



Why the 21st Century Needs Christianity

Life Group Leader Guide

What if our world today really needs Christian values?

When we watch the news or scroll through social media, our contemporary culture would make us think they are getting along just fine without any faith influence. However, as we dig a little deeper, the 21st century is filled with areas that need the influence of Christ and people of faith.

Together, we will study how our values can influence the world around us for the better and what we can do to have an impact in a secular society. During this six-session series, we will look at the following Scriptures and themes:

- Session One: "Science and Christianity" Romans 1:18-24
- Session Two: "Justice and Christianity" Romans 2: 1-11
- Session Three: "Business and Christianity" Romans 13:8-14
- Session Four: "The University and Christianity" 1 Corinthians 1:18-25
- Session Five: " Government and Christianity" Romans 13:1-7
- Session Six: "The Human Soul and Christianity" Ephesians 2:1-10

In this packet, you will find sample discussion questions for our study and several helpful tools & handouts that you can use in leading your group meetings.

In addition to these materials, watch for our regular leadership emails and other helpful resources as you lead your group. Feel free to contact your group coach or our team with any questions or concerns that come up during this series.

Discussion Questions

At each group meeting you will have the opportunity to discuss a series topic and explore the passages we are studying in worship each week. Our sessions are aligning with the sermon series beginning the weekend of March 9 & 10 and will give your group a chance to dig a little deeper into our weekly theme.

Each session's discussion includes three groups of questions:

- 1. *Get to know me:*** Questions written to help your group open up to one another and begin sharing life experiences related to the topic.
If your group is meeting for the first time, consider using all (or most) of the questions included here.
If your group knows one another fairly well, you might consider skipping the first question or two in this section and starting your group discussion with question three, etc.
- 2. *Into the Bible:*** Questions designed to draw you into the text from the most recent week's sermon. These questions include Scripture passages to study as a group. This might be the first time some of your group members have really explored the Bible. Don't miss an opportunity to let them really read the Word of God. These questions are written with the most direct questions first and the more complex questions last. Feel free to select the questions that best fit your group and will get them discussing the ideas that will be most valuable to them.
- 3. *Application:*** No lesson is complete without the opportunity to apply the learning to our lives. The questions and discussion prompts in this section are just that. Complete as many as your group has time for and/or focus on the questions that stimulate the greatest interest in your group.

Session One: “Science and Christianity” Romans 1:18-24

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. ¹⁹ For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. ²⁰ For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. ²¹ For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves.

Get to know me

- If your group is meeting for the first time, be sure to introduce yourselves to one another and welcome any newcomers. As you begin this series, discuss who you might like to invite to join you in the coming weeks. Complete the group roster in the appendix of this packet and use the “Circles of Life” handout to brainstorm who would benefit from joining your group.
- As we begin our look at the relationship between our faith and the world around us, kick off this week’s discussion by sharing about a way that our culture today seems to be anti-Christianity. What have you observed recently that has appeared to support a post-Christian worldview and how does that attitude seem to be increasing in our culture today?
- What is your experience/background in science? Is it particularly interesting to you? Where do you get current information about scientific advancements?

Into the Bible

- What stood out to you most from this week’s sermon?
- This week’s text says, “His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world.” Based on this week’s study, how do you understand our ability to observe God’s nature through creation?
- In your own words, how does humanity’s search for wisdom result in foolishness?
- Though this passage was written a long time ago, in what ways have we “exchanged the truth about God for a lie,” today? And in what places do we look for truth in our modern culture?

Application

- How can your faith enhance your understanding of scientific discovery?
- What can you do to be a stronger voice for Christian values in the world around you?
- DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS: In each session of this study we will have an application designed to help your group focus on a personal discipline. This week, consider how disciplined Bible reading could help equip you to share your Christian values. If you haven’t already, consider starting a reading plan using the YouVersion Bible

App. The Bible App has hundreds of very good reading plans and it would be great for your group to choose one together.

Session Two: “Justice and Christianity” Romans 2: 1-11

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. ² We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. ³ Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? ⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶ He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, ¹⁰ but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality.

Get to know me

- If anyone is new to your group this week, be sure to give them a chance to introduce themselves and meet the other group members.
- As we open this week's discussion, what are some overall impressions of law enforcement and the legal system today?
- In our culture, we often see the impact of the justice system and what people believe is fair or right. Share how you have observed the attitude about the legal sector change in our culture. In what ways are those changes for better or worse?

Into the Bible

- What stood out to you most from this week's sermon?
- In this week's text, we learn about the judgment of God. In what ways do these verses suggest that God's judgment differs from the judgment passed by an elected official in a modern-day courtroom?
- In what ways does God's understanding of “fairness” differ from what our culture believes?
- How would God's value of impartiality impact our contemporary justice system if it were shared in 21st century culture?

Application

- How can you shift your value of impartiality to live out a more Christ like worldview?
- In what ways could we be more supportive of law enforcement and the legal system today?

- DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS: Sacrificing is a way to recalibrate our understanding of fairness and identify more closely with the injustice Christ endured. Is there something that you could go without for a period of time as a way of refocusing your values?

Session Three: “Business and Christianity” Romans 13:8-14

⁸ Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹ For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. ¹¹ Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed. ¹² The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. ¹³ Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Get to know me

- Tell about a difficult business dealing you experienced? What happened? Were there any warning signs that it might go badly?
- What are some key requirements that you look for in a business partnership or agreement?
- How have business transactions changed in our lifetime? What challenges do we face in modern commerce that are different than a decade or two ago?

Into the Bible

- What stood out to you most from this week’s sermon?
- How does the statement, “Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law,” influence your understanding of how you should approach contemporary economic circumstances?
- What values can be taken from this verse and applied to the business relationships we have?
- In what ways are people tempted to compromise in the marketplace? Why?
- Our verse this week says, “Let us walk properly as in the daytime.” How does the transparency of “brining things to light” translate into today’s business and employment culture?

Application

- In what area of your economic life do you want to get better? Is there a quality found in this week’s verses that you would like to develop?
- What can your group do to help one another grow into more trustworthy employees and members of our economic system?

- **DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS:** In this week’s teaching we emphasized the value of trustworthiness in a business transaction. As a group, commit to doing something to grow in this area. Challenge a member of your group to read a book together that might interest you, develop your marketplace skills through finding a continuing education opportunity in your field, or consider participating in an upcoming class like Leadership School. (For more information on March 30th Leadership School, visit <http://christchurchohio.org/leadership-school> or call the church office).

Session Four: “The University and Christianity” 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

⁸ For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” ²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, ²³ but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Get to know me

- When you think of your family growing up, what was your experience with higher education? Was college or graduate school an opportunity, an expectation, or a pipe dream?
- Share a little about your school experience. In what ways did your school experience shape your faith?
- How do academic minded people shape our culture today? What impact do you feel the university is having on the world around us?

Into the Bible

- What stood out to you most from this week’s sermon?
- In this week’s verses, it says, we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.” In what ways is the message of Christ a stumbling block to academics?
- How does the teaching of Christ oppose the teaching of academic leaders?
- Our verse states, “For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” In what ways does the influence of the church support this principle?

Application

- What could you do to be more thoughtful about your faith?
- How could you be more influential for Christ when engaging in conversations with especially academic minded people?

- DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS: Praying for Christian university leaders/faculty can be a powerful way to support a Christian worldview in the university. Spend some time in prayer this week asking God to increase the influence of Christian leaders.

Session Five: “ Government and Christianity” Romans 13:1-7

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.³ For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval,⁴ for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.⁵ Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.

Get to know me

- What are some of the most significant changes you have seen in the influence of faith on government?
- What role does a leader's faith play when you are considering who to vote for?

Into the Bible

- What stood out to you most from this week's sermon?
- In this week's verses it says, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities." What does that value look like in today's political system?
- The tone of our political environment is especially charged today. How could our Christian understanding that leaders have been instituted by God influence the way we talk about elected officials?
- Our passage says, "Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. " How does that make you feel about following the leaders in power in our government?
- As April 15 approaches, how can you apply the following verse beyond just filing your W-2 on time? "Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed."

Application

- What can your group do to elevate the discussion of political issues in a more thoughtful way?
- Regardless of policy differences, how can we be a support to the leaders that *God has appointed*.

- **DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS:** Being actively involved in our political system can be valuable. Is there a local politician that you could do something to encourage? How might you support them or let them know that you appreciate their service?

Session Six: “The Human Soul and Christianity” Ephesians 2:1-10

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast.¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Get to know me

- As we near our last session of this series, be sure to confirm plans for the launch of your group’s next study; consider where and when are you going to meet, who you might like to invite to join you for your next study, and what, if any, changes you are planning to make in your group meeting format?
- Share some ways that you have seen your soul mature through the development of your faith? What have been some of the influential moments that have helped you mature in Christ?
- In what ways have you experienced the grace of others? How has grace extended to you from others helped you to understand God’s grace?

Into the Bible

- What stood out to you most from this week’s sermon?
- In Ephesians 2 we see, “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins.” How have you experienced seasons of life when you felt that perspective was especially true?
- Compared to being separated from God, list the qualities we see in this verse as a result of God’s mercy. Which of these characteristics is most meaningful to you?
- The result of God’s mercy in our lives is “good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” How does the mercy we experience allow us to live out the good that God has called us to?

Application

- What are you doing in response to God’s mercy as we considered it this week?
- What specific area would you like to grow because of God’s mercy in your life?
- **DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS:** Set aside some time this week and look for a way to walk in the good works, which God prepared. Whether it is preparing a meal for someone

in need of finding a way to serve someone, what can you tangibly do to respond to the mercy of God?

Group Agreement

Our Group's Purpose:

To transform our spiritual lives by cultivating our spiritual health in a healthy small group community.

We do this through:

Group Attendance

To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent. (Completing the Group Calendar will minimize this issue.)

Safe Environment

To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments or simple fixes.)

Respect Differences

To be gentle and gracious to people with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments or imperfections. We are all works in progress.

Confidentiality

To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.

Encouragement for Growth

To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our lives by serving others with our God-given gifts.

Welcoming Newcomers

To keep an open chair and share Jesus' dream of finding a shepherd for every sheep.

Shared Ownership

To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time.

Rotating Hosts/Leaders and Homes

To encourage different people to host the group in their homes and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating each meeting. (See the Group Calendar.)

- Refreshments/meal times _____
- Child care _____
- When we will meet (day of week) _____
- Where we will meet (place) _____
- We will begin at (time) _____ and end at _____
- We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together. Our primary worship service time will be _____
- Date of this agreement _____

Group Calendar

Planning and calendaring can help ensure the greatest participation at every meeting. At the end of each meeting, review this calendar. Be sure to include a regular rotation of host homes and leaders, and don't forget birthdays, socials, church events, holidays, and mission/ministry projects.

DATE	LESSON	LOCATION	DESSERT/ MEAL	FACILITATOR

Group Roster

Use this chart to record contact information for the members of your group.

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE	EMAIL	MINISTRY	OTHER
<i>Brett Eastman</i>	<i>29801 Santa Margarita Pkwy. Ste. 100</i>	<i>949-609-8709</i>	<i>brett@inregether.com</i>	<i>Childrens</i>	<i>5 Kids</i>

CIRCLES OF LIFE

DISCOVER WHO YOU CAN CONNECT IN COMMUNITY

The diagram consists of five overlapping circles arranged in a pentagonal pattern. Each circle contains a title and a brief description, followed by four horizontal lines for writing names.

- Family**
(immediate or extended)
- Familiar**
(neighbors, kids' sports teams, school, and so forth)
- Friends**
- Fun**
(gym, hobbies, hangouts)
- Firm**
(work)

Follow this simple four-step process:

1. **Prayerfully** list 1-2 people in each circle.
2. **Prepare** the group for them. Share a few names with your group and update your progress.
3. **Place** a call to them.
4. **Pick** them up and bring them to your next meeting.

"Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." Matthew 4:19

Leading for the First Time

Sweaty palms are a healthy sign. The Bible says God is gracious to the humble. Remember who is in control; the time to worry is when you're not worried.

Those who are soft in heart (and sweaty palmed) are those whom God is sure to speak through.

Seek support. Ask your leader, coleader, or close friend to pray for you and prepare with you before the session. Walking through the study will help you anticipate potentially difficult questions and discussion topics.

Bring your uniqueness to the study. Lean into who you are and how God wants you to uniquely lead the study.

Prepare. Prepare. Prepare. Go through the session several times before your group meets. Set aside time to discuss the material with your coach and bring up any questions or ideas that you are unclear about. Consider writing in a journal or fasting for a day to prepare yourself for what God wants to do.

Don't wait until the last minute to prepare.

Ask for feedback so you can grow. Perhaps in an email or on cards handed out at the study, have everyone write down three things you did well and one thing you could improve on. Don't get defensive, but show an openness to learn and grow.

Prayerfully consider launching a new group. This doesn't need to happen overnight, but God's heart is for this to happen over time. Not all Christians are called to be leaders or teachers, but we are all called to be "shepherds" of a few someday.

Share with your group what God is doing in your heart. God is searching for those whose hearts are fully His. Share your trials and victories. We promise that people will relate.

Prayerfully consider whom you would like to pass the baton to next week. It's only fair. God is ready for the next member of your group to go on the faith journey you just traveled. Make it fun, and expect God to do the rest.

Leadership Training

Congratulations! You've responded to the call to lead a group.

There are few other tasks in the family of God that surpass the contribution you will be making. As you prepare to lead, whether it is one session or the entire series, here are a few thoughts to keep in mind. We encourage you to read these and review them with each new discussion leader before he or she leads.

1. Remember that you are not alone. God knows everything about you, and He knew that you would be asked to lead your group. Remember that it is common for all good leaders to feel that they are not ready to lead. Moses, Solomon, Jeremiah and Timothy—they all were reluctant to lead. God promises, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). Whether you are leading for one evening, for several weeks, or for a lifetime, you will be blessed as you serve.
2. Don't try to do it alone. Pray right now for God to help you build a healthy leadership team. If you can enlist a co-leader to help you lead the group, you will find your experience to be much richer. This is your chance to involve as many people as you can in building a healthy group. All you have to do is call and ask people to help, you'll be surprised at the response.
3. Just be yourself. If you won't be you, who will? God wants you to use your unique gifts and temperament. Don't try to do things exactly like another leader; do them in a way that fits you! Just admit it when you don't have an answer, and apologize when you make a mistake. Your group will love you for it, and you'll sleep better at night!
4. Prepare for your meeting ahead of time. Review the session and the leader's notes, and write down your responses to each question. Pay special attention to questions that ask group members to do something other than engage in discussion. These exercises will help your group live what the Bible teaches, not just talk about it. Be sure you understand how a question is designed, and bring any necessary supplies (such as paper and pens) to your meeting. If the exercise employs one of the items in the appendix, be sure to look over that item so you'll know how it works.
5. Pray for your group members by name. Before you begin your session, go around the room in your mind and pray for each member by name. You may want to review the prayer list at least once a week. Ask God to use your time together to touch the heart of every person uniquely. Expect God to lead you to whomever he wants you to encourage or challenge in a special way. If you listen, God will surely lead!
6. When you ask a question, be patient. Someone will eventually respond. Sometimes people need a moment or two of silence to think about the question, and if silence doesn't bother you, it won't bother anyone else. After someone responds, affirm the response with a simple "thanks" or "good job." Then ask, "How about somebody else?" or "Would someone who hasn't shared like to add anything?" Be sensitive to new people or reluctant members who

aren't ready to say, pray or do anything. If you give them a safe setting, they will blossom over time.

7. Provide transitions between questions. When guiding the discussion, always read aloud the transitional paragraphs and the questions. Ask the group if anyone would like to read the paragraph or Bible passage. Don't call on anyone, but ask for a volunteer, and then be patient until someone begins. Be sure to thank the person who reads aloud.

8. Break up into smaller groups each week. If your group has more than ten people, we strongly encourage you to have the group gather in discussion circles of three or four people. With a greater opportunity to talk in a small circle, people will connect more with the study, apply more quickly what they're learning and ultimately get more out of it. A small circle also encourages a quiet person to participate and tends to minimize the effects of a more vocal or dominant member. It can also help people feel more loved in your group. When you gather again at the end of the section, you can have one person summarize the highlights from each circle. Small circles are also helpful during prayer time. People who are unaccustomed to praying aloud will feel more comfortable trying it with just two or three others. Also, prayer requests won't take as much time, so circles will have more time to actually pray. When you gather back with the whole group, you can have one person from each circle briefly update everyone on the prayer requests. People are more willing to pray in small circles if they know that the whole group will hear all the prayer requests.

9. Rotate facilitators weekly. At the end of each meeting, ask the group who should lead the following week. Let the group help select your weekly facilitator. You may be perfectly capable of leading each time, but you will help others grow in their faith and gifts if you give them opportunities to lead. You can use the Small Group Calendar to fill in the names of all meeting leaders at once if you prefer.

10. One final challenge (for new or first time leaders): Before your first opportunity to lead, look up each of the five passages listed below. Read each one as a devotional exercise to help equip yourself with a shepherd's heart. Trust us on this one. If you do this, you will be more than ready for your first meeting.

- Matthew 9:36
- 1 Peter 5:2-4
- Psalm 23
- Ezekiel 34:11-16
- 1 Thessalonians 2:7-8, 11-12

How to lead in Prayer

One of the most powerful aspects of small groups is the opportunity to offer prayer requests, to pray together, and then to see how God follows through on those prayers. It's amazing to see how God works over three months or six months or a year. Prayers gets answered, situations change, hearts change—your group sees God work in mighty ways.

Just as powerful as the group dynamic of prayer is the impact that a praying leader can have on his or her group. A praying leader ministers to the group not only by showing how much he or she cares about their needs but also by modeling a life of prayer.

As with most things, becoming a small group centered on prayer doesn't just happen. Here are seven tips on how you can minister to your small group through prayer:

- Dedicate the last half hour of each bible study to “personal prayer needs” time.
- Write each member's prayer requests down on 3x5 cards or the prayer sheets provided. Bring the cards/sheets to every study so you can check back on their requests.
- After the requests are given, pray immediately with your group.
- Set up a prayer-partner system where each member has another member praying for him or her, and vice versa.
- As a leader, continue to pray for each specific prayer request of each of your members (use your cards as reminders) daily.
- Call mid-week (or mid-session) to see how things are going.
- Call or email whenever the Holy Spirit prompts you. God may use you to help answer a member's prayer. If you feel the Holy Spirit giving you wisdom that could help a member in a quandary, let that person know.

Prayer and Praise Reports

Prayer is essential to group life, use this chart as a place to record prayer requests that are shared in your group each week.

PRAYER REQUEST	PRAISE REPORT