

# LIVING in a GLOBAL VILLAGE

*A Lent course for Christians in today's world*



Awareness  
Course

LEADER'S GUIDE

**Living in a Global Village and The Awareness Course**  
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All Biblical quotations are taken from the NRSV.

Throughout this course, we refer to God as 'He' for the sake of simplicity. We have embraced an inclusive language and make no claims as to God's gender.

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# Course Leader's Guide

## 1. Course Book

The Course Book provides you with the course itself, plus advice on contextualisation, discussion topics, warm up questions, Take Away activities, a variety of teaching aides, along with Bible readings and prayers.

The Course Book helps you to make the most of the DVD, which is at the heart of the learning experience. The Course Book provides you with a bullet-point precis of the contents of each video.

Remember that the Course Book's teaching model is designed for maximum adaptability and contextualisation. If you have teaching experience, then you may wish to diverge a little from the suggested teaching structure and timings whilst preserving the message and purpose of the course.

## 2. Teaching DVD

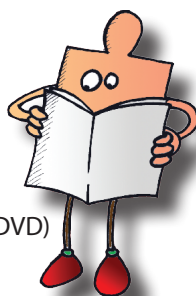
The Teaching DVD contains one video segments for each session. These segments are presented by the coauthor of the Awareness Course, the Revd Nadim Nassar, plus a number of guest speakers. The video segment provides the body of the teaching in each session, allowing you to concentrate on making the teaching even more relevant to your participants. Watching the video segment before each session will help you to prepare.

## 3. Study Packs

The Study Packs contain specially written notes from the course, plus discussion topics. The Study Pack has plenty of space for notes.

## Session Structure

- i. **Introduction**  
(e.g. 5 minutes)
- ii. **Warm-up Question**  
(e.g. 5 minutes)
- iii. **DVD Teaching**  
(e.g. 15-20 minutes, including Teaching DVD)
- iv. **Discussion/Activity**  
(e.g. 15 minutes)
- v. **Conclusion**  
(e.g. 10 minutes)
- vi. **Reading and Prayer**  
(e.g. 5 minutes)



In order to be faithful to the course materials, we suggest a total session time of one hour, including around 20 minutes for discussions; feel free to take longer in certain areas, or to cut a discussion short if everyone has finished. **Please note that the times given here are only suggestions.**

In the **Introduction**, begin by setting the scene, explaining what the session will cover.

This is followed by the **Warm Up Question** to get participants thinking about the topics under discussion. All discussion topics focus on participants' personal experiences, which means there is no right or wrong answer and everyone can – and should – participate.

You should begin the **DVD Teaching** by introducing the main themes of the video. You can find these in your Course Book. Emphasise a couple of points you think are especially important for your participants. Afterwards, play the video for your Session. When the video finishes, kick off the discussion and make sure that as many people as possible take part. Begin by giving your reactions to, and comments on, the video; this opens the door for participants to share their thoughts. This is the ideal time to direct the discussion by linking the subjects of the video to participants' lives; you can do this through asking questions, giving local examples of the points that were raised in the video, and highlighting some of the practical and helpful thoughts that emerge during the discussion. You will find some suggestions in the Course Book.

The **Group Discussion** which follows the video should last 15-20 minutes, depending on your group's involvement. The Discussion topics are based around a theme - or themes - in the DVD teaching, so participants get to discuss what they have learned while it is still fresh in their minds.

The **Conclusion** consists of 5-10 minutes of teaching; this is the time for you to draw things neatly to a close and to encourage participants to apply practical lessons in their lives.

To finish, use the **Bible Reading and Prayer** to offer a time for thought and reflection.

### Warm-up Questions/Discussion Topics

You will find these boxes throughout the Course Book. These boxes contain suggested Warm-up Questions, Discussion Topics and 'Take Away' Activities to help participants share their insights and experience, and to encourage the development of a healthy Christian life.

# Important Terms

## 1. Culture

We define 'culture' as follows:

**Culture is the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, customs, knowledge, belief, behaviour, institutions, achievements and practices that characterises a particular nation, people, or group.**

## 2. The Culture of God

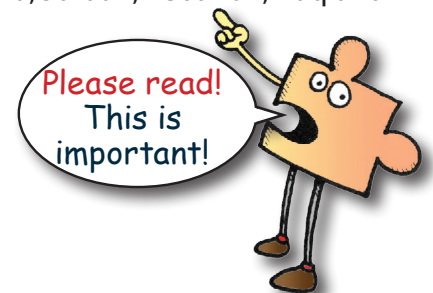
Taking the definition of culture above, and the doctrine of the Trinity in the Christian faith, we can say that God the Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit - through His dynamic interaction with Himself, and living in communion with Himself, has a culture in Himself.

