



Christianity
101: A *Living
the Way*
Guide





Christianity 101 is an exploration of what Christians believe—and have believed since the time of Jesus—about God, his world, and the life he has for us.

This workshop will guide participants to ...

- Understand sin and its effects on our lives
 - Encounter God's plan to rescue us
 - Engage with God's Word to us

³For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

Resources you will need ...

LTW Community Workshop Guide
The Bible, any translation
startlivingtheway.com

Session One | Longing to Be Made Well



Begin by catching up on one another's lives. What is something recent that is bringing you joy?
What is something recent that is causing you stress?

Then, discuss the following questions about your hopes for the coming weeks.

1. Do you have any previous experience with learning the basics of Christianity? If not, no problem, you've come to the right place!
2. How do you hope the following weeks with help you grow in your faith in Christ?

Session One | Longing to Be Made Well

We All Get It

The world is not the way it's supposed to be. From human trafficking to abuse of power to racial injustice. Something has gone very wrong, and the result is all kinds of misery. It's pain, suffering, and death. Now, you don't need me, or anyone else, to tell you that the world is broken. We all get it. We all feel the sting of it. And we all long for our lives and our world to be made well. Paul says, in fact, that all creation desperately longs for healing.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. (Romans 8:22)

What is it that especially breaks your heart about the state of the world?

Christianity offers the greatest answers the world has ever seen as to why we are so broken and what God has done to make us well. That's what this guide is all about. Get ready to encounter the most honest, beautiful, captivating, and redemptive story in all of history.

Where the Problem Lies

Our hearts have been ruined by something called *sin*. Sin is at the root of our problems. It's the reason why we manipulate, abuse, and neglect one another. It explains greedy corporations, abandoned children, and heartless lenders. Name a problem that plagues human relationships (and institutions), and you'll find sin at the heart of it.

Sin starts with our desires. God made us to desire things. That's perfectly normal and, in many cases, a very good thing. We desire, for instance, intimacy with others. We desire to set goals and achieve them. We desire the well-being of loved ones. These are all good desires. They help us to love God and others well. Sin happens when we desire what we desire for our own selfish gain. Sin is desire that's been distorted by selfishness. In fact, when we desire anything apart from love for God and others, everything gets ruined.

Take, for instance, Jesus' command against greed (Luke 12:15-21). When we are greedy, we take a desire that is not bad in-and-of-itself (i.e., the desire to earn money so that we can provide for others) and ruin it. We don't seek money greedily because of love for God and others. Rather, when we are greedy, we seek money to store it up for our own gratification. That's disobedience to God's beautiful plan for us. That's sin.

¹⁵ Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. ¹⁶ For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. (1 John 2:15-16)

1. What do you think John means by 'the world' in the above passage? What are your own struggles with loving the world?

2. Discuss the sin of greed. What desires, which are not bad in themselves, have we distorted when we are greedy? How have we distorted them?



Session One | Longing to Be Made Well

The Effects of Sin

Let's take a closer look at the effects of sin. This isn't exactly a fun exercise, but it's necessary. If we don't see clearly just how bad our situation is, we can't really understand our need to be rescued. And our rescue will be even more beautiful when we see clearly the darkness we left behind. Sin is like an illness. It's ruined so much in our hearts, minds, souls, and relationships.

Sin has shattered our relationship with God. The first humans walked in union with Him. They talked and walked freely with their Creator (Gen. 1:26-31). When they sinned—desired to be *like* God more than to be *with* Him—this relationship was broken (Gen. 3:1-22). We can't overstate just how tragic this is. This broken relationship with God has harmed *every part* of our lives. We come into the world bent towards sin. We desire all the wrong things. Harmful things. That's just the way it is. Our natural inclination is to live only for ourselves. This severs our relationship with the One who made us. Yet, despite all this, God loves us and longs to draw us near to Himself.

Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. (Isaiah 59:1-2)

1. Have you ever experienced separation from God because of a sinful thought or deed?

2. This passage is a tough dose of reality. What hope does it hold out to us, nevertheless?

Likewise, sin separates us from one another. Because of it, we compete with and degrade one another. We fail to empathize with others when they struggle. We exploit, abuse, and manipulate one another. We give in to hatred and violence. We reject the authorities God has placed in our lives for our good. For these reasons—and so many more—it's impossible to love one another well when sin wreaks havoc in our lives.

The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

1. Pick a few of these ugly sins and discuss how they separate us from one another.

2. Is there a particular pattern of sin with which you especially struggle (affirm to one another that this is a safe place to be transparent and vulnerable)?



Session One | Longing to Be Made Well

Finally, sin not only separates us from God and one another. It also damages our souls. The process often starts small, e.g., turning a blind eye to a neighbor in need. Yet, the more we sin, the worse things get. We eventually become calloused to it. We become unable to see what is good. We become less able to love, show compassion, or sacrifice for others. As a result, we become more restless, self-centered, deceived and, finally, miserable. In fact, Jesus says, “*Very truly I tell you, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.*”

Why do you think Jesus calls sin a kind of slavery?

Hope for Freedom

That all sounds pretty bleak. And, it would be, were it not for the incomparable mercy of God. Sin is slavery, for sure. It’s slavery to our desires and actions. But God has made a way out. He’s offered astounding hope to all who call on Him. It’s nothing short of freedom. A transformed way of living. A relationship with our Creator. Think back to the first humans. God could have abandoned them because of their sin. No one could blame Him. But He didn’t. Immediately, He pursued them (see Genesis 3:8-9).

Without a second thought, He began the process of restoring them to His side. The same goes for us. God loves you and me beyond measure. He keeps on pursuing us—right up to the cross of Jesus. God longs to set us free. Let’s move forward to God’s rescue plan.

Exercises for Session Two

1. Make time to be with God each week between sessions. Try to plan for at least an hour once a week. Be transparent with God about your struggles with sin. This is called **confession**. It’s not meant to be a time where you berate yourself over your sins. Rather, it’s a time for cleansing. Be honest with God (He knows anyway) about your sins and ask His forgiveness and freedom. See the verse below and come ready to discuss this exercise.

2. Complete the discussion questions for session two. Come ready to discuss!

Interlude

You’ve finished the first session of this guide. Congratulations on taking some crucial steps to deepen your relationship with God and others!

Don’t forget that it’s best to go on this sacred journey alongside others. Make some time to get together and deepen your relationship. Grab coffee just to chat. Go to a baseball game. Gather your families for a movie night. Do something that simply celebrates the joys of being human and knowing others. This is good for its own sake but will also help you grow as you complete future sessions.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8-9)



Session Two | God's Rescue Operation



Begin by catching up on one another's lives. Is there anything causing you anxiety, worry, or fear in the past weeks? Pray for one another about these things.

1. How was your experience with the practice of confession?
2. Do you have any concerns you'd like to share about confession?

Session Two | God's Rescue Operation

Not What They Expected

The Jewish people in Jesus' day were under the oppressive rule of the Roman Empire. The prophets foretold the coming of a rescuer, called the Messiah. The people longed for His arrival and expected him to drive out the Romans. So, naturally, they expected a political and perhaps even a military figure to come to their rescue. What they got instead was a man named Jesus from an insignificant town called Nazareth. He wasn't political. He wasn't militaristic. He wasn't famous. He wasn't rich. Jesus didn't fit the job description the people had written for the Messiah.

God knew best. He understood what the people needed most. He knew that freedom from the Romans, while good, would be just a blip in the map of history. It would come and go. God longed for us to be free in a deeper and everlasting way. God desired real peace, real contentment, and real joy for us. Jesus may not have fit the expectation of the people, but He was perfectly equipped to bring us the real freedom we needed most—freedom from sin.

Christianity, at its core, is about Jesus of Nazareth. It is about His life, death, resurrection, and ongoing presence in our world. It is about believing—with our hearts, minds, and souls—that He rescues and gives us new life. That's real freedom! And not only are we set free. We are then called to walk with Him into bringing the justice, mercy, and peace of heaven to this earth.

