

Christianity Explored to relaunch both sides of the Atlantic

CHRISTIANITY
EXPLORED

Christianity Explored – a popular course for people wanting to discover the real Jesus – is being relaunched in May.

Taken entirely from Mark's gospel, the course explores who Jesus was, what He achieved and what it means to follow Him today. Each session is based around a Bible study and a short talk or DVD followed by questions.

It celebrates its tenth year this May with a new-look feel, which includes the course being shortened from 10 sessions to seven.

Since it began, it has expanded so much that more than 5,000 courses a year are now taking place in 54 countries around the world and in settings as diverse as church youth groups and prisons.

The course has proved extremely popular both in the UK and the US, where sales increased 50 per cent last year. To celebrate its success at both sides of the Atlantic, the new course will be launched simultaneously in the UK and in the US.

Training director Craig Dyer will speak at the National Christian Resources Exhibition (CRE) at Sandown Park on 10 May, while course author and evangelist Rico Tice will launch it on the same day at Alistair Begg's Basics preaching conference in Cleveland, Ohio.
christianityexplored.org

IDEA, MARCH/APRIL 2011

False dichotomy

Sir, I read with interest both Michael Lawson's article on evangelism (March 25) and Fane Conant's reply (April 1) and echoed "amen" to both.

I understand the temptation to set various strands of evangelism in contrast to one another. But I believe it is a false dichotomy. Our experience at Christianity Explored, gained over more than 10 years, is that they must all work together.

Taking course leaders through Mark's Gospel, as Christianity Explored does, showing the importance of who Jesus is, why he came, and what it means to follow him gives an excellent training in personal evangelism. It also gives leaders an excitement in sharing their faith.

And working closely with Rico Tice, many times I've heard him describe larger events as the tip of the iceberg. They can act as either a spur for people to go on a course or they may trigger a response to a gospel learnt but not yet acted on.

The call to make Jesus known is indeed urgent. So let's use every method God has given us and pray for revival in our nation and beyond.

Ian Roberts,

Director of Resources, Christianity Explored

CEN 8 APRIL 2011

ALSO LAUNCHED AT CRE... is the third edition of Christianity Explored, from All Soul's, Langham Place, London. The tried and trusted outreach method celebrates its 10th anniversary later this year. 5,000 courses are now being held at any one time, in 60 countries around the world...

CHURCH TIMES,
21 APRIL 2011

Evangelism course sees Baptist growth

By Paul Hobson

BAPTIST churches are now catching up Anglicans in their enthusiasm for the evangelistic course Christianity Explored.

This is the finding of UK statistics compiled this month which show that, in the last nine months, 19 per cent of Christianity Explored courses were registered by churches defining themselves as Baptist.

This just behind the leading group, Anglicans (24 per cent) and ahead of all other denominational groupings.

Christianity Explored is an informal course for people who would like to investigate Christianity and is focused on Mark's Gospel. It is now a decade old.

The data is based on 171 registrations in the last nine months. Christianity Explored founder Alan Tice said he was 'delighted' that so many Baptist churches were reaching out to friends and neighbours through the course.

The figures came as no surprise to the Baptist Union of Great Britain mission department head, the Revd Ian Bunce.

'Courses which allow a more exploratory approach to faith are increasingly thriving,' he told *The Baptist Times*.

'No-one was ever converted through argument, but we sometimes seem to spend most of our time arguing with people.'

In his latest publication *21 Concerns for 21st Century Christians* (*The Baptist Times*, April 8), leading researcher Dr Peter Brierley noted that teaching courses contribute to about two-thirds of converts added to the church in 2005.

The majority of these come through Alpha, which has roughly twice as many courses as the others

(including Christianity Explored and Emmaus) combined. There are 8,451 Alpha courses in the UK and a total of 42,530 courses in 163 countries, according to the Alpha website. Five thousand Christianity Explored courses are now being held at any one time, in 60 countries around the world. But each teaching course has roughly the same conversion rate, Dr Brierley noted.

The news comes as Mr Tice prepares to launch the third edition of Christianity Explored at the Christian Resources Exhibition next month.

BAPTIST TIMES 15 APRIL 2011

COURSE BE WITH YOU

uknews Iain Taylor

Over the past ten years *Christianity Explored* has become a tried and trusted, often highly informal, method of sharing the gospel.

It works by introducing people to the real Jesus from the pages of the Bible, exploring who Jesus is, why he came and what it means to follow him.

