



Christ, Culture, and a Call to Action

Small Group Discussion Guide

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Christ, Culture, and a Call to Action

Small Group Discussion Guide

This Small Group Discussion Guide is designed to assist leaders in walking a small group through a Secret Church study in 6 sessions.

To utilize this Small Group Discussion Guide you will need:

Secret Church 15: Christ, Culture, and a Call to Action VIDEO

Each week you will watch a portion of the video from *Secret Church 15: Christ, Culture, and a Call to Action*. This video can be obtained in two ways:

ONLINE: The video of *Christ, Culture, and a Call to Action* can be found online for free download/viewing in the Resources section of the Radical website. To access the video go to Radical.net/SC15.

RADICAL STORE: The DVD of *Christ, Culture, and a Call to Action* can be ordered through our online store at Radical.net/Store in the Secret Church Resources section.

Secret Church 15: Christ, Culture, and a Call to Action STUDY GUIDES

Each member of your small group will need a *Christ, Culture, and a Call to Action Study Guide* from Secret Church 15. Each week as you watch a video session from SC15, members will fill in a corresponding section of the study guide. Study guides can be obtained in two ways:

ONLINE: The PDF version of the *Christ, Culture, and a Call to Action Study Guide* can be found online for free download in the Resources section of the Radical website. To access the PDF of the study guide go to Radical.net/SC15.

RADICAL STORE: Spiral-bound, printed copies of *Christ, Culture, and a Call to Action Study Guide* can be ordered through our online store at Radical.net/Store in the Secret Church Resources section.

If you have questions or need assistance concerning Secret Church resources, go to Radical.net/Contact.

This Discussion Guide will provide the following helps as you work through the Secret Church 15 study:

Watch/Fill In

This Discussion Guide breaks the Secret Church 15 study into six sessions. The Watch/Fill In portion will tell you how much of the video to watch during each session and what portion of the study guide will be used during that session.

Week at a Glance

The Week at a Glance section will give you a general overview of the material you will be studying each week.

Key Takeaways and Verses

Every week the Discussion Guide will provide a few key takeaways from the study as well as key verses to help you guide the discussion following the video portion of the study.

Explaining Terms and Concepts

This section of the Discussion Guide explains and unpacks terms and concepts used during the Secret Church study.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

Questions for discussion and reflection are provided to help your small group think thorough and apply the concepts studied each week.

For Further Study

Each week a list of resources is provided for the leader and participants for further study on the content covered in that session.

WEEK 1

Gospel and Culture

Watch

SC15 Video: 68 mins

Online: Session 1 (0:00–68:00)

DVD: Disc 1 (0:00–68:00)

Fill In

SC15 Study Guide: Pages 5–34

Week at a Glance

Week 1 begins with a brief introduction to the cultural issues addressed throughout this study, including why it is so important that we think about them and engage them on the basis of God's Word. We then turn to consider the core truths of the gospel: who God is, who we are, why Jesus is unique, what we must do (to receive God's grace), and what is at stake. It is crucial that we lay this gospel foundation as we engage a culture that is growing increasingly hostile to Christian beliefs on a wide range of issues.

Key Takeaways

- In a culture that is shifting morally and becoming increasingly hostile to Christian beliefs, followers of Christ must not compromise. We must act with conviction, compassion, and courage. This means praying, submitting to the authority of God's Word, and proclaiming the gospel.
- The greatest offense to unbelievers is not any particular social issue, but rather the gospel itself.
- The gospel is the good news that the just and gracious Creator of the universe has looked upon hopelessly sinful men and women and sent His Son, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, to bear His wrath against sin on the cross and to show His power over sin in the resurrection so that everyone who turns from their sin and themselves and trusts in Jesus as Savior and Lord will be reconciled to God forever.

Key Verses

Who God is

Genesis 1:1; Romans 2:6-11; Isaiah 43:15; Psalm 145:9; Titus 2:11; John 3:16

Who we are

Genesis 1:26-28; Romans 3:10-12; Ephesians 2:1

Why Jesus is unique

John 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; John 1:1-4;
Romans 3:21-26

What we must do

Acts 2:37-41; Mark 1:14-15; Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9

What is at stake

Philippians 3:20-21; Revelation 21:1-4; Revelation 19:1-4;
2 Thessalonians 1:9

Explaining Terms and Concepts

faith (believe): to trust in or rely on someone or something. The kind of faith that saves involves believing in what God has done for us in Christ and committing to Jesus as our Lord. Faith is the opposite of working to earn God's favor.

glory (glorify): often a reference to the outward manifestation of who God is—His character, His works, etc. We glorify God when we delight in Him and make known His greatness.

