

DEFINED

Who God Says You Are



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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

STEPHEN KENDRICK is a speaker, a film producer, and an author with a ministry passion for prayer and discipleship. He's a cowriter and the producer of the movies *OVERCOMER*, *WAR ROOM*, and *FIREPROOF* and a cowriter of *The New York Times* best sellers *The Resolution for Men* and *The Love Dare*. An ordained minister, Stephen attended seminary, received a communications degree from Kennesaw State University, and serves on the board of the Fatherhood CoMission. Stephen and his family live in Albany, Georgia, where they're members of Sherwood Church. Most important, as affirmed by this Bible study, he's a child of God whose citizenship is in heaven.

ALEX KENDRICK is an award-winning author gifted at telling stories of hope and redemption. He's best known as an actor, a cowriter, and the director of the films *FIREPROOF*, *COURAGEOUS*, *FACING THE GIANTS*, *WAR ROOM*, and *OVERCOMER* and a coauthor of *The New York Times* best-selling books *The Love Dare*, *The Resolution for Men*, *Fireproof* (novel), and *Courageous* (novel). In 2002, Alex helped found Sherwood Pictures and partnered with his brother, Stephen, to launch Kendrick Brothers Productions. He's a graduate of Kennesaw State University and attended seminary before being ordained to ministry. Alex and his family live in Albany, Georgia, where they're members of Sherwood Church.

JEREMY MAXFIELD, who developed this Bible study, lives in Chattanooga, Tennessee, with his wife, three daughters, and a chocolate lab. After earning degrees from the University of Georgia and Beeson Divinity School, he has served in various pastoral roles over the past fifteen years and in Christian publishing for ten years. You can find more of his work at jeremymaxfield.com and can follow him on Twitter at [@jrmaxfield](https://twitter.com/jrmaxfield).

INTRODUCTION

The more we dive into who we are, the more we discover how amazing our God is.

Every person has identity issues. All of us ask questions about who we are and why we're here. When we get down to it, we recognize that identity issues rest at the core of life's deepest struggles. We just don't know who we are. We may allow things like our past, our favorite sports or activities, and even our culture to speak into how we see ourselves and who we think we are. But who does God say we are?

What you believe about God is more important than anything else going on in your life, but what you believe about yourself and who He made you to be is directly connected to that. So, the most important question we can ask ourselves in regard to identity is what our Creator believes and says about us.

Even before Jesus began His ministry, He heard the truth about His identity directly from the Father:

And a voice from heaven said: "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased."

MATTHEW 3:17

But directly after this, the Spirit led Jesus into the desert where He was tempted. Satan began by questioning Jesus' identity as God's Son, saying, "If you are the Son of God ..." (Matt. 4:3,6). But Jesus knew this: He is who God says He is. More importantly, Jesus knew God is who He says He is. Our identity and security rest in this above all: God is who He says He is.

We pray that you will be open to what God wants to show you through this study and that He will work in your heart and remind you constantly of the infinite value He has given you. We pray that you will learn to be *Defined* by God, no matter what is going on around you.

HOW TO USE

This Bible study book includes eight weeks of content for group and personal study.

GROUP SESSIONS

Regardless of what day of the week your group meets, each week of content begins with the group session. Each group session uses the following format to facilitate simple yet meaningful interaction among group members, with God's Word, and with the teaching of Stephen and Alex Kendrick.

START. This page includes questions to get the conversation started and to introduce the video teaching.

WATCH. This page provides space to take notes on the video teaching.

DISCUSS. This page includes questions and statements that guide the group to respond to the Kendricks' video teaching and to explore relevant Bible passages.

PERSONAL STUDY

Each week provides five days of Bible study and learning activities for individual engagement between group sessions. The personal study revisits stories, Scriptures, and themes introduced in the video teaching so that participants can understand and apply them on a personal level. The days are numbered 1-5 to provide personal reading and activities for each day of the week, leaving two days off to worship with your church family and to meet as a small group. If your group meets on the same day as your worship gathering, use the extra day to reflect on what God is teaching you and to practice putting the biblical principles into action.

Day 5 of each week's personal study includes an exercise asking you to summarize the key points you've learned over the past week.

Begin by listing five benefits you hope to gain from this Bible study.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

ABOUT THE MOVIE

MEET JOHN.