St. John says, 'God is love, and who abides in love abides in God, and God in him'. (1 John 4:16)














The Culture of God is the culture of the Trinity, the culture of love. God offered different clues and signs of His culture throughout human history, but this culture was inaccessible until the coming of the eternal Son who experienced the Trinity firsthand. Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, revealed this culture through his life and teachings. An example is the statement that Jesus made to the leaders who brought the woman caught in adultery: 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.' (John 8:7b) This shows a thought process beyond any human thinking. This statement reveals the intimate knowledge of us all that God alone possesses, and His love for us that never condemns. Many acts, parables and other sayings of Jesus show God revealing Himself through Christ in our earthly culture.

## 3. The Middle East

When we refer to the Middle East in this course, we mean the countries of Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Palestine (see map below).



## DVD Contributors

	<a href="#">The Revd Canon Chris Chivers</a> Rector, John Keble Church, London		<a href="#">The Revd Smitha Prasad</a> Vicar, St. Paul's Church, Birmingham
	<a href="#">The Revd Rob Gillion</a> Rector, Holy Trinity and St. Saviour Upper Chelsea, London		<a href="#">Sayed Ali Abbas Razawi</a> Islamic scholar and teacher
	<a href="#">The Revd Michael Heaney</a> Moderator, Free Churches of England & Wales		<a href="#">Rabbi Shaul Rosenblatt</a> Director, Tikun
	<a href="#">The Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin</a> Vicar, St. Philip's Church Dalston, London, and Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons		<a href="#">The Revd Canon Dr Dennis Stamps</a> Director of Ministry, St. Albans Diocese
	<a href="#">The Revd Rana Khan</a> Interfaith Adviser, Lambeth Palace		<a href="#">Chris Williams</a> Pastor, London Community Church
	<a href="#">Rashid Ali Laher</a> Secretary, South London Interfaith Group		<a href="#">St. John Wright</a> , Operations Director, Awareness Foundation
	<a href="#">The Revd Nadim Nassar</a> Director, Awareness Foundation		

# 1 Culture and Faith in a Diverse World

## Introduction

Take a few minutes at the start of this session to introduce participants to their Study Pack.

Begin the session by welcoming the group, then introduce the key question of the Course: 'How should Christians respond to the challenges and opportunities of globalisation and of living in a diverse society?'

The first session examines:

- The importance of culture
- Some of the challenges we face today
- How many Christians have reacted, and
- How we should look after our relationships - with God and with each other - in the midst of a global culture.

### What does your culture mean to you?

How do you define who you are, and what forms your identity?

## DVD Teaching

We need to understand three kinds of culture:

- *The culture of the Bible*
- *Our own culture today*
- *The Culture of God, the Culture of the Trinity, the culture of love*
- *Jesus, the Son of God, revealed the Culture of God in His own earthly culture.*

Linking culture and faith

- *We need to link our culture and our faith if we are to make our faith relevant today.*

Our new global culture

- *Today, our world is changing rapidly; the effects of advances in transportation and telecommunications mean that our world seems like a smaller place. The pace of life is now faster, too.*

Understanding our faith

- *Our faith needs Prayer (a living relationship with God), and Study (exploring the Bible); we must then take these elements and apply them practically in our daily lives. Only then can we plug our faith into our own culture and make it truly relevant.*

9/11 and onwards

- *The impact of 9/11: religion is centre-stage once more, sadly for the wrong reasons - as the cause of tension, conflict and violence.*

Challenges today

- *Hard-line fundamentalism has perverted faith, turning it into a force for harm.*
- *Atheistic secularism has attempted to 'ban' God by pushing religion out of public life altogether. We need to have God in our lives!*
- *Rapid demographic and cultural changes have undermined our confidence in who we are.*



*Sayed Ali Abbas Razawi: Faiths were not prepared for mass globalisation and secularisation. We must adjust to this so that we can carry our faith forward into the 21st century.*



*The Revd Canon Dennis Stamps: The world has changed and we are still adjusting to this. We no longer live in a truly 'Christian' society and public understanding of our faith has diminished.*

Christian responses to globalisation

- *People have reacted in different ways to the new global culture.*
- *Some Christians sought safety in the Bible, turning it into a 'fortress' of certainty against the uncertainty around them.*
- *Some Christians sought to make friends with the culture around them, sometimes going too far to please secular groups at the expense of their own faith.*
- *Instead of influencing the culture around them, these Christians were influenced by the culture around them. There is a great tension between hard-line fundamentalism and over-liberal Christianity, and the majority of Christians are trapped between them.*



*The Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin: The Church is fragmented, and we fight over the latest 'issues' rather than focussing on the Gospel!*

Christians and globalisation around the world

- *In Europe, many Christians have been pressured into making their faith 'private' - they are sometimes made to feel embarrassed about their faith!*
- *Going to Church is a start - but that alone is not enough if we want to take our faith seriously.*
- *We must nurture our faith by opening up to God and coming to know Him in a personal relationship.*
- *We should hold on to our cultural and religious identity so that we can live without compromising our identity or fearing those who are different.*

We can only play a full, positive role in our societies if we are open about, and even proud of, our faith.

