



# IDENTITY

Who is God? Who are we?

GUIDE BOOK



**IDENTITY** Who is God? Who are we?

Guide Book

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## SESSION 1

# The God who created us



1



### HAVE YOUR SAY

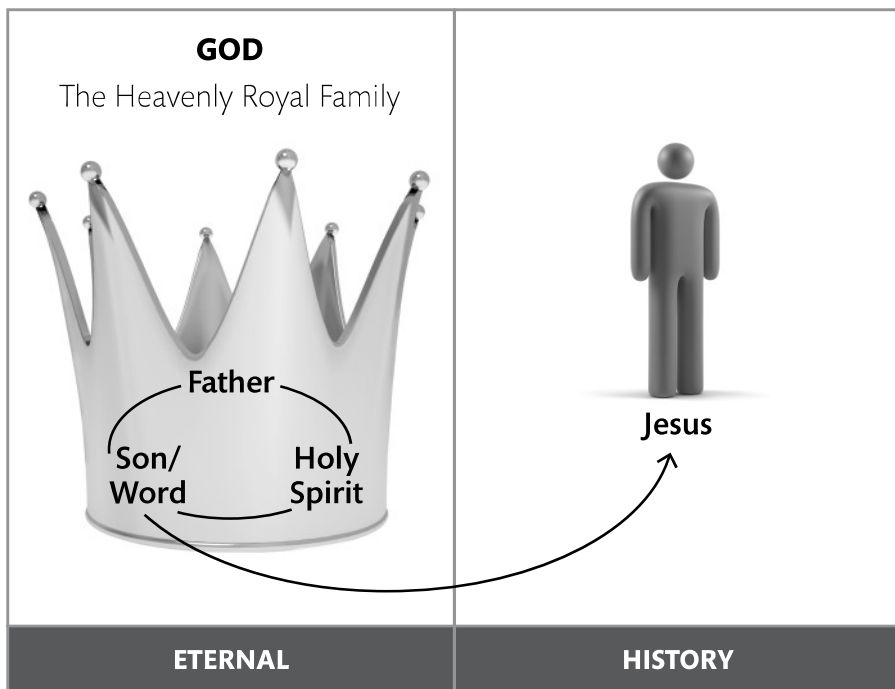
- What's your name?
- Why have you come along?
- What kind of God do you believe in?
- What big question would you like answered over the next few weeks?

### NOTES

*John 1:1-14*







## HAVE YOUR SAY

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- 🌀 What did you find helpful?
- 🌀 How convinced are you that God is much more like a divine family than a lonely individual or an impersonal force?
- 🌀 Why do you think we should listen to the words of Jesus?





## **BIG QUESTION**



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Are science and Christianity enemies or friends?



## **HAVE YOUR SAY**

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-  How persuaded are you that science and Christianity are the best of friends?
  
-  How keen are you to read John's Gospel?



## SESSION 2

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# The God who wants to rescue us



2



### TAKE A LOOK

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*Please read John 1:35-42*

The John we read about in these verses is normally referred to as John the Baptist. He is not the same John who wrote John's Gospel.

#### 1. What did John the Baptist tell his disciples about Jesus?

*(See verses 35-36)*

#### 2. What happened as a result?

*(See verses 37-39)*

To understand the significance of calling Jesus the Lamb of God we need to know something about an event called Passover and a section of the Bible that speaks about a lamb being led to the slaughter.

Passover night took place over a thousand years before Jesus was born. At this point in human history the Jewish people were slaves in the mighty Egyptian Empire. However, we read in the book of Exodus, the second book of the Bible, that God made a promise to the Jews that he would rescue them



from this agonising situation. And this is how he did it. He chose a night when he passed through the entire country and brought death to the oldest son in every family. However, he told his people that on this night they could save their oldest sons from this judgement if they killed a lamb and painted its blood on the doorposts of their houses.

This night became known as Passover because although God **passed through** the whole land in judgement, he **passed over** any house where he saw the blood of a sacrificed lamb. The lamb was killed as a **substitute** for the oldest son. It died so that the child could live.