Many tens of thousands have become Christians as a direct result of doing the course — and not just in the UK. 5,000 courses are now being held at any one time in 60 countries around the world and *CE* has been translated into 20 different languages. It is used in many different settings too, ranging from traditional church missions to outreaches in schools and prisons.

Now upgraded

But this month, *Christianity Explored* is being revised, rebranded and relaunched. Why?

The key decision, which was to re-edit and shorten the course from ten sessions down to seven, emerged from research which showed that many users are doing this already, and that it is perfectly possible to convey the key elements of the Christian faith within a shorter timeframe. A further benefit of a shorter course

is that it appears less daunting to potential guests, which in turn provided one impetus to redesign it, without compromising its fidelity to the gospel.

Another imperative was to ensure that only one clear, consistent theme was taught per session, since making it stronger thematically also results in it being easier for participants to understand. That has meant that the session on grace has had to be completely rewritten and that on the resurrection has had to be completely reworked, resulting in a 'new' edition that is streamlined and manageable.

Another factor driving the redesign is the simple fact that any DVD-based product looks dated after eight years. Consumers are used to seeing visually stunning, incredibly innovative, visual material everywhere, on TV, in films and on their computers. Such is their quality that people are simply turned off by poor production values, wherever they encounter them.

Re-shooting Rico

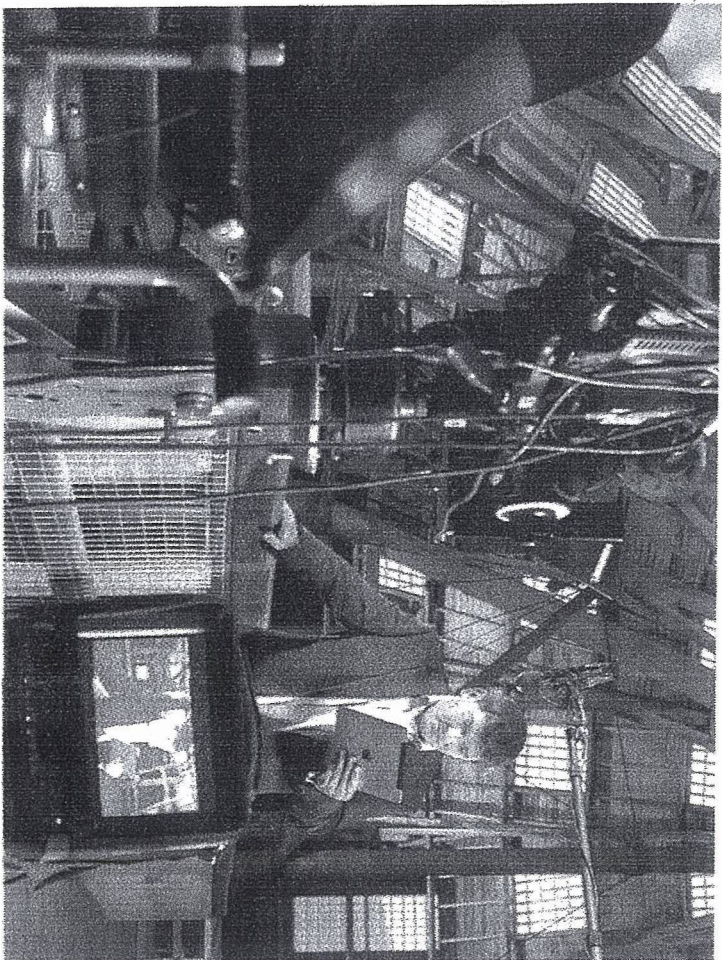
The *CE* DVD has, therefore, been completely reshot in an exciting and eye-catching way. It retains the best script elements from before, but adds a wealth of new material, including an account of a most amusing — and slightly embarrassing — personal encounter with an unrecognised VIP who is very much in the news at the moment. And both the DVD and the materials for leaders and guests have been completely rebranded under a crispier, clearer, more attractive design. Visually and aesthetically therefore, *Christianity Explored* is now a

stunning production.

Some aspects of the course, however, remain uncompromisingly the same, in particular its straight-talking evangelistic programme, which is always thoroughly grounded in Mark's compelling portrait of the identity, mission and call of Christ. And it continues to offer a crystal clear exploration of sin and its eternal consequences, so that the sheer wonder of God's grace can be understood, appreciated and responded to. Churches that already know *Christianity Explored* well, as well as those trying it out for the first time, will be most impressed with the 'new' edition.