- *Hiding our faith, or being embarrassed about it, is not the answer.*
- *Muslims in Europe have reminded Christians that faith belongs to the public arena.*
- *The Trinity is all about relationships - God interacting with Himself in love - and we should follow this example in our own lives.*
- *We must nurture our relationships, and influence our world*

through our relationships.

## Lessons from the Middle East

- *Christians in the Middle East live their faith by example; they cannot stand on the street corner and proclaim it with words, so they proclaim it through every aspect of their lives!*
- *We can proclaim the Gospel through how we live our lives*

The diverse nature of Christianity itself is a major issue for us all, especially if we are in what is perceived as 'the middle ground'. It might be helpful if you reflect on belonging to one denomination out of many and how you view other Christian traditions.

Christians in Europe may be very aware of the pressures put upon them to make their faith a 'private matter.' You can involve participants by describing how this makes you feel, and by encouraging them to share their own experiences.

Finally, we suggest that participants should discuss how relevant their relationship with God is in their daily lives and how much God is involved in those lives. Start off the discussion by sharing your own views, then divide them into groups as your group size allows.

### How can your faith enrich your life today?

How can your relationship with God make your other relationships more fruitful?

Allow a few minutes after discussion for your group to share feedback in a plenary session.

## Conclusion

Wrap up the session by emphasising that we must link our faith to our lives if we want them to be meaningful. Before we can do this we must resist any pressure put upon us to make our faith a private matter. Highlight that we need to pray and we need to read the Bible in depth if we are to start connecting our faith with our daily life. Studying the Bible should be part of our life of prayer - which means inviting God to be an active partner in our lives, guiding us in the journey of faith.

### READING: 1 John 4:7-21

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent His Son as the Saviour of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgement, because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because He first loved us. Those who say, 'I love God', and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from Him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

**PRAYER:** Gracious and loving God, God of harmony and peace, we thank You and praise Your name for Your diverse creation. You came to us to teach us how to live together with our differences and celebrate Your presence in our hearts and the heart of creation. Help us to find You in those who are unlike us and help us to reflect Your image to the world around us. We pray in the precious name of Jesus Christ. Amen

# 2 The Global Village

## Introduction

Begin the session by welcoming the group, then introduce the main topic of this session, which is *living in the Age of Globalisation*.

Introduce globalisation by explaining that it began with the development of a global economy which made the whole world into a single market; this market benefitted from increased free trade and a freer flow of capital. In the West, this means we can buy strawberries from South America in the middle of winter and a big company in Britain can locate its call-centre in India or the Far East. You might like to add your own, local, examples. In the developing world, this can help boost an economy or see it flooded with imports.

### GLOBALISATION

**Noun:** the spreading through efficient global communications systems of information and ideas; global capital markets; easier travel and trade; and the organisation of business by corporations which can operate globally and respond to the demands of shareholders of no particular domicile.

*Vincent Cable, Demos, 1994*

In an age of rapid technological progress, the world is becoming a smaller place. People are moving faster and in larger numbers than ever before, whether for travel or migration, and we must find ways to deal with the great changes that are taking place in our communities today.

### How does globalisation affect your life?

Discuss positive and negative aspects.

## DVD Teaching

In the DVD, Nadim Nassar explains how civilisations and cultures need to meet and get to know each other gradually, but through globalisation they have met too rapidly, creating huge problems for us all.

Globalisation is like an abstract painting

- *Each culture views globalisation in its own way.*
- *Globalisation has both positive and negative aspects.*

Cultures need time to evolve

- *Globalisation gave cultures very little time to adjust to the new global world and to the huge demographic changes that followed.*

The host culture in the West felt threatened

- *In Europe the host cultures (e.g. English, French and German) reacted strongly to demographic changes*
- *In the US the reaction was much less noticeable because the US has always been a mixture of cultures.*

The lot of immigrant populations

- *Some immigrants retreated into closed communities to preserve their cultural and religious identities*
- *The 2nd and 3rd generations have felt torn between their family culture and the culture around them*
- *Many immigrants have been disillusioned by the reality of their new life in Europe.*
- *Western life is perceived as obsessed with celebrities and money.*



*Rabbi Shaul Rosenblatt: In a secular world, people find that life is a little bit meaningless no matter how much they try to distract themselves. Religion offers consistency of growth and satisfaction which is opposed to the occasional 'highs' in secular society.*

Secularism, materialism and individualism in the West

- *Many people in the West have become obsessed with fame, reality TV, sport etc..*
- *This is a reaction to the erosion of cultural and religious identities in Europe exacerbated by atheistic secularism.*

Secularism and religion in the US

- *Church and the secular world live side by side*

Globalisation - delivery method for Western cultural imperialism?