gospel: the message that the just and gracious God of the universe looked upon hopelessly sinful people and sent His Son, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, to bear His wrath against sin on the cross and to show His power over sin in the resurrection so that all who have faith in Him will be reconciled to God forever.

grace: God's unmerited (or unearned) favor. God's grace is demonstrated when He blesses us instead of giving us the judgment we deserve.

heaven: the place where God dwells, and the place where those who have put their faith in Christ go to be with Christ when they die. When Christ returns and his people are resurrected, they will dwell with Him forever in a new heaven and a new earth (see the final section of Week 6 for more on the eternal reward of Christians).

hell: the place of judgment and torment to which all those who do not trust in Christ will go when they die. Hell is eternal in duration, and it is the just punishment for those who have sinned against an infinitely holy God.

holy: to be set apart; to be morally pure. When Scripture refers to God as holy, it is often highlighting His uniqueness and His sinless perfection.

redemption: a way of referring to God's salvation in Christ that pictures the believer as being freed from the slavery of sin. The metaphor of redemption pictures Christ's death as the ransom that was paid to purchase God's people, much like slaves in the time of the New Testament could be purchased at a certain price. Believers are redeemed when they initially put their trust in Jesus as Savior and Lord, but their redemption is not complete until they are raised from the dead when Christ returns. (For more on how our redemption affects ethnic unity, see Week 5; to learn more about the end-goal of our redemption, see Week 6).

repent: to change your mind or to turn away from a certain way of thinking or acting in order to move in a new direction. Biblical repentance involves turning away from sin and moving toward Christ in faith.

righteousness: Scripture refers to God's righteousness as His moral perfection, including His justice and holiness.¹ God freely declares guilty sinners to be righteous when they repent of their sins and place their faith in Jesus Christ. Being declared righteous is also referred to as being justified (see Romans 5:1).

salvation/saved: a reference to God's rescuing of sinners from the penalty and power of sin into a right standing with Him through Christ. God saves us when we trust in Christ, and then continues His saving work making us more like Jesus. Our salvation will be complete when God raises us from the dead at Christ's Second Coming, for we will go to live with him forever in a new heaven and a new earth.

¹ Taken from notes on Romans 1:17 in the ESV Study Bible. Dr. Thomas R. Schreiner is the contributor for Romans.

sin: anything we do (or say or think) that does not glorify God. We sin by doing what God has commanded us not to do in His Word, and we also sin by not doing what God has commanded us to do.

spiritually dead: this refers to the condition of every human being who has not experienced the gift of new life that God gives in Jesus Christ. Being spiritually dead means not only that we disobey God, but also that we are unable to do so. Those who are spiritually dead cannot rightly evaluate and embrace spiritual truth. We are born dead in our sins because we inherit the guilt and the sinful nature of Adam, the man who brought sin into the world.

wrath: a reference to God's just anger and punishment of sin. At the final judgment, those who have not trusted in Christ will face God's eternal wrath.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. What cultural issues do you have the most difficulty talking about with unbelievers? Why do you think these particular issues bring out so much emotion?
2. Why is it so important to understand where our final authority comes from on social issues?
3. Why do we say that the gospel is a greater offense than any social issue?
4. What are some of the dangers of cultural engagement that is not based on the gospel?
5. Why are God's holiness and His authority so important to our understanding of the gospel?
6. God's Word presents man as sinful and spiritually dead. How does our culture's view of human nature differ from this?
7. What makes Jesus uniquely qualified to be our Savior? Include in your answer who Jesus is and what He has done.

8. If God has done everything necessary for our salvation, and we can't earn it, then do we have to respond to the gospel? If so, what does that look like?
9. What happens to those who die without responding to the gospel in repentance and faith?
10. How should eternity shape the way we think about engaging culture?

For Further Study

A Biblical Approach to Cultural Issues

- Marvin Olasky, ed., *Turning Point Christian Worldview Series*
- Michael Horton, *Where in the World is the Church?*
- David Wells, *No Place For Truth*
- Francis Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live?*
- Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*

The Gospel

- Greg Gilbert, *What is the Gospel?*
- C.J. Mahaney, *Living the Cross-Centered Life*
- J.D. Greear, *Gospel: Recovering the Power that Made Christianity Revolutionary*
- John Stott, *The Cross of Christ*
- David Platt, *Follow Me*
- David Platt, *Counter Culture*
- David Platt, *Secret Church 10: Crucifixion, Salvation, and the Glory of God*, Radical.net/SC10

WEEK 2

Abortion / Orphans and Widows

Watch

SC15 Video: 49 mins

Online: Session 2 (0:00–48:20)

DVD: Disc 2 (0:00–48:20)

Fill In

SC15 Study Guide: Pages 35-56

Week at a Glance

Week 2 addresses the issue of abortion and then orphans and widows.

