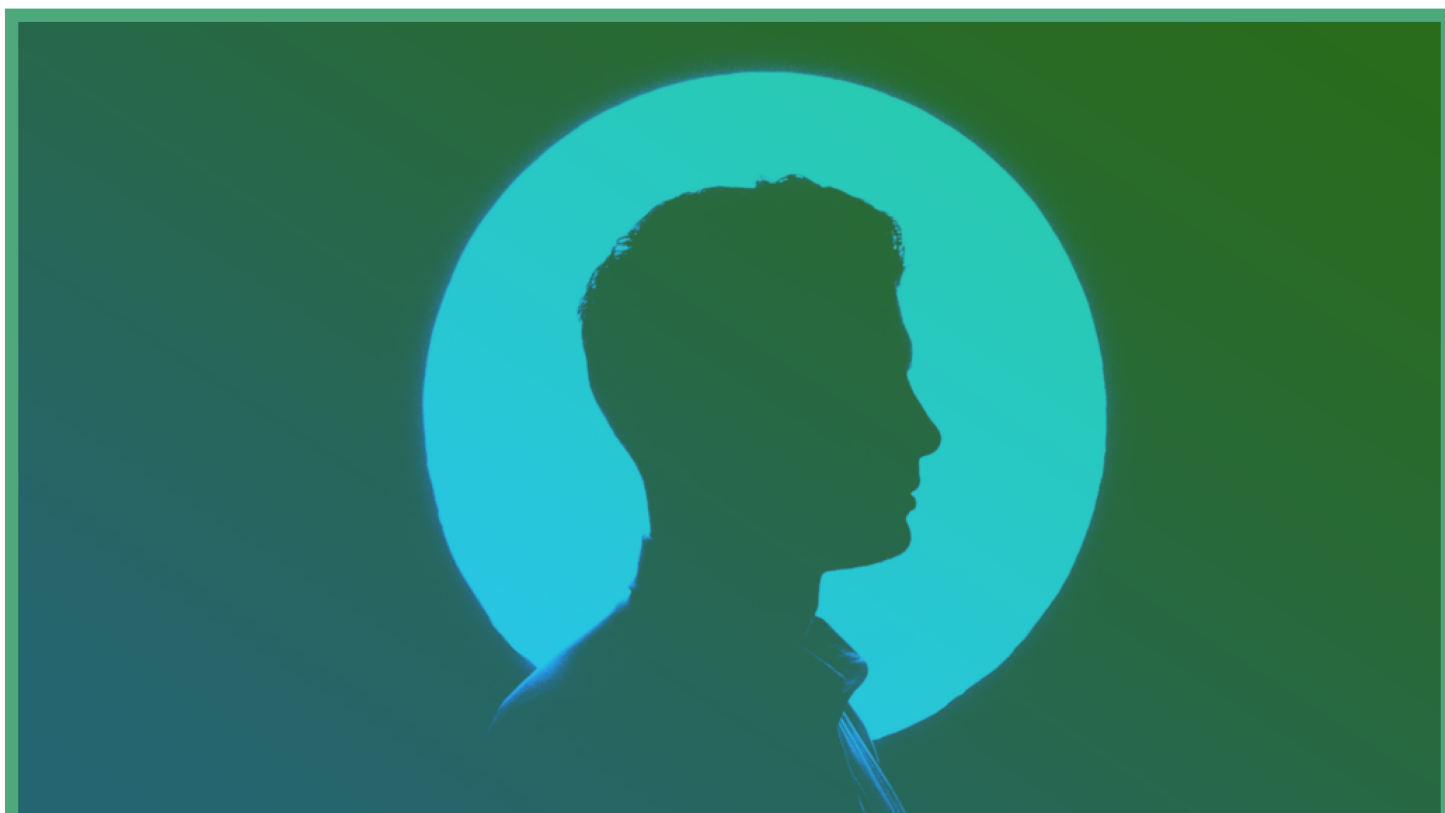


This is who you are



4 Sessions



ROOTED
in God-given identity

Part of Gold Hill's 'Take a Step' discipleship pathway.
www.goldhill.org/disciple

Make the most of this guide

We believe this guide can be transformative. But as with most things, it can be used to the fullest or not have much impact. It depends how you use it. To help you get the most from it, we strongly suggest you ask and answer these 3 questions:



1. Who is alongside me?

This is not designed to use alone as a private study. You will get the most if you go through it with someone and take these steps together. If you haven't already worked that out, who could you ask to join you?



2. When will we meet?

It's best to have a plan before you start. You only need 4 slots, each 1–2 hours, and no closer than a week apart so you have time to try things out. So put them all in the diary up front.



3. Will we give this a real go?

In this guide there will be questions to consider and discuss, but the real impact will be as you give things a go and put things into action. Then it won't just be information but transformation. Will you do that?

