

FULLY ALIVE



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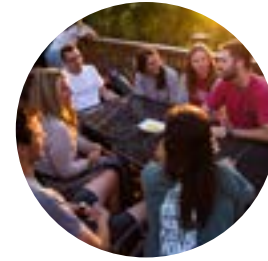
FULLY ALIVE

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Chapter I

Image and Identity

CHAPTER 1

IMAGE AND IDENTITY

Goal: Awakening an Awareness to a Deeper Identity

Leader's Guide:

There is no doubt that Greek life contributes to a unique, formative, and often all-encompassing college experience for those who participate in it. We want to contribute to and foster the goodness that can come from a student's participation in Greek life throughout their time in college by integrating it into a relationship with Christ and Christ's vision for our lives.

In this study, you will lead your participants through a discussion of various topics that many students encounter, but are often amplified in Greek life, such as relationships, alcohol, and the desire for success, and how these topics can be seen through the lens of faith. Through these conversations, there is a great opportunity for us as Bible study leaders to provide a space for the Lord to transform the hearts and minds of those involved, to inspire them with the assurance that they are known and loved by Him and made for a relationship with Him. With this, we hope to inspire and equip them with the knowledge and understanding they need to become amazing leaders in their chapters!

Many people view Christians as people who adhere to moral principles and try to be good people. While it's true that Christians are striving to be the best versions of themselves, that striving isn't an end in and of itself, but the result of a life surrendered to Jesus Christ. You, as the Bible study leader, will bring your participants back to the Gospel message as you walk through the various topics that make up this Bible study. This Gospel message is the foundation and the only thing that makes everything else in this study make sense. It is the one message that will eternally make one fully alive.

Note: This first chapter will be the longest in the study, as it lays the foundation of our identity as beloved sons and daughters of God. In the remaining chapters, we will explore how other topics in Greek life relate to this foundational identity. Feel free to take your time with this first chapter!

Please take your time preparing these studies. Discern how much of the content you will want to read to your participants, or summarize in your own words. Be prudent with your group, and feel free to cut back or add as needed!

Introduction: Living Fully Alive

(Please read aloud.)

"The glory of God is man fully alive." – Saint Irenaeus

What does it mean to be fully alive? Is that something you desire?

This Bible study was written specifically for you – students involved in Greek life! College is an awesome time in many people's lives, and

your experiences in Greek life can add to these adventures. However, there are also some unique challenges in Greek life that can pose threats to becoming fully alive in Christ.

Throughout this study, we will explore some of the opportunities and challenges in Greek life and ultimately how we can become fully alive through six different topics that relate to you in Greek life. You will reflect on your own viewpoints and study what God and the Church have to say on these topics. Lastly, you will learn some practical points on how to live an integrated life and embrace being fully alive in the following areas: identity, relationships, sex, alcohol, success and rest.

This Bible study finds its root in the truth of the Gospel: God desires a relationship with each one of us so much that Jesus became man and died on the cross. He did this in order to set right the relationship between God and man so we could have eternal life with him in heaven. This study grows from the root of the Gospel and considers the effects on our lives of a God who so radically loves us.

1. What do you think it means to be “fully alive”? Have you ever experienced a time when you felt “fully alive”?

Response: Let the group discuss.

(Read John 10:10.)

Ultimately, life with Christ is what it means to be free, and Fully Alive!

Fully Alive: Our Identity

Whether or not you remember a time when you’ve felt “fully alive,” the truth is that *we were created to be fully alive*. And yet we also know that it’s easy not to feel this way. There are plenty of things that distract us or keep us from living this way.

In order to more fully understand what it means to be fully alive, we have to know for what we were created. How can we know what we were created for? We can turn to the source. Let’s turn to the very beginning of Scripture to hear what God says about what we were created for.

(Read Genesis 1:23 – 27, 31.)

