

# HOW TO BE

**12** Truths  
to Build  
Your Life On

**EDITED BY**

**Andrew  
Wilson**

# HOW TO BE

“In a world of increasing confusion and shouted opinions, this book is full of solid, calm, dependable, simple, straight-talking truth. It will actually help you to reflect on who you are and what you were made for—giving answers that are both refreshingly simple and deeply satisfying.”

**ANDY ACHESON**, Author, *Who Is God?*

“This book helps young people engage thoughtfully with a Christian worldview at a time when many of their assumptions are being tested. Shaped by the voices of youth workers and leaders who understand the realities young people face, it offers insight, honesty and lived experience. It creates space to wrestle with big questions, reflect deeply and consider what it means to live out faith in today’s culture.”

**DAVE BODEN**, Author, *Raising Gen Alpha*  
and *Like or Follow*



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# STAY

How to Be Human

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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b> (ANDREW WILSON)	7
<b>1: God</b> (STU GIBBS) The God of eternity invites you to know him.	9
<b>2: Creation</b> (ADRIAN HOLLOWAY) The universe demands an explanation.	17
<b>3: Image</b> (TAYLOR BENTLIFF) Human beings are designed to be like God.	25
<b>4: Male</b> (ANDREW WILSON) Being a man isn't something you earn but something you're given.	33
<b>5: Female</b> (KATHERINE BROWN) God created every woman on purpose, for a purpose.	41

<b>6: Work</b> (MBONISI MALABA)	49
Work is meaningful because God calls us to it.	
<b>7: Marriage</b> (JEZ FIELD)	57
Getting married is about more than just the two of you.	
<b>8: Sexuality</b> (ASHLEIGH HULL)	65
God invented sex for a bigger reason than you think.	
<b>9: Sin</b> (JOE MACNAMARA)	73
When we build our lives on things that aren't God, we end up in trouble.	
<b>10: Suffering</b> (KIRSTEN HIGGINS)	81
When life is hard, God cares.	
<b>11: Shame</b> (DAN FEATHERSTONE)	89
You don't have to hide anything from God.	
<b>12: Hope</b> (MARTIN SEGAL)	97
No matter what, things are going to get better.	
<b>About the Authors</b>	107
<b>About Newday</b>	111

# Introduction

ANDREW WILSON

**B**eing human is the greatest privilege a creature can have. You are at the top of the food chain. You have a large brain, an upright spine and opposable thumbs. You can talk, read, imagine, create and worship. Most importantly, you have been created in the image of God. You are an icon: a picture of God for all the world to see.

But that privilege brings challenges. It always has. With great power comes great responsibility, as Uncle Ben so famously said to Spiderman. Human beings have the capacity to do magnificent good or spectacular harm. We can discover penicillin, or invent atom bombs; our speech can bring life, or it can bring destruction; we can lead people into the heavenly presence of God, or hellish rebellion. So, if we are going to be life-givers rather than destroyers,

we need to know how to handle our humanity well.

That is complicated in this generation. We spend more of our time looking at screens than faces. Isolation is on the rise. Artificial intelligence is already having an impact on the way we learn and the jobs we will do. There has never been a more important time for us to know how to be human.

And that's what this book is about. It gives you twelve truths to live by, drawn from the most important thing that has ever been written about being human: the first three chapters of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. You will learn about God and creation; what it means to be made in his image as male and female; God's intentions for work, sex and marriage; and how to think about the problems of sin and suffering, and God's wonderful response in the gospel.

If you're a Christian, not a Christian, or not sure, this book is for you. Read it and see what you think about the Bible's take on how to be human.

## CHAPTER 1: GOD

# The God of eternity invites you to know him.

STU GIBBS

**T**he Bible starts simply, doesn't it? "In the beginning God..." It doesn't try to define God or explain him. It just places him at the centre and beginning of all things. *In the beginning, God.* That's the starting point of everything we know.

When you're used to talking about God, it's easy to take him for granted. Between the ages of 0 and 18, I went to church pretty much every week. If you count youth group meetings on Friday nights as well, that's over a thousand church meetings before I was an adult. I knew a fair amount about God... but I didn't know God. Not really.

I only recognised this when I went to a Christian event and met a bunch of people who did. They seemed eager to pray, passionate about worship and fascinated by the Bible. I suddenly had a deep hunger to find out more. I realised that God was not just real but *knowable*—and so the best and most important thing in life would be to know him as he really is.

Genesis 1 sets us off on that journey: “In the beginning God...” These first few verses don’t tell us everything that can be known about God, but they do point us in the direction of some pretty major truths. Life-changing truths, even.

## **God Is Eternal**

What counts as a long time ago for you? Before the Covid lockdown? England winning the World Cup in 1966? The Egyptians building the pyramids around 2,500 BC? How about the moment the sun was formed? God was present for each one of those events, as well as every other event in history. In the beginning—when God began history as we know it—he *had already been present for ever*.

This is pretty mind-blowing. You should try to keep thinking about it, because it will stop you thinking about God as if he is an older and wiser version of you.