On the topic of abortion, we begin by thinking about God's sovereign authority as Creator and His relationship with the unborn. Then abortion is discussed in relation to the gospel and our need of forgiveness for the ways we have participated in this great evil. Finally, abortion is discussed as it relates to the church and to the various ways in which we can take action on this issue. We can speak up for the unborn, reach out to those affected by abortion, and seek help ourselves if we are struggling with our involvement in the sin of abortion.

Next we turn to God's commands to care for orphans and widows. This kind of care is a reflection of God's own character—His mercy and His justice. Though we are sinners, God graciously adopts us, making us beloved sons through Jesus. It only makes sense, then, that our response would be to extend compassion to those who are physically needy and vulnerable. With millions of orphans in the world, and with widows all around us, we should be intentional about caring for those in need. When it comes to widows, Scripture gives instructions and guidelines to the church on how to care for them.

Key Takeaways

Abortion

- Abortion is first and foremost an affront to the God who creates life.
- God values the unborn and has an intimate relationship with them.
- Only God has the authority to give and take life.
- God will judge those who have participated in the sin of abortion.
- The gospel is sufficient to redeem fully those who have participated in abortion in any way.

Orphans and Widows

- God protects, provides for, and redeems orphans and widows.
- Followers of Christ should reflect God's compassion on a practical level by ministering to orphans and widows.
- God graciously adopts sinners into His family through Jesus Christ. We now relate to God as sons to a loving heavenly Father.
- As those who have received God's grace, we ought to respond with compassion towards orphans and widows. We are not redeemers, but the redeemed.
- Scripture gives us specific instructions and guidelines about how to care for widows.

Key Verses

Abortion and God

Psalm 139:13-16; Deuteronomy 32:39; Genesis 1:26-28; Job 31:15; Exodus 21:22-25; Jeremiah 1:5; Luke 1:44

Abortion and the gospel

Romans 2:6; Titus 3:3-7; Luke 7:47-50; Romans 8:1

Abortion and the church

Ephesians 5:7-11

Orphans and widows

Deuteronomy 10:17-18; Psalm 68:5-6; James 1:27; Galatians 4:4-5; 1 Timothy 5:3-16

Explaining Terms and Concepts

adoption: God adopts sinners by saving them and making them His sons. God's grace in our spiritual adoption should motivate us to obey His command to care for orphans. Physical adoption is a way of expressing our care for those who do not have earthly families.

discipline: just as a good and loving earthly father corrects and instructs his children, so also God the Father disciplines His children (those who are in Christ), sometimes bringing difficulties into their lives and reproofing them so that they might share in His holiness.

image of God: all men and women are created in the image of God, which means that we are created to represent God and to be like Him in certain ways (though we don't become divine). That we are created in God's image speaks to the worth of every individual, and it should compel us to love all people and share the gospel with them.

inheritance: the Christian's inheritance is his or her future reward in God's eternal kingdom. Although believers go to be with Christ when they die, their ultimate inheritance (to be received at Christ's coming) is to be resurrected and to be with Christ in a new heaven and a new earth. Christians are assured of their future inheritance now through the witness of the Holy Spirit who comes to live inside them at conversion.

sovereign: a reference to God's authority and complete control over all things. God's sovereignty refers to His right and ability to do whatever He pleases.

widow: God's people are commanded to care for widows—those who do not have a spouse to protect, provide, and care for them. However, so that the church will not be unnecessarily burdened, Scripture gives guidelines concerning which widows the church is required to support. For instance, if the family of a widow can support her, it should do so and thereby free up the church's resources to meet other needs.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Why is abortion first and foremost a God issue before it's a political or legal issue?
2. How would you respond to someone who says that the issue of abortion is not in Scripture? Where would you point them?
3. What would you say to a woman who feels that her abortion in the past has cut her off from the possibility of receiving God's grace?
4. Since the issue of abortion is so controversial, why shouldn't the church just remain silent about it?
5. List some practical ways that you or your church can engage this issue and all those affected by it (the unborn, parents, and those who have had abortions in the past).
6. What does our care for the weak and needy (or the lack thereof) say about how we view ourselves? What does it say about our view of God's character?
7. List some similarities and differences between our physical adoption of orphans and God's spiritual adoption of sinners.
8. What's the danger of thinking of yourself primarily as a redeemer and not as one who has been redeemed as you think about adopting?
9. How would you respond to this objection to adoption: "I just don't know if it's good to take someone out of their own culture."
10. Make a list of those inside your church or your community who are either widowed, needy, or orphaned. What are some practical steps you could take to minister to them?

For Further Study

Abortion

- Gregory Koukl, *Abortion and Human Rights*
- Randy Alcorn, *Pro-Life Answers to Pro-Choice Arguments*

Orphans and Widows

- Russell Moore, *Adopted for Life*
- Tony Merida and Rick Morton, *Orphanology*
- Carol Comish, *The Undistracted Widow*

For additional resources on these topics, go to CounterCultureBook.com.

