



living

CHRISTIANITY

**following Jesus in
every area of life**



US edition

leader's guide



Living Christianity | livingchristianity.org.uk/us

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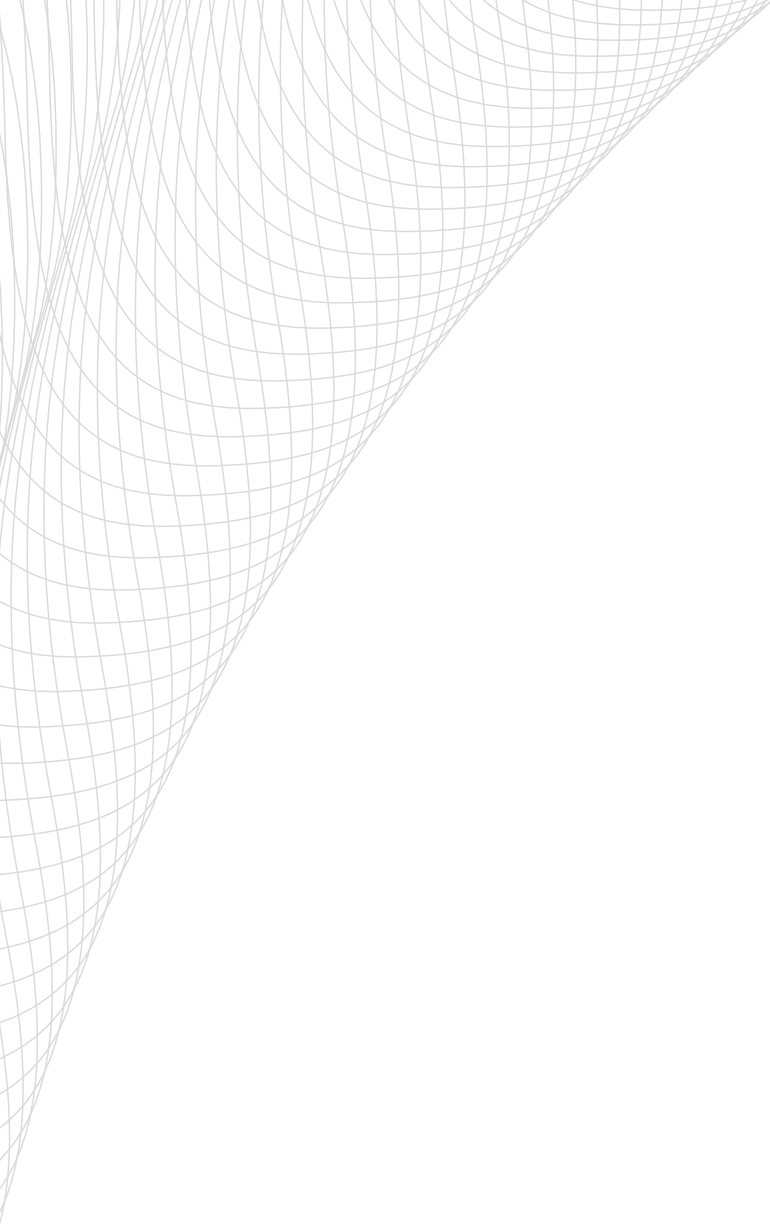
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"If I profess, with the loudest voice and the clearest exposition, every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christianity. Where the battle rages the loyalty of the soldier is proved; and to be steady on all the battle-field besides is mere flight and disgrace to him if he flinches at that one point."¹

¹ Chronicles of the Schöenberg-Cotta Family, Elizabeth Rundle Charles, Thomas Nelson, 1864.