When circumstances beyond his control unravel the name he has built for himself, John Harrison “becomes the least likely coach helping the least likely runner attempt the impossible in the biggest race of the year.”¹

MEET HANNAH.

She’s on a journey of discovery. Like most adolescents, she wants to know where she came from, what she’s good at, what it means to be part of a family, and where real value is found in life. Those are questions about identity.

Life changes overnight for coach John Harrison when his high school basketball team’s state-championship dreams are crushed under the weight of unexpected news. When the largest manufacturing plant in town suddenly shuts down and hundreds of families begin moving away, John must come to grips with the challenges facing his family and his team. Urged by the school’s principal to fill in and coach a sport he doesn’t know or like, John is frustrated and questions his worth until he crosses paths with a student struggling with her own journey.

Filled with a powerful mix of faith, a twist of humor, and a ton of heart, the Kendrick brothers return to theaters with *OVERCOMER*, their newest feature following *FACING THE GIANTS*, *FIREPROOF*, *COURAGEOUS*, and the number one box-office hit *WAR ROOM*. The inspiring family film stars Alex Kendrick, Priscilla Shirer, Shari Rigby, Cameron Arnett, and introduces Aryn Wright-Thompson. *OVERCOMER* dares to leave you filled with hope, inspired to dream, and asks the question: What do you allow to define you?

**FOR MORE ABOUT THE MOVIE, PLEASE VISIT
OVERCOMERM MOVIE.COM**

WEEK 1

UNIQUELY
CREATED

START

Each week, we'll review here what we learned in personal study the previous week. Refer back to your notes when answering these questions with the group if you'd like. Your "Take Five" will be especially helpful.

Let's take a minute to get to know one another before we watch this week's video.

Share your name and something about yourself.

Why did you choose to share that particular information? (Was it unique? Something you share in common with a friend? Something you enjoy doing? Just based on other people's answers?)

Do your activities, sports, and hobbies influence how you think about yourself? How so?

How might social media shape how we think about ourselves and our purpose in life?

Through this study, you will discover that God has a far greater, far more fulfilling purpose for you than any sport or activity. You will also discover that your personal worth and value are rooted in Someone much bigger than you Who loves more than you can image—not in athleticism, popularity, or social media presence. Ask God to help your students discover who God made them to be and embrace the mission He has set for them.

WATCH

Use this section to take notes as you watch the Week 1 video.

DISCUSS

After viewing the video, discuss the following questions.

What points in the video stood out to you?

What do you think most students today tend to define themselves by?

Where do they root their sense of self-worth?

We live in a culture that encourages us to define ourselves by what we do, what we accomplish, and how we feel. You've probably thought of yourself as a soccer player, a singer, or a gamer, but none of these things truly capture who you are the deepest level. You may also have defined yourself by your feelings—you see yourself as happy or cool or cynical. Such feelings, however, are temporary and therefore insufficient indicators of who we really are. Another thing we often measure our worth by is our accomplishments. You might see yourself as an honors student, the MVP of the basketball team, or first chair in band. While such accomplishments have value, they are dangerous when they take center stage in how we see ourselves. When we root our identity in accomplishments, we will be devastated when we fail.

Why is it harmful to root our sense of worth in our activities, popularity, success, or social media presence?

What's wrong with letting how we feel determine who we are? Why aren't our feelings reliable in understanding our identity?

As limited and sinful human beings created by an infinite and holy God, we need to recognize that our feelings simply don't give the whole picture of who we really are. One day you may feel unworthy of God's love because of your past failures and the next day you might feel like God owes you something because of your good behavior. Neither of these is true. When we let the unchanging truth of God's Word define our identity, we see that our God loves us despite our sin (Rom. 5:8), doesn't owe us anything (Rom. 11:35), and has given us every good thing we have (Jas. 1:17).

Read Genesis 1:26-28; Psalm 24:1; 139:1-4,16; Isaiah 64:8; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. What do these verses reveal about God's right to define your life? What do they reveal about your identity?

Why is it good news that God created us, owns us, has authority over us, and knows us better than anyone? Share an example of each.

What does it mean for people to be created in the image of God? What do we share in common? How are we unique?

What are some of the benefits of embracing God's design for life? What are some of the consequences of rejecting God's design?

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being not at all valuable and 10 being priceless), how valuable do you secretly believe you are? With what value do you treat the people around you?

