# Where do we find our identity? Eloise Wellings

## Lesson overview

Eloise Wellings is a long-distance runner who has competed at an international level since 1998, including representing Australia at the London Olympics in 2012. She became a Christian when a school friend saw her struggling with disappointment and invited her to church.

### Learning intentions

Students will learn about:

* How Eloise Wellings developed her Olympic aspirations, worked towards fulfilling them, and suffered disappointment
* How Eloise then found faith in God and a new sense of identity in Christ
* What the Bible says about where true identity can be found
* The importance of sharing Christ with others.

### Success criteria

Students will be able to:

* Identify some ways in which the Bible speaks about our true identity
* Reflect on how faith in Jesus can give us a new and eternal perspective on life, purpose and significance
* Understand the comfort to be found in God’s love during times of trouble or disappointment

### Note to teacher

‘Identity’ has in recent times become a loaded word. Depending on your class and your school setting, you may wish to extend your discussions during this lesson into the territory of gender or sexual identity, the importance society currently attaches to these aspects of identity, and how identity in Christ is more significant than even the most deeply personal experiences of identity. Note that while this lesson plan does not require you to venture into these areas, students may raise them.

### Bible content

Psalm 139:13–14; Jeremiah 17:7-8; John 1:12; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:10.

### Link to Australian Curriculum

General capabilities – Personal and Social Capability

## Lesson plan

|  |
| --- |
| Preparing the lesson  * View the video content and read the questions that accompany each segment. * Read through the material provided and select the activities and Bible content you wish to use with your students.   **Note:** there are quite a few activities and Scripture passages provided for this lesson. You may wish to give greater focus to some activities and/or some Bible verses than others. You can omit or modify content as appropriate for your class and the time you have available.   * Use the resources listed in ‘Further reading’ if you wish to explore the topic more fully for your own reference before teaching. |

### A. Discussion starter (5 mins)

Say to students: *Imagine you are an Olympic-level athlete preparing for the next Olympic Games. You will know whether you qualify later this year. What are the best things about being in this situation? What are the worst things?*

Without pre-empting Eloise’s own words too much, prompt students to briefly consider ideas about the tenuous nature of this kind of achievement – the risk of injury, or of not being selected, or of not performing well on the day. Prompt them to see how one’s whole life can need to be given over to reaching this level of achievement.

### B. Show video segment 1 (approx. 10 mins including questions)

While the video is playing/after it has finished, ask students to write answers to the following viewing and listening question:

1. Why does Eloise seek out and make friends with other athletes when she’s competing at events?

2. Do you think most athletes would be like this? Why or why not?

### C. Discussion activity (3 mins)

***Think–Pair–Share***

Say to students: *How would you describe**Eloise’s attitude to the disappointments she suffered? Think for a moment, then discuss with your partner.*

### D. Show video segment 2 (approx. 7 mins including questions)

While the video is playing/after it has finished, ask students to write answers to the following viewing and listening questions:

1. What led to Eloise coming to church and seeing God in a new light?

2. How did her perceptions of God change?

3. In what did Eloise find her identity and purpose *before* she became a Christian? Explain how this changed when she came to faith.

### E. What does the Bible say? (10 mins)

Read the Bible verses together. How do these relate to what Eloise has learnt about life, faith and herself through her experiences? (You can give students this table to fill in or just discuss. To save time, divide students into groups and allocate verses to different groups. Alternatively, just pick a few verse to discuss as a class – some suggested key verses are in bold.)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Bible verses** | **How this relates to Eloise’s experiences** |
| **Psalm 139:13–14**  For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. |  |
| **Jeremiah 17:7-8**  But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit. |  |
| **John 1:12**  Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God … |  |
| 2 Corinthians 5:17  … if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! |  |
| Galatians 2:20  I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. |  |
| **Ephesians 2:10**  For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. |  |

### F. Closing discussion/writing question (5 mins)

Say to students: *The video extracts you’ve just watched come from a series called ‘Faith Runs Deep’. In what ways would you say ‘faith runs deep’ for Eloise Wellings?*

### G. Going deeper: optional extension ideas

Depending on available lesson time, students’ interests and school priorities, teachers may wish to build on this lesson plan and further explore:

* Contemporary ideas about ‘identity’
* More on being bold in praying for others and inviting them to hear the gospel
* More on the notion that suffering may be caused by God punishing us.

### H. Further reading

* Karl Faase with George Marriot, *Faith Runs Deep Anthology: Unearthing stories of faith in Australia*, Olive Tree Media, 2022
* Eloise’s biography on Athletics Australia website: <https://www.athletics.com.au/olympic-athlete-profiles/eloisewellings/>
* Foundation started by Eloise and fellow athlete, Ugandan Olympian and former child soldier Julius Achon: <https://www.lovemercyfoundation.org/>
* Australian Christian College’s The Inspiration Project podcast: <https://www.acc.edu.au/podcast/eloise-wellings/>
* Variety of articles on the *Desiring God* website to do with finding one’s identity in Christ: <https://www.desiringgod.org/topics/identity-in-christ#>
* Stephen Liggins, *The Good Sporting Life*, Matthias Media, 2020.