Welcome to Living Christianity

a series of studies about God's
calling for his people in the world

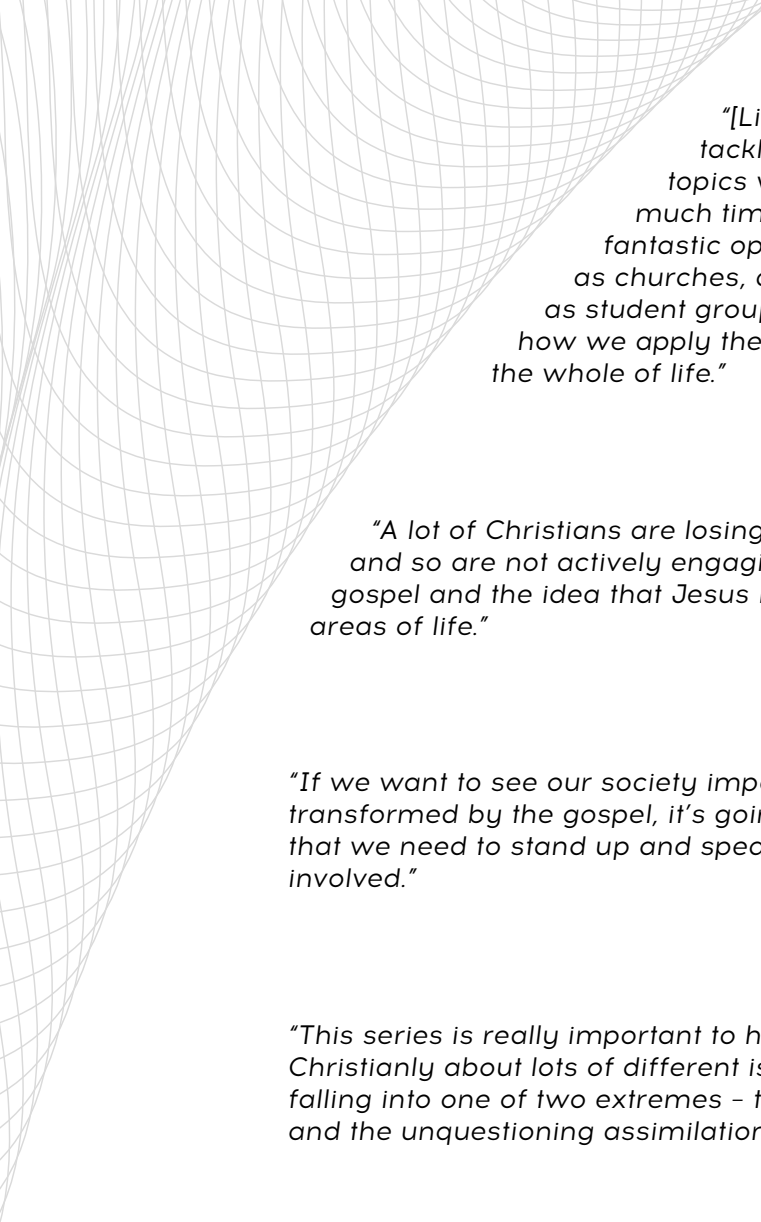
Over these 5 sessions we hope to get you to value the truth that following Christ **transforms** all aspects of our lives.

Christians are **new people** in Christ, with a new status and a new purpose. No longer under the power of sin, we have been transferred into the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. In him we have **redemption** and **forgiveness** of sin. As followers of Christ we are called to **grow** in our love for him and for our fellow believers.

Christ is Lord in our family life, when we are at work, in our responsibilities as citizens, and much more besides. The Bible guides believers to seek a healthy church life, to spread the good news, and directs us to **live faithfully** in everything we do.

If we want to be faithful and effective Christian citizens, we need to pay particular attention to what it means to truly **engage** with wider society.

Our prayer is that through the course, you and your group recognize the implications of living as a Christian in today's world and become better equipped to live out your faith in **all areas of life**.



"[Living Christianity] tackles many of the topics we don't invest much time in. This is a fantastic opportunity for us as churches, as small groups, as student groups to think about how we apply the Christian faith to the whole of life."

Chris Sinkinson

"A lot of Christians are losing their confidence and so are not actively engaging with the gospel and the idea that Jesus is Lord of all areas of life."

Pete Nicholas

"If we want to see our society impacted and transformed by the gospel, it's going to mean that we need to stand up and speak out and be involved."

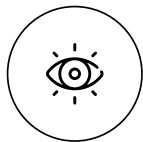
Michael Ots

"This series is really important to help us think Christianly about lots of different issues without falling into one of two extremes - the 'holy huddle', and the unquestioning assimilation of our culture."

Caz Dodds

"The key purpose of this study series is to equip the Church, to help its young people, its students, all of us taking our place in wider society, to live the whole of life for God and to his glory."

