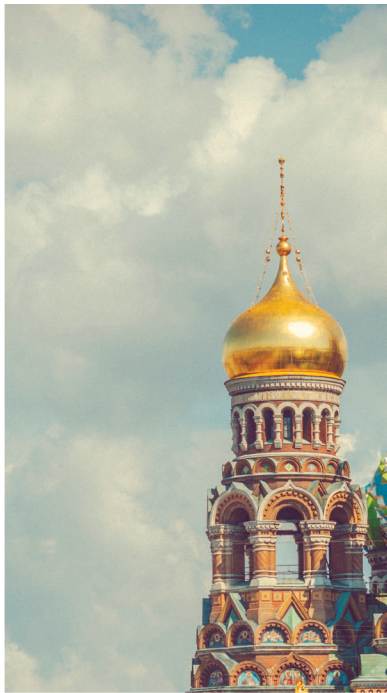
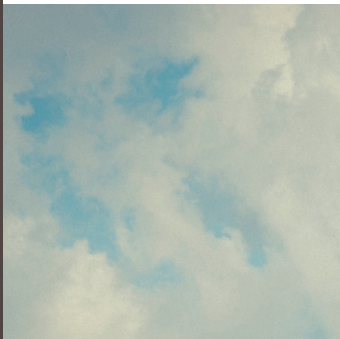


# WHAT GOOD IS CHRISTIANITY?

Level 660

INSTRUCTOR'S GUIDE



Church of the Savior on Spilled Blood  
Saint Petersburg, Russia

# What Good is Christianity?

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Evaluating its Historical Record

By the Sonlight Team

*“But examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good.”*

I Thessalonians 5:21 (NASB)

Sonlight Curriculum® 660 “What Good is Christianity” Schedule and Notes, Seventh Edition

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“Do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12).

“The worker is worth his keep” (Matthew 10:10).

Published by

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Printed in the United States of America.

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## About “What Good is Christianity?”

The world of ideas is often filled with misinformation. Sometimes this is purposeful, as is the case with propaganda that seeks to intentionally mislead. At other times misinformation is a consequence of failing to investigate truth claims. In certain instances a particular agenda moves individuals or groups to disseminate information that is meant to present an opposing view in a bad light, while generally championing the cause of those preparing the content. In short, presenting fair and objective information is not as easy as it may sound. Our intention at Sonlight is to present a variety of viewpoints, while at the same time remaining committed to Christianity. In recent years we’ve noticed an increasing amount of misinformation about Christianity and its influence. The so-called new atheism, for instance, has leveled a number of attacks and criticisms against the faith that call into question the benefits Christianity has provided civilization with, as well as seeking to demonstrate that Christianity has, in fact, done more harm than good.

Are these criticisms true? If they are, then Christianity does indeed have quite a bit of explaining to do. If they are not, then the critics have some apologizing to do. Some claims, however, are more nuanced than a simple “Yes” or “No” answer can provide. For instance, it is true that some Christians supported slavery, but it is also true that some Christians vehemently opposed it (see Week 17 in our schedule). Learning to think through ideas is part of our goal. We’d like to help you raise children who are able to think for themselves, reasonably, as they weigh the claims they will encounter in daily life. Consequently, our goal in this curriculum is not to force-feed information, but to expose you and your students to a variety of ideas they are likely to encounter in their Christian walk, while at the same time providing relevant insights as your students grapple with some challenging ideas.

In order to accomplish our goal, we’ve selected seven primary resources, described below, combined with our Instructor’s Guide Notes and other included resources such as discussion questions, suggested assignments, and some articles intended to supplement the primary content. As always, our Instructor’s Guide is intended as a flexible tool that you are welcome to modify and adapt as best fits your educational goals. Also note that we’ve included a section on **Tips for Classroom Use** intended to help teachers integrate this curriculum into a classroom setting or for use by home school co-ops.

## Resources

***What’s So Great About Christianity?*** by Dinesh D’Souza (Tyndale, 2008). Written in a crisp, engaging style, D’Souza guides readers through eight parts: The Future of Christianity, Christianity and the West, Christianity and Science, The Argument from Design, Christianity and Philosophy, Christianity and Suffering, Christianity and Morality, and Christianity and You. Specific topics addressed include Christianity and atheism, democracy, evolution, miracles,

natural law, the problem of evil, and much more. It’s short chapters provide a nice break from the more academic writing style found in *How Christianity Changed the World* and *The Victory of Reason*.

***The Book That Made Your World: How the Bible Created the Soul of Western Civilization*** by Vishal Mangalwadi (Thomas Nelson, 2011). Written by a thoughtful Indian, who has lived both in the East and the West, and has wrestled with the differences between the two regions. After careful study, Mangalwadi is convinced that the gospel has created the change in the West from the rest of the world. He discusses music, the family, science, technology, and more in a highly-readable book.

***Christianity On Trial*** by Vincent Carroll and David Shiflett (Encounter Books, 2002). This book addresses a number of topics including slavery, science, charity, the environment, and more. The authors begin each chapter by broadly outlining the general criticisms against Christianity, then spend the remaining portion of the chapter responding to general and specific criticisms. Carroll is a newspaper journalist, resulting in a popular-level and readable book, but it also contains intellectual depth. Broadly speaking, the authors point out that historical illiteracy is often responsible for unjust caricatures of Christianity, while also pointing out the many positive influences Christians have made on civilization throughout history.

***How Christianity Changed the World*** by Alvin Schmidt (Zondervan, 2004). Schmidt’s tome is at times on the dry side, but is nevertheless filled with valuable and factual historical information about Christianity’s influence on the world. The book covers a diversity of topics ranging from the sanctity of human life to sexual morality to Christian influences on health care, charity, education, science, liberty, slavery, literature, and the arts. A fascinating final chapter offers an overview of Christianity’s influence on holidays, words, and symbols. A number of photographs, illustrations, and tables break up the text with interesting information. Schmidt is a sociologist, but his attention to historical detail is precise.