Has this lesson changed the way you would answer the question, "Who am I?" How so?

Thank God for His wonderful design of you and all things. Remind one another to complete this week's personal study before your next meeting.

DAY 1

WHO IS GOD?

Everyone loves origin stories. The first book of the Bible, Genesis, is taken from the very first word in the original Hebrew language, meaning *beginning* or *origin*. Genesis 1 and 2 give us the world's origin story from two different perspectives. Chapter 1 of Genesis is a big picture overview, as though a camera were zoomed out as far as we could imagine and then zoomed in closer and closer as creation grows increasingly complex. In chapter 2, we jump to a close-up scene within the story we'll examine in more depth tomorrow. For now, don't rush past the opening chapter. Don't even rush past the opening words. This isn't an introduction you can skip over to get to the real story. This is the opening scene of the same story you're living in today. This is where it all begins—literally.

Write out Genesis 1:1 either from memory or after looking it up.

Why do you think it's significant that this is the first sentence in the Bible? List everything you can think of that this sentence teaches us about God, ourselves, and life in general.

God:

Ourselves:

Life:

Using this chart, record what God created on each day in Genesis 1.

Day 1 (vv. 3-5)	Day 2 (vv. 6-8)	Day 3 (vv. 9-13)
Day 4 (vv. 14-19)	Day 5 (vv. 20-23)	Day 6 (vv. 24-31)

Has it ever occurred to you just how unthinkable it is that light was created on the first day, but the sun, moon, and stars weren't created until the fourth day? But in God's infinite wisdom, even His creation revealed information about Himself to us (Rom. 1:20). The first three days established natural domains, and then God

gave living creatures dominion to “be fruitful, multiply” (Gen. 1:22), filling each of those environments.

Note the repeated pattern of “Then God said. ... And it was so.” What does that teach you about God, ourselves, and life in general?

God:

Ourselves:

Life:

What does the repeated declaration of “It was good” teach you about God, ourselves, and life in general?

God:

Ourselves:

Life:

What does the repeated blessing of “Be fruitful, multiply” teach you about God, ourselves, and life in general?

God:

Ourselves:

Life:

You can’t know who you are without first knowing who God is. The Bible starts with the account of creation, not just for the order of events but also for the foundation of truth. He isn’t just the Creator. He’s your Creator, and you’re His good creation.

Reflect on the following prayer from God’s Word. Take a moment to praise your Creator for who He is and for how much He loves you.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ ..., who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ.

EPHESIANS 1:2-3

DAY 2

WHO AM I?

How would you describe yourself? What defines your unique identity?

Following the epic account of the first six days of creation, Genesis 2 zooms in for a close-up of the first man and woman as they opened their eyes to behold the miracle of life. The Lord God, who had just spoken light, planets, and every living and nonliving thing into existence, changed the rhythm. It was no longer “God said, ‘Let there be ...’ ”

The LORD God formed the man out of the dust from the ground and breathed the breath of life into his nostrils, and the man became a living being.

GENESIS 2:7

The LORD God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man.

GENESIS 2:22

God breathed life into man’s nostrils and personally shaped the man and woman from earth and bone. The personal relationship between God and humanity became unmistakably clear. You aren’t just one more part of the natural order:

God created man in his own image;
he created him in the image of God;
he created them male and female.

GENESIS 1:27

Why is it important to know men and women are created in the image of God?

Don't let yourself entertain the lie that Adam and Eve were special but you aren't. Look at what Ephesians says:

We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.

EPHESIANS 2:10

If God specifically created you for His good purpose, what can't be true about your life? What has to be true about your life?

The image of God isn't just about a physical resemblance, but rather a personal relationship with your Father. Wrapped up in your identity is your responsibility. You've been created for a purpose. You can trust that God's plan for your life, you're perfectly suited for the work.

You probably want to know what you're supposed to *do*. What's God's plan for your life? What should you do or not do? The truth is that God first wants you to know who He created you to *be*. When you know who you are, you'll know how to act. Without understanding your identity, you will wander aimlessly no matter what you do.

Identity is everything. Who you are matters; it matters every day. And who God is defines your identity. *Who* you are is determined by *Whose* you are:

I have called you by your name; you are mine.

ISAIAH 43:1

How does believing you were created by God and belong to Him affect the way you see yourself? How does it affect the way you see your life?