It means that there was never a time when he wasn’t. He didn’t develop into God over time and eventually

reach perfection. However many trillions of years you go back, he was already present, perfect and glorious.

It means he has no cause. Nothing else came before him, gave birth to him or produced him. He is the cause of everything that exists, and he isn't dependent on anything else.

It means he is unchanging: "the same yesterday and today and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8). Everything else changes, but God never does. He is permanent in his perfect wisdom, power, love and glory.

This is why God revealed himself in a flaming fire to Moses and said, "I AM WHO I AM" (Exodus 3:14). We don't get to decide who he is, what he is like or what he should do. But—and this is important—we do get invited to listen to him as he reveals himself to us. And what the eternal God shows us about himself is more profound and marvellous than we could ever have guessed.

## **God Is Three in One**

In Genesis 1, God shows up straight away and is described as the Creator of all things. We also read that the Spirit of God is hovering over the waters, ready for action (1:2). And then we find that creation happens as God speaks: "Let there be light!" *Boom!* "And there was light." So the Bible describes God creating by his word, through his Spirit. There is one God, but he's also more than one.

When we get near the end of the chapter, God drops in another clue: “Let *us* make mankind in our image” (v 26). “Us”? Who is he talking about? All the way through the Bible, God keeps up the hints—until the moment of revelation finally arrives with the coming of Jesus. John’s Gospel explains the mystery: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). God was not on his own; the Word was with him. Then “the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14).

Christians are baptised “in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”, because one God exists in three Persons. We use the word “Trinity” (Tri-unity) to describe this. Over the years people have tried all kinds of ways to explain this three-in-one God: eggs, triangles, water-ice-steam, and pretty much anything that connects three and one together. None of them quite work, and you know you’ve definitely taken a wrong turn if you end up picturing God as an enormous triangular egg who can shape-shift into a liquid or a gas.

The Trinity is just hard to wrap your mind around—and that’s okay. After all, God is the infinite Creator, and we are his creatures. When my kids were toddlers, they could understand that they had parents who loved and looked after them before they could say ma-ma or da-da, and certainly before they understood

what marriage or family was! For us, it's enough to know that we have a heavenly Father who loves us, a Saviour who died for us, and the Holy Spirit who breathes life into us, even if we don't yet have a clue how that is supposed to work.

But understanding God as the Trinity is not just good for scoring points in a theology test; it helps us to understand something crucial. Nabeel Qureshi was a Muslim who converted to Christianity after years of study. At first he was embarrassed and awkward about the Trinity as it confused his friends, and so he avoided talking about it. Over time, though, he began to make it the first thing he described in conversations about God. Why? Because he concluded that it pointed to the most incredible truth about what God is like. Which is...

## **God Overflows with Goodness**

In John 17, we get to overhear Jesus praying to his Father. "Father," he asks, "I want those you have given me to ... see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world" (John 17:24). Wow. You might have seen sports stars pause their celebrations and bring their kids onto the pitch to share the moment. This prayer shows us that the heart of Jesus is to draw *us* in to share in the love and glory that he has enjoyed with the Father and the Spirit for all eternity.

That's why God created the world. That's why God sent his Son. That's why God's Spirit is still present and active, drawing people like you and me into faith and friendship with our Father. It's because God is love and has been for ever. God didn't create the world because he was bored with Jesus and wanted someone else to talk to. Creation was the overflow of his goodness so that people like you and me could join in and share the love and glory he has always had.

God spoke, and created a world full of rich blessings—stars and seas, food and friendship, love and laughter—so that through it we could taste and see his overflowing goodness. And even though we rebelled against him and went our own way (more on that in later chapters), that wasn't the end of the story. God has poured out his love, Jesus came and poured out his life, the Holy Spirit continues to be poured out on God's people, and we are invited to freely receive all God's blessings.

## **How to Know God**

You could spend your whole life studying the nature of God and never run out of things to think about. In fact, everyone who belongs to Jesus will spend eternity knowing and enjoying him. Right now, though, I would encourage you to do one thing that will help you build a relationship with God based on these beautiful truths: pray.

Most of us find it hard to pray. We may not know what to say. It might feel weird talking to someone you can't see. But I've learnt over the years that it helps to remember who we are praying to before we start. Sometimes I think about God's eternal nature, which reminds me of how much wiser and stronger he is than me. Or I think about the love and glory that has always been his, and Christ's prayer that we would share in it. I might list some of the blessings he has poured out, and try to let his goodness sink into my heart. It makes a big difference to my experience of being in his presence, and to the kind of prayers I pray.

Since I went to that festival aged 18, I've been to church a lot more times—but now I do it as someone who knows God. I've found comfort, peace, joy, truth and wisdom in knowing him that is far better than anything I've found elsewhere. The God of eternity invites me in, and I say yes. What about you?

**“I would say that because I know God, I feel happier. I feel like I’m not weighed down—the burden of sin has been taken off my back. It’s not that I don’t struggle, but I have a comfort in Jesus that I can rejoice in.”**

**OLLIE, AGED 16**