- *Globalisation began in the West and the huge multinational corporations behind it are also Western.*
- *The technological revolution has bombarded cultures in the developing world with Western consumerism, lifestyles and culture*
- *In developing countries the pace of technological change has been incredibly rapid, telescoped into just 5 to 10 years.*

The rise of fundamentalism in the Middle East

- *Many outward expressions of faith (such as religious dress and observance) in the Middle East, for instance, can be understood as a political and cultural reaction against Western influence.*
- *This reaction is an attempt to reassert local cultural identity.*

Globalisation and its effects on religious harmony in the Middle East


- *After centuries of peaceful coexistence, Christians are now often viewed as 'Western' rather than as natives of the region.*

Cultural identity

- *We should encourage people to rediscover their cultural identity.*


## A way forward

- *We need to build **trust**.*
- *In Europe we need to acknowledge that the basis of our culture is Christian. We must embrace our own cultural and religious identities and stop hiding our faith!*
- *If we are to build relationships with others, then Christians must start by setting a good example by respecting their own faith and culture.*
- *Once we are comfortable with who we are, then we can build bridges with our neighbours.*

 *The Revd Smitha Prasad: many think that showing their faith means standing up and shouting about it - but that isn't how we communicate normally! We should talk!*

Is there a global answer to globalisation?

- *There have been many human attempts to impose one system on everyone; these have all failed.*
- *The Culture of God, which is the culture of love, the culture of the Trinity, is truly global; God respects our differences. The Culture of God, uniquely, is applied differently in each culture, giving us **principles** to follow rather than **laws** to obey.*

 *The Revd Chris Chivers: if we can start to talk a language of faith that brings the world into the Church then maybe we will gain the confidence to go out into the world!*

After the video, emphasise that Christianity can thrive in a diverse world because it is based upon the universal message of the Culture of God, which is the culture of love.

Stress the importance of practicing our faith in our communities, and give an example of how you 'live the Gospel' in your daily life, e.g. how you show your faith in your relationship with your neighbours/colleagues/friends or family.

### How could you share your faith in your own community?

Give some practical examples on making the Christian message alive in your everyday life.

## Conclusion

Globalisation is a fact, and our lives have been changed forever by it.

It is essential for us to realise that living our faith in a globalised world is a big challenge. We must not give in to the negative view of globalisation; instead, we must realise that by changing our own attitudes towards diversity and towards other religions and cultures we can transform our communities and revitalise our own faith.

We need to find a way to affirm our faith and live our relationship with God in our demographically changed, 'global' communities. We need to reach out with our faith and communicate it with people of other faiths and none if we want to live the Gospel of Christ and truly become His followers.

### READING: Acts 2:1-12

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. Amazed and astonished, they asked, 'Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs - in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power.' All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?'

**PRAYER:** Loving Father, we thank You for all the cultures around the world and for giving us the opportunity to learn from each other. Help us, Lord, to extend Your Kingdom to the world which is in great need of Your love. Teach us to respect each other and be united in You despite our differences. We pray in the name of the One who drew us to Himself and gave us an abundant life, Jesus Christ. Amen.

# 3 Hospitality and Generosity in Faith

## Introduction

Begin the session by welcoming the group, then introduce the main topic of this session, which is *sharing space with others*.

This session looks at two vital concepts of Christian faith: hospitality and generosity, which have been lived and practised by God. Our lives should be a response to God's own generosity and hospitality.

Remind your participants that many people think that being hospitable to other religions would threaten our understanding of evangelisation, and that if they respect other religions and respect them as they are, then they have no place for conversion. This is the wrong way to understand preaching the Gospel! Explain that the best way to witness to people of other faiths is to live as an example of hospitality and generosity, so that they can see the image of Jesus Christ in us.

**Talk to your neighbour about anything you have done that could be gestures of hospitality or generosity and why you did them.**

## DVD Teaching

### Living in Religious and Cultural Diversity

- Now all societies contain many diverse elements
- The choice: retreat into ourselves and reject the changes around us, or go out and embrace the elements of change and build better communities together

### Hospitality

- All religions emphasise hospitality, with God as its source
- Hospitality means:
  - Giving space for others to practise their own faiths
  - Inviting others to share what we have
  - Going out to meet others
  - Divine hospitality - God created us!