***The Victory of Reason*** by Rodney Stark (Random House, 2006). Well-known sociologist Rodney Stark makes the case that Christianity positively influenced the development of a variety of globally significant movements in relation to democracy, science, reason, and more. Far from being a negative influence or a backwards religion lacking a robust foundation, Stark convincingly argues that Christians and Christianity are responsible “for the most significant intellectual, political, scientific, and economic breakthroughs of the past millennium.” At times Stark makes for some challenging reading, which is why we’ve broken up the reading of *The Victory of Reason* over the course of three weeks (Weeks 2, 3, and 4). See also his book *God’s Battalions: The Case for the Crusades* (HarperOne, 2009), especially in relation to Weeks 15 and 16 on Special Challenges to Christianity.

**Art and the Bible** by Francis Schaeffer (InterVarsity Press, 1973; IVP Classics edition, 2006). This classic work consists of two essays: “Art in the Bible” and “Some Perspectives on Art.” Scheduled during our discussion of Christianity and the Fine Arts (Weeks 8 and 9), Schaeffer’s work provides a solid foundation for understanding the relationship between Christianity and the arts, as well as containing timeless insights on the topic.

**Does God Exist?** by Focus on the Family (Tyndale Entertainment, 2009). This DVD set features Dr. Stephen Meyer, author of *Signature in the Cell* (Harper, 2009) and other works. Over the course of two weeks your students will journey with Dr. Meyer through 10 engaging video lessons covering topics such as cosmology, design, morality, and various arguments for the existence of God. The lessons feature short introductions by Dave Stotts, known for his work on the *Drive Thru History* DVD series.

**Atheist excerpts** (various authors). Note that in Week 14 we’ve included excerpts from popular contemporary atheist writers as part of assignments (Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins). Our intention is to allow your students to engage typical ideas presented by the new atheists in order to better understand their perspectives and to allow your students the opportunity to critique opposing viewpoints. Some of the rhetoric of the new atheists is somewhat harsh, to say the least. Nevertheless, we believe exposure to the ideas presented is critical in preparing your students to enter the world, particularly if they pursue college studies. After allowing your students to engage the atheist ideas, we provide our insights to model how we might respond to those ideas.

## Overview

### Western Culture/Democracy

We begin with a look at Christianity’s influence on Western culture and democracy (Weeks 1–4). Even though in many respects contemporary Western culture is now secularized, understanding the roots of Christian influence and their extent in many areas is important.

### Social Justice

The topic of social justice (Weeks 5–6) covers a broad range of issues. Our studies begin with an emphasis on the transforming power of Christianity which, in turn, leads naturally to positive interaction with culture, society, politics, the economy, the arts, and more. The emphasis continues by viewing Christianity as a way of life, as well as an opportunity for Christians to change the world for the better.

### Education/Literature

Since education and literature are historically linked, the topics are addressed concurrently beginning in Week 7. An article on “Interpretation” underscores the importance hermeneutical (interpretive) principles as relevant not only to biblical interpretation, but the logical interpretation of any kind of literature and the ideas contained therein. This article will also help children develop critical thinking skills when it comes to understanding and evaluating ideas.

### The Arts

Weeks 8 and 9 concentrate on Christianity’s extensive impact on the fine arts including music, painting, literature, sculpture, architecture, and more. *Art and the Bible* provides helpful information in relation to art and the Christian worldview, while *The Book That Made Your World* and *How Christianity Changed the World* delve deeper into specific examples of Christian influence on the arts. Our Notes emphasize, among other things, the importance of the concept of the image of God (*imago Dei*) in relation to creative pursuits.

### Science/Environment

Weeks 10 and 11 address a variety of questions regarding Christianity and science. We read a number of historical examples of Christian contributions to the sciences and explore issues relevant to Christianity’s foundational contributions to science, the argument from design, and questions about evolution. Atheism is also touched on, preparing children for further discussions on the topic beginning in Week 12. In addition, we’ve included an article on “Faith and Science” that provides a helpful overview of a variety of misconceptions and issues regarding the relationship between Christianity and science. Since the topic is somewhat related to science, issues regarding Christianity and the environment are also covered (Week 12).

### Contemporary Atheism

With the recent rise of the so-called new atheism, Weeks 12–14 address a variety of issues via readings in *What’s So Great About Christianity?* and the 10-part DVD series, *Does God Exist?* In Week 14 your students will have two opportunities to interact with excerpts from popular atheist writings by Christopher Hitchens and Richard Dawkins. While the goal is to help your students assess common criticisms raised by contemporary atheists, we also provide suggested solutions and responses that will also help develop critical thinking skills.

### Charity/Special Challenges

Weeks 15 and 16 cover Christianity and charity, as well as some special challenges to Christianity. Far from being a “poison” or negative influence on culture, as charged by modern atheists, readings demonstrate Christianity’s many positive influences, particularly in relation to charitable efforts. Special challenges addressed include the relationship between Christianity and the Nazis, the Crusades, the Inquisition, an assessment of atheism in relation to ideologies that have resulted in violence, and an article addressing Christianity and warfare.

### Women/Slavery

Weeks 16 and 17 address questions about Christianity and women, as well as Christianity and slavery. Far from being oppressive of women, our readings demonstrate Christianity’s profound elevation of women and the freedom and dignity it offers. An article on “Christianity and Women” explores some contemporary viewpoints on the topic. The issue of Christianity and slavery is also addressed.

### Christianity's Influence

Week 18 concludes the curriculum with a general emphasis on Christianity's positive influence on the world.

## Discussion Questions and Assignments

Each week you'll find a list of discussion questions related to the topics and readings. Discuss these questions aloud with your students. Look in the appendix for a list of all the questions and possible responses to help you interact with your students. Many of these questions are intended to help your students recall and articulate broad understanding of the material and critical thinking skills rather than rote memorization of material.

You'll also notice that we've provided a list of suggested assignments every week. We don't expect your students to do all of these assignments, but we do strongly recommend that at least one assignment per week is selected. For more involved assignments, feel free to allow your students more time to complete them.