As you use this guide together, there are various things that we will suggest along the way. They are marked by these different icons:



READ

Read these bits. (And interrupt if you want to discuss!)



DISCUSS

Use the prompts, and have an open chat about it together.



ACTION

These are things to do, either together or before next time.

This is who you are

‘Imposter syndrome’ is the feeling that we’re in a position where, truly, we don’t belong. Everyone treats us like we belong there, but we know what they don’t: we aren’t what they think we are...

Christians can feel this way about their faith. We know where we fail or struggle or doubt. We know what goes on in our head, and we can start to believe that those things define who we really are. We let those facts become our identity. But if we have received the work of Jesus in our lives, our failures simply aren’t who we are. In fact, who we *really* are has the power to help us conquer those failures and really, truly leave them in the past.

So this guide will help you, alongside a friend or two, discover or re-discover some important things about who you are. These are the things God Himself declares over you, and that has power. And if you’ll let them, they can sink in and change so much about your life, the way you view God and the way you view yourself.

OVERVIEW

1. You are Created

God was intentional and deliberate when He created the world, and He was the same when He made you.

2. You are Forgiven

We get ourselves into all kinds of messes, but God rescues us from that so our standing before Him need not be in question.

3. You are Adopted

God does not just forgive us as Judge, but welcomes us as a Father too. Adoption is powerful and totally changes our identity.

4. You have Purpose

God did not just put us here without a purpose for us. He made us for a reason, so how do we find that reason out?

You are Created

session 1

In this first session, we are starting at the beginning, not just of the Bible as God created people but the beginning of *you* as He made you!

What makes you 'you'?



Everybody is different! Before we get into things a little more deeply, take a moment to discuss and jot down two things that are distinctive about you. What makes you different from most people. Feel free to encourage one another as you do!

Made by God, and *like* God



At the very start of the Bible is the story of God creating the world. The climax of that (it goes from 'good' to 'very good') is people, and this is how it's described in **Genesis 1:26-27**.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

Who you are was made by God. And when he made people, he made them (and us!) 'in his own image'. That means God's own personality, character and being lives in people. We are stamped with His mark.



Below are some characteristics of God. In yourself, which of these do you see most strongly (circle) and which least strongly (underline)?

Love

Compassion

Wisdom

Creativity

Patience

Peace

Holiness

Truth

Kindness

Justice

Morality

Faithfulness

Every good thing is a gift from God. Where we lack, or where these are incomplete, it is because the image of God is distorted in us. Give thanks to God for his image on you, and ask him to make it more complete.

Not just you!

Everyone is made in God's image, not just you! In the verses we read, we see the 'male and female' is placed just alongside 'the image of God'. One points to the other. Our differences (including gender) and our sameness (we are all human) point us to our Father-Son-Spirit God. We see God most fully when those who are different come together.

1: Where have you seen something of the nature of God through someone who is similar to you? Where have you seen that in someone different from you in a particular way?

2: What are the created differences in others you can give thanks to God for and seek to learn from?

Fearfully and wonderfully made



The rest of this session will explore **Psalm 139**. It is a beautiful Psalm that speaks to these questions of what it means to be created by God.

Start off by looking it up and reading the whole of Psalm 139. As you do, ask these questions of it jotting things down as you do:

1. What does this say about GOD?

2. What does this say about PEOPLE?

3. What ENCOURAGEMENTS do I find here?

4. What CHALLENGES me as I read?



We will now pick out a few particular bits of the Psalm and reflect on them a little bit further.

Familiar with us (v2-3)

- ² You know when I sit and when I rise;
you perceive my thoughts from afar.
- ³ You discern my going out and my lying down;
you are familiar with all my ways.

Q: If God is 'familiar with all your ways', is that an encouragement or a fearful thing? How might you respond to this with God?

Made with care (v13-14)

- ¹³ For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.
- ¹⁴ I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made;
your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Q: If you were made 'fearfully and wonderfully', God had a high view of you when he made you. Do you treat yourself that way? Your body? Your mind? Your soul? Where could you grow in that?

Search me, God! (v23-24)

- ²³ Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
- ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Q: God made you, and knows you inside-out now. What would it look like to pray kind of prayer, and what might the effect be?



TAKE-AWAY *from session 1*

Use this space to note down what are taking away from this and any actions you've decided on.

PRAY

Before you finish, take some time to pray for each other, specifically for the things you have shared and the decisions you have made together.

You are Forgiven

session 2

In this session, we consider what a difference Jesus has made to who we are, utterly changing our identity, status and standing before God. God forgives us, and this is very good news!

Forgiveness and you



When have you need to forgive someone? Or when have you needed to receive forgiveness? It could be a big thing or a little thing – the more recent, the better!