2. Let’s make sure we’re all on the same page: how does Scripture say that God made human beings?

Response: In God’s image and likeness.

3. What do you think it means to be made in the image and likeness of God? What does this tell you about how God views humanity?

Response: Let the group discuss. Ultimately, this tells us that God views humanity as his own children, as the phrase “image and likeness” is later used to describe Adam and his son Seth — Seth was in Adam’s “image and likeness” (Gen. 5:3). This phrase describes a parent/child relationship. A further implication, then, is that we are created to be in relationship with God and even to become like him.

4. And how does God describe his creation in verse 31?

Response: Very good!

5. Notice that God makes this statement before humanity has done a single thing other than exist — they have not earned any of their goodness; it was purely how they were created. What are the implications of this truth for our lives and how we view ourselves?

Response: Let the group discuss. Possible answers include: accepting ourselves as we are created, not having to earn our worth or God's love, viewing ourselves as part of the larger family of God, etc.

(Note to leader: Please read aloud.)

Take a moment to put your own name in this Scripture passage, and sit with the fact that God made YOU very good.

What else does God say about what we were created for? We've looked at the idea of "image" in the light of Sacred Scripture; now let's dive even deeper by seeing what the Church has to say about our "image."

The Catechism expounds on how awesome it is to be made in God's image, without detracting from the rest of Creation: "The manifold perfections of creatures — their truth, their goodness, their beauty — all reflect the perfection of God" (CCC 41).¹

6. In what ways do you think creation, nature, or the world around us reflect the perfection of God?

Response: Let the group discuss. Possible answers include: the beauty of nature; the vastness of the world; the incredibly small details of creation that reveal God's handiwork, etc.

7. In what ways do you think men and women even more closely reflect the perfection of God? How have you seen glimpses of God in other people?

Response: Let the group discuss. Possible answers include: encountering the love of God in family, strangers' acts of kindness, the greatness of God on display through various talents, etc.

8. In what ways does humanity *not* reflect God and his goodness? Why do we often fall short of reflecting who God is, even when we were created in his image and likeness?

Response: Let the group discuss. Possible answers include: original sin; the gift of our free will, which allows us to choose something other than God; our weaknesses or fears.

Seeking Our Own Image

(Note to leader: Please read aloud.)

We have looked at how we are created in the image of God and what a profound truth that is. However, any of us can probably recognize the ways that we don't live with confidence in this image and instead are tempted to view ourselves as less than or unworthy to be children of God. In particular, we will look at four areas in which we are tempted to find our image and our worth **apart** from God: approval and appreciation; emotional and physical comfort; security and control; and influence and power.

Each of these four areas has the potential to drive us to find our image and our purpose in things other than God, or to make us forget

our relationship with God completely. Each week, we will connect our topic to these four areas and how they ultimately cause us to live less fully alive and less who we were created to be. This week, we will consider a few ways that we might be tempted to seek our image from the world and not from God:

- When we seek the **approval and appreciation of others**, we can find ourselves doing or saying things to gain attention from the world, rather than knowing that we are always seen and loved by God. *Examples: Getting drunk or providing alcohol to minors at parties so that you are liked, buying expensive and superfluous clothing, working to maintain the status of your chapter amongst IFC and Panhellenic and taking pride in the “tier system.”*
- When we seek **emotional or physical comfort**, we can trade the greatness to which God is calling us for our own lesser or selfish desires out of fear or laziness. *Examples: Missing class because we are exhausted from a terrible night, relying too heavily on a brother or sister for their friendship, sleeping around, one night stands, getting drunk, late night binge eating.*
- **When we seek security and control**, we can try to take our life into our own hands, rather than trusting that God is truly in control and never stops working for our good (Rom. 8:28). *Examples: Not going to bed at a decent hour because we are too worried about the executive duties that we have, staying up late studying to make perfect grades, cheating to maintain your reputation without putting in the real work to learn and do well in classes.*
- When we seek **influence and power**, we can be tempted to believe that our status or our position are what give us worth and the hope for a fruitful or successful future, while both of

these things can only be found in God. *Examples: Hazing new members to gain authority over them, ruining friendships within your chapter because of an excessive drive for an executive position, tearing other chapters down who you consider to be less than yours, unhealthy pride in your status in Greek life as you relate to non-Greek students in class or other groups on campus.*

9. Which of these human desires do you find yourself seeking most often? How might seeking these things from the world make you less fully alive?