Richard Cunningham



Living Christianity

at a glance

Living Christianity consists of 5 studies, each lasting just over an hour. Each session has a video, Bible discussion and some time for prayer. It's aimed at groups and individuals who want to be equipped to engage our contemporary world.



episode 1 concern for society **SG9** **p13**
engaging with today's world as disciples of Jesus



episode 2 christians and the world **SG15** **p29**
holding a biblical view of the world and our role in it



episode 3 christians and work **SG21** **p45**
getting clear on our calling to live as Christians at work

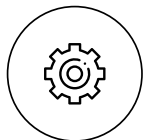


episode 4 life, gender, marriage and family **SG27** **p61**
valuing God's good design for all areas of life



episode 5 christians as citizens **SG35** **p79**
embracing our Christian citizenship in society today

Your group will be using the Living Christianity study guides.
'SG' numbers show the page corresponding to the leader's guide.




Living Christianity


how it works

1. introduce the topic (~10 mins)


 **introduction** and  **session focus** set the scene.


 **getting started** is designed to get people thinking (and talking) about a key aspect of the study.

2. watch the video (~15 mins)


 **watch** the video together. **This will be the basis for most of the discussion to follow.** Sessions 1 and 2 provide the foundation for sessions 3 to 5.

3. discuss the Bible passage (~40 mins)


 **read** the passage together. We have selected passages which best address the *main* points raised in the video. They will not deal with every issue.

Use the  **discuss** questions to understand and apply the teaching.

4. pray (~10 mins)

Sum up the lessons learnt from the discussion and  **pray** about how to put them into practice.

5. before leaving

Let the group know the topic for next time and encourage them to take some time to look at the  **going further...** section.

Total time: 1h 15m approx.



Living Christianity

leader's guide

Leading any Bible study requires a prayerful commitment to helping the group benefit from God's word.

the Bible

The Bible is our ultimate authority.

The writer to the Hebrews tells us that "the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb 4:12).

Paul tells us in 2 Timothy 3:16-17 that "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." Hardly surprising then that the apostle exhorts Timothy to be a leader "rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15).

Correct handling of God's word requires a leader to commit to study each of the Bible passages themselves, before seeking to lead their group. A good leader will also encourage and show others in the group how to do this themselves rather than simply spoon-feed the 'answers'.

prayer

Prayer is essential, before you meet, while you meet and after you meet! Pray that God would help you and your group to understand his word more fully. Encourage your group to pray that they would apply what they've learned to their everyday Christian life. Pray for one another as issues are raised that some may find difficult to deal with. A number of areas for prayer are suggested each week.

your group

Every Bible study group is different. Even with the same people it will be slightly different from one week to the next. But the Bible is relevant to everyone. Everyone in your group should leave knowing how what they've read and heard is relevant to them and what changes they may need to make as a result.

when you meet

Before your first meeting, send round a link to the series trailer at livingchristianity.org.uk and ask everyone to watch it.

Each member of your group needs their own study guide. Remind them to look at the material before each session. You, and they, will find it makes for a much better study.

Encourage your group to commit to all 5 sessions.

additional study resources for leaders

The study guides used by your group have largely the same content as this leader's guide. However, we have provided a few additional materials which we think you will find helpful:

- an outline of the key points of each episode
- some additional notes providing some helpful background to one or more of the discussion questions
- a transcript of the videos for easy reference
- a list of the Bible texts used in the video