### Generosity

- Generosity of God - richness and diversity of creation
- Our responsibility is to reflect God's hospitality and generosity, so that we can all share the same space

In a personal faith, it is almost impossible to be

objective

- We need the space to practise our faith and the right to believe that we have the ultimate truth.
- We need to give others the space to practise their faith and accept their right to believe that they have the ultimate truth.

The belief of another should not threaten me or diminish my own beliefs.

- When we all have the space to practise our faiths, then we can build a peaceful community without fear or compromise.



*The Revd Rana Khan: I always work to keep my relationship with God afresh, and I always try to compare my relationship with other humans, and explore the presence of God within these relationships. We can gauge our relationship with God by examining our relationships with our fellow human beings.*

Tolerance is never enough

- Exploring faiths and cultures means that we explore our common ground - and respect our differences!
- As Christians, we need to see the image of God in every single human being! That is why we must go out of our comfort zones and find a common space within God to meet and celebrate our differences without judging each other.

How do we deal with our differences?

- Difference is natural; it should not be a source of fear but of celebration - even where the differences are irreconcilable.

Following how Christ dealt with difference

- Christ teaches us how to deal with difference.
- He always accepted people - the Samaritan woman, the Roman Centurion, the tax collector - for who they were, showing hospitality and generosity



*Chris Williams: Jesus gave us wonderful examples that show how we can be sensitive with our own faith when we relate to those of other faiths. Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman is very instructive - how Jesus wanted to enter into dialogue with her. We should not be afraid to reach out to others through talking and sharing respectfully together, opening up our lives. This must include our faith, for no part of our lives is unaffected by our faith.*

We are invited by Christ Himself to

- Change our attitudes and approach difference in a different way and
- Show hospitality and generosity in accepting and respecting people for who they are.



*Rashid Ali Laher: Places of worship could work to nurture relationships, repairing relationships with God and with each other. Faith leaders must build bridges within and between their communities*

*through debate and dialogue. My Sunni mosque originally did not welcome Shi'a Muslims, but now all are welcome.*

How do we proclaim our faith and still allow others their space to believe differently?

- We should preach the Gospel by **example**, living as a practical example of our faith rather than quoting the Bible at people.
- There should not be a gap between our life and our faith; faith should enrich our life.
- Invite the other to live in harmony with us by not being threatened by difference.

Religions are not all the same

- We must celebrate the differences between religions, especially where those differences are irreconcilable.
- This frees us to meet in our common ground and to live in harmony.

It is very important to highlight that Christians often differ in understanding their responsibility to witness to the Gospel of Christ. Those differing views are formed by our attitudes to life; if one is naturally outspoken then the easy approach might be to speak openly about one's faith, while more reserved people might be reluctant to say anything. Reassure your participants that, fortunately, words are not always necessary, and living our faith through being generous and hospitable to others is a wonderful way to witness. No one style of witnessing is better than another and we should be wise enough to choose the way to witness that is best for us and the circumstances we are in.

**Which way of witnessing to your faith will be the most comfortable for you, and why?**

## Conclusion

Wrap everything up by reiterating the choice that we have today: retreat into ourselves or go out and embrace those elements of change that can help us to build better communities together.

Our task is to share our faith with love and respect. We can achieve this if we educate ourselves about our own faith and understand other faiths and cultures around us. Only then can we be secure enough to give others the space to practise their faith without feeling that we are compromising our own.

Remind your participants that it is easy to be hospitable and generous to those who are in agreement with us or those who have already offered

us their hospitality. We are called to show these qualities to every single person whom we encounter from any part of the world.

In this way, we can live as an example of our faith, reflecting the Culture of God through demonstrating hospitality, generosity and love to everyone.

### READING: Philippians 2:1-11

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,

who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**PRAYER:** Creator God, You brought us to being out of Your great love. We thank You for the diversity in the world around us. Everything reflects Your wonderful creativity. Help us to open our hearts and minds to those who are different so that we may glorify your name. Through Christ, Your Son our Lord, we pray. Amen.

# 4 The Culture of God and the Cultures of the World

## Introduction

Begin the session by welcoming the group, then introduce the main topic of this session, which is the Culture of God and how we can link this with our own cultures today.

We live in the kingdoms of the world. As Christians we belong also to the Kingdom of God. We have to find the balance between belonging to our earthly culture and belonging to the Culture of God, the culture of love.

God created us out of love and gave us the space to exist in relationship with Him. Out of the same love, He came to us in Jesus Christ. He revealed His Father's Culture in His own earthly culture. Now it is our task to rediscover this Culture of Love and make it relevant and meaningful in our lives today.