No condemnation



We begin this session by looking at some verses written by Paul all about our new standing before God in **Romans 8:1-3**. Read them, and look them up in some different versions.

¹ Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,
² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering.

There are a lot of big and powerful ideas, phrases and truths here! Together, put this into your own words. Take time over this, considering each phrase and noting down what it means, then pull it together into one statement.

| Paul's Words | Our Words |
|---|-----------|
| Therefore, there is now no condemnation... | |
| ...for those who are in Christ Jesus... | |
| ...because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life... | |

...has set you free from
the law of sin and death.

For what the law was
powerless to do...

... because it was
weakened by the flesh...

...God did by sending his
own Son...

...in the likeness of sinful
flesh to be a sin offering.



If you were trying to ***explain to a non-Christian*** the idea of God's forgiveness, how would you explain it? Have a discussion about this, and consider:

- Why it is needed
- How it is possible and how we receive it
- What difference it makes

REMEMBER: All of those things you have just discussed are what God wants you to remember too!

New creations!



We are now going to look at the result of the forgiveness we receive from God in a famous passage in **2 Corinthians 5:16-19**. Have a read, and note all the encouragements you find!

16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. **17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! **18** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: **19** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.

Have a think about these questions together.

1: In v16, Paul says that we are not to consider anyone simply from a worldly or human point of view. What makes it difficult to stop viewing ourselves and others from a human point of view?

2: In v17, we read this amazing statement that the old has 'gone' and the new has 'come'. This is something that has already happened for those who are in Christ. What things are 'old' in you that you need to remember are now gone in Jesus?

3: In v18, Paul speaks about being 'reconciled' with God. If this is true, how close are you willing to get to him and what stops you drawing closer?

4: In v19, we read that God is 'not counting people's sins against them'. Are you able to do that for yourself and others?

5: These words finish with the reminder that this news is not just for us but a message given to us for others. How could you share this news of reconciliation with others this week?



TAKE-AWAY *from session 2*

Use this space to note down what are taking away from this and any actions you've decided on.

PRAY

As with last week, finish by praying for each other to be able to put into practice what you have spoken about and shared.

You are Adopted

session 3

One of the images used in the New Testament to describe our status and identity in Christ is of 'adoption' and in this session we will be digging into that idea. As we do, allow the wonderful truth to sink in deeply!

The idea of adoption



1: In our society, what kinds of ideas (including both truthful ones and untrue stereotypes) do you think exist around adoption. Which are good and which are bad?

2: What are the similarities and differences between children born to parents and those adopted by parents?

| SIMILARITIES | DIFFERENCES |
|--------------|-------------|
| | |

Children of God



We are focusing on one passage for this session, where Paul describes what this adoption by God is all about. It is found in **Romans 8:14-17**. As you read, discuss the questions below.

¹⁴ For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. ¹⁵ The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." ¹⁶ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. ¹⁷ Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

1. What does this say about GOD?

2. What does this say about PEOPLE?

3. What ENCOURAGEMENTS do I find here?

4. What CHALLENGES me as I read?



This session is very simple, just going through this passage slowly and having a conversation prompted by the verses. Use the questions provided, and explore anything that comes up as you discuss as well.

1. Who is Paul talking about when he writes of those *'led by the Spirit of God'*?

2. What does the phrase *'children of God'* speak to you about?

3. Why does Paul highlight that we are not **'slaves'** and need not **'fear'**? Is that how you always live?

4. Adoption carries the full legal standing of a child in a household. What does that mean for a Christian to be given the same standing as Jesus before God?

5. 'Abba' implies closeness (it's nearer 'Dad' than 'Father'). How do you express that kind of closeness and intimacy with God?

6. If you are an **'heir'** of God and **'co-heir with Christ'**, what inheritance is yours?

7. Why, in a passage like this, do you think Paul introduces the reality of sharing in Christ's **'sufferings'**? What experience do you have of that, and how does this idea of adoption shape that for you?



TAKE-AWAY *from session 3*

Use this space to note down what are taking away from this and any actions you've decided on.

PRAY

Take a few minutes to pray together, and ask God that these wonderful truths would sink deep into your hearts, impacting your lives.

You have Purpose

session 4

In the first three sessions, you have explored parts of who God says that you are. You are created by Him in His image, you are forgiven by Him and you are adopted by Him. In this final session, you will now explore the purpose that He has given you. This, too, is part of who you are in Him.

One person, many purposes!



