creation and shouldn't be viewed from a “worldly” point of view
6	John 1: 12-13; Eph. 1: 4, 5	God has adopted us as his sons and daughters. We are part of His family

Write on a chalkboard or large piece of paper the following words: Dead – Alive; Deserving Punishment – Forgiven; Sinful – Righteous; Shameful – A New Creation; Rejected – Adopted, Enemy of God – Reconciled with God. Then ask,

- ***Thinking about the reflection of humanity we saw last week in God’s mirror, why do people feel shame and a fear of failure, rejection and punishment?*** [Since the fall, unsaved people should experience these feelings since we have failed and shamed ourselves by sinning and so have brought upon ourselves God’s just rejection and punishment]
- ***What relationship do you see between these fears and the transformation that happens when someone becomes a child of God?*** [Once someone has been born again all the punishment they deserve has been poured out on Jesus Christ. Their failure is replaced by the perfect righteousness of Christ. They are no longer rejected but are adopted into God’s family. They have no reason for shame because they have been made a new creation in Christ.]
- ***Why do many people who are children of God still feel shame and these fears?***

When we think someone's angry with us or doesn't like us, we tend to avoid him. But when someone cares about us, believes in us and encourages us we want to spend time with him. So it is with God. When we view Him as unconcerned about us or as angry with us, just waiting for us to mess up so he can punish us, we treat him like the pagans treat their “gods”: with respect, even fear, as we try to appease him with the

things we think he wants—religious rituals and ceremonies, like going to church and trying to “be good.” We are like the Israelites, who God described like this: “These people come near me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.” (Is. 29: 13)

When we can, with the help of God’s Word and Spirit, begin to see ourselves clearly as He sees us we can begin to experience healing in our view of ourselves, and our relationships with God and with others. This can be a slow process as these ways of thinking and viewing the world are deeply rooted. Becoming convinced of our identity in Christ is a significant step towards spiritual liberty and maturity. It helps us put on the armor of God so that we can take our stand against the devil’s schemes, especially his role as an accuser that uses our sins to make us doubt God’s love for us and the effectiveness of the sanctifying work of His Spirit in our lives. It also strengthens our love for and relationship with God.

Commitment

[note: it is important that the students understand that the following declarations are only true for people who have been born again into God’s family through faith in Christ. For this reason they will preface each statement by saying “in Christ...” Obviously you will not to exclude people from the activity but at the same time it is important to clarify this point, especially if you are aware of group members who have not yet trusted in Christ for their salvation. You might want to take this opportunity to review how people become members of God’s family (John 1:12, 13) and how people can gain assurance of their salvation (1 John 5:11-13.) Offer to talk personally outside class with anyone who has doubts about any of these issues.]

Give each student a copy of “In Christ I Am....” Explain that the group will read through it in the following way, starting with the leader and going around the room clockwise. Each person will read one of the sentences but instead of reading it as it is written on the paper (for example, “I am the light of the world”) he will first say “in Christ” and then fill in the “I” with the name of the person next to him (“In Christ, Mary, you are the light of the world”). The person next to him will then do the same for his neighbor and so on until all of the sentences have been read. After the reading ask,

- ***How did hearing this with your name in it make you feel?***
- ***What, if anything, about how God sees his sons and daughters is surprising to you?***
- ***Are these characteristics something we have to earn?*** [We cannot earn them, they belong to us as members of God’s family. At this point you might want to explain that just like there are things people can do to bring glory or dishonor to their family name but nothing will change our membership in that family, there are ways that we can live as if these qualities weren’t true and ways that we can make them more apparent to those around us, but that neither of these change our identity once we are members of God’s family.]

As we have discussed most people do not have an accurate idea of who they are and of their value as people. Maybe today you have discovered that you have feelings of fear or shame that affect the way you see yourself and your relationships with God and others. You might even find it difficult to hear yourself called righteous, holy and deeply loved. But you must accept that this is how God describes His children. Some of you might be thinking, "How can I possibly be called righteous and holy when there is sin in my life?" All of us experience in our family relationships the difference between having a relationship with our parents and having harmony in that relationship. We can disrupt the harmony in our relationship by disobedience but that doesn't mean that our actions have dissolved our relationship with them. In the next lesson we will look at how we can live up to our identity in Christ, how we can show the world who we are. But first we must see ourselves and others the way God sees us.

Encourage the students to put their handouts in their Bibles and to read them at least once a day until they begin to know what they look like in God's perfect mirror. Remind them to ask the Holy Spirit to transform the way they see themselves and those around them.

Closing

[Prepare for the "birthday party" according to the resources and time you have available. We recommend some sort of refreshments and if possible a birthday cake, but if this is not possible at least sing "Happy Birthday."]

Explain that since nothing in life is as important as the transformation that happens when someone is born into the family of God you are going to spend a few minutes celebrating that birth. You may want to include some of the following elements in your "party": blowing out candles on the birthday cake; singing "Happy Birthday"; allowing time for people to share testimonies about how God has made them a new person since their "spiritual birth"; having people write on a piece of paper the number of years of "spiritual life" they have and then announce the total number of years that you are celebrating as a group; having wrapped "gifts" either as decoration or even as party favors representing the free gift of salvation given to us by God.

Close with a prayer of thanksgiving.

The Filter Through Which I See the World

Next to each of the following statements note the number that best represents your response.