Response: Let the group discuss. A potential follow-up question: What are you actually seeking when you are pursuing these things? Help your group realize that all of what they are seeking from the world in these areas is found in God in a more perfect way than could ever be offered by the world.

10. How might God be inviting you to surrender your pursuit of these false sources of image to him? How is God truly the answer to what you are seeking?

Response: Let the group discuss.²

(Note to leader: Please read aloud.)

God desires us to live fully alive. He created us as the prize of creation, to be his own sons and daughters. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* tells us:

“True happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement – however beneficial it may be – such as science, technology and art, or indeed in any creature, but in God

alone, the source of every good and of all love.” (CCC 1723)

11. Have you encountered true happiness in God throughout your life? If you have, what was that experience like? If you have not, have you desired to know God more deeply?

Response: Let the group discuss.

Made in God’s Image: Greek Life Testimonies

(Note to leader: Feel free to read aloud or print these testimonies for your group to read and reflect upon, either during your study or outside of your study time, or, share your own!)

Male Testimony:

Leading up to college, I struggled tremendously with how I thought others viewed me. I wanted to be seen as in control, influential and popular. In high school I chased these images by planting my identity firmly in athletics; but when I graduated, I felt I needed a new platform that would help project these images. I found that platform through fraternity life. This façade I labored to keep up led to abuse of alcohol, unhealthy relationships, vanity issues and ultimately an exhausting and enslaved way of living. It wasn’t until the Lord met me at rock bottom in confession that I began to discover my true identity as his beloved son and the peace and freedom that came from seeking to please him alone.

Female Testimony:

As a new member in my sorority, I quickly found myself placing, and even grasping for, my identity in the people I hung out with and the things we were doing. I knew I was created for more, but

nobody seemed to care. I was losing who I was, and I felt lost. It was only after attending a FOCUS conference and remembering who I was and what I truly wanted that I began to live out of my daughterhood as a daughter of God. At first, I tried to maintain both identities, but that was exhausting. When I finally let go of being “cool” and “accepted” and “fun” and leaned fully into being chosen by God, my life changed forever. Being the “Catholic girl” in my sorority became one of the greatest sources of joy in my life. It allowed me to love women authentically for who they really were, because I knew I was loved for who I was. In letting go of the slavery of “fitting in,” I became free and would continue to invite my friends into this freedom for the rest of my time as a Greek woman in college.

12. What is one thing you want to commit to this week to reorient your understanding of your own identity or to bear more fully the image and likeness of God?

Response: Let the group discuss; be sure your students make a written commitment that you can follow up with next week! Examples include: spending 10-15 minutes of quiet time each day in prayer or reading Scripture; attending a retreat or faith-based event on campus; going to Mass on Sunday or daily; learning more about the saints; spending time daily in creation contemplating God.

¹ Read CCC 2500 to expound on what the transcendentals Truth, Beauty, and Goodness are if your participants want a deeper understanding here.

² Note to leader: If your group desires to go deeper here, desires a more scriptural foundation or is homing in on one certain area from the four above, feel free to share or discuss the following Scripture verses for guidance on surrendering or more rightly viewing the four areas in terms of our faith:

- Approval and Appreciation: 1 Thess. 2:3 – 6
- Emotional and Physical Comfort: John 16:32 – 33
- Security and Control: Matt. 6:25 – 33
- Influence and Power: 1 Pet. 3: 3 – 4)