New churches get on board

Even before the launch of the new edition of *CE*, it is becoming clear that the course is having some positive results that are, in some respects, slightly surprising. The *first* is the interest shown by churches outside the normal



Rico Rice, presenter of *Christianity Explored*, brushes up on his lines

conservative evangelical heartlands where it has hitherto proved most popular. So a significant number of theologically conservative Pentecostal churches (such as New Frontiers, Elin and Assemblies of God) have started using *Christianity Explored* recently, in parts of the UK as diverse as Surrey, Devon, Durham, south Wales and Northern Ireland. The feedback received reveals that these churches have been highly satisfied with both the course and the results that have been achieved. Moreover, the benefits were felt not just by those who attended, but by those who led the sessions too. This was because they themselves felt they had enhanced their biblical understanding. This mirrors the experience of many other churches.

The second area in which *CE* is having a

UKnews

Raising difficult questions

In early April, the Johns, the couple at the heart of the controversy over whether couples with mainstream Christian views on sexuality can become foster parents, re-submitted an application to foster to Derby City Council, asking the Council to change its policy on carers.

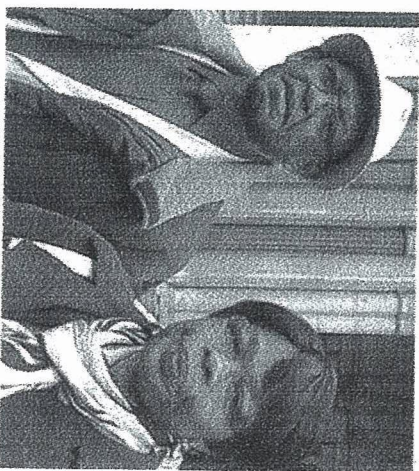
In their April letter they raised two points to support their application. *One* is the recent ComRes Poll citing a majority held opinion that Christians with traditional ethical views should be allowed to foster. The *second* cites evidence from the National Minimum Standards (NMS) on fostering, the Statutory Guidance, the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 and the Council's own Equality and Diversity Policy which do not require that 'positive attitudes be demonstrated towards homosexuality' (paragraph 101 of the High Court judgement).

BBC balanced report

A BBC Radio 4 programme broadcast in late March attempted to explore the details behind the recent high profile discrimination cases involving Christians.

Focusing *firstly* on the Bulls and the B&B case, and then on fostering issues highlighted by the Johns case in Derby, it covered some interesting parts of the cases, involving small but perhaps significant details largely unreported in the secular and Christian media.

The trailers for the programme seemed to



Owen and Eunice Johns

imply that the 'truth' regarding the position of Christians in Britain today and how the law views them would be exposed. The implication being that Christians were not the new 'persecuted' but perhaps — as many commentators in the 'bottom half of the internet' would say — are being correctly exposed as bigots in need of prosecution.

Interesting interview

Of most interest was the interview with Kay Harris, the representative of Children's Services for Derby City Council. She drew attention to the Johns' application for weekend respite foster care involving a child perhaps going to church 'all day' with them, or at the least

church forming a large part of the short time the child was with them. She admitted that there may well be children who would have been happy going to a church service with the Johns, but asked: 'What if we had a Muslim child [to place with the Johns]? The implication being that there would be more chance of a Muslim child needing a placement with the Johns than a child from a family that would perhaps be Christian / happy with church attendance. The obvious statistical 'conflict' in her statement went unchallenged, as did the idea that her department failed to even allow a Christian child to be given into the Johns' care. However, these holes in Harris's argument were left 'hanging' for the listener to absorb.

Infections?

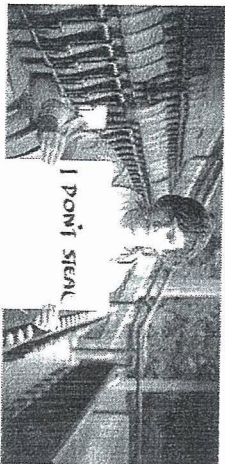
Secondly, the interview covered the comment made by the Equalities Commission that Christian views were seen as an 'infection' of a child. As much as she tried to avoid this comment with the much reported 'redrafting problem' response, the interviewer reminded Ms. Harris that 'very highly paid barristers drafted this report. Did they really make a mistake?'

The programme was reasonably balanced and did ask difficult questions of the authorities, which is probably all one can ask for from the secular media. It's a shame it was tucked away in such a quiet spot of the broadcast media.