What does all this have to do with Jesus? To say that Jesus is the Lamb of God means that he came to do something similar to all those lambs that were killed on the night the Jews were rescued from Egypt. It means that he came to die as a substitute so that others can live. It means that he died so that we can be spared the judgement we deserve. There is a day coming when everyone who has ever lived will have to stand before their Creator and Judge. However, the good news is that because Jesus has already died as the Lamb of God, the sentence deserved by his followers will be **passed over** on the Judgement Day.

Another section of the Bible that helps us understand the significance of calling Jesus the Lamb of God is found in the book of Isaiah. It also teaches **salvation through substitution**. Here is a quotation to give you a flavour of what is written.

“But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.” *Isaiah 53:5-7*



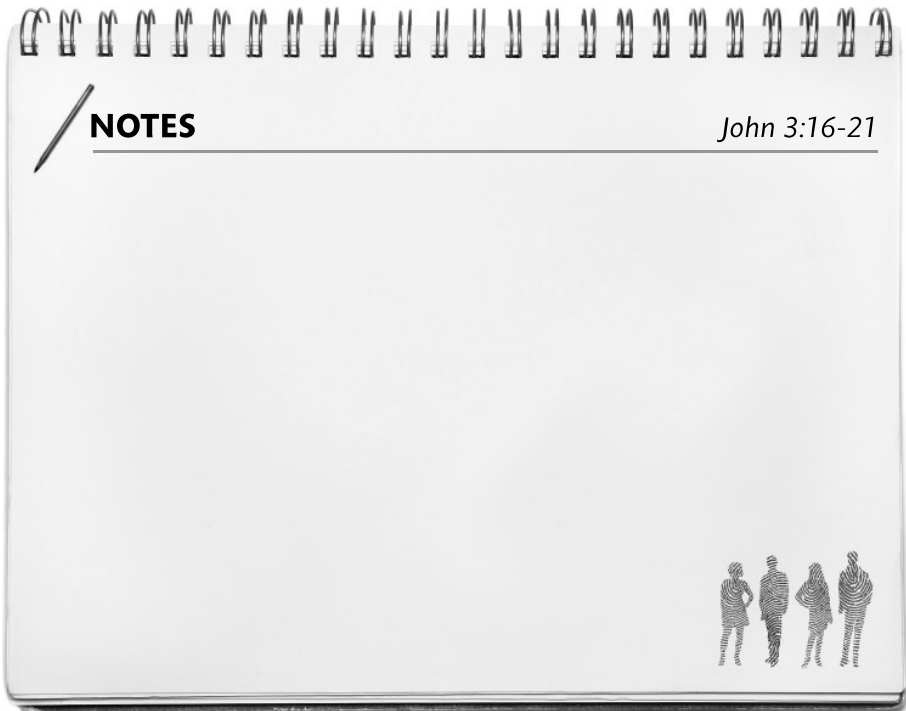
### 3. Why do you think Andrew hurried off to find his brother Simon?

(See verses 40-42)

The Jews of Jesus' day were longing for the appearance of their Messiah. Messiah is the English translation of a Hebrew word that means 'anointed one'. Christ is the English translation of a Greek word that means 'anointed one'. Messiah and Christ are interchangeable words.

Many promises had already been made about this special person in the Jewish Scriptures, what Christians call the Old Testament. A selection of these promises can be found on pages 39 to 44 of this booklet.

These predictions allowed Messianic claims to be tested. There had to be a perfect match between the predictions and the person claiming to be the Messiah.







## HAVE YOUR SAY

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What did you find helpful?



How convinced are you that we all need to be rescued from the judgement of God?



How would you respond if someone said to you, “I can’t understand why the death of Jesus is so important to Christians”?



## BIG QUESTION

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What about other religions?





## HAVE YOUR SAY

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- 🌀 What would Jesus say to someone who believes there are many paths to God?
  
- 🌀 What should we do if we believe what we read in John 3:18?



## SESSION 3

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# The God we were made for



3



### TAKE A LOOK

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*Please read John 4:1-26*

1. Why was the Samaritan woman surprised that Jesus spoke to her?  
(See verses 1-9)
2. What does Jesus tell the woman in verse 10?
3. What do we discover about the gift of God in verses 11-14?
4. What do we learn about the woman in verses 15-18?
5. What do we discover about the identity of Jesus in verses 19-26?