After each section fill in the number of blocks horizontally corresponding to your answers.

1	NEVER	2	SELDOM	3	Sometimes	4	OFTEN	5	ALWAYS	
1	I am very critical of myself if I fail to reach standards I have set.									
2	I avoid participating in certain activities because I am afraid I might fail.									
3	I am a perfectionist.									
4	I get angry with people who interfere with my efforts to succeed and so make me appear incompetent.									
5	I worry									
6	When I think that someone might reject me I become nervous and anxious									
7	It bothers me deeply when someone is unfriendly to me									
8	I try to figure out what people think of me and how to impress them.									
9	I am shy and unsocial									
10	I am critical of others.									
11	I am afraid of what God might do to punish me									
12	When I see someone experiencing difficulties, I wonder what they did to deserve that punishment.									
13	I feel the need to tell others when I see them doing something wrong.									
14	I tend to focus on the faults and failures of others									
15	I get angry with God when someone who is immoral or dishonest has success.									
16	I often think about past failures or experiences of rejection									
17	I feel inferior									
18	I feel like certain experience has ruined my life and taken away my opportunity to have a complete and happy life.									
19	There are parts of me that I want to change but I don't believe I can ever accomplish it.									
20	I have to hide who I really am from people or they would not like me.									

Understanding your Score

21-25: Fear of failure appears to dominate the way you see yourself and the world around you. You need to experience deep healing in your view of yourself, your relationship with God and with other people.

17-20: Your life appears to be regularly affected by your fear of failure, which robs you of joy and peace

11-16: When you experience emotional problems they may come from a sense of failure.

0-10: You do not seem to be affected by the fear of failure that affects many people. God has given you a strong appreciation of His love and unconditional acceptance.

Statements 1-5 **Fear of Failure**

You believe that your worth is based on your performance so in order to be able to feel good about yourself you must meet certain standards. As a result you have a great fear of failure and a drive to succeed and to do everything as perfectly as you can, even if it means manipulating those around you. If anything or anyone interferes with your pursuit of perfect performance you become angry with them. If you believe that you might not succeed in a certain area or relationship you withdraw from it.

Statements 6-10 **Fear of Rejection**

You believe that in order to feel good about yourself you must have the approval of others. As a result you greatly fear rejection and will do anything necessary to please those around you. You are oversensitive to people's reactions or comments, interpreting them as more critical than they may be, or being devastated by them, causing you to be angry with others and withdraw from them in order to avoid their disapproval. Because you anticipate that people will reject you if they really know you, you find it hard to open up and be yourself so you end up having superficial relationships.

Statements 11-15 **Fear of Punishment**

Because you believe that your worth is based on your performance you also believe that your failure makes you unworthy of love and deserves to be punished. You also believe that when others fail they deserve to be punished. These beliefs drive you to avoid failure and to blame others when you feel you have failed. And you withdraw from God and from others because you are afraid of the punishment you think they will pour out on you.

Statements 16-20 **Feelings of Shame**

Your thoughts are frequently occupied by thoughts of something that makes you feel ashamed, whether some aspect of your physical appearance, a bad habit or character trait, or something you did or that happened to you in the past. Because of this you believe that you are inferior to others and you are ashamed of yourself or of some part of yourself. Because you believe that others look down on you, you are uncomfortable around people and isolate yourself from them. You do not believe you can change so you become depressed and hopeless.

Adapted from "The Search for Significance" by Robert McGee, Word Publishing

Who I Am In Christ

I Am Accepted	
John 1:12	I am God's child
John 15:15	As a disciple, I am a friend of Jesus Christ
Romans 5:1	I have been justified
I Corinthians 6:17	I am united with the Lord, and I am one with Him in spirit
I Corinthians 6:19-20	I have been bought with a price and I belong to God
I Corinthians 12:27	I am a member of Christ's body
Ephesians 1:3-8	I have been chosen by God and adopted as His child
Colossians 1:13-14	I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins
Colossians 2:9-10	I am complete in Christ
Hebrews 4:14-16	I have direct access to the throne of grace through Jesus Christ
I Am Secure	
Romans 8:1-2	I am free from condemnation
Romans 8:28	I am assured that God works for my good in all circumstances
Romans 8:31-39	I am free from any condemnation brought against me and I cannot be separated from the love of God
2 Corinthians 1:21-22	I have been established, anointed and sealed by God
Colossians 3:1-4	I am hidden with Christ in God
Philippians 1:6	I am confident that God will complete the good work He started in me
Philippians 3:20	I am a citizen of heaven
2 Timothy 1:7	I have not been given a spirit of fear but of power, love and a sound mind
I John 5:18	I am born of God and the evil one cannot touch me.
I Am Significant	
John 15:5	I am a branch of Jesus Christ, the true vine, and a channel of His life
John 15:16	I have been chosen and appointed to bear fruit
I Corinthians 3:16	I am God's temple
2 Corinthians 5:17-21	I am a minister of reconciliation for God
Ephesians 2:6	I am seated with Jesus Christ in the heavenly realm
Ephesians 2:10	I am God's workmanship
Ephesians 3:12	I may approach God with freedom and confidence
Philippians 4:13	I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens

"The more you affirm who you are in Christ, the more your behavior will begin to reflect your true identity!" (From *Victory Over the Darkness*, Dr. Neil Anderson)