WEEK 3

Poverty / Slavery

Watch

SC15 Video: 39 mins

Online: Session 2 (0:48:21–1:24:00)
Session 3 (0:00–13:57)

DVD: Disc 2 (0:48:21–1:24:00)
Disc 3 (0:00–13:57)

Fill In

SC15 Study Guide: Pages 57-94

**Due to the nature of some of the content about slavery, leaders should use discernment if younger viewers are participating.*

Week at a Glance

The issues of poverty and slavery are covered in Week 3.

To begin the section on poverty, we'll consider what God's Word has to say about money and about our stewardship of His resources. This will involve looking at God's attitude toward the poor, as well as diagnosing a number of errors when it comes to the way we think about material things. A number of biblical guidelines will be offered to help us use our resources for those in need and for the glory of God.

The second topic we'll consider in this section is slavery. After a brief look at various types of slavery in history, we will consider what God's Word has to say on this topic. The Bible condemns slavery, but because its main goal is personal redemption rather than social reform, it also provides regulations for slaves and slave-owners where the practice exists. In the end, the concept of slavery is redeemed through the example of Christ, who became a servant on our behalf, and through our identification with Jesus as his slaves. Now, in light of the gospel, followers of Christ should engage issues of modern-day slavery, like sex-trafficking, by praying and working on behalf of those who are mistreated. We also ought to pray that traffickers would either be saved or stopped.

Key Takeaways

Poverty

- God is the sovereign owner of all things, and we are His stewards.
- God cares for and defends the poor and helpless. He commands His people to do the same.
- Money and possessions are neither inherently sinful nor all-satisfying.
- Materialism poses great dangers to churches and to individual Christians.
- Our giving should be sacrificial, and it should be done wisely so that the poor are helped rather than hurt.
- If we do not help the poor, there is reason to question our profession of faith.

- The prosperity gospel uses God to get health and wealth.

Slavery

- There are various types of slavery in world history, and while some forms have been less degrading and cruel than others, slavery is not part of God's original design.
- The Bible condemns slavery because it undermines the equal dignity given to all humans in creation.
- Since slavery exists in a sinful world, the Bible regulates it by giving instructions to those who own slaves, and by encouraging slaves to honor their masters.
- Ultimately, the gospel undermines the practice of slavery, and the concept is even redeemed through the example of Christ's servanthood and through the identity of His people as His slaves.
- Believers ought to engage the issue of slavery by praying for victims, traffickers, and governments, and by asking God to open the eyes of the church to this issue. Our concern should result in action on behalf of those who are oppressed and vulnerable.

Key Verses

What's at stake in our treatment of the poor

Matthew 25:31-46; Proverbs 21:13

How God thinks of the poor

Psalms 140:12; Isaiah 41:17

Our relationship to money

1 Timothy 6:6-10, 17-19; Luke 14:33; 1 John 3:16-18; Matt 6:19-24

The motivation for our giving

2 Corinthians 8:9; Acts 4:32-37

The inherent worth of all people

Genesis 1:27

Slavery in the Old Testament

Leviticus 25:35-43; Deuteronomy 15:7-18; Exodus 21:16, 26-27

The image of slavery redeemed in the New Testament

Galatians 3:28; James 2:1; Philippians 2:5-7; Romans 1:1

Instructions to bondservants and masters

Colossians 3:22; 1 Timothy 6:1-2; Colossians 4:1; 1 Corinthians 7:21

Engaging slavery today

For those who are slaves: Psalm 138:7; Psalm 82:4; Psalm 103:6

For traffickers: Isaiah 55:7; Romans 5:6-7; Psalm 37:17-20

For governments: Deuteronomy 16:19

For the church: Matthew 5:13-14; Proverbs 31:8

Explaining Terms and Concepts

asceticism: an approach to living that views material possessions and comforts as sinful. An ascetic may seek to avoid sinning by getting rid of earthly possessions or, in some cases, by physical self-denial.

incarnation: a reference to the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ, becoming fully human when He was conceived by the virgin Mary, His mother. Since the incarnation, Christ remains fully human and fully divine as the second person of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit).

materialism: an approach to living that views money and possessions as all-satisfying. Someone who is materialistic is primarily concerned with acquiring and enjoying earthly possessions.

prosperity gospel: a theology that believes that God's aim is to make believers healthy and wealthy in this life. The prosperity gospel uses God to get earthly blessings, while the biblical gospel views a right relationship with God through Christ as the ultimate goal. Scripture teaches that earthly blessings are good gifts from God, but that they are not guaranteed in this life, regardless of how much faith one has.