How do people today portray Jesus as someone different than who He really is?

Who Is Jesus?

At one level, Jesus is a man who was born 2,000 years ago in a town in Judea called Bethlehem. His mother's name was Mary. He lived a relatively normal life until he was thirty-years-old, when God called Him on the greatest mission of all time. His words and deeds reshaped our understanding of good and bad, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly. Jesus is the wisest teacher, prophet, and preacher ever to have lived. That is all absolutely true. Jesus was a real person who lived in real history. We have records of his life called the *gospels*.

However, there's so much more to Jesus. He was not only fully human, like you and me, but he was also God-in-the-flesh. Somehow—only God knows—Jesus was both human and divine. This is a crucial reality. Without it, we cannot understand God's rescue plan. Only God has the power to save us. So, the rescuer had to be God. But the only a human could really understand our pain and suffering. So, the rescuer also had to be human. Enter Jesus. He was and is the perfect rescuer—fully human and fully God—who redeemed us from the madness in the world.

The Bible is very clear that Jesus is fully God (and not just a godlike human). For instance, Jesus is identified as the **one who created the universe**, meaning He existed before any earthly stuff.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:1-4)

What else do we learn about Jesus from this passage?



Session Two | God's Rescue Operation

Likewise, the early believers **respond to Jesus by worshipping**. Only God is worthy of worship and yet Jesus accepts it as appropriate, i.e., as if He is God-in-the-flesh.

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him." Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you." Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. (John 9:35-38)

Finally, after Jesus goes to heaven, the disciples pray to him **as they would only pray to God**.

To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:2-3)

1. Why is it so important that we believe that Jesus is not only human, but God?

2. What questions do you have about the person of Jesus?

God's Rescue Plan—Jesus is Crucified

Jesus' words and deeds were beautiful. They brought the joy, peace, justice, and mercy of heaven into our world. Yet, He also faced a tidal wave of evil. He was reviled, mocked, spat upon, and conspired against. It eventually led to His execution. Jesus was hung on a cross, which was in effect an ancient torture chamber. The Jewish religious leaders of the day colluded with the Romans, of all people, to make it happen. On the cross, Jesus accomplished our rescue in three ways.

First, Jesus won lasting victory over evil, sin, and death. All the world's evil was thrown at him. He bore it lovingly for us and in three days conquered it (more on that in a minute). **Second**, He achieved forgiveness of our sins—setting us free for a new life. He did this by taking the effects of sin—pain and death—on Himself. **Third**, He set a breathtaking example of love and sacrifice for us to follow. The cross (along with the resurrection) is the turning point in all of history. Make time to read through the narrative in **John 19:1-42**.

And having disarmed the powers and authorities, [Jesus] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross. (Colossians 2:15)

When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Peter 2:23-25)



Session Two | God's Rescue Operation

1. What do we learn about the crucifixion from these passages?
2. Discuss your experience of freedom from sin and brokenness through Jesus' death.

God's Rescue Plan—Jesus Rises from the Grave

Christianity would not exist if Jesus had simply died on the cross. There would be no reason to believe, worship, and pray to a defeated would-be rescuer. Paul says it like this.

And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. 1 Corinthians 15:17-19)

Here's the best news the world has ever seen. Jesus is alive! He arose from the grave in real, bodily form. He appeared to the disciples and allowed them to touch the wounds from the nails. What does the resurrection have to do with God's rescue plan? **Everything.**

Jesus' resurrection is God's stunning victory over the forces of sin and evil. They took their best shot at Him, and He defeated them. This means that God's plan for His world—that He redeem it and fill it with His love—won't just happen at the end of time. It has already happened and is happening now because of the risen Jesus. New creation, new life, new breath in our lungs is all possible because of this climactic event in history. The great rescue was complete when Jesus walked out of the grave! Make time to read the account in **John 20:1-29**.