Before your mind starts racing toward all the things you need to do, pause and thank God for everything He has already done. Conclude your time of personal study by declaring you're His and you trust in His plan for your life.

DAY 3

WHEN DID GOD BECOME INVOLVED IN OUR LIVES?

We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time for us to do.

EPHESIANS 2:10

There's a reason we started this week's study with the first sentence in the Bible. It shows us that God is absolutely supreme—He existed before all things and all things exist by the power of His will—and it points to the reality that we aren't accidents, afterthoughts, or abandoned ideas. God has been involved in our lives since the beginning of time. That doesn't mean He cared only about Adam and Eve, whom He fashioned by hand. He also knit each of us together, every intricate detail, in our mothers' wombs (Ps. 139:13).

God has a close relationship with all people even before they're born. Psalm 139 beautifully addresses this reality, but there's a distinction between agreeing with this truth and embracing it as something that's true about you.

Read the following passages, and respond to the questions with details from your life.

Psalm 139:1-6.

What time did you wake up today?

Where will/did you go today?

Whom did/will you talk to today?

Psalm 139:7-12.

Where do you live?

What are your favorite places to go?

When do you feel anxious or insignificant?

When do you feel most confident and alive?

Read Psalm 139:13-18.

Describe your physical appearance.

Describe any physical limitations.

When and where were you born?

Describe your home life growing up.

Describe your life now.

Read Psalm 139:19-22.

Do you ever feel like a hypocrite—you say one thing and do another?

What tragedies have you endured?

What injustices have you witnessed?

Read Psalm 139:23-24.

What sin or hypocrisy do you need to confess or remove from your life?

Describe your current relationship with God.

Describe your desired relationship with God.

The most important fact about you is that God created you. The second most important fact about you is that God created you wonderfully:

I will give thanks to You, for I am
fearfully and wonderfully made;
Wonderful are Your works,
And my soul knows it very well.

PSALM 139:14, NASB

Review Psalm 139 verse by verse as a personal prayer, using the details you recorded during today's reflection.

DAY 4

HOW IS GOD INVOLVED IN OUR LIVES?

God created you, has a plan for your life, and has never stopped being personally involved in your life. He always has been, always is, and always will be accomplishing His great purpose. As you studied in Day 2, God's first desire is for you to know who you are before you get distracted by what you're supposed to do. God is personally involved in guiding us to live out our God-given identity.

Read Genesis 2:4-9. What did God do? What was Adam supposed to do?

Read Genesis 2:15-25. What did God do? What was Adam supposed to do?

List four words or phrases you would use to describe the relationship between God and Adam (and Eve).

It's important to recognize the name "God" is always used in Genesis 1, but after the seventh day of creation in chapter 2, He's always the LORD God—Yahweh—which is His covenant name in relation to His people. These names reveal more about what it means to be created in God's image. We're made to reflect Him in the world. Once Adam and Eve were in the garden, God not only gave them identity as His image bearers but also gave them a place, a partner, provision, a purpose, and parameters for their safety and good. He placed them in a position of power so they could join Him in His work of bringing life, order, and thriving in the world He created. We were created to know Him personally as LORD and to trust Him fully as Creator.

What does the fact that the LORD God gave Adam work, a helper, and instructions in a perfect garden teach you about your identity?

What does it teach you about your relationship with God?

Read the apostle Paul's words to the people of Athens in Acts 17:22-34. How would you describe God's involvement in human lives since the beginning with Adam and Eve? How and why has He been working?

We may not see shrines and idols to false gods around us every day but that doesn't mean people aren't worshipping other gods. What are some examples of the false gods many students worship today?

How do you see God's involvement with Paul and the people of Athens? How does the gospel provide us a better and clearer purpose?

God doesn't need you to serve Him; He isn't helpless without you or dependent on you (v. 25). However, He calls you to join Him (Gen. 2:9). You aren't expected to work *for* God. You're invited to work *with* God. The LORD God is at work *in* you and all *around* you, and He desires to work *through* you as well.

Consider your current situations and relationships. How could God be working in you, calling you to know and trust Him more personally?

How could God be working around and through you? How could you join Him in His work?

Consider the ways God is at work in your life, whatever your daily schedule or routine may be. Ask Him for courage to trust and obey Him completely. Pray for opportunities to share the truth about your Creator and LORD God with others so that they can know Him too.