## Further Assistance

We trust you will heartily enjoy your homeschool journey with your students. If we can be of further assistance, please don't hesitate to contact us or visit our Sonlight Connections Community ([sonlight.com/connections](https://sonlight.com/connections)). This community of Sonlighter's provides a place for you to interact with other homeschoolers, seek advice, offer your insights, give words of encouragement and more.

We also suggest that you visit [sonlight.com/subscribe](https://sonlight.com/subscribe) to sign up for our free email newsletter. When you sign up, you'll receive regular homeschool encouragement, news, announcements and be the first to know about Sonlight's special offers. ■

## Tips for Classroom Use

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Although not developed specifically for classroom use, *What Good is Christianity?* is suitable for high school classroom use, preferably in upper levels (juniors and seniors). Feel free to use it flexibly, meaning that you are welcome to adapt it in order to best integrate it into your lesson plans, style, and class structure. Below are ten suggestions for adapting our 18-week curriculum for use in the classroom. By the way, if you integrate this curriculum into your classroom, we'd love to hear from you about how things went, so feel free to contact us and let us know. If you have additional insights on how to use our curriculum in the classroom, we welcome your comments and ideas! Note, too, that many of these tips also apply to home school co-ops.

### 1. Review our Instructor's Guide Notes

This curriculum, as noted in our Introduction, consists of six books and one set of DVDs. For classroom use you may wish to study one book at a time rather than following our 18-week schedule. If you do so, we encourage you to review our Instructor's Guide Notes that accompany each book. For instance, if you decide to begin with *The Book That Made Your World*, just be sure to keep up with reading our accompanying notes. We do spend quite a bit of time researching and preparing our Instructor's Guide, often anticipating questions you or your students may have, so please take advantage of our efforts!

### 2. Consult our questions and assignments

Since we've also provided discussion questions and suggested assignments, we also encourage you to review that material for possible integration into your lesson plans. You, for example, select only a sampling of our discussion questions to bring up in class, modify our questions, or feel free to add your own discussion starters if ideas come to mind in reviewing the material.

### 3. Small group assignments

Our assignments are, likewise, flexible. After reviewing accompanying assignments, you may wish to assign small groups of students to tackle a specific project. If several groups of students in your classroom take on different assignments related to the same topic of study, you'll have quite a variety of assignments to discuss in your classroom. You may also opt to have each team give a short presentation on their topic.

### 4. Using the DVDs

We've scheduled the DVDs over the course of two weeks (Weeks 12 and 13), but if your lesson plans are unable to integrate viewing the DVDs over the course of two consecutive weeks, adjusting our schedule is fine. For instance, you may wish to only watch one DVD session once a week, perhaps on Friday and, consequently, take approximately ten weeks to complete the DVD set.

### 5. Discuss the material

Speaking of the DVD set, we encourage you to discuss the material presented by Dr. Meyer following each viewing. Doing so immediately after watching the DVD lesson is best, but this is not mandatory. Sonlight's approach in general is to present a variety of positions on an issue and let students seek to understand competing viewpoints. As a result, we suggest you try this in the classroom, too. The content in the DVDs, for example, may spark a variety of ideas your students have.

### 6. Take a field trip

Field trips related to our topics of study are encouraged. Obviously, some of our topics lend themselves better to fieldtrips than others. A few suggestions include a visit to an art museum in conjunction with studies on the arts; a visit to your local city hall for a tour on how city government functions, in relation to your studies of democracy; arranging a tour of a science museum in relation to your studies of science; and more. Of course, we don't expect you to take a field trip associated with each topic we cover, but consider taking at least one that is relevant to a subject area.

## 7. Testing

What about testing? Sonlight doesn't include tests or quizzes in this curriculum. In fact, the closest we come is in including our discussion questions, which tend to focus on broad concepts and the understanding of related ideas rather than the memorization of specific facts and dates. If your lesson plans call for testing on the material you present, feel free to utilize the material in our Instructor's Guide to help you prepare. While it's up to you how to prepare such tests, we recommend leaning in the direction of essay or short essay-oriented questions that seek to draw broad conceptual understanding out of your students over memorization of facts.

## 8. Atheism

Regarding the material on atheism covered in Week 14, we understand that some parents may be uncomfortable exposing their children to these ideas, so if you decide to integrate this material into your lesson plans we encourage you to first gauge the comfort level of parents with the material. Our intent in presenting the material is not to damage anyone's faith, but, rather, to strengthen it by demonstrating how Christians may respond to typical accusations by critics that will likely be encountered in university settings and beyond. However, if you are uncomfortable with this material, feel free to minimize it or drop it entirely. Other resources in our curriculum will provide a helpful overview of some of the atheist-related issues without directly turning to the atheist material (for instance, *The Book That Made Your World* and *Christianity On Trial*). At any rate, be sensitive to what your students can handle regarding this topic, as well as the temperaments of parents.

## 9. Subject areas

You may be wondering where best to schedule our curriculum. That is, what subject or subjects does our content match? Broadly speaking, this curriculum covers a lot of history, but not exclusively. Sections on Western culture and democracy, for instance, would fit well in political science, government, social studies, etc. If you are integrating our curriculum as part of Christian private school studies, the curriculum would fit well with studies in Christian apologetics (defending the faith) or even ethics, but could also be added to historical studies, social studies, and so forth, as noted already.

## 10. Pray

Finally, if you are a Christian teacher utilizing this material, please spend time in prayer regarding how best to integrate our material into your lesson plans, as well as how best to present, discuss, and evaluate the content. We cover a lot of ground ranging from Western culture to science to literature to the arts to education and more, but we don't want you to become overwhelmed. Remember, our material is flexible, but don't become so immersed in adapting or integrating the content that you minimize the spiritual nature underlying your efforts. So, please pray! ■



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## **Section Two**

Schedule and Notes

Days 1–5: Date: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

## Week 1

Date:	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
<b>Western Culture/Democracy</b>					
<b>Christianity On Trial</b>	pp. vii–23				
<b>The Book That Made Your World</b>		prologue & chap. 5			
<b>What's So Great About Christianity?</b>			pp. 43–56	pp. 57–81	
<b>Assignments/Discussion Questions</b>					Assignments/ Discussion
<b>Other Notes</b>					

### Christianity on Trial

Day <b>1</b>	pp. vii–23
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**pp. xii–xiii**  
Some of the anti-Christian “art” discussed on these pages is disturbing, but will tie in with our discussion of the fine arts in Weeks 8 and 9, particularly Francis Schaeffer’s book *Art and the Bible*.