slave: the same word translated as 'slave' (*doulos* in Greek) is also translated as "bondservant" (1 Corinthians 7:21) and "servant" (Romans 1:1) in Scripture. When the New Testament speaks of this kind of slavery, it is referring to an institution that is in some ways different from the form of slavery that existed in the United States from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. Bondservants in the time of the New Testament could be given very important responsibilities, and they could potentially earn enough money to purchase their freedom. (In 1 Corinthians 7:21 Paul permits bondservants to gain their freedom if they are able.)¹ However, this does not mean that slavery was a desirable position in the New Testament, or that there were not abuses of the institution.

steward: someone who manages or is responsible for resources that belong to another person. God owns all things, so we are to be faithful stewards of the resources He gives us.

traffickers: individuals who participate in kidnapping, trading, or selling human beings for any variety of purposes. Whether for sex, work, or any other purpose, trafficking is evil and it is in direct violation of Scripture.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Explain why our use of money and possessions is an indicator of our relationship with God.
2. Since the gospel is everyone's greatest need, why should we care about their physical needs?
3. Are money and possessions inherently sinful? Explain your answer.
4. Does giving to the poor help us earn God's favor? If not, then what should motivate our giving?
5. Why is materialism so dangerous? How should we fight against it in our own hearts?

¹ Taken from notes on 1 Corinthians 7:21 in the ESV Study Bible. Dr. Frank Thielman is the contributor for 1 Corinthians.

6. Should Christians expect God to bless them financially for their faithfulness? Why or why not?
7. List three practical ways you can serve those around you who are in need.
8. How does the creation account in Genesis undermine the practice of slavery?
9. If God is opposed to slavery, why does He address slaves and slave-owners in Scripture?
10. What is one practical way you can get involved in terms of engaging the evil of sex trafficking?

For Further Study

Poverty

- Randy Alcorn, *Money, Possessions, and Eternity*
- Craig Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches: A Biblical Theology of Possessions*
- Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert, *When Helping Hurts: Alleviating Poverty Without Hurting the Poor...And Ourselves*

Slavery

- Gary Haugen, *The Locust Effect*
- William Wilberforce, *A Practical View of Christianity*

For additional resources on these topics, go to CounterCultureBook.com.

WEEK 4

Sexuality

Watch

SC15 Video: 68 mins

Online: Session 3 (13:58-1:22:00)

DVD: Disc 3 (13:58-1:22:00)

Fill In

SC15 Study Guide: Pages 95-133

**Due to the nature of some of the content about sexuality, leaders should use discernment if younger viewers are participating. In addition, it may be best to separate by gender for some of the discussion related to sexual immorality in this section.*

Week at a Glance

In Week 4 we focus on the hotly contested issue of sexuality. To address the variety of challenges we face in this area, we will consider some foundational truths from Scripture about God's original design for man and woman. Marriage, divorce, sexual immorality, and the ever-present issue of pornography are all addressed in this section. We will see that God has designed gender, sexuality, and marriage as a display of His goodness and as a witness to the covenant love that exists between Christ and His church. This is why we must reject any distortion of biblical sexuality—so that we do not dishonor God and bring reproach on the gospel.

Key Takeaways

- God created man and woman with equal dignity, different roles, and as a reflection of the Trinity.
- God's design for sexuality is for His glory, our good, and the demonstration of the gospel.
- The marriage of a husband and a wife pictures the relationship of Christ and the church in the gospel.
- Wives should respect and submit to their husbands, while husbands are to love their wives in a way that is selfless and edifying.
- God hates divorce, though He permits it in the cases of sexual sin and abandonment. The goal for couples should always be restoration, and the gospel provides hope for all who have participated in or been affected by divorce.
- Flee any and all sexual activity outside of marriage between a man and a woman.
- Homosexual activity and homosexual desires are sinful. Like other sins, believers should battle these temptations by believing the gospel and by actively fighting temptation in the power of the Spirit.
- We must fight against the temptation to view pornography because it dishonors Christ, it violates the men and women who are being viewed, and it contributes to the demand for sex slaves who are used in pornographic material.

Key Verses

God's design for gender

Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 2:18-25

The Trinity

John 1:1-3; 1 Corinthians 11:3

Marriage

Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7

Challenges to biblical marriage

Matthew 22:21; Matthew 22:37-39

Divorce

Matthew 19:3-12; 1 Corinthians 7:10-15; Malachi 2:13-16;
Matthew 18:21-22

Sexual immorality

1 Corinthians 6:9-20; Proverbs 5:1-6; Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26;
Matthew 5:27-30; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; 1 Peter 2:11;
Psalm 119:9-11

Explaining Terms and Concepts

complementary: when we say that God has designed sex to be complementary, we are referring to the fact that God created men and women for one another physically, and in a number of other ways. The first woman, Eve, was created to be her husband's helper and companion, while the first man, Adam, was created to love, protect, and lead his wife. This kind of complementary relationship between a man and woman should be the mark of every marriage.

marriage: Scripture defines marriage as the lifelong union between a man and a woman that is consummated physically.

sexual immorality: any sexual activity outside of marriage between a man and a woman.