## NOTES

*John 6:25-35*



## HAVE YOUR SAY

-  What did you find helpful?
-  What are the most common God substitutes in the lives of the people you know?
-  What has been your past experience of God substitutes?





## **BIG QUESTION**

Where can I find lasting pleasure?

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## **HAVE YOUR SAY**

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- 🌀 How convinced are you that Jesus is not a cosmic killjoy?
  
- 🌀 How do you think your life would change if you became a Christian?



## SESSION 4

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4

# The God who wants to comfort us



### TAKE A LOOK

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*Please read John 10:1-16*

1. How does the shepherd in verses 1-6 gather and lead his sheep?
2. Why does Jesus call himself the gate for the sheep?  
(See verses 7-10)
3. What do we discover about Jesus in verses 11-15?
4. Why is verse 16 such good news for non-Jews?








## NOTES

*John 11:1-45*



## HAVE YOUR SAY

-  What did you find helpful?
-  What do you think happens to people after they die?
-  How would you answer Jesus' question in verse 26?





## **BIG QUESTION**

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Why do we suffer?



## **HAVE YOUR SAY**

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- 🌀 What would you say to someone who doubts the existence of God because of all the suffering they see in the world?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 🌀 How keen would you be to meet your Creator in a minute's time?





# The God who loves relationships



## TAKE A LOOK

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*Please read John 14:15-21*

**1. How can we identify the people who love Jesus?**

*(See verse 15)*

**2. What do we learn about the Holy Spirit in verses 16 and 17?**

One of the titles of the Holy Spirit is the Counsellor. A legal Counsellor or Counsel takes his place alongside his client and is his/her personal helper in all things legal. Likewise, the Holy Spirit is the personal helper of a Christian. He takes his place within the followers of Jesus and helps them live the Christian life.

**3. What does Jesus promise in verses 18-20?**

**4. What can those who love Jesus expect from him?**

*(See verse 21)*








## NOTES

*John 15:9-13*



## HAVE YOUR SAY

-  What did you find helpful?
-  How keen are you to experience the intimate relationship described by Jesus?
-  Why should we not fear putting the commands of Jesus into practice?





## **BIG QUESTION**

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Do I need to go to church to be a Christian?



## **HAVE YOUR SAY**

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- 🌀 How is it possible to be a regular churchgoer and yet not be a Christian?
  
- 🌀 Why do you think a Christian should meet regularly with other Christians?



## SESSION 6

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# The God who died for us



6



### TAKE A LOOK

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*Please read John 15:18-21*

1. How should Christians expect to be treated by the world?

*(See verses 18-19)*

2. What does Jesus teach about persecution in verse 20?

3. What do we discover about the name of Jesus in verse 21?








## **NOTES**

*John 19:16-30*



## **HAVE YOUR SAY**

-  What did you find helpful?
-  How do we know our rebellion against God is serious?
-  Why is the perfect life of Jesus such good news for people like us?





## **BIG QUESTION**


Does God care about justice?

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## **HAVE YOUR SAY**

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 How persuaded are you that God cares about justice?

 How keen are you for God to judge the world?