The ideas of Christopher Hitchens, a prominent atheist, are addressed in Week 14.

**pp. xvi–xvii**  
The authors write, “We realize that irreconcilable differences separate many Christian denominations and sects; but that is a sign of their health.” How is Christian division “a sign of their health”? While we agree that there are divisions among Christians, such divisions are unfortunate and, more likely, symptomatic of human depravity than anything particularly healthy. We should also point out that despite divisions on certain issues, on the whole Christians agree on some significant and central points such as the nature of God, the human condition, the person and role of Christ, the authority of the Bible, etc.

**pp. 2–3**  
The matter of human beings being made in God’s image, a Judeo-Christian teaching, is of importance to a variety of topics related to Christianity. As a result, you’ll note that we’ll bring up the matter consistently in relation to different areas of study.

The authors will address matters of American democracy in chapter 8.

Elaine Pagels, quoted favorably here, is also known for her work in relation to the so-called Gnostic Gospels. Unfortunately, her work in that area is hardly accurate or beneficial. See, for instance, *Fabricating Jesus* by Craig Evans (InterVarsity Press, 2006), and the more popular level work *The Truth About Jesus* and the “*Lost Gospels*” by David Marshall (Harvest House, 2007). *Hidden Gospels* by Philip Jenkins may also be of interest (Oxford, 2002).

**pp. 4–5**  
The topic of Christianity and women is addressed further in Weeks 16 and 17.

**pp. 6–7**  
The violence of gladiatorial games in contrast to Christian ethics is addressed further in *How Christianity Changed the World*. The Christian practice of rescuing discarded infants is

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also addressed in *How Christianity Changed the World*, as is the general topic of Christian charity (Week 15).

pp. 8–9

On page 9 the authors write, “It is not that Christian ethics were entirely original.” On this point they are correct. Christ did not come to share some new, secret morality with the world, although His morals are indeed high. God’s moral standards, in fact, are woven throughout the cultures of the world, whether they are Christian or not. This relates to what is termed natural law—that God’s moral standards are part of everyone’s conscience. Granted, within Christianity the impetus toward charity is an integral part of being a Christian. Those who love God and others are, after all, inclined to help others.

pp. 10–11

Ambrose of Milan played a key role in the conversion of Augustine, who found Ambrose to be a level-headed Christian, intellectually and spiritually.

pp. 22–23

While this chapter provides a somewhat selective and sweeping overview of Christianity’s positive influence on Western culture, the topic is taken up in far more detail in *The Victory of Reason*, and, to a lesser extent, in *What’s So Great About Christianity*.

## The Book That Made Your World

Day  
2

Prologue & Chapter 5

### Preliminary Thoughts

The author says, “Shourie, however, condemned missions as a conspiracy of British imperialism.”(xix) Britain ruled India from 1858 to 1947. Notice that Shourie was part of the Hindu political party and spoke with an agenda; he used his comments for political leverage to gain a seat within the government. Since Britain often tried to block missionaries from coming to India, his statement is untrue. [p. xix]

India’s caste system became illegal in 1950 but the idea behind it persists to today. The caste system defines what jobs you are allowed to do, whom you can marry, and the social interactions allowed between peoples. The bottom caste, the untouchables were only allowed unclean jobs. Missionaries helped defeat the caste system. [p. xx]

Whether we acknowledge it or not, or whether we are familiar with it or not, Christianity has had a profound influence on Western life and culture, as the author points out. Many of the concepts we take for granted have their origins in Christianity. These facts, of course, do not mean that Christianity must be true, but they do provide evidence of the positive and extensive influence Christianity has had on the world. While Mangalwadi’s approach is not that of an apologist, making a case for Christianity on the basis of his findings, the content contained in his book can certainly form part of a cumulative case argument in support of Christianity. [p. xx]

Much is made by critics of the “wrongs” of Christianity. Is this a good approach to determining whether or not Christianity is true? Biblically speaking, the test of the truth of Christianity is very much centered on the person of Christ. Did He exist? Did He rise from the dead? Are the New Testament records reliable? These and other questions really get to the heart of whether or not Christianity is true or not. That’s not to say we can simply ignore other issues and criticisms of Christianity, but it’s important to keep in mind that whether or not the resurrection of Christ actually happened will not be settled by discussing matters such as Christianity and Science. [p. xx]

The author wrote this book to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible; it was first published in 1611. And it was one of the early Bibles printed in the vernacular or the language spoken by the people. Prior to this people had to read the Bible in Latin. [p. xxi]

Mangalwadi’s remarks about the lessening of Christianity’s influence on modern cultures may be interpreted as both discouraging, as it highlights a decline of Christian influence, but also encouraging in that such insights should challenge individual Christians and the church as a whole to once again make significant and positive impacts on culture. [p. xxi]

Not all worldviews think the world matters. In some Eastern religious traditions, for instance, this is not the case. The world, in those views, is in fact illusory, meaning that it is not really there at all. Furthermore, in Hindu religious teachings associated with karma, it is not even beneficial to help others in a humanitarian sense, lest we work against the cosmic karma that those unfortunates have been dealt. Christianity, however, revels in God’s creation and its inhabitants as intrinsically of value. Certainly we live in a fallen world, but remnants of its beauty and God’s artistry and power in it remain. [p. 64]