Christian Concern / Ruth Woodcraft

Christianity Explored

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Why will you go to heaven? | Image: CE DVD

major impact is the way it is bringing gospel-hearted churches together, often from very different denominations and traditions, as they instigate joint missions. A good example is in Scotland, where a few days ago in Edinburgh, Church of Scotland, Baptist, Independent Evangelical, Salvation Army and Free Church congregations combined in a major evangelistic initiative whereby a *Christianity Explored* course was held in a Costa coffee shop in the heart of the city.

The main UK launch of CE will be at the Christian Resources Exhibition at Sandown, Surrey on May 10. For more information about *Christianity Explored* resources and materials, contact Melanie Baild on 020 7636 6406 or see the website, www.christianityexplored.org

CH

Locked in but living

Double time

Explore Christianity

THE CHRISTIAN Resources Exhibition on May 10 sees the launch of the new edition of the popular evangelistic resource Christianity Explored.

Now spanning seven weeks, with a superbly produced DVD featuring acclaimed communicator Rico Tice, the course allows those investigating Christianity to have time and space to think about what they believe in a warm and friendly setting.

Based on Mark's Gospel, CE enables people to move along their faith journey by exploring who Jesus is, why He came, and what it means to follow him.

One of its greatest strengths has proved to be the way it points course members to the Bible at each step, encouraging them to read and listen to it for themselves.

'Over and over again I have had the joy of seeing people's lives being eternally changed as they have met Jesus and put their trust in Him through participating in a Christianity Explored course. The third edition has sharpened and strengthened an already outstanding course' (Paul Rees, senior pastor of Charlotte Baptist Chapel, Edinburgh).

The third edition also features a brand-new website which enables anyone to explore the Christian message in their own

way and find out more about local churches and courses - see www.christianityexplored.org.

The number of churches using CE has grown hugely in the last few years. The course is run across the full range of denominations, and has been translated into 20 languages for use in 60 countries.

Five thousand courses are now being run at any given time, in coffee shops, living rooms, prisons and schools as well as the more traditional church settings.

'The comprehensive leader's guide, along with the stunning new DVD, make Christianity Explored simple for anyone to run,' says Ian Roberts, resources director at CE. 'We've worked hard at making this edition of the course easier than ever to join in with.'

'And of course we've kept the same format, with guests being given the opportunity to say what they think, to ask their questions, and to feel welcomed and at ease as they think through what they believe.'

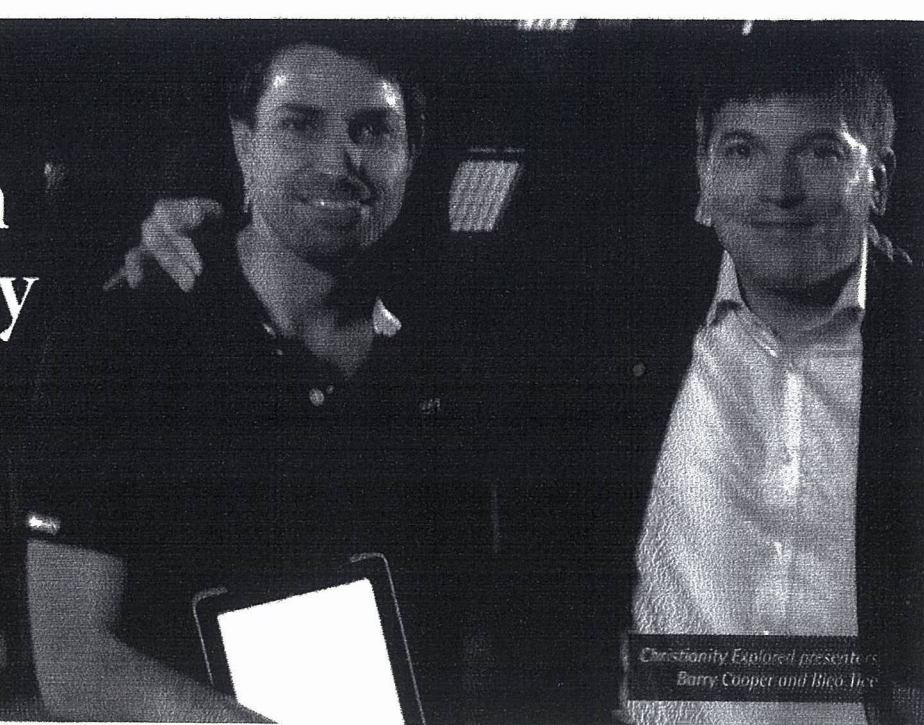
Tens of thousands of people now cite a CE course as a key stepping stone on their journey into the Christian faith.