**What do you think of when you hear "The Culture of Love"? Give some examples.**

## DVD Teaching

A definition of culture

- *Each culture has certain elements, including language, history, art and religion.*

The Culture of God

- *God and the Creation are not one.*
- *God is in communion with Himself through the Trinity; so God has His own Culture: God is love!*

Finding the Culture of God

- *The culture of God is inaccessible to us. But Jesus Christ, God incarnate, revealed the Culture of God through His life and teachings.*

The Trinity

- *God is a mystery, and so is the Trinity - it's not a mathematical or intellectual problem but a matter of faith and revelation.*
- *The Holy Spirit reveals within our hearts that God is Trinity; through this revelation, we share God's culture with Him. The Culture of God, which is beyond time and space, is universal because God embraces all cultures.*

Embracing all cultures

- *If God embraces all cultures, how can we judge or reject another culture? We must be hospitable, generous and loving, respond-*

*ing to the love of God.*



*The Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin: Jesus speaks tirelessly about love and forgiveness. We must love and forgive everyone if we are to be members of the body of Christ.*

How Jesus treated His earthly culture

- *After Jesus experienced the Culture of God as a part of the Trinity, He came to us and embraced His earthly culture; He understood this culture very well, and He loved it.*
- *His teachings tell us how much Jesus respected and understood His inherited culture.*

Jesus challenged His earthly culture

- *Jesus challenged the religious leaders and their use of the Law.*
- *He revolutionised the Law, lifting us from living under rules of 'Do' or 'Do not do' to living a life where we strive as best we can to meet the highest principles, such as loving your enemy.*

Jesus respected His earthly culture

- *When Jesus taught, He used icons of His earthly culture - such as the good shepherd, seeds, vineyards or fig trees - to convey the Culture of God in a way that was meaningful to His listeners.*
- *This demonstrates Jesus' intimate understanding of His earthly culture.*

How to work with our own cultures today

- *We must discover how we can use the icons of our **own** culture to deliver Jesus' message in a compelling and contemporary way today.*
- *We can begin transforming our communities and cultures only when we understand our own culture and its icons and when we use these icons as vehicles of truth and love to change attitudes.*
- *We must take our relationships and make them the vehicles of the Culture of God. When other people look at our relationships, they should see the image of Jesus Christ and the Culture of God.*



*The Revd Canon Chris Chivers: Our job as Christians is to identify God's presence in the whole of creation and join with it. God is in creation, and our job is not to bring faith into the world to share with others, but to join with God who is already there!*

Christians should actively engage with society

- *We should do this through action - through BEING the followers of Christ and not merely TALKING about it.*
- *This is how we bring Jesus' teachings to life.*

The letter to Diognetus, written in the 2nd century (SEE TEXT ON NEXT PAGE).

### The Letter to Diognetus

'Christians are not distinguishable from other people by nationality or language or by the way they dress. They do not live in cities reserved to themselves; they do not speak a special dialect; there is nothing eccentric about their way of life. Their beliefs are not the invention of some sharp, inquisitive mind, nor are they like some, slaves of this or that school of thought. They are distributed among Greek and non-Greek cities alike, according to their human lot. They conform to local usage in their dress, diet, and manner of life.

Nevertheless in their communities they do reveal some extraordinary and undeniably paradoxical attitudes. They live each in his or her native country, but they are like pilgrims in transit. They play their full part as citizens and are content to submit to every burden as if they were resident aliens. For them, every foreign country is home, and every home land is foreign territory.

They marry like everyone else. They beget children, but they do not abandon them at birth. They will share their table with you, but not their marriage bed. They are in the world, but they refuse to conform to the ways of the world. They pass their days on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, but in their way of life transcend all laws. They show love to all people, but all persecute them. . . Jews denounce them as heretics, and Greeks harass them with the threat of persecution; and in spite of all this ill-treatment, no one can produce ground for hostility. In a word, what the soul is to the body, Christians are to the world.'

- *This powerful letter shows how we can be faithful to our beliefs even as we become fully involved with the culture around us.*
- *We can be a source of change and challenge without compromising our faith and without alienating ourselves from our own culture.*
- *As St. John said, we are in the world, but 'not of the world.'*

The essential message of this is very simple: if we are to transform our cultures for the better, then we cannot do that from outside - we have to be full members of our culture. The Gospels are filled with examples of Jesus demonstrating an expert knowledge of, and a love for, His earthly culture. We must demonstrate exactly the same - and that means thinking about how to explain elements of our faith to others in ways that are natural and easily understood. So how do we begin? You might kick off the discussion by suggesting a modern icon that we could use instead of, say, the Good Shepherd. Nadim Nassar's favourite 'modern shepherd' would be the thoughtful bus driver who delivers everyone safely to their destination without incident. What can you come up with?

