

Families of Faith



Collegiate Quarterly

Teacher's Guide

Materials

Reproducible Activity, Bibles, whiteboard, markers, *The Great Controversy*, paper, pencils/pens

Surveying the Source

Gen. 16:1–3; 35:1–4; 1 Kings 11:1; Ezra 10; John 3:16; 12:32; Acts 10:1–28, 34–36; 15:19, 20, 28, 29; Rom. 1:16, 17; 1 Cor. 2:2; 2 Cor. 5:18–21; Phil. 2:15; 4:8; Col. 3:16, 17; 1 Thess. 5:21, 22

Plotting the Course

The students will:

- ▶ Analyze how culture challenges and influences Christians.
- ▶ Understand how God taught the early church to respond to individuals of different cultures than their own.
- ▶ Be able to apply the idea of the “family of faith” to the way that they think about and interact with their immediate culture.

Preparing to Lead

H. Richard Niebuhr suggests that Christian attitudes toward culture have run the gamut from opposition to a wholesale acceptance of it—and everything in between (*Christ and Culture*). The many ways in which Christians have defined, argued about, lived out, and taught their children about culture sug-

gest that the relationship between Christianity and culture is not an easy one.

The question we ought to ask today is not “How have Christians related to culture in the past?” Rather, it is, “What does the Bible teach Christians about culture?” That is the question addressed in this week’s study.

Getting Started

A. Say: “I’d like to read to you an example of how a historical change and cultural practice continues to shape Christianity today.” Read aloud pages 52 to 53 of *The Great Controversy*.

Ask: “How does the shift from the seventh day to the first day of the week in fourth century Christianity continue to impact secular culture as well as Christian churches today?”

Say: “This illustrates the powerful influence of culture. How should Christians relate to culture? Today we explore this question.”

B. Ask: “What examples can we find in the Bible of how non-biblical cultural practices influenced individuals and families?” Write students’ responses on the board. Potential responses include but are not limited to Gen. 16:1–3; 35:1–4; Ezra 10 contrasted with 1 Kings 11:1.

Ask: “In each of these examples, what decision(s) did the individual or family make? What was the cultural practice that they encountered?”

Say: “How should Christians relate to culture? In today’s class, we’ll explore this question.”

Delving Into the Word

A. Ask: “Who knows where the story of how God taught Peter how to relate to someone from outside of his immediate culture is found?” *Read* Acts 10:1–28, 34–36. Divide the students into groups of three and ask them to summarize the story in their own words, and discuss what lesson God was teaching Peter.

Say: “The Jews maintained a ritualistic and social separation from Gentiles. But God showed Peter that Jesus is “Lord of all” (v. 36). This story teaches us about an identity that transcends regional, linguistic, racial, ethnic, and national cultures—an identity centered in Christ.”

Read John 3:16; Rom. 1:16, 17; 2 Cor. 5:18–21. *Ask:* “What do these verses teach about who can join God’s family?”

Say: “When we accept Jesus, we become part of the family of faith that is bound together by a love for Him. We continue to exist in our immediate culture, but our thoughts, decisions, and actions within that culture are shaped by our loyalty to God.”

B. Ask: “Have you ever met someone from a culture different than your own? Today we will read about one such incident that arose as the early church grew.”

Read Acts 15:19, 20, 28, 29. *Say:* “As the early church expanded to include people from different cultural backgrounds, it encountered questions that created conflict (like the question of circumcision).”

Ask: “How did the early church resolve their issues?” *Say:* “The immediate cultural context we live in is not an obstacle to us joining the family of faith.”

Divide students into groups to make a list of verses about what the focus of the Christian life should be e.g. John 12:32; 1 Cor. 2:2; Phil. 2:15; 4:8; Col. 3:16, 17; 1 Thess. 5:21, 22.

Say: “No matter who we are, when we join Christ’s church we join a family in which He is our Brother and Redeemer. The way that we act, make decisions, and think in the context of our immediate cultures is guided by the principle of honoring Him.”

Discussing the Ideas

1. How do you define culture?
2. Is culture bad? How did Jesus relate to His immediate culture?
3. Have you ever struggled with a tension between your or your family’s culture and your identity as a Christian?
4. What are concrete decisions you need to make this week that can demonstrate that you belong to the family of faith?

5. How does belonging to the family of faith shape how you relate to your immediate or biological family?

6. Have you ever struggled with relating to someone of a different cultural background? What are practical, and biblical ways to respond to this type of challenge?

7. How can we demonstrate Jesus’ love through the cultures in which we live?

Closing the Activity

Distribute copies of the Reproducible Activity to students. Allow students to work individually or in pairs to draw a conceptual map of what they learned in the lesson (see RA instructions). Ask students to share their responses to the

second half of the activity if time permits, particularly their “real life” applications.

End the class by praying that God will help you to be a part of His family of faith, and to invite others to join it too.

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In the space below, draw a conceptual map (shapes, lines, chart, and other visual elements and words) of the biblical relationship between Christians, family/families, and culture based on what you learned in today's lesson:

Now explain what you hope to convey through this representation in a few sentences. Suggest three ways in which you can concretely apply what you learned in today's class to your life today:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____