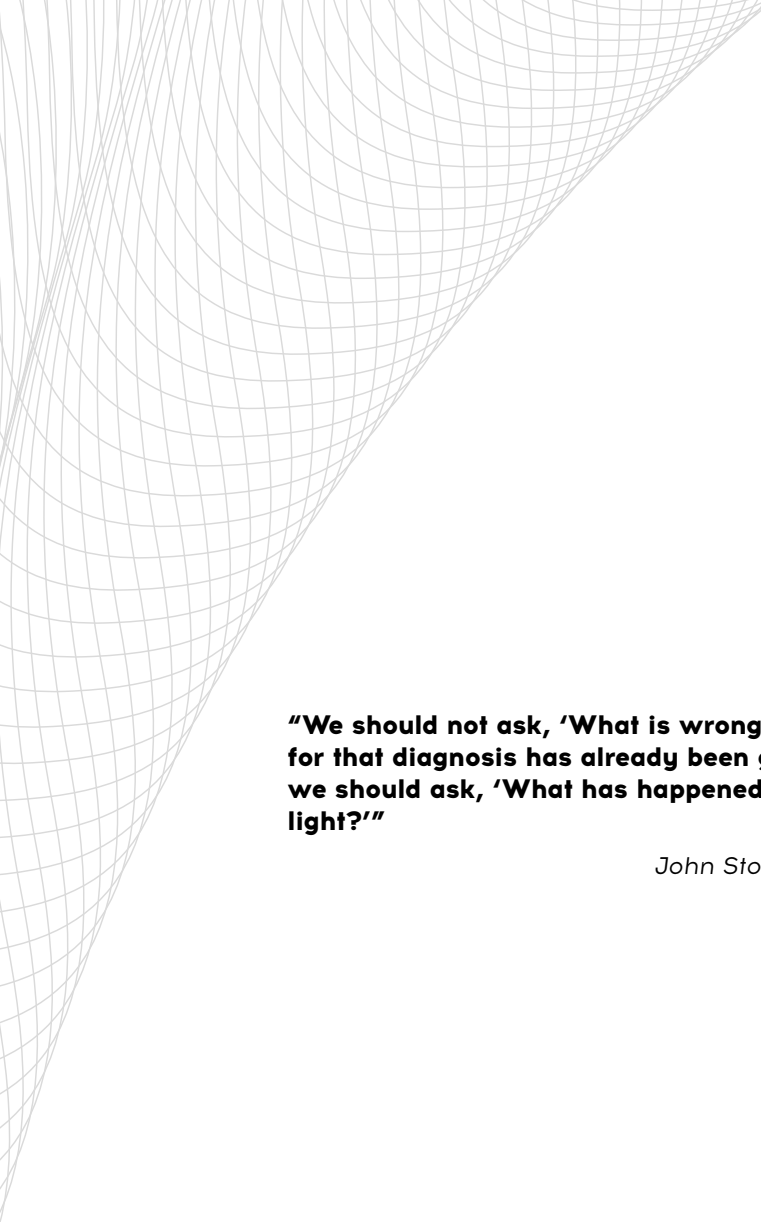


Living Christianity

advice for new leaders

If you've never led a Bible study group before, or even if you have, these practical tips might help.

- 1. Studying the Bible shouldn't feel like a chore to be endured.** Do your best to be the most enthusiastic member of your group.
- 2. When another person is talking, give them your full attention.** Show approval wherever possible and draw out applications.
- 3. At some point someone will say something that is wrong.** This could be because they have a wrong view of Scripture but may also be because they genuinely don't understand the topic. Consider rephrasing the question or ask if anyone else has a different view. But do not let something wrong go unchallenged.
- 4. Personal illustration can help communicate truth in a memorable way.** But watch out that sharing personal experience doesn't replace studying the Bible.
- 5. Don't be afraid of silence.** If people have time to think, they are likely to be more insightful.
- 6. You may need to moderate difference of opinion.** But remember that debate can be a sign of good engagement! You can welcome differing views, but seek to bring the group towards resolution by clarifying the teaching.
- 7. If you don't know the answer, just say so.** Say you'll look into it for next week or have someone in the group research it.
- 8. Keep the group moving through the study.** Avoid getting bogged down in details or going off on tangents. 'Park it', offer to come back to it later if there's time, and move on.
- 9. Give everyone a chance to speak.** If someone is doing all the talking, ask what others think.



"We should not ask, 'What is wrong with the world?' for that diagnosis has already been given. Rather, we should ask, 'What has happened to the salt and light?'"

John Stott, pastor and author



concern for society

engaging with today's
world as disciples of Jesus

introduction

Do some areas of your life seem very obviously 'Christian', while in others your faith seems a lot less relevant? If so, you're not alone. Many Christians find it hard to see the everyday relevance of their beliefs beyond personal devotions, church life and evangelism.

But God never intended us to compartmentalize our lives like this. As Christians, we're called to live out our faith in Jesus in everything we do.

In this study series we will see that the God who created this world and will one day restore it, sends us out to serve him in all areas of life. God calls his people to live Christianly; engaging positively with society as active citizens.

In this first session, we will begin to look at what it means to be a full-time disciple of Jesus.



session focus

Becoming a Christian transforms us; affecting *everything* we do.

1




getting started

A friend asks you: 'What is the gospel?' What do you say?



watch episode 1

 Use this space if you'd like to make notes



episode 1 outline

1. what is the gospel?