### Vocabulary

**Ex nihilo:** to create out of nothing, as only God could accomplish as in the creation of the world. [p. 68]

### To Discuss After You Read

1. What does the author believe about Shourie’s statement? [Prologue] ➔ *he rejects it completely and believes that missions were “the single most important force that created contemporary India.”(xx) They uplifted the untouchables, opposed the caste system, provided the education system, the economic system, free press, political liberty, and fought corruption*
2. In the Hindu worldview, parents “looked at children as assets or liabilities, conveniences or burdens. We looked at them as human beings with intrinsic worth.”(63) Does the abortion culture view unborn babies as liabilities or humans with worth? [chap. 5] ➔ *liabilities (sadly); if we consider our nation “holier” because we don’t have a caste system, may we grieve at the enormous number of babies murdered each year!*

3. “The Mother-goddess could kill her baby because faith in reincarnation trivializes death as well as life.”(64) How might this idea tie to the modern idea that life is meaningless? Could the belief that abortion is okay be tied to an idea that trivializes death? [chap. 5]
4. The author claims that the Bible translated into the vernacular helped Europe become Christian and drew Europe out of the fear and worship of spirits. Could the almost 2000 peoples that don’t have the Bible in their language also be helped? [chap. 5]

Many history books give credit to the Greeks for the Renaissance in science and the idea of human dignity. However, many (most) of the scientists in the Renaissance period were Christians who studied the world to better understand God’s creation. And, the idea of human dignity can only be argued from the Biblical belief of man being created in the image of God. No other worldview honors people like Christianity.

5. Where did biblical scholars come up with the dignity of man? What impact did this idea have? [chap. 5]► *from both the creation of man in God’s image, and the incarnation of Christ who chose to become man to make people children of God. It allowed people to gain their full potential, and lead the West to be a humane civilization that sought the good of all people*

#### Interesting Ideas

Mangalwadi offers comments that are so surprising. We add some at the end of the notes in each chapter for your consideration.

If the definition of a myth is “a view of reality invented exclusively by the human mind”(xxi) then atheism must be a myth as in atheism all thoughts, ideas, and beliefs only come from the human mind. (p. xxi)

### What’s So Great About Christianity

Day 3 pp. 43–56

#### pp. 46–47

Many of the themes D’Souza introduces here are addressed in more detail in our other readings over the weeks such as the Christian influence on education, literature, the fine arts, holidays, other cultural matters, and more.

Does Matthew 22:21 really teach separation of church and state? Schmidt seems to think so, too. See our note in reference to Schmidt for a brief alternative explanation to what Christ is saying in the passage. (Week 5, Day 21, pp. 264–265 of Schmidt)

#### pp. 48–49

There are different schools of thought regarding the origins of religions and their types. Some hold to what is usually termed *original monotheism*, arguing that from monotheistic traditions came a decay in belief that re-

sulted in beliefs such as polytheism, animism, henotheism, etc. Original monotheism is in contrast to an evolutionary approach to religions’ origins, which place monotheism as a much later religious development. For an overview of these perspectives see chapter 1 of *Neighboring Faiths* by Winfried Corduan (InterVarsity Press, 1998).

D’Souza’s use of the phrase “The God of the Old Testament” is somewhat unfortunate in that it implies a distinction between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament. For Christians, however, God is the same God, unchanging, in the Old and New Testaments.

#### pp. 50–51

D’Souza writes, “But the Christian God is not like human beings at all,” going on to offer some examples. It is indeed true that there are significant differences between creature and Creator, but we should balance these facts with additional information such as the fact that human beings are made in God’s image. This means, at least, that we do have some traits in common with God, but not such that we, too, are gods. For instance, we possess intellectual, creative, and moral aspects to our being, just as God does. In addition, in God the Son (Jesus), we have the miracle of the Incarnation, meaning that God became a man. Without getting too far off on a theological tangent, God the Father is spirit, but God the Son does indeed have a physical, though glorified, body. Even the Holy Spirit, though a spiritual being by definition, is a personal being. Again, this is not to dispute D’Souza’s point, merely to offer some clarifications. If “God is not like human beings at all,” we’d have no way to meaningfully relate to God.

Although D’Souza points out contemporary theocratic approaches by underscoring Islam, there are elements within Christianity that could also be included, such as those holding to what is variously termed Christian theonomy or reconstructionism. Such Christians do indeed believe in establishing God’s laws, emphasizing the Old Testament, in contemporary society.

The phrase “Christian dichotomy” is a tricky one. While on the one hand, D’Souza’s overall point here is to demonstrate theocracy inherent in a religion such as Islam, on the other hand the use of “Christian dichotomy” may lead some to make an all-too-common error in thinking that the Christian life can be neatly segregated rather than a whole integrating all of the Christian life into every aspect.

Day 4 pp. 57–81

#### pp. 58–59

The phrase “new values entered the world” as a consequence of Christianity needs some clarification. Christianity did not introduce “new values” per se, because those values already existed to some degree or another in every person. Those values were “written on the heart” (Romans 2:14–16) by God and, as such, cannot be completely eradicated. Christ did not come along to introduce a new morality or new values, but He certainly reiterated such

God-derived values and their importance, leading Christians to better understand their significance both personally and practically.

**pp. 62–63**

Stating that “Christ invented the notion that the way to lead is by serving the needs of others” is somewhat of an exaggeration. Perhaps it would be better to say that Christ ideally modeled the notion of servant leadership.

**pp. 64–65**

Actually a better translation of the passage cited by D’Souza is “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils” (1 Timothy 6:10, ESV).

The rise of capitalism is addressed further in *The Victory of Reason*.