## SESSION 7

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7

# The God who wants to persuade us



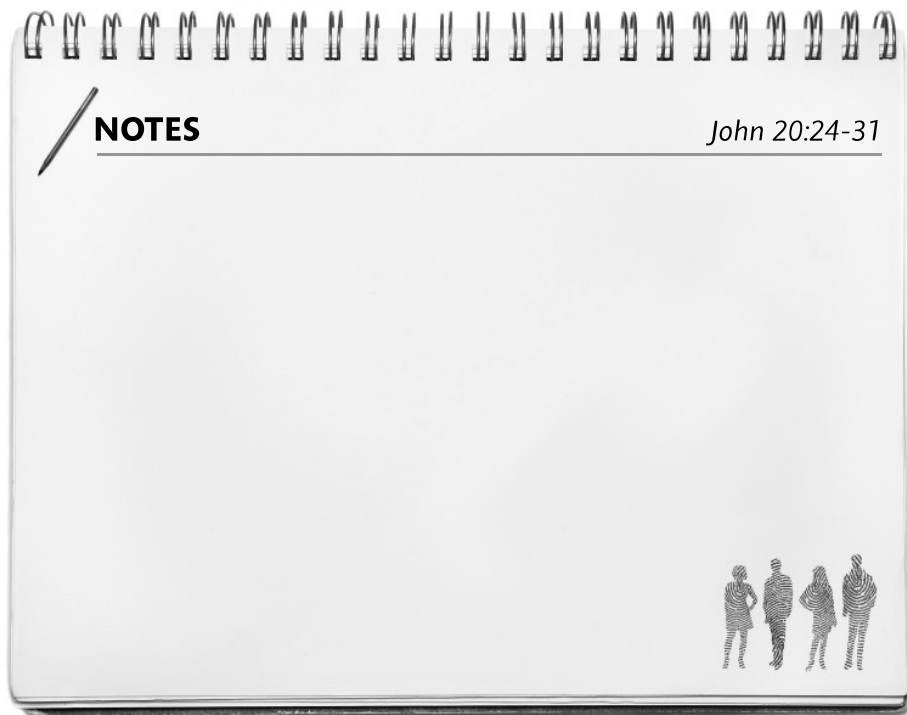
### TAKE A LOOK

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*Please read John 20:1-23*

1. How do we know Mary Magdalene wasn't expecting the resurrection of Jesus when she went to his tomb?  
(See verses 1-2)
2. What did Peter and the other disciple discover when they arrived at the tomb?  
(See verses 3-9)
3. What persuaded Mary Magdalene to believe in the physical resurrection of Jesus?  
(See verses 10-18)
4. What transformed the mood of the disciples we meet in verses 19-20?
5. What do verses 21-23 teach us about the Christian life?





## HAVE YOUR SAY

- What did you find helpful?
- How persuaded are you that becoming a Christian is based on evidence?
- How convinced are you that John's Gospel is telling the truth?





## **BIG QUESTION** Do I need to see in order to believe?

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## **HAVE YOUR SAY**

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- 🌀 What do you think is the best explanation for the transformation of the early disciples of Jesus?
  
- 🌀 How are you going to respond to what you have discovered from John's Gospel?



If you want to become a Christian then you can use the following prayer to surrender personally to Jesus. It has three main parts to it: a chance to say sorry, an opportunity to say thank you, and some words which will help you say please.

*Father, I recognise I need your forgiveness for the way I have lived my life. I am sorry for putting myself at the centre and for living in your world as if I was in charge. Please forgive me.*

*Thank you for sending your only Son into the world to live in my place and to die in my place. Thank you that Jesus has already experienced the judgement I deserve.*

*From now on I want to follow him as my Saviour/King, so please help me by your Spirit, day by day, to do whatever Jesus says.*

*Amen.*



# EXTRA QUESTIONS

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## Has the New Testament been changed?

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Sometimes the suggestion is made that the New Testament we read today is not the same as the original. Is this true? Has the New Testament been deliberately changed over the centuries?

It is widely believed that all the books of the New Testament were written between AD 40 and AD 100, that is, about 10 to 70 years after Jesus' public ministry. We should note that memorisation was a key feature of Jesus' culture so the events of his life would have been carefully remembered before they were written down.

Unfortunately, we don't possess any of the original New Testament documents. However, the good news is that a vast number of copies have been discovered over the last 2000 years. The original documents were written in Greek so the number of Greek copies is especially important to consider. In total, over 5000 Greek manuscripts have been discovered so far!

The total collection is made up of fragments, portions and complete documents. The oldest known fragment surviving today is called the 'John Rylands Papyrus' and this is stored at the John Rylands University Library in Manchester, England. It dates from about AD 130 and contains a few verses from John chapter 18. The oldest copy of the entire New Testament dates from the fourth century. This is called the Codex Sinaiticus.

What can we learn from the thousands of manuscripts that have been discovered? Comparing the documents shows that small copying mistakes were made. However, there is absolutely no evidence that a major



rewriting of the New Testament has ever taken place. The sheer number of manuscripts also allows experts to identify the copying mistakes and so enables them to reconstruct the original New Testament.

All this means we can be very confident that what we are reading today is what was first written.





## What predictions were made about the Christ?

The first column in the table below shows a few of the predictions made about the Christ in the Jewish Scriptures. The second column focuses on the life of Jesus. Look at how perfectly the life of Jesus matches the ancient predictions.