But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you. (Romans 8:10-11)

1. Are you struggling with any hurt or guilt that you sense Jesus wants to transform?
2. Do you have any remaining questions about God's rescue plan and how it applies to you?

Exercises for Session Three

1. Meditate imaginatively on either John 19:1-42 or John 20:1-29. Imagine yourself in the story as a witness its events. Write down any thoughts, feelings, or observations as you do so.
2. Complete the discussion questions for session three. Come ready to discuss!



Session Three | Who is God?



Begin by catching up on one another's lives How have you spent your free time over the past weeks? What words would you use to describe it (e.g., rejuvenating, refreshing, wasteful, fretting)?

1. Describe your experience meditating on either John 19:1-42 or John 20:1-29. What did you learn by interacting with Scripture slowly and intentionally?
2. How was your experience of session two different from session one? Do you have any remaining questions before we jump into session three?

Session Three | Who is God?

What We Think About God

We saw in the session one that our situation was hopeless. The brokenness of the world and the sin inside pretty well shackles us. But God is great and good. He is gracious, merciful, and loving. God doesn't leave us in a desperate place. He lifts us up through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This is good news. It's THE good news! Life can be full of goodness even amidst the struggle because Jesus brings heaven to earth and into our lives. God's voice reassures us that new life is available here and now.

Let's talk more about God—our rescuer. How we think about Him is crucial to our relationship with Him. If you imagine God as a grumpy schoolmaster, for instance, you're unlikely to want to share your life with Him. The reality of God—his character and plans for us—is better than we could have dreamed. And reflecting on who He is leads us to love and worship Him more. Let's get to it.

'I Am Who I Am'

In the book of Exodus, the prophet Moses asks God a reasonable question: Who are you?

Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'" God also said to Moses, "Say to the Israelites, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has sent me to you.' "This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation. "Go, assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, 'The Lord, the God of your fathers—the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—appeared to me and said: I have watched over you and have seen what has been done to you in Egypt. And I have promised to bring you up out of your misery in Egypt into the land of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—a land flowing with milk and honey.' (Exodus 3:13-17)

We learn some crucial things about God from this exchange. **First**, God is self-existent. He doesn't depend on anyone or anything. He has everything He needs simply by being Himself. This is only true for God (and clearly not for us!). Only God is I Am. **Second**, God wants us to know not only His character, but also His actions. He is known by who He is *and* what He does.

1. God tells Moses that He is self-existent, i.e., He needs no other humans or gods. He already has everything He needs. Why is this reality so important to our relationship with Him?

2. How does God reveal Himself through His actions in the passage? Try defining who God is in terms of His actions in your own life.



Session Three | Who is God?

God is Creator and Sustainer

God is the creator of everything. Trees. Boulders. Hummingbirds. Periwinkles. Ocelots. Humans. You. Me. God made it all. The Bible tells us that He created *ex nihilo*, i.e., out of nothing. God can simply speak something into existence. He's the only being in the universe who can do this. We have learned to use the resources He's given us in extraordinary ways. But we will never be able to create something out of nothing. We can't even fathom what that would be like.

When we look at God's creation, we see that He values beauty, diversity, and order. Here's how one biblical writer describes it.

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge. They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them. Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun. It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth. (Psalm 19:1-6)

What do we learn from creation about God's character? About His heart for us?

God also sustains what He has made. This means He keeps us going. God didn't create all this beauty only to abandon it or to watch the world turn from afar. He is intimately involved in our lives, right down to the details. God holds the world together. He oversees the changing of the seasons. He sees humans at our best and our worst. He cares for us and walks with us. Paul even goes so far as to say this:

For in [Jesus] all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:16-17)

Jesus holds all things together. That's amazing stuff. What do you think it means?

Let's sum it up. God created all that was, is, and ever will be. He reveals His beauty, majesty, and goodness in His creation. Even more, God stays involved with what He has made by nurturing and caring for us.