**pp. 66–67**

The idea of progress as ongoing betterment is certainly debatable on a number of levels. For instance, while there’s no disputing the progress made in certain realms, such as medical technology, in comparison to conditions hundreds of years ago, there are other areas where progress as betterment is not so clear. In some ways one could argue that humanity as a whole has indeed gotten worse or at least maintained similar stances when it comes to warfare, for instance. The 20th century alone saw the advent of two world wars. While some secularists have placed their faith in naturalistic science to “save” humanity, viewing religion as a relic that will one day vanish, such has not been the case, either with science as savior or religion diminishing. With that said, there are within various Christian theological viewpoints different perspectives on progress. Some view the church influencing the world so positively that the world will indeed get better and better such that it is ultimately “Christianized,” thus preparing the way for the return of Christ. This view is commonly called postmillennialism. Other views tend to lean in the direction of the world becoming more and more corrupt, thus setting up the world for the rise of a period of great tribulation (hardly “progress” in the typical definition). Such a view is commonly held by Christians who hold to a form of premillennialism known as dispensationalism. Our goal here is not to present and sift through various Christian positions on such things, but merely to point out that there are differing Christian views on “progress.” We would add, too, that even Christians who differ on such matters agree that history has a linear, God-directed (providential) purpose that will indeed come to a head.

More on Christian compassion is included in chapter 5 of *How Christianity Changed the World* (Week 15).

**pp. 70–71**

Chapter 10 of *How Christianity Changed the World* also addresses matters of equality (Week 5, Day 21), while chapter 2 addresses matters regarding the sanctity of human life (Week 6, Day 29), and chapter 4 addresses the topic of women in Christianity (Week 17, Day 81).

**pp. 72–73**

Slavery is addressed in more detail in Week 17.

**pp. 76–77**

For more on just war theory see our article on “Christianity and Warfare” (Week 16).

**pp. 80–81**

For more on the negative impact of secularism on society see *Saving Leonardo* by Nancy Pearcey (B&H Books, 2010). For an astute assessment of the ideas D’Souza brings up regarding the ultimate failure of a “secular” morality see *The Abolition of Man* by C.S. Lewis ■

Days 6–10: Date: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

## Week 2

Date:	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
<b>Western Culture/Democracy</b>					
<b>The Victory of Reason</b>	pp. ix–32	pp. 33–55 (stop at “Inventing”)	pp. 55–78 (stop at “Property”)	pp. 78–99	
<b>Assignments/Discussion Questions</b>					Assignments/ Discussion
<b>Other Notes</b>					

### The Victory of Reason

Day <b>6</b>	pp. ix–32
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**p. 5**

Stark uses the phrase “irrationality and dogmatism” to describe how some view theology. “Irrationality” obviously would by definition leave no room for rationality, while “dogmatism” suggests theology does not consider other evidence but instead blindly holds fast to its principles. While some individual Christians may embrace the irrational and blindly adhere to their beliefs, biblical Christianity supports the intellect and belief that is based on reasonable evidence. Jesus told his followers to love God with heart, soul, and *mind* (Matthew 22:37), while many other passages indicate that belief is to be reconciled with the reasonable (see, for instance, Acts 26:25). Nowhere does the Bible tell readers to set aside their intellects and simply cling blindly to beliefs.

Theology is indeed a “highly *rational*” discipline, as Stark notes. A robust theology incorporates reason in establishing a systematic, coherent system that spans various fields including, for instance, philosophy, anthropology, psychology, literary criticism and interpretation, history, textual criticism, language studies, etc. This goes against the popular misconception of theology and religion as only being personal and subjective.

The phrase “imposes moral codes” in reference to God may rub some readers the wrong way, as it comes across as God arbitrarily forcing moral codes on His creatures. God provides moral standards for human beings, not arbitrarily, but because such standards are derived from God’s

very nature, which is good. Moreover, by following God’s moral standards we are functioning the way He made us to function, while if we stray from His moral standards we are not functioning as we were meant to. If we put sand in the gas tank of an automobile, it won’t run properly. Similarly, if we try to run on “sand” rather than the proper fuel God has provided for us, we won’t “run” properly. Seen from this perspective, God’s moral codes are not intended to harm us, but to help us. With that said, there is a branch of ethics called *divine command theory*, also known as *theological voluntarism*. In this perspective, moral codes are derived solely from God’s will and are revealed in biblical commands. In other words, right and wrong are decreed by God. While Christian ethics encompasses divine command theory, it also incorporates a variety of other ethical approaches (see chapter 2, “Christian Ethics,” of *Moral Choices* by Scott Rae [Zondervan]).

**pp. 6–7**

Stark writes, “not only does the Bible not condemn astrology,” refers to the story of the wise men in the New Testament. A few words must be said about Stark’s comment in reference to astrology. The Bible does condemn occult behavior—that is, it forbids us from seeking secret or hidden supernatural knowledge. As an occult activity seeking to know the future (divination), astrology, then, is not biblically sanctioned (see, for instance, *Astrology and Psychic Phenomena* by Andre Kole and Terry Holley [Zondervan, 1998]). Nevertheless, Stark’s main point is not to quibble about whether or not the Bible condemns astrology, but to point out that Christianity provides the

rational framework to intellectually and rationally investigate claims, making Christianity not irrational, but rational.

Stark, perhaps unnecessarily, also offers the example of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Roman Catholic doctrine views Mary as remaining “ever virgin,” even though the New Testament writes that Jesus had siblings. Most Protestants reject the Catholic doctrine that Mary remained “ever virgin.” Stark’s overall point is that Christian theology provides an opportunity to rationally investigate ideas and develop solutions and answers to challenges, as well as to offer opportunities to refine biblical truths.

“New doctrines” are also mentioned by Stark. This phrase may cause some confusion. The Bible says what it says, but it is our human interpretation—our theology—that may result in “new doctrines” or understandings. However, in keeping with the theological position that God is unchanging, we must be careful to avoid developing teachings that contradict earlier divine revelation.

“An accurate account of any aspect of Christian theology,” writes Stark, “must be based on major, authoritative figures.” He appears to mean prominent theologians who “made their mark,” so to speak, on Christian history, thought, and theology. Some, however, may interpret Stark as committing the logical error of appeal to authority. An appeal to authority fallacy occurs when an idea is justified primarily on the basis of an appeal to some known authority, thus placing a critic in the position of having to question the authority in order to make a point against an argument rather than evaluating an idea on its own merits. Not all appeals to authority, however, result in logical fallacies. For instance, if an authority is indeed credible, then appealing to this authority is not fallacious. In court cases, for example, expert testimony is often sought.