**How can we use the familiar images (icons) of our cultures in order to communicate the culture of God?**

## Conclusion

In His teaching and in His life, Jesus demonstrat-

ed the Culture of God. By studying the Bible and keeping an active life of prayer we can access this Culture; then we must repackage it for our contemporary culture - not by watering down the message, but by couching it in modern language and metaphors.

The Trinity exists in relationships of love - the Father loves the Son by the Holy Spirit. This is the ultimate model of living together, and it is for us to build our communities by living the values of the Culture of God, which is the culture of love, hospitality and generosity.

We can transform our culture by living as Jesus wants us to live, actively involved in our communities, so that we become living examples of our faith in Christ. How we do this will depend on our own gifts and on the nature of our own culture.

### READING: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21

For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them. From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

**PRAYER:** Triune and generous God, in Jesus Christ Your Son, You revealed to us Your culture and Your love. Strengthen us to be recentred in You. Help us to belong to Your culture so that we may transform our own. We pray in the name of the One who revealed Your heart and mind in our limited culture, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

# 5 Faith and an Abundant Life

## Introduction

Begin by reading out the following:

*Jesus said, 'I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.' (John 10:10)*

But what is an 'abundant life?'

Our citizenship in the Kingdom of God leads to a lifelong transformation because the Holy Spirit works in us and through us. Only by being transformed can we transform the world around us. Look at the Disciples at Pentecost, when they were transformed by the Holy Spirit from frightened refugees to fearless transformers of the whole world. This is exactly the essence of the teaching of Christ when He says that the Kingdom of God is amongst us and that He came that we may have life, and have it abundantly!

For the Warm Up Question, describe an 'abundant life' as when we are fully conscious that we are in an intimate, personal relationship with God through Christ and that is reflected in a life of cheerful service.

**What would change in your daily life if you were transformed by the Holy Spirit?**

How would that affect your relationships?

## DVD Teaching

Finding our way

- *When we visit a new city, we feel insecure because we do not know its layout or where to go. So we buy a map and study it to become familiar with the city.*
- *When we follow a religion, we first need to become acquainted with our faith, to know how the religion 'works'.*

Becoming acquainted with our faith

- *This involves studying our faith and feeling that it is part of our identity. Faith should colour all aspects of our lives.*
- *Going to church or lighting a candle is a start, but we must be Christian in the street, at work or with friends.*

A private faith

- *Faith can never be a private matter: we must be Christian everywhere. We must share our faith.*
- *We must not allow the fabricated fear of 'offending others' to get in the way of our faith.*

Living our faith

- *Living our faith means that we are reflecting the light of the Kingdom of God, and this is something we should share with everyone. We must not be shy!*



*The Revd Michael Heaney: If we do not share our faith, then what happens to it? Too many Christians have lost the desire to 'pass the baton' of Christian understanding on to others.*

Dialogue

- *We need to communicate with each other.*
- *Dialogue should be a journey, opening up to others and inviting them into our space and meeting them in their own space.*

Interfaith Dialogue

- *Interfaith dialogue means learning about each other and sharing space. This takes time and planning.*
- *Dialogue should have an agreed aim or purpose. Then we can journey together towards our common goal.*
- *For dialogue to succeed, we need to be secure in our own faith and in our own culture.*
- *We also need to be aware of our dialogue partners' own faiths and cultures.*



*The Revd Rob Gillion: We need to listen to others - to create opportunities for communication. Listening to people helps you to step into their shoes and it gives you authenticity.*

Jesus said, 'I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.' (John 10:10)

- *In the West, 'abundance' usually refers to money, power and possessions.*
- *Jesus said that you cannot serve money and God at the same time.*
- *An abundant life is when we are fully conscious that we are in an intimate, personal relationship with God through Christ, and that is reflected in so many aspects of our lives.*
- *The abundant life is the life that shines with the light of God - 'fully alive!' It is a life filled with joy, but it is a life of service.*

Coping with diversity

- *We live in a diverse world - it's a fact - and our own communities are diverse.*
- *How do we live abundant lives in such diverse societies?*
- *Diversity should not be a threat; look at diversity in the eyes of God, and one can see that it offers enrichment, not danger.*

Making sense of our faith in our lives

- *When we read the Scriptures and when we pray we must remain connected to our daily life.*
- *When faith stops making sense then our faith is dead.*
- *To have an abundant life today we must make sense of our diverse world.*

