

THOSE WHO HAVE MORE...	THOSE WHO HAVE LESS...
Those who have more plan and give instructions and advice and are solidified in their identity as the ones with answers and who have it all together	Those who have less follow instructions and receive advice and are solidified in their identity as the ones who need help and don't have ideas
Those who have more speak about the lessons they've learned through their successes, and are solidified in their identity as the successful, blessed	Those who have less speak about their failures and are solidified in their identity as the needy, incompetent failures

(Rhodes, 2013)

TASK 5

EXAMINE IMPLICATIONS THROUGH A CASE STUDY OF GOD COMPLEXES AND MARRED IDENTITIES AND COMMIT TO APPLYING NEW KNOWLEDGE (30 MINUTES)

5A: To **examine** this dynamic further, **read** this case study about an ally and participant. **Form** groups of 3 – work with someone that you don't know well or from across the room! In your groups of 3, **discuss** what will happen in terms of the four key relationships, god complexes, and marred identities according to the question.

After 10 minutes, we'll **hear** reflections from each group.

ESTHER AND MARIE

Esther grew up in the community of Eastside Park. She dropped out of high school at age 14 after her father, who regularly abused her mother, was killed in a gang conflict. Esther has worked three jobs in her life, two at fast food restaurants, and all for less than 3 months. She now works the early shift at Waffle House for tips and no benefits. Today was a typical day for Esther. She dragged herself out of bed at 5 am, awoke her 8 and 5-year-old children, and walked them to the bus stop before catching her own bus to work. One hour and three transfers later, she arrived already weary. After getting cut early, Esther picked up her 5-year-old from school, then stopped by the grocery store for food and cigarettes with the \$9 she earned in tips that day. With no bus fare left, she walked home, lugging the grocery bag and cranky 5-year-old by the arm. After settling in at home, the kids stayed home alone and ate cereal for dinner so Esther could get to the laundromat to do three loads. She got back in time to tuck them in by 9 pm, then passed out in bed herself shortly after.

Marie comes from an upper middle class family, and went to Vanderbilt for her undergrad and Rhodes for her MBA. She's a successful business owner, and a women's ministry leader at her large middle-class church. Marie is meticulous about managing her finances, and works over 60 hours a week managing the graphic design firm that she and her husband started 15 years ago. She has recently heard the call to help the poor in her community, but really, she doesn't know any low-income people personally until she meets Esther through a financial education program at church. The first time she visits Esther in Eastside Park, she can't believe anybody in her city lives in such conditions. Later that night, Marie is shaken up. "I don't even know how she survives," she tells her husband with tears in her eyes. She looks out the window into her historic neighborhood's newly renovated park, thinking about the stark contrast between their worlds.

Both Esther and Marie attend Christ Community Church downtown. Recently, Esther came to Marie, her ally,

asking for help paying the electric bill. This time of year has been tough with the holidays, paying bills, buying winter clothes, and affording presents for the kids, especially when losing shifts at the Waffle House. Marie thought about her own Christmas holiday with her family, about the trip they had made to California to see her parents and the presents she and her husband were able to buy their kids this year. All in all, it had been a great holiday; the only real stress had been being too busy. Esther's Christmas was so different from hers, and this made Marie feel guilty. She has the power to help Esther...how can she refuse? After all, Esther is living in a dangerous, low-rent apartment, and she has little money to feed her 2 kids. When Esther called, in tears, asking Marie for \$30, Marie drove over to Eastside Park. She agreed to pay her electric bill. Obviously, Esther cannot pay the bill herself. Marie locked the car doors as she drove away from Esther's apartment. She felt good about being able to help her – almost heroic. There's something really great about being involved, getting to know someone, and being able to step in and lift them out of their troubles. Marie was eager to keep pressing on in her relationship with Esther, because it made her feel significant.

But, later that evening, Marie's high seemed to wear off, and she found herself feeling sorry and irritated at Esther's situation – her Christmas, her job, her children. She started to think about all the times the deacons at church helped her with bills in the past year. Why aren't things getting better? When she went to ask her church about this and look through the records, she realized that individuals, or the church, had paid nine bills for Esther in the past twelve months. Goodness! Marie thought. She felt frustrated that after one year of helping Esther, even after participating in the financial education class together, it seems like nothing much has really changed in her life. She's still working bad shifts at Waffle House, and she still barely pays her bills every month.

5B: In your small groups, **consider** each of the following actions. For each one, what will happen in terms of the four key relationships, god complexes, and marred identity if Marie...

- Continues to offer Esther money for help with bills, but only essentials like the electric bill – not with snacks or cigarettes.
- Refuses to have any financial connection with her, but will have her over for regular meals and discussions on the importance of responsibility and hard work.
- Spends time helping Marie find help through the city government or another community resource.
- Hires Esther to clean her house, thereby providing her the money she needs, and on their break begins to help her with her budget, making sure she listens and understands Esther's obstacles to good financial management.

5C: Let's **hear** some of your reflections about Esther and Marie's relationship in terms of god complexes and marred identities.

Real gospel transformation occurs when those who have more lay down their god-complexes, recognizing their own weaknesses so they can see Jesus' strength, and those who have less lay down their marred identities, recognizing their gifts, abilities, and strengths as made in God's image. This happens when:

MATERIALLY WEALTHY...	MATERIALLY POOR...
The materially wealthy open themselves to the hospitality of the poor and look for ways to receive from them.	The materially poor are able to contribute using their gifts, abilities, talents, and even material possessions.
The materially wealthy ask questions that empower the poor to form their own answers, and to name their own gifts and abilities.	The materially poor are able to dream about how to use their God-given skills and abilities to solve problems, provide for their families and contribute to their communities.
The materially wealthy are open about their own challenges, brokenness, and sin.	The materially poor speak from the wisdom they have through education and experience, and name times when they used God's gifts to them to succeed.

(Rhodes, 2013)

From this perspective, you can see how people of widely varying incomes actually need each other. Everyone, regardless of socioeconomic situation, experiences broken relationships and poverty apart from Christ. Both groups need one another to experience healing and the reconciliation of God!

5D: Thanks, everyone, for the great discussion. What are the major take-away points from this discussion? **Call them out** in the large group.

[Make sure the following points are drawn out:

- *We are all poor.*
- *Each of us is broken in our four key relationships.*
- *Relationships with others have potential to heal brokenness or increase it.]*

5E: Now, **reflect** a few moments in silence on this question: What are ways that your own god complex or marred identity has kept you from seeing God's grace?

5F: Choose one of the boxes from the chart above and think about a situation or relationship in your life where you could apply it. **Circle** the box, **make** notes, and **turn** to a partner to **describe** your commitment to act.

After 3 minutes, we'll **hear** one or two ideas from those who would like to share.

[30 minute break]