God is a Trinity

That's who God is—Creator and Sustainer. He is the one true God. He is I Am. There are no other gods—not Krishna, not Allah, not Hercules, and not money, power, or prestige. Yet, the Bible teaches, at the same time, that God is three persons. He is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This is called the doctrine of the Trinity. How is it possible?

First, let's be clear. The Trinity is a deep mystery. We can know lots of things about God. Wonderful things. But we can never fully comprehend Him. He's too big for our limited minds.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. (Isaiah 55:8-9)



Session Three | Who is God?

Second, we do know that the Bible says God is a Trinity. Check out **Matthew 28:18-20, 2 Corinthians 13:13, and 1 John 4:2, 13-14**. These are just a few places that reveal God as three persons and yet one God. Furthermore, we see that each person of the Trinity relates to us in unique ways. God the Father is our Creator. God the Son is our Rescuer (see last session). God the Spirit dwells within all who follow Jesus (more on this soon!).

Legend has it that Saint Patrick used the shamrock to illustrate the Trinity. There are three leaves and yet one shamrock. Some have also highlighted the nature of water. It can be a liquid, solid, or gas, and yet all three are water. While helpful, none of these fully explain the Trinity. Indeed, nothing really can. God is that big and that awesome.

1. What did you learn about the Trinity from the above passages?
2. Discuss any questions you have about the Trinity with your discipler. It's a tough doctrine but it's so important because it reveals the heart of God. He is our Creator, Rescuer, and Indweller.

Character of God

Each group of passages below teaches about an aspect of God's character. Look them up and then note what you learn about Him.

1. Psalm 115:3; Isaiah 55:11; Jeremiah 32:17—
2. Psalm 147:5; John 21:17; Hebrews 4:12-13—
3. Genesis 26:3 Psalm 139:7-10; Jeremiah 23:24—
4. John 3:16-17; Ephesians 2:4-5; 1 John 4:7-8—
5. Psalm 86:5; Luke 6:36; Lamentations 3:22-23—

Exercises for Session Four

1. Choose an aspect of God's character from the above exercise. For instance, you might choose God's love. Explore this characteristic of God creatively. Journal about it. Write a song or poem. Paint a picture. Or, if you aren't creatively inclined (that's OK!) make a trip to an art museum or park. Reflect on the beauty and diversity of who God is through what He has made.
2. Complete the discussion questions for session four. Come ready to discuss!



Session Four | Knowing God's Word



Begin by catching up on one another's lives (if meeting as a group). How often have you been jealous, critical, or irritable towards others these past weeks? Reflect on the reasons for this and pray for one another.

1. Discuss your time reflecting on God's character. What did you learn? How did it affect you?
2. What aspects of God's character do you find the most comforting?

Session Four | **Knowing God's Word**

In this final session we will explore the Bible. It's a special book for followers of Jesus, unlike any other. We believe it offers words that bring life. That's because its words, while written by humans, are inspired by God. God used human personalities to reveal the deepest truths about us and our world. It's nothing short of God's Word. It's His self-revelation to us.

Basics About The Bible

Let's begin by getting a lay of the land. The Bible is a collection of books divided into two sections. The first contains 39 books and is called the Old Testament (OT). It was written from around 1,500 B.C. – 300 B.C. It tells the story of God's creation, the fall of humanity, and God's rescue plan through the people of Israel. It features three types of writing. **First**, it gives the laws the people were to follow. **Second**, it tells the story of Israel, mainly through their kings. It's a winding tale of conquest and being conquered. **Third**, it offers words of wisdom and prophecy, which God called to urge the people to repentance and obedience.

Christians see the Old Testament as the history of God's relationship with humanity. That relationship has been broken, but we see God moving us towards restoration. He plans to do this, we learn, through a person OT calls the Messiah, the rescuer. Cue the New Testament (NT).

The New Testament contains 27 books, many of which are letters to new churches. It tells the story of God's rescue plan through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah (which is the same word as *Christ*). The first four books, the Gospels, are all about Jesus and how he fulfills God's promises from the Old Testament. The rest of the books feature the history, beliefs, and teachings of the early Church. They detail the miraculous spread of Jesus' way.