A personal relationship with God

- *Judaism, Christianity and Islam believe that we need a personal relationship with God.*
- *Islam and Judaism believe that this personal relationship with God should be lived through applying their divine laws.*
- *In Christianity we have a personal relationship with God through a person - God Himself, coming to us in Jesus Christ - rather than a book of laws.*
- *Through the Risen Lord, through His crucifixion and resurrection, we connect, communicate and belong to God.*

### The value of all religions

- *Each religion is distinct and different and if we lose any world religion then the world will be poorer.*
- *When we are truly faithful to what we are, and we each relate our beliefs faithfully to others, then we do not clash with each other - rather, we complement each other and we build a peaceful, abundant society together!*

Remind your group that becoming better acquainted with our faith will be different for everyone. It must include studying the Bible (with or without a Companion Guide) and the use of prayer to keep an open channel of communication with God. It might also happen through interacting with other people. God can speak to us in so many ways!

We must share our faith in the way we live our life, and when we engage in dialogue with those of other faiths. While much dialogue is structured and planned, some of the most valuable dialogue will occur when you talk to neighbours or colleagues.

As Christians, we believe that God, the Creator of the universe, lived with us, embraced our limitations, and consequently relocated us from belonging to the world to belonging to God. Today, in our materialistic world, it is more important than ever to hold on to this experience of God the Redeemer and to show the world this alternative way of life and the alternative world view.

**Would you now have the ability to talk with your neighbours in a more confident way, and why?**

## Conclusion

As Christians we belong to the Culture of God, the culture of love, and at the same time we live as ambassadors of Christ in the world. *We also belong to our earthly cultures and it is essential that we seek to understand, love and respect them in order to change them, challenge them and transform*

*them not by our own power but by the power of the Lord.*

As Christians we must be fully aware that we live in a diverse world with other cultures and other faiths; because of that, we must ensure that we are ready to live together, armed with the strength of our faith, a genuine understanding of our faith, and the faiths of others. Only then can we live an abundant life and serve others just as Christ lived to serve and not to be served. Such a way of life will bring harmony to the world, leading us on the path of peace.

As this is the last session, remind your group that the central message of this course is: *Belonging to the Kingdom of God demands a lifestyle that brings God's glory and love right into the heart of the world, so that everyone can experience it.*

### READING: John 10:7-18

So again Jesus said to them, 'Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. 'I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.'

**PRAYER:** Gracious Lord, You came to give us a better and more fulfilled life. You are our great shepherd; lead us, Lord, with Your Holy Spirit, to be agents of change, peace and love. We pray in the precious name of our great shepherd, Jesus Christ. Amen.

The Awareness Course helps Christians make sense of their faith in the 21st Century, increasing awareness of their neighbours' faiths and cultures, so that they can live in a diverse society without fear and without compromise. It is only by learning about others that we can truly begin to understand ourselves.

***Living in a Global Village*** is written from a Christian viewpoint, and is designed so that the Course Leader can tailor the programme to suit their church or venue. The course is suitable for regular or occasional churchgoers and Christians outside the church.

***Living in a Global Village*** comprises five sessions, each of which lasts one hour, including video teaching and ample time for questions, activities and discussions.

**"The Awareness Course has proved a liberating experience for so many here in Blackburn: enabling them to grow in confidence about their own faith so as to be able to be in dialogue with our Muslim friends and neighbours in a much more meaningful way."**

The Revd Canon Chris Chivers, Course Leader, Blackburn Cathedral, UK

**"I commend the Awareness Foundation for its timely initiative because one of the greatest challenges facing the Christian churches today is to educate their members to live in a multi-faith and multicultural society."**

The Archbishop of Canterbury

**"The Awareness Course has been a wonderful eye-opener for me to explore my own faith while understanding my neighbour."**

Abigail Norton, Course Participant, London

**"With the dawn of every new day in our multicultural world, it becomes ever more clear how necessary the Awareness Foundation's work is for Christian presence and witness in this world."**

The Revd Habib Badr, Course Leader, Minister of the National Evangelical Church Beirut, Lebanon and Editor of 'Christianity: A History In The Middle East'

**"The Awareness Course provides us with substantial and thought-provoking understandings of what it is to fully inhabit the Christian Faith within a rapidly changing and developing world. 'Citizens of Two Kingdom's' has challenged us to confront the real issues of the day from the Christian perspective. "**

The Revd Christopher Cawrse, Course Leader, King's Cross, London

**"This resource can equip Christian people to be secure enough to be generous and open to others without risk to their own identity. It can help Christians be reconcilers and builders of a diverse global community."**

The Revd Canon Tim Elbourne, Director of Education and Training, Diocese of Ely, UK

**"Even in a rural parish, our group found the issues raised by the Awareness Course relevant to both our church and community."**

Anthony Shillingford, lay Course Leader, UK

**Awareness  
Foundation**  
a path to peace