- Jesus is our Lord in all of life
- the Great Commission includes teaching everything Jesus taught

2. concern for society: the Bible's view

- God made everything and everyone, he is concerned with all of humanity
- God shows us how human society should operate for his glory
- the Bible commands us to love our neighbors and all people

3. concern for society: the Christian's role

- human life is the pinnacle of God's creation and extremely precious
- but the rest of creation is valuable too
- work is part of God's design and matters to God

4. how does God's law guide us?

- it teaches us to love God and our neighbor
- this works out in personal life and in public life
- this includes respectfully urging governments to fulfil their God-given role



session 1 notes

Most Christians will have little problem explaining the gospel message in terms of our redemption from sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However many miss that God's great salvation plan includes all of creation and affects every area of life.

The passage in Matthew chapter 5 forms part of the Sermon on the Mount. In the famous section of the beatitudes, first Jesus talks of the character and blessings of the citizens of his kingdom (vv3-10) – including the hostility of 'the world' to his followers (vv11-12). He then describes the influence of his followers, i.e. those in the kingdom, on the world (vv13-16).

Salt is well known as a preservative, slowing down decay as well as bringing out flavor. Its very presence makes it effective even though we cannot see it at work. Of course, it must be both used, and remain salty, i.e. uncontaminated, otherwise it will have no effect.



read Matthew 5:13-16



discuss

1. Jesus is speaking to his disciples (vv1-2). Why does he describe them as 'salt' and 'light'? Is it possible to be a Christian and not be salt and light?


✍️ Jesus doesn't tell them to become salt and light; he says they are salt and light and therefore distinct from 'the world'. Salt and light is our 'status' but we can fail to live out that status (see Q2). We need to be who we are.

2. What does this passage imply about the world in which we live? Why should Christians be concerned to have an impact on the world around us?

✍️ The world needs Christians to act distinctively as salt and light to restrain moral and spiritual decay. Unused salt, which remains in the salt cellar, or 'tasteless' salt, full of impurities, will not preserve or add flavor to God's world. Likewise, hidden light is of little benefit. Our status as salt and light needs to be lived out in the public square (see Eph 4:1). This results in God being glorified (v16; 1 Peter 2:12).


3. Who benefits when Christians live out their lives as distinctive salt and light?

4. "Being obedient to the gospel requires us to be a Christian influence on every aspect of society." In the light of Matthew 5:13-16, do you agree with this statement? How is this different to offering a gospel of salvation by 'good works'?

 *It is noticeable that no limitations are placed on where we should be salt and light - our light is simply to shine before 'others'. There is no suggestion of salvation by works in this passage - or anywhere else in these studies. We are not saved by good works but we are saved for good works.*

5. The gospel affects every area of life. How has it affected your relationship with: family and friends, work colleagues, local and national government?

6. Is engagement with political issues a distraction from the gospel?

 *Draw upon material in the video, and question 4 above, to show how the gospel should affect all areas of society.*

7. In the past Christians have been at the forefront of the abolition of slavery, ending state-licensed prostitution, combating poverty and homelessness, and championing racial equality and universal education.

Which areas of society do you think Christians need to have a biblical influence on today? What can you do to be a Christian influence - nationally and locally?



pray

- bring to God any personal relationships where you would like to be 'salt and light'
- pray for one or two of the areas you identified in question 7
- ask God to show you where you are not obeying "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27)



going further...

Would you answer the question: 'What is the gospel?' any differently now?

Further reading:

Counter Culture: Following Christ in an Anti-Christian Age,
David Platt, Tyndale Momentum, 2017



episode 1 transcript

Hello, I'm Chris Sinkinson and welcome to this short study series where we're going to be examining the implications of what it means to live as a Christian in today's world.

The fast-paced society we live in is undergoing constant change - much of it for the better. But there are also some worrying trends within liberal thinking on social, moral and ethical issues eating away at our culture and displacing many of the Christian values which have so significantly shaped our nation.

And while all of that's going on, we're caught up in a society where we're inclined, even encouraged, to focus on ourselves as individuals rather than more collectively. And people see faith as a very private matter, not to be heard in the public square.

So the question is: should we as Christians be actively engaged in the issues affecting our society, including working to protect and develop laws which reflect God's values? The answer of course is yes.