PREDICTIONS ABOUT THE CHRIST	THE LIFE OF JESUS
The Christ would be born in Bethlehem	
<b>Micah 5:2</b> But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.	<b>Matthew 2:1</b> After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem.
The Christ would be a descendant of King David	
<b>Ezekiel 34:23</b> I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd.	<b>Matthew 1:1</b> A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham.



### The Christ would be anointed by the Spirit

**Isaiah 11:1-2** A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him — the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.

**John 1:32-34** Then John gave this testimony: "I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on him. I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.' I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."

### The Christ would arrive after a time of preparation

**Malachi 3:1** "See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty.

**John 1:6-8** There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.



**The Christ would perform miracles**

**Isaiah 35:5-6** Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.

**Matthew 11:4-5** Jesus replied, "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor..."

**The Christ would enter Jerusalem on a donkey**

**Zechariah 9:9** Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

**Matthew 21:1-4** As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away." This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet.



The Christ would be silent before his accusers

**Isaiah 53:7** He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

**Mark 15:5** But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

The Christ would be spat upon

**Isaiah 50:6** I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting.

**Mark 15:19** Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him.



### The Christ would have his garments divided

**Psalm 22:18** They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.

**John 19:23-24** When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it." This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, "They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing."

### The Christ would have his side pieced

**Zechariah 12:10** And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.

**John 19:34** Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.



**The Christ would be buried in a rich man's tomb**

**Isaiah 53:9** He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

**Matthew 27:57-60**

As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus. Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock.

**The Christ would be raised from the dead**

**Psalms 16:9-10** Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

**Mark 16:6** "Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him..."



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I am so thankful to Henry Curran for the initial idea to write a course on John's Gospel and for his help in the early stages of the course's development. I have fond memories of staying with Henry and Kate in the Curran household as Henry and I worked on the first version of the course together.

I thank God for all those who helped make the filming of Identity a reality. My thanks especially to Louisa Bratley, Ben Hall, Tim Mitchell and Geoff Waring. I want to highlight Geoff for special thanks. Not only was he behind one of the cameras, he also spend many hours editing the footage; he worked out how to subtitle the course in multiple languages; and he was the brains behind the superb quality DVD.

I am grateful to Ed Jolley, Stephen Silva and Amy Silva for typing up the transcripts of what I actually said. Thanks also to Ed for the many hours he spent preparing the scripts for subtitling. Lizzi Coke was also a great help in the final stages of the DVD production.

The translations could not have been completed without a number of Christ's global family partnering together. Below are the names of the many people involved in the different stages of the subtitling process.

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My Trinitarian God has used many people to shape and clarify my understanding of the gospel. My head is full of illustrations and ideas I have heard from many others over the years.

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Above all, I thank the glorious Father that he sent his one and only Son to save a rebel like me. And I rejoice that he has given me the Holy Spirit to help me live as a disciple of Jesus.



**Who am I? What is the purpose of life? Who is God? Can I make contact with him?** These are just some of the questions that many people are asking.

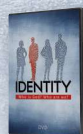
**IDENTITY** is a seven-week course that examines the Gospel of John to clear up the confusion about who we are and who God is. Each session reveals more about the identity and mission of Jesus, and shows why he is the key to life and the one who can answer our big questions. The themes are:

- SESSION 1 **The God who created us**
- SESSION 2 **The God who wants to rescue us**
- SESSION 3 **The God we were made for**
- SESSION 4 **The God who wants to comfort us**
- SESSION 5 **The God who loves relationships**
- SESSION 6 **The God who died for us**
- SESSION 7 **The God who wants to persuade us**

Each session also addresses a popular question, such as:

**Are science and Christianity enemies or friends? What about other religions? Why do we suffer?**

This Guide Book, written by Lee McMunn, is suitable for use by groups and individuals. An accompanying DVD is also available, with subtitles in English, Polish, Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Hindi and Farsi.



**NOTHING IS ASSUMED. EVERYTHING IS EXPLAINED. ANYTHING CAN BE ASKED.**

Lee McMunn is an Associate Minister/Evangelist at St John Newland, Hull. He grew up in Scotland and became a Christian while studying Maths and Economics in London. He is married to Vicky.

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