Trinity: when we say that God is a Trinity, we are saying that He is one God existing in three distinct persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. All three persons are fully divine, though they carry out different roles.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Why do you think our culture finds a Christian view of gender and marriage so offensive?
2. Why is the submission of a wife not insulting to her? How does the Trinity help us understand why submission is not degrading?
3. What traits should characterize the leadership of a godly husband?
4. Our culture essentially defines marriage as two individuals who love each other. What's wrong with that definition?
5. What are the only two biblical grounds for divorce?
6. The Bible says to flee from "sexual immorality" (1 Corinthians 6:18). In your own words, what is meant by "sexual immorality"?
7. Why should Christians care about the issue of homosexuality?
8. Why is the issue of biblical authority so important as we engage the issues of homosexuality and so-called same-sex marriage?
9. List reasons why pornography is dishonoring to God and to others.
10. What are some practical steps you can take to battle against sexual sin and temptation?

For Further Study

- Andreas Kostenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*
- John Piper and Wayne Grudem, (editors), *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*
- Daniel R. Heimbach, *True Sexual Morality*
- Sam Allberry, *Is God Anti-Gay?*
- Thomas Schmidt, *Straight and Narrow? Compassion and Clarity in the Homosexuality Debate*
- Tim Challies, *Sexual Detox: A Guide for Guys Who Are Sick of Porn*

For more resources on these topics, go to CounterCultureBook.com.

WEEK 5

Ethnicity & Immigration Liberty & Persecution

Watch

SC15 Video: 32 mins

Online: Session 4 (00:00–31:50)

DVD: Disc 4 (0:00–31:50)

Fill In

SC15 Study Guide: Pages 134-153

Week at a Glance

In Week 5 we tackle the issue of ethnicity—what is sometimes called racism—and then we move on to the issues of liberty and persecution.

We'll talk about why our discussions about diversity ought to be based on the idea of ethnicity rather than race. The scriptural category of ethnicity goes beyond skin tone, recognizing our many differences and our underlying unity as persons created in God's image. Since every person is born with a sinful nature, regardless of ethnicity, Christ's redemption is necessary and sufficient for every people group on the planet. In light of these truths, God's people ought to work toward ethnic harmony and for unity in the church, even as we recognize our God-given distinctions. One way we should apply these truths about ethnicity is by caring for immigrants around us. As immigrants looking for the world to come, we ought to extend to others the kind of mercy God has lavished on us.

When it comes to religious liberty and persecution, we'll see what the Christian's responsibility toward government is, and we'll see what roles God has given the government. It is important that we realize that religious liberty is a gospel issue. When the government steps outside its authority and makes demands that are contrary to Scripture, believers must decide whether their allegiance is to God or to man. As the discussion shifts to the persecuted around the world—those who don't have religious liberty—we'll see that they have already had to make that choice. That's why we'll consider how we can serve them and speak up on their behalf. We should be spurred on to proclaim the gospel as we see them doing it at such great cost.

Key Takeaways

Ethnicity and Immigration

- Because all men are created in God's image, there is a basic unity behind worldly diversity.
- The category of ethnicity is more biblical and helpful than race as we pursue the kind of diversity that honors God.
- While ethnic animosity is a result of our common sinful nature, Christ died to purchase peoples from every tribe, tongue, and language.
- Christians ought to work toward ethnic harmony by appreciating God-given differences and distinctions, and by affirming our common dignity.
- God's people ought to be unified, refusing to show favoritism based on ethnicity.
- As God's people, we ought to care for immigrants based on our common dignity, and as a response to God's mercy toward us.

Liberty and Persecution

- As Christians, we should be submissive citizens of our government.
- Government is given by God for the restraint of evil and the promotion of good.
- Religious liberty is not just a political issue; it is a gospel issue.
- Government's role is not to grant or eliminate the free exercise of religion, but rather to protect it.
- Faith, as the Bible describes it, cannot be forced or coerced.
- Christians should work to protect the religious liberty of all people.
- We should obey government unless it requires us to disobey God.
- We should speak and serve on behalf of the persecuted church around the world.