Your life likely has a number of different components and areas to it. These could include work, family life, hobbies, teams you are part of, volunteering, the church and lots of others. Pick three of those areas and try to capture what your purpose you fulfil in that area of your life. (An example is given!)

| Area of Life | Purpose |
|---------------|--|
| (e.g.) My Job | <i>I take care of my team, helping them to work well, dealing with problems when they come up, and make sure progress is made.</i> |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Good work is prepared for us



When he wrote to the Ephesians, Paul reminded them of the good news of God's forgiveness and salvation, but does not stop there... Read **Ephesians 2:8-10**.

⁸ For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— ⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast. ¹⁰ For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.



These great truths of salvation (we are saved freely by the God who made us) all lead somewhere – there are good works which ***‘God prepared in advance for us to do’***.

1. Do you know what things God has prepared for you to do and calls you to do for and with Him? If not, how would you go about working that out?
2. What are the ‘good works’ God calls all Christians to do? And are there specific things you already know that God has prepared for *you* to do?

We all have a part to play



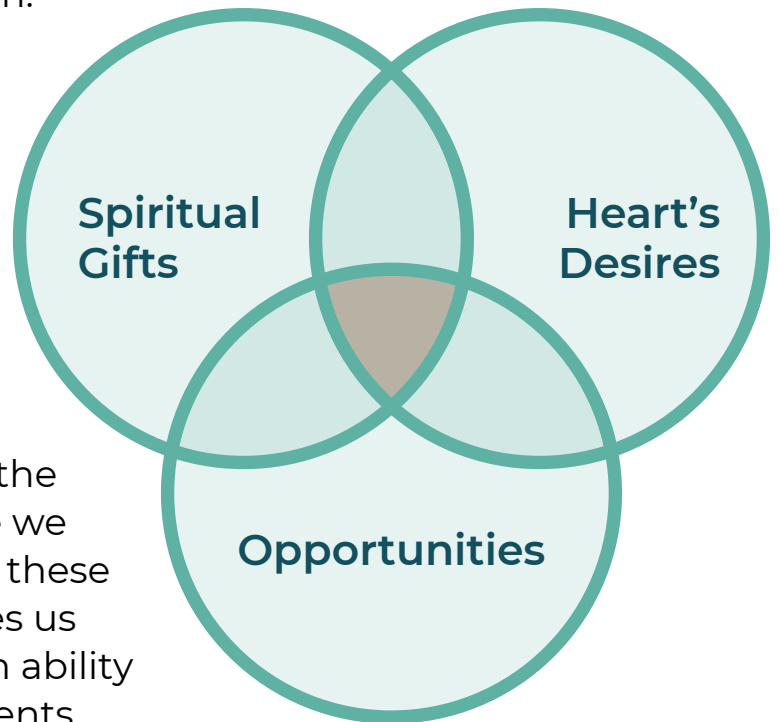
Perhaps the most famous bit of the New Testament about the different parts each of us has to play is **1 Corinthians 12:12-27**. In it, Paul uses the image of a body. It is quite long, so instead of printing it here go and look it up, read and then discuss the following question.

- Q.** There are a number of things in this passage about how we relate to one another. What do you think goes wrong when:
1. All people are thought of as exactly the same with the same contribution to make all the time?
 2. We treat one person’s purpose and contribution as the most important meaning others must be less important?
 3. We neglect someone else’s part to play in the body because it does not seem as interesting/essential/important as our own?

Finding God's good works for you



If everyone has a part to play, it's a good idea to think about what our own might be! A helpful way of thinking about this is with this Venn diagram:



God has gifted us all with things (spiritual gifts). He has also given us particular desires (our heart's desires). And He has placed us all in particular positions in life (these provide opportunities).

When we consider who we are and the purpose God has given us, the place we really want to operate is where all of these overlap, where the things God makes us passionate about and our God-given ability line up with an opportunity He presents.

Take a little bit of time considering how this might all play out for you.

My Spiritual Gifts

What are you good at? What do you do that seems to flourish?

My Heart's Desires

What gets you excited, angry or passionate? What motivates you?

My Opportunities

Where do you spend your time? Who are you with most?

Where could these align?

Either right now or in the future, where might you 'sweet spot' be?

Witnesses!



There are some things God calls all His followers to, and one of them is found in **Acts 1:8**. It is all about being witnesses to Him wherever we are and go.

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

When we receive the Holy Spirit, given to all those who follow Jesus, we are empowered to be a witness to Jesus. This is part of our identity and purpose given by God.

Q: Where are you able to be a witness? What can that look like for you? Are there things that would help you to fulfil this part of your identity, purpose and calling more fully?



TAKE-AWAY *from session 4*

Use this space to note down what are taking away from this and any actions you've decided on.

PRAY

This is the final session, so pray about all you have covered together, from living as someone carefully made by God, to walking in forgiveness, owning your status as God's adopted child, and living out your God-given purpose.

Commit to continue praying, and why not also put a date in the diary to get together again and catch up on how you are doing with all these things.



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