Let's sum it up. The Bible is a collection of 66 books written by 40 authors—including poets, kings, priests, and fishermen—over the span of 1,500 years. It tells the story of the brokenness of the world and God's rescue through Jesus. Christians believe that, while God used human personalities and styles, He inspired the words the authors wrote. As such, the Bible is **completely accurate** in all it teaches. You can count on it.

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Here's the most stunning part. The Bible is not just an ancient document. It's active and alive. Its words have the power to transform us. They show us the way and live within us. They are more relevant today than ever. When we follow Jesus, we become part of the ongoing story that God is telling.

1. Are you ready to give the Bible this place of authority in your life? Why or why not?

2. What questions do you have at this point about the Bible?



Session Four | **Knowing God's Word**

Why the Bible Still Matters

Mother Teresa felt the pangs of hunger, thirst, and disease as much as anyone. She lived with and cared for the afflicted. Perhaps surprisingly, she once said, "The most terrible poverty is loneliness and the feeling of being unloved." Of all the horrible kinds of poverty she witnessed, Mother Teresa says that loneliness was the worst. That's telling. We all fear being isolated and rejected from others. We don't want to be alone. Life without relationships isn't life at all.

Enter the Bible, with its timeless message of redemption. It echoes an earthshattering truth throughout the ages: **You are not alone. God is with you. God is for you. God loves you.** No one walks alone when they have Jesus. That's the theme of this amazing book we call the Bible.

Because they are God's words, the Bible impacts every area of our lives. See these examples.

The Bible speaks against anger and division. *"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. (James 4:19-20)*

The Bible warns that money can take over our lives. *"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." (Matthew 6:24)*

The Bible instructs us on worry and anxiety. *So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Matthew 6:31-33)*

Ancient wisdom for some of the most pressing issues of today. This list could go on and on. It's no wonder the author of Hebrews says this about the Bible.

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)

1. Would you like to seek wisdom from the Bible in a specific area of your life? Discuss together.

2. What do you think it means that the Bible is "alive and active?"

Interacting with the Bible

The Bible is an essential companion and guide for the follower of Jesus. It's one of God's greatest gifts to us. So, how should we interact with it? Here are the three major ways.



Session Four | **Knowing God's Word**

Reading Through the Bible

When we read large portions of the Bible, we encounter the story God tells throughout history. We walk through Creation to the Fall to Redemption to Glory. There are many plans online for reading through a single book, the Old or New Testament, or even the entire Bible. It's quite impactful to read large sections in a set amount of time. It takes commitment, but you'll be glad you did! You can get started with reading plans at biblegateway.com/reading-plans.

Studying the Bible

Bible study is the practice of engaging a portion of the Bible to understand what it means and how it applies to our lives. When we study a Bible passage, we look carefully at its words, context, and history. It's an exciting process. You'll learn more from the Bible than you ever could have imagined. Just like dedicated reading, it's a crucial part of interacting with the Bible. We recommend that you go through the Bible study guide at startlivingtheway.com once you finish Christianity 201 and 301!

Meditating on the Bible

Meditation is the practice of slowing down and turning your deepest attention to God and His Kingdom. When we meditate, we clear our minds (as best we can) of any distractions and gaze on God's beauty and what he has made. One of the primary ways followers of Jesus do this is through the Bible. We can meditate, i.e., think deeply upon and absorb, God's words to us. We recommend that you go through the lectio divina guide at startlivingtheway.com once you finish Christianity 201 and 301!

Reflections on Christianity 101

You've now encountered some foundational realities that build us in the way of Jesus. Take some time to reflect and celebrate what He has done. We invite you to continue your journey by digging into Christianity 201 and 301 found at startlivingtheway.com!

1. What did you learn about God in this guide? About yourself? About the Bible?
2. Did you grow spiritually over these past weeks? How were you challenged?
3. How do you plan to celebrate the good things God has done on this journey so far?