Key Verses

Foundations for unity and diversity

Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 10:31-32; Acts 17:24-27

Sin and ethnic animosity

Genesis 6:5; Genesis 11:1-9

God's gracious promise for all peoples

Genesis 12:1-3; Psalm 67; Matthew 24:14; Matthew 28:18-20;
Revelation 5:8-10

Working toward ethnic harmony and unity in the church

Galatians 3:23-29; John 17:20-23; Ephesians 2:12-14; James 2:1

Caring for immigrants

Psalm 146:9; Deuteronomy 10:17-20; Jeremiah 7:5-7;
Luke 10:25-37

The government's role and the Christian's responsibility

1 Peter 2:13-17; Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1-7; Acts 5:27-29

Speaking for and serving persecuted believers

Acts 4:23-31; Ephesians 6:18-20; Luke 9:23-24

Explaining Terms and Concepts

ecclesiological unity: this is a reference to the unity that ought to characterize the people of God. The term ecclesiological is simply a reference to the church.

ethnicity: the concept of ethnicity includes more than biological (physical) factors in terms of marking out people groups; it factors in social, cultural, lingual, historical, and religious characteristics. Scholars have identified thousands of people groups in the world. These groups share a common self-identity due to their shared history, customs, patterns, and practices based on two primary characteristics:

ethnicity and language¹. Pursuing diversity based on ethnicity rather than race fits the biblical pattern, and it is practically more helpful.

freedom of religion: a privilege that is given by God, and one which government is obligated to protect. Government should not seek to coerce its citizens in terms of their religious beliefs, nor should it seek to eliminate religious beliefs. The right to a freedom of religion is a recognition that citizens ought to be able to live their lives in accord with their beliefs. This is a broader concept than the freedom of worship, which is typically restricted to the right to gather on a particular day.

immigrant: a person who migrates or moves to another country, often to live permanently.

race: to categorize people on the basis of race is to make distinctions based on biological factors such as skin tone and other physical features.² This way of pursuing diversity is both biblically unhelpful and practically impossible.

persecution: any attempt to silence Christian witness can be referred to as persecution. In some areas of the world, persecution comes in the form of physical violence and even death, while in many areas it comes in the form of being socially alienated, or of being oppressed by the government. Though Christians should never seek to be persecuted, they should expect it according to Scripture. Persecution is a result of speaking and living according to the truth.

¹ This explanation of ethnicity is taken from pg. 191 of David Platt's book *Counter Culture*.

² For more on a definition and discussion on the category of race, see Thabiti Anyabwile's article "What Does the Bible Teach About Race?" at the *EraceOurselves* website posted on 1/13/14.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word diversity?
2. How is the culture's definition of diversity different than the kind of diversity the Bible encourages?
3. What's the difference between race and ethnicity? Why is ethnicity a better category for thinking about biblical diversity?
4. What is the root problem when it comes to conflicts between people of different ethnicities?
5. How has God addressed the issue of ethnic conflict?
6. What is a Christian's responsibility toward immigrants?
7. What should the Christian's attitude toward the government be?
8. Does submission to the government mean that we always obey its laws? When would there be exceptions?
9. Why should freedom of religion extend beyond the place of our weekly gathering?
10. How can Christians who aren't persecuted serve those who are? List a few practical ways.

For Further Study

Ethnicity and Immigration

- J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race*
- Michael Emerson, *Divided by Faith*

Liberty and Persecution

- Stephen Carter, *God's Name in Vain*
- Nik Ripken, *The Insanity of God*

For more resources on these topics, go to CounterCultureBook.com.

WEEK 6

The Greatest Injustice of All / The Ultimate Hope for All

Watch

SC15 Video: 35 mins

Online: Session 6 (31:50–1:06:00)

DVD: Disc 6 (31:50–1:06:00)

Fill In

SC15 Study Guide: Pages 154-188

Week at a Glance

In Week 6 we consider the greatest injustice of all, namely, that there are approximately 2 billion people spanning over 6,000 people groups that have not been reached with the gospel. We'll consider these unreached people groups, as they're called, as well as the ultimate hope for all, which is God's reward in a new heaven and a new earth.

The greatest injustice is that many people groups still do not have access to the gospel. We'll see what it means to be unreached both practically and biblically. Then we'll consider some motivations Scripture gives us to go to the unreached, as well as the responsibility that all Christians have in seeking to reach them. This section closes with a challenge to put our lives before God as a blank check in this most urgent and eternally significant mission.

Finally, this last session closes by looking to the hope that compels us to go to the unreached and to engage all the social issues discussed in previous weeks—the hope of heaven. We'll discuss what this means from a biblical perspective, which involves being with Christ in a resurrected, glorified body in a new heaven and a new earth. There are so many dimensions to our final reward that should make us long for it. This sure hope of experiencing God's glory should fill us with joy and motivate us to live our lives in obedience to Christ, no matter the cost.