DAY 5

TAKE FIVE: LIFE

Write a list of some of the physical attributes that make you unique (eye color, hair color, height, etc.).

Write a list of personality traits that make you unique from other people.

You are uniquely designed. No one has the exact same eyes or hair or fingerprints. And like these unique traits, God's Word remains the same, but each person hears and applies it in specific ways at different seasons in their lives. Your DNA, the shape of your ears, the pattern in the iris of your eyes, the combination of your physical features, and the stride of your walk, are all unique to you as an individual. You're skillfully and wonderfully made—one of a kind. But the common bond we all share as human beings is that we're created in the image of God.

In the movie business the phrase, "take five" means to take a short break. As you complete this study, it's important that you take a break, not just to relax from studying but to reflect on what you've been studying. Don't rush through the content each week. Pause to consider some key takeaways. What are the main truths you need to retain in order to have a good grasp of each week's topic? What was most significant? What challenged, convicted, or encouraged you?

This time can be as brief or as long as you need it to be. The aim is to identify truths you don't want to forget—truths you want to take with you when you move on to the next part of this study and, most important, to the next phase of your life.

Record five main takeaways God taught you through the group sessions and personal study this week. You may want to choose one truth from each day, or certain days may have been especially meaningful to you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Look at the natural world around you. God's fingerprints are all over it:

The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the expanse proclaims the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour out speech;
night after night they communicate knowledge.
There is no speech; there are no words;
their voice is not heard.
Their message has gone out to the whole earth,
and their words to the ends of the world.
In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun.
It is like a bridegroom coming from his home;
it rejoices like an athlete running a course.
PSALM 19:1-5

Read Psalm 19 in your Bible. Let it guide a time of prayerful reflection.

HOW TO USE THIS LEADER GUIDE

PREPARE TO LEAD

Each session in the leader guide is designed to be cut out so that you, the leader, can keep this front-and-back page with you as you lead the group session.

Work through the personal studies, watch the week's teaching video, and read the group session with the leader guide cutout in hand to understand how it supplements each section of the group study.

THE BIG PICTURE

Use this section to help focus your preparation and leadership during the group session. Take note of the highlighted points.

KEY SCRIPTURES

Key passages of Scripture are listed for quick reference.

CONSIDERATIONS

The purpose of leading a group is to bring God's Word to the people in the group. This section is designed to help you consider and wrestle with the ideas in each session and to suggest ways to apply those truths to your group.

PRAY

Use the prayer provided to close the group session.

WEEK 1

THE BIG PICTURE

This first session introduces foundational questions such as: What is identity? Why is it important? How do we define ourselves? Who has the authority to determine our identity? The answers to these questions are more practical—and less abstract—than we may realize.

In session 1 Stephen and Alex teach on the God who made us and what it means to be made in His image. Four key truths about God provide the foundation for our identities.

1. God created us, so He has the right to determine our identity.
2. God owns us and bought us with a price, so he has the double right.
3. God has all authority over all other authorities, so he has the triple right.
4. God knows us best, so He has four levels of authority.

KEY SCRIPTURES

- Genesis 1:26-28
- Psalm 24:1
- Psalm 139:1-4,16
- Isaiah 64:8
- 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

CONSIDERATIONS

Ultimately, you want to help group members say, “Yes, God made me. He created and chose me in His sovereignty in this way and for this time.” The focus should be on the image of God. Although all people are created in the image of God, not all people are redeemed by God (redemption will be introduced in week 3). Multiple passages refer to the value of people, based on their creation in the image of God (Gen. 1–2). This is why murder is wrong (Gen. 9:6) and why cursing people is wrong (Jas. 3:9-10). You may want to highlight the words used in Psalm 139 to describe the way God values people: They are “remarkably and wondrously made” (v. 14), and His thoughts toward them are “precious” (v. 17).

Ask members, on a scale of 1 to 10, how valuable they think they really are. With what value do they treat the people around them? Do they curse them? Do they honor and respect them? Like David, have they thanked and praised God for the way He made them and other people? They should thank God for their nationality, personality, gender, parents, and family. This could be a great exercise to end the session.

PRAY

Pray for group members to grow confident and certain about their God-given identity. Remind everyone to complete the personal studies before the next group session.

NOTES