With more and more churches realising its use as a friendly, engaging and relevant outreach tool, the launch of the latest edition is set to increase the popularity of CE still further.

BT 6-5-11

The evolution of Christianity Explored

Commercial companies don't survive if they haven't researched their products. And the same is true of any Christian ministry.



Christianity Explored presents Barry Cooper and Rico Tice

However, that normal, healthy process becomes more difficult when it means evolving material, such as Christianity Explored, which is anchored in the timeless truths of the Bible and will be launching its revised edition in May. How does one update a course which has already enabled tens of thousands to embrace the Christian faith and which many people think is pretty good already?

What is Christianity Explored?

Over the past 10 years Christianity Explored, which recently joined as a member of the Alliance, has become a tried and trusted, often highly informal, method of sharing the gospel. It works by introducing people to the real Jesus from the pages of the Bible. It explores who he was, what he achieved and what it means to follow him today. The course works through Mark's gospel, with every session based around a Bible study and a short talk or DVD followed by questions.

Evangelist Rico Tice, co-author of Christianity Explored, says: "There are two wonderful moments when teaching the material. The first is when you explain to church leaders, be they elders, pastors, vicars, bishops or even archbishops - and I've seen this in them all - that Mark's Gospel can be summarised in just three words: identity, mission and call. Who is Jesus? Why did he come? What does it mean to follow him? And as you explain that and they see that summary and they see its depth, their eyes light up, literally they flare, as they get that, because they can see not only is it a summary, but it enables their people to let the gospel tell the gospel, to have such a simple summary that goes right to the heart of almost every verse of the book."

He adds: "The second notable moment is obviously when non-Christians are on the course, and this is far more wonderful. Their eyes light up as they encounter Jesus, as they hear talks from the front, as he is discussed in the material in groups, as they go home and read about him, again discovering for themselves who Jesus is, why he came and what it means to follow, but above all seeing the miracle of God opening their blind eyes to His son."

It has proved incredibly popular both in the UK and, increasingly, overseas in places such as the US, Canada and Australia. It has expanded so much that more than 5,000 courses are now being held at any one time, in 57 countries around the world. It is used in many different contexts too, not only in traditional missions but also in settings as diverse as schools and prisons.

This means it works for people of all ages, classes, races and educational achievements. And since its flexible format operates as well in small gatherings ('coffee morning evangelism') as it does in large, set-piece events, it is very easy for small groups to use it to reach out

Christianity
EXPLORED

to their friends and families with the gospel. It even works well for one-to-one, personal evangelism opportunities, too.

What's changed?

Since its inception, Christianity Explored has encouraged a wealth of feedback from its users. Capturing this important information has underpinned many of the decisions taken about how best to update the course.

The most significant revision is that the new edition has been sharpened and shortened from 10 main sessions down to seven; the Weekend Away has also been altered to a single Day Away. This makes it far more streamlined and manageable. Each session now focuses on a single theme, making the course leaner, more logical and easier to understand. To that end, the session on grace has been completely rewritten, that on the resurrection completely reworked and a brand new one on the parable of the sower added.

Despite refreshing updates, some aspects of the course remain the same, so churches will recognise its evangelistic programme, which is always thoroughly grounded in Mark's gospel. And it continues to offer a crystal clear exploration of sin and its eternal consequences, in order that the sheer wonder of God's grace can be understood, appreciated and responded to.

The course has always proved incredibly popular with conservative evangelical churches. But in recent months and years, more and more churches in other traditions have started using the material. This is because the course appeals to any Christian who trusts in the Bible and wants to explore who Jesus is with those who don't know him. And this trend is set to accelerate when the new material is launched.

The launch

Given its popularity on both sides of the Atlantic, simultaneous launch events took place in May. The main UK launch will be at the Christian Resources Exhibition at Sandown, Surrey, on 10 May. On the same day, in the US, evangelist Rico Tice will address Alastair Begg's 2011 Basics conference in Cleveland, Ohio. Christianity Explored training director Craig Dyer addressed the Gospel Coalition conference in Chicago in April, with Rico Tice speaking at New Word Alive in north Wales three days earlier.

Iain Taylor christianityexplored.org