Key Takeaways

The Unreached

- The unreached are those who have no access to the gospel, and there are still over 6,000 people groups in this category.
- The unreached have rejected God and stand condemned before Him.
- While the unreached only have knowledge enough to damn them to hell, the gospel of God is powerful enough to save them for heaven.
- Followers of Christ should live to reach people from among all peoples for the praise of God.
- Every Christian should play a part in spreading the gospel through praying, giving, and potentially going to the unreached.
- Every Christian ought to offer his or her life to God as a blank check—to be used however He wants to use us to accomplish His purposes in reaching the nations.

The Ultimate Hope

- Our ultimate hope is a new heaven and a new earth where we will see God and enjoy His new creation.
- Heaven will not be boring or completely foreign, but rather fascinating and satisfying—full of joyful service, work, and worship.
- Our resurrected bodies will be free from sinful desires.
- Followers of Christ should live to reach people from among all people groups for the praise of God.

Key Verses

The unreached in relation to God

Romans 1:18-25; Romans 3:9-20

Reasons we must go to the unreached

Romans 1:14-16; 2 Corinthians 4:4-6; Romans 1:16-17; Romans 10:12-15; Revelation 5:9-10; Romans 15:20-21; Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 12:1-2

Our lives as a blank check

Matthew 9:37-38; Psalm 67; Acts 20:22-24; Luke 9:23-24

Our ultimate hope

Philippians 3:20-21; Revelation 21:1-4; 2 Peter 3:13; Romans 8:19-21

What to expect in our future reward

Revelation 21:2-3; Matthew 25:34; Luke 12:37; Isaiah 25:6; 1 Corinthians 15:40-44; Revelation 7:15-17

How heaven should affect our lives now

Hebrews 11:13-16, 35-40; Revelation 2:9-10; Isaiah 40:8; Acts 14:20-22; Colossians 3:1-4; Matthew 10:26-28

Explaining Terms and Concepts

hope: when Scripture speaks about the believer's hope, it is not speaking about a mere wish or a vague sense of optimism, but rather of faith in God's promise of future reward and blessing. The believer's ultimate hope is the enjoyment of God in a sinless, resurrected body with all God's people in a new creation.

new heaven/new earth: while believers who die now go to be with the Lord in heaven (2 Corinthians 5:8), the place where God dwells, our ultimate home will be a new creation that is brought about after the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Scripture refers to this new

creation as a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1 ; 2 Peter 3:13). We will live in this new creation forever with resurrected bodies that are free from sin. Our ultimate hope is that we will see God and enjoy Him for all of eternity. (For an explanation of the term heaven, see the explanation given in Week 1 of this Discussion Guide.)

people group: persons who share a common language and common cultural characteristics make up a people group. This is different from classifying people geographically and politically as nations. When Jesus commands the church to make disciples of all nations in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), that term nations might better be translated as people groups (what we might also refer to as tribes, clans, or families).

resurrection: just as Jesus was raised from the dead, so also those who put their trust in Him as Savior and Lord will be raised from the dead when Jesus returns. The resurrection of God's people will be a bodily resurrection in which believers will be given a new, resurrected body that is free from sin and weakness. The final aspect of the believer's salvation will be to enjoy God and His new creation in a resurrected body.

unreached: a people group among whom there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to engage the people group with church planting. Technically, this means the percentage of evangelical Christians is less than two percent. Over 6,000 people groups are still unreached, which means that over two billion individuals still do not have access to the gospel. Of these 6,000 unreached people groups, over 3,000 are still unengaged, meaning that there is currently no evangelical church planting strategy under way to reach them. The remaining 3,000 unengaged people groups are made up of a combined 200 million individuals.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. Why should we be so concerned about unreached people groups when there are lost people in our own neighborhoods?
2. What is a people group? What does it mean to be unreached?
3. How would you respond to someone who said that unreached peoples are innocent before God? What passages would you point them to?
4. Engaging unreached people with the gospel can sound intimidating. List some motivations from Scripture for going to them.
5. Why is it so important to remember that reaching the unreached is to be done for the glory of God?
6. List some practical ways that every Christian can be involved in reaching the nations.
7. What are some specific hindrances to your being willing to do whatever God would have you do to reach the nations? How might you address those?
8. What comes to mind when you think of heaven? Is this something you long for?
9. How does it affect your view of heaven to think about enjoying it in a resurrected physical body?
10. List some ways that your future hope should affect your life now.

For Further Study

The Unreached

- John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad*
- Jason Mandryk, *Operation World*

The Ultimate Hope

- Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*
- John MacArthur, *The Glory of Heaven*
- Paul Enns, *Heaven Revealed*

For more resources on these topics, go to CounterCultureBook.com.

*Secret Church 15: Christ, Culture, and a Call to Action Small Group Discussion
Guide developed and written by David Burnette, Staff Writer, Radical
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