**Session 1: Identity and Work**

* Introduction: give structure of 2 sessions, J and N swapping at different points
  + Know some do not have exams, hope still useful in context of work, coursework, world of work in the future, etc.
  + Useful in supporting brothers and sisters
* Pray

*Setting the context of the world in which we live*

How do the students (Christian or non-Christian) you interact with here in Cambridge define themselves?

What do *you* find influencing how you think about yourself?

* The metrics we use to think about this are things like
  + Our work – what we study
    - Exam and coursework results
    - How hard we work
    - Later in life, our jobs
  + What we feel (or what we think we feel!)
    - Psychological labels
    - Sexuality
  + Class background, education, ethnicity
  + The type of church you go to (Charismatic, or not)

Two powerful concepts:

1. What we think about ourselves
2. What we think other people think about us

In both of these is a large amount of pride – in ourselves and in the eyes of others. Self-worship.

*How should a Christian think about identity?*

* As Christians we want scripture to be the most authoritative in shaping and defining our understanding of ourselves and our understanding of reality.
* Objective truth is a better way to define our identity
  + Not tainted by human subjectivity or sinful human motives
* Things start to go wrong when we consider what we think about ourselves, or what we think others think about us, over what God has said we are

*So what has God in the Bible said we are?*

* Identity as sons of God
  + Image bearers
    - Gen 1:27, Gen 9:6 (post-fall)
    - Romans 8:29
  + Brought into right relationship through the cross
  + Application: valued by the only one who matters
    - Not on performance – (results, working to potential)
    - Not what we think of ourselves, not what we think others think of us
* Identity as workers
* Creation
  + Creatures (not creator)
    - Limited
    - Image bearers
    - Relationship with God
  + Workers
    - God as a worker
    - Vice-regents over creation
* Fall
  + Still in God’s image, but now have a corrupted inheritance from Adam
  + Affections, motivations, thinking are out of sync with God
  + But still in God’s image, so still known by God and forgiven by him
  + Work becomes toilsome, futile, compulsory for survival
  + **Sinners are self-worshippers – defined by what we think about ourselves**
  + **Sinners are self-deceived – defined by what we think others think about us**
* Redemption
  + Christians repent and trust in Christ
    - Part of God’s family
    - Image is continually conformed to be more and more like Christ
  + Transformed into God-worshippers
    - Enabled to live out the identity given to Adam and demonstrated in Christ
  + Redeemed sinners
    - Sin continues in our heart – but that is not who you are!
      * Man of flesh is not you!

*In the context of preparing for exams and coursework assessment*

* Remember what is objectively true about you, and what is only subjective
  + Be careful spending all of your time thinking and talking about subjective measures (circumstances, hours studied, hours not studied)
    - Be deliberate in shifting conversations and thoughts in a vertical, Godward direction – “how does God relate to this?”
  + Your work itself is an act of worship, regardless of the result
    - But what the work produces is also valuable
* Remember what you have responsibility for, and what you are concerned about but not responsible for
  + Use diagram

**Session 2: Making the most of the exam season**

* Introduction: The chief end of man is to worship God and enjoy him forever.
  + Think about how you can use exam term for that purpose
  + Making the most of the term ahead (not just a case of not getting stressed!)
  + Read Philippians 4:1-9
* Philippians 4:1-9 – Stand firm in the Lord
  + Opportunities for Fellowship
    - These are things we do together (affection of v1-3, ‘finally, brothers and sisters’)
    - Stay committed to church, to meeting with brothers and sisters, sharing and supporting one another, point each other to Christ
  + Opportunities to rejoice
    - Rejoice in the Lord, who is the great examiner, the judge of the world
    - Exams judge us, by showing what we really have been doing all year. When the lord returns he will judge us, but our assurance, is that even though we deserve to fail his examination, he has swapped papers with us, taken our rubbish one for himself and given us his perfect one.
    - If you find yourself becoming anxious for an exam, realise that that, and so much more, is how you should feel about coming of Christ. But in truth there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, and so you can turn that anxiety to praise, and know that that ultimate exam has already been completed, and the examiners given you a starred first.
  + Opportunities for gentleness
    - Remember the Lord is near, stand firm on Him, and know that we don’t need to prove ourselves. Let him transform you into an example of purpose, faith, patience, love. Stress bring irritability towards others – know the Lord is near, and let that bring gentleness and calm in our relation to others.
    - Exam season provides so many great opportunities to serve others! So many of our friends stressed, overworked. Use Sundays, meal times.
  + Opportunities to work on trust and prayer
    - *“Oh, what peace we often forfeit. Oh what needless pains we bear! All because we do not carry, everything to God in prayer.”*
    - Be committed to prayer! When you find yourself in your room, close your eyes, and bring it to the Lord in prayer.
    - We pray because we trust God, but as we pray, we trust God more. It programs our thinking, attitudes, and actions to call on the Lord for everything.
  + Trust God to guard your heart
  + Opportunities to remember the good things
    - As you work, you will come across things which are “noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable” – things which are “excellent and praiseworthy”. Think about these things! What an amazing opportunity we have while revising to dedicate our time to exploring these things.
    - If you are studying a piece of literature that demonstrates justice, or if you are memorising the make-up of a chemical that reveals and admirable designer of the universe, praise God!
    - Encourage yourself in the Lord by recounting all the good things you have been given through Christ