Whether the debate of the day surrounds the sanctity of human life, marriage and the family, religious liberty or free speech, Christians need to be heard and to play their part. It's about living out our lives of faith at all times and in all places - no matter what the circumstances or situation.

But of course we can only begin to come to terms with this challenge by starting with the good news of Jesus Christ and God's work of salvation.

1. what is the gospel?

The Bible tells us that God made the whole world and everything in it. It also tells us that he made man in his own image, to maintain and care for his creation.

But things changed once sin entered the world. Man turned away from God, wanting instead to be in charge of his own destiny, and as a result he was no longer able to live up to God's perfect standards. So he found himself under judgment and unable to save himself.

But the good news is that God sent his only son Jesus Christ down to earth to rescue his people. And by dying on the cross

Jesus took that judgment that we deserve. And then by rising from the dead, triumphant over the grave, he paved the way for salvation and eternal life for anyone who puts their trust in him.

So as Christians we have received salvation and been born again into a living hope. And through the Holy Spirit we learn to love and listen to God’s word as we grow in likeness to Christ. We rejoice in him and talk to him in prayer.

And in all this it’s so important to belong to a local church where we are taught God’s truth and can serve one another in the family of God.

.....

Becoming a Christian changes everything; it means surrendering the whole of your life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Whether it’s how we behave at work, how we speak, who we marry, our care of creation, and how we handle our money. Everything is affected.

And being made a disciple of Jesus Christ is a bit like throwing a stone into water. It creates ripples. And it’s so important those ripples of discipleship spread, not only over our own personal circumstances, but over wider society too.

However there are some Christians who caution against engaging with the broader issues in society. Perhaps they see speaking out on social change – certainly political lobbying and campaigning – as distractions: fruitless, ineffective and unnecessary. Or maybe they simply want to focus on evangelism and church planting.

Of course Jesus tells us in the Great Commission in Matthew chapter 28 to: make disciples of all nations, baptizing them... [and] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

But we mustn’t get confused here. We know the mission of the Church is to ‘go, and make disciples of all nations’, and therefore it must be focused on proclaiming the saving gospel of Christ to the world.

But Jesus also says that part of making disciples is to teach them to obey everything that he has taught and instructed. This teaching will clearly have an impact for us on the whole of life, both private and public.

2. concern for society: the Bible's view

The Bible is clear that as Christians we are to be engaged with and involved in our society.

Some people have the impression that Christians are only concerned with seemingly spiritual things like singing, praying, reading the Bible, going to church and evangelism. However, this owes more to ideas like Greek Gnosticism than the Bible.

Right at the start of the Bible story we see God as the Creator of all things. Everything is made by Jesus and for Jesus. The Bible says whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31). The Bible commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves, which is fundamental in showing concern for society.

But Jesus goes even further. He says to love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you (Matt 5:44). Our concern though should be wider than those immediately around us. Paul tells us we are to pray for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions - and that while fellow Christians are to be our priority, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone (1 Tim 2:2 & Gal 6:10).

.....

So it's clear that as Christians we are to be outward looking on society. We simply mustn't restrict our faith to private religion, but should pursue his purposes in every sphere of life, both private and public. Romans 12 says: Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so as to live according to what is good and acceptable and perfect.

And of course the Bible teaches that the Church is a witness to God's glory across all nations. As the apostle Peter says, you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him (1 Peter 2:9). And Jesus preached in the Sermon on the Mount, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matt 5:16).

You see, God is concerned for the whole of humanity. And as God's people, we should share that concern too, not only in our nation, but for all the nations on earth.

3. concern for society: the Christian's role

Man is the pinnacle of God's creation – male and female made in his image. And despite our failings and our sinfulness, the Bible teaches that all human life is God-given and precious to him. So if each one of us is this special in the design of God, then hot topic issues today like terminating the life of the unborn, euthanasia, or gender are ones that Christians will be passionate about.

It's our role to stand up where we see biblical principles under threat or challenge. We're charged to protect 'all of life' from birth to death, and uphold social institutions that God makes clear are for the benefit of everyone in society. This has to be our concern, whatever the circumstances or cost.

We're also to show concern for the wider physical creation too. After all God made the whole world and intended mankind to rule over it and care for the earth, and the animals in it.

So again, Christians are to be engaged, and have a voice on how society treats both the physical environment, and the animal kingdom – neither are for us to abuse.

.....