Do Christians commit the appeal to authority fallacy if they, for instance, cite biblical authors or texts? Christians do not commit this fallacy *if* they can support the position that the biblical records are accurate, reliable sources of information. If this is the case, then the biblical records are credible and, therefore, justly authoritative. Getting into the details of how Christians might go about supporting the biblical documents is beyond the scope of this note (see, for instance, *A General Introduction to the Bible* by Norman Geisler and William Nix [Moody Press]).

Christians today should also celebrate reason, as Stark writes in reference to Augustine and Aquinas. If Christians communicate a blind faith, then critics such as Hitchens and others are right to point out a thread of irrationality within Christianity.

#### pp. 8–9

Along with Christianity, Judaism and Islam represent the world’s three primary monotheistic religions, meaning they believe in the existence of one God. There are, however, significant theological differences among the monotheistic religions. If Judaism is viewed as what might be termed a host religion, then Christianity and Islam may be seen as developing from Judaism. As such, all three monotheistic religions revere what Christians call the Old Testament.

Stark writes, “Judaism and Christianity have sustained a directional conception of history, culminating in the Millennium.” Views regarding the meaning of the millennium vary within Judaism and Christianity depending on the theological framework of the adherents. Millennial concepts are more developed within Christianity, though there are three competing theological perspectives on the topic known as amillennialism, postmillennialism, and premillennialism. Amillennialists view the millennium as figurative. Postmillennialists believe the church will continue to make positive strides in the world, essentially “Christianizing” it and preparing it for the return of Christ. Premillennialists believe Christ will remove His church from the world prior to a period of tribulation, then establish His literal millennial kingdom. Consequently, Stark’s claim that Judaism and Christianity see the culmination of history in the millennium is debatable. In the case of Christianity, for instance, the overarching culmination of history involves the return of Christ (second coming) and the restoration of creation.

Is the New Testament a “unified scripture” or an “anthology”? Stark does not elaborate on what exactly he means when he states the New Testament is an “anthology” rather than a “unified scripture.” The majority of conservative Christians, past and present, view the Bible as a unified whole that is also an anthology (a collection of writings by various authors). Consequently, Stark’s seeming either/or approach to the New Testament as being either a unified scripture or an anthology is false.

Since Stark mentions the Qur’an, the Muslim holy scripture, in contrast to the Christian views of scripture, a brief note is in order. Christians accept the Old Testament and New Testament as holy scripture, having been written by various human beings but divinely inspired. The Old Testament spans a lengthy period of history, while the New Testament emphasizes the birth and life of Christ and His ministry as well as the beginnings of the Christian church and its struggles internally and externally. Despite the length of time and various authors who contributed to Christian scriptures, there is an underlying belief that the Bible is the word of God, in that God inspired the authors to write what they did. There is also a theme of consistency in doctrine regarding the nature of God, the nature of human beings, the nature of salvation, etc. The Qur’an, on the other hand, is viewed by Muslims as an exact copy of a holy book in heaven, written directly by Allah, transcribed by Muhammad, and preserved by Muhammad’s followers. Both Christians and Muslims, then, view their scriptures as divine revelation, but with a key difference being the manner in which this revelation developed.

Moreover, while Jews and Christians can examine a rich history of manuscript copies of their sacred writings (a field known as textual criticism), there is far less manuscript evidence for the Qur’an since fragments deemed unworthy to be included in it were deliberately destroyed. In addition, Arabic is viewed as the divine language Allah used to write the Qur’an and, as such, translations of the Qur’an are not deemed accurate, whereas the New Testa-

ment is written in common, everyday Greek of the time rather than a sacred language that loses essential meaning in translation.

**pp. 10–11**

On interpreting the Bible literally and figuratively, see our article on interpretation in Week 7, Day 34.

**pp. 12–13**

Endnote 32 references Stark's book *For the Glory of God* (2003, Princeton University Press). In reference to Christianity and the rise of science, chapter 2 is particularly relevant: "God's Handiwork: The Religious Origins of Science." A brief quote from the chapter offers Stark's answer regarding the rise of science in relation to Christianity in medieval Europe: "Christianity depicted God as a rational, responsive, dependable, and omnipotent being and the universe as his personal creation, thus having a rational, lawful, stable structure, awaiting human comprehension" (p. 147).

Note Stark's definition of science on page 12: "Science is a method utilized in *organized* efforts to formulate *explanations of nature*, always subject to modifications and corrections through *systematic observations*." What do you make of this definition? Do you find it accurate? Inaccurate? What are its strengths and weaknesses? Is there anything about it that conflicts with faith? With reason? Read through the definition carefully and offer some general comments on it.

Seeking to understand the nature of science and its scope falls into the realm of philosophy of science. Note, too, that even though Stark's definition of science limits its scope to "natural and material reality," that does not stop individual scientists from going beyond this area when expressing their thoughts. There may also be particular *implications* of science relevant to philosophy and theology, for example, even though these realms are, strictly speaking on the basis of Stark's definition, beyond the realm of science. In other words, despite definitions, in reality there is often an interplay between science and religion, for instance.

**pp. 14–15**

Stark makes a distinction between "real science" and the kinds of activities of ancient thinkers he describes in the preceding paragraphs. For instance, he says, "Euclid was not a scientist, because in and of itself, geometry lacks substance, having only the capacity to describe some aspects of reality, not to explain any portion of it." Stark's point appears to be that science goes beyond mere description and offers reasoned and empirical explanation. He next claims that "real science arose only once: in Europe" and goes on to make a brief case for this statement (a lengthier case is made in chapter 2 of *For the Glory of God*). Combined with this claim is Stark's assertion that Christianity provided the support for the development of real science.

**pp. 16–17**

Viewing God's creation as a "book," as Stark refers to it, goes along with the theological concept of the two books: nature (God's general revelation) and the Bible (God's special revelation). How theologians interpret the book of nature and assess its value in relation to, for instance, evangelism, is a point of contention among Christian scholars.

**pp. 20–21**

Although it is monotheistic in its view of God, Stark asserts that Islam does not provide the foundations necessary for the development of science. This may seem strange, considering that both Christianity and Islam are monotheistic religions, believing in the existence of one God. However, despite agreement on that broad point, Islam and Christianity diverge in important ways when it comes to the details of the nature and attributes of the one God. As Stark notes, Allah appears somewhat capricious, and, if so, this perspective influences one's interpretation of Allah's creation.

Some followers of Averroes (1126–1198) purportedly held to a "two truth" view, stating that something could be true philosophically speaking, but false theologically speaking (or vice versa). Supposedly, this approach helped them resolve difficulties between Christianity and Aristotelianism. Unfortunately, this view makes little logical sense. Still, even today some Christians take a similar approach to their faith, particularly when it comes to matters of science and faith.

**pp. 22–23**

It's important to note that Stark is not claiming that cultures such as those of the Chinese, Greeks, and of the Islamic world have nothing positive to contribute to the world. Certainly, they do have much to offer in various fields such as the arts, music, literature, philosophy, and so forth. Stark's primary point is that these cultures do not offer a solid foundation to support the rise of real science, while, in his assessment, Christianity does.

Stark claims the "rise of science . . . was the natural outgrowth of Christian doctrine: nature exists because it was created by God. In order to love and honor God, it is necessary to fully appreciate the wonders of his handiwork." This statement, in fact, is a good summary of Stark's overall point in this section of the chapter.

Stark highlights "the blessings of a theology of reason, while atheist Hitchens titles one chapter in *God is Not Great*, "The Resistance of the Rational." Who's right? Is Christianity irrational or rational? Stark argues that Christianity provides a foundation for rational thinking. That is not to say, however, that some individual Christians, and perhaps even movements, behave irrationally.



**pp. 36–37**

The term “burghers” refers to a wealthy member of a town.

**pp. 38–39**

Technical terms for water power include hydraulics and hydropower, derived from the Greek word for water (*hudor*). Hydroelectricity refers to power generated by hydropower.

**pp. 40–41**

Roman Catholics would traditionally abstain from meat such as beef and chicken on Fridays for a variety of reasons, though the practice can be traced to the ancient church as well. One reason was to remember the sufferings of Christ on Good Friday. Another reason involved a form of penance—voluntary self-punishment to express repentance. This form of dietary abstinence is still practiced by some Catholics during Lent—the period leading up to Easter—and on Ash Wednesday (the first day of Lent).

**pp. 44–45**

For more on Christianity and warfare see Week 16.

**pp. 48–49**

Note Stark’s summary statement: “All of these remarkable developments can be traced to the unique Christian conviction that progress was a God-given obligation, entailed in the gift of reason.” Rather than stagnating in knowledge—a typical view of the Dark Ages—Christianity spurred the creative process of invention. This approach to the world also fueled Christianity’s interest in science (See Weeks 10–11).

**pp. 50–51**

Unfortunately, admissions like those of Ginzrot, who readily stated he had no factual evidence to support his drawings, sometimes seep into the scientific community as well, even to this day. See, for instance, the book *Icons of Evolution* by Jonathan Wells.

Much of what Stark skims over in the next few pages is covered in more detail in *The Book That Made Your World* and *How Christianity Changed the World*.

**pp. 56–57**

For more on money as a “root” of evil, see our note on pages 64–65 of *What’s So Great About Christianity?* (Week 1, Day 4).

Three things must be said about 1 Timothy 6:10: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils.” First, as always we need to keep in mind the context of the passage. Paul is writing to Timothy and, in the broader context of the passage, is warning about the allure of the love of money and the pursuit of wealth. He informs Timothy, just a couple of verses earlier, “But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content” (v. 8). Second, the passage is often misquoted. It does not say that love of money is “the” root of all evil, which is a mistranslation found in the King James Version, but that love of money is “a” root of “all kinds of evils.” Third, the Greek work translated as “love” in the passage is *philargyria*, meaning avarice or greed. In other words, it does not mean “love” in the traditional sense.

**pp. 60–61**

More on the dignity of labor is addressed in chapter 8 of *How Christianity Changed the World* (Week 5, Day 24).

**pp. 62–63**

On page 63 Stark suggests that Christian theology is an ongoing and developing process. While this may be true in some areas where Christianity must adapt to contemporary thinking or trends, or refine interpretations, this is not the case when it comes to essential Christian theology. Consequently, core historical and biblical doctrines remain the same within Christianity, rather than changing. This is why nearly 2,000 years of Christian history rests on the same foundational theological doctrines regarding such beliefs in reference to the nature of God, the nature of human beings, the person of Christ, salvation, etc.

**pp. 76–77**

More on Christianity’s contributions to democracy are covered in *Christianity On Trial* and *How Christianity Changed the World* (Weeks 4 and 5).

**pp. 88–89**

The Lombards were people of Germanic origin who invaded Italy in the 6th century.

**Assignments/Discussion Questions****Assignments****Western Culture**

1. Write a book report on *The Victory of Reason*, paying particular attention to the topic of Christianity and the development of Western culture.

**Democracy**

2. Develop and defend your position on the issue of separation of church and state. Consider questions such as why you have taken the position you have taken, what benefits do you see in the position, and how well the position stands up to opposing perspectives. Offer biblical support for the position you've taken.

**Discussion Questions****Western Culture**

1. According to Stark, what are the “blessings of rational theology”?
2. How has Christian thinking influenced the development of the areas of science and technology in the West? ■

Days 11–15: Date: \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

## Week 3

Date:	Day 11	Day 12	Day 13	Day 14	Day 15
<b>Western Culture/Democracy</b>					
<b>The Victory of Reason</b>	pp. 101–122 (stop at “Frugality”)	pp. 122–144 (stop at “On To”)	pp. 144–159	pp. 161–184 (stop at “Crumbling”)	
<b>Assignments/Discussion Questions</b>					Assignments/ Discussion
<b>Other Notes