So we're building up a picture of some of the areas of concern and responsibility that God is challenging us on as Christians. But there's more. For example, what role should our faith play as we go about our daily work?

Right from the beginning of the Bible Adam and Eve were tasked with working the garden, creating, building, organizing and so on. But after mankind rebelled against God, his judgment brought frustration and weariness, and work became a struggle.

But despite that, it still has a dignity as part of God's design for all people. How we work and our attitude to our employer matters to God. Colossians 3:23 says: Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men. Therefore behind your immediate boss, you actually look to your true boss, God himself.

And in a similar way, how an employer treats their employees is also of great concern to God. This is just one example of how our roles and responsibilities as Christians should reach out into everything that we do.

4. how does God's law guide us?

When we think about living as Christians in society we need to consider the whole area of God's law, and those principles that underlie it.

At the very core of all this is the command to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. And as we've already heard, to love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:29-31). In these few verses Jesus summarizes in a nutshell what God requires of all his followers. Our love for God should naturally lead us to follow his will, or his law if you like, and to do that in all areas of life.

So, if we fully embrace the command to love our neighbor as ourself, that means then naturally we're going to offer kindness and care to individuals, but also speak up for our neighbor's welfare in society at large.

.....

So again God's law is telling us that Christians should have a broader concern for society and the world. And this includes using the opportunities that come our way to respectfully urge our lawmakers to fulfil their God-given role to restrain and punish evil, and to promote good.

Historically all sorts of legislation such as the abolition of the slave trade, the protection of children and adult workers from exploitation, and more recently concerning human trafficking were all campaigned for by politicians primarily influenced by the Bible.

You see, the Bible teaches that leaders in national and local government, all around the world, are 'God's servants for our good', For there is no authority except from God (Rom 13:1). So they are serving him, and will be held accountable before him, whether they acknowledge him or not.

And as Christians, we need to ensure that our own individual response to authority, whether that be at home, at work, at church, or in wider society, is shaped and guided by God's word. It's all part of God's plan for his people.

5. so what's the plan?

Colossians 1 verse 20 says that God plans to: reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

So the implications of the cross are massive. It isn't simply about personal salvation just for you and me, or about the life of the Church. No, the New Testament reminds us that creation itself will be liberated and we can look forward to a new heaven and a new earth.

This future hope gives believers confidence that the whole of creation matters to God. There are no boundaries to his care and authority. So as Christians, we should be out there, in the world, living lives that witness to this amazing salvation plan.

.....

So work, relationships, communication, love, beauty, creativity, the natural world and worship – all those things we engage in now, will one day be brought to perfection. But this heavenly perspective shouldn't make us want to escape the world, nor get bogged down in it.

No, all these things that God values, and will one day restore, should matter to us now, even as we live in our present, imperfect world. The glorious salvation we have in Christ not only makes us rejoice in the gospel, it teaches us to view the whole world from God's perspective.


You see, while we were not saved by good works, we were saved for good works – and we are to serve God in 'all of life'.

This isn't always easy to get our heads around, and none of us have arrived at a perfect understanding, but all of us who are disciples of Jesus Christ need to be allowing the ripples of God's grace in our lives to go on reshaping all that we think and do, make and say, work and plan for. That's the challenge we all face living as a Christian in today's world.



episode 1 Bible references

-
- Matt 28:19-20** *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you*
-
- 1 Cor 10:31** *whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God*
-
- Matt 5:44** *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*
-
- 1 Tim 2:1-2** *for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions*
-
- Gal 6:10** *as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone*
-
- Rom 12:2** *Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect*
-
- 1 Peter 2:9** *you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light*
-
- Matt 5:16** *let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven*
-
- Col 3:23** *Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men*
-
- Mark 12:30-31** *love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength... love your neighbor as yourself*
-
- Rom 13:1** *For there is no authority except from God*
-
- Col 1:20** *and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross*
-



"This series will equip the Church to pull together those often separate areas of life, so as a result we can live joined up lives."

*Richard Cunningham
Director, UCCF: the Christian Unions*

"A superb resource for churches serious about making not just converts, but real disciples who shine as lights in a dark world."

*William Philip
Senior Minister, The Tron Church, Glasgow*

Living Christianity is a series of 5 studies about God's calling for his people in the world.

There's more to the gospel than you might think. Understand the implications of living as a Christian in today's world and become better equipped to live out your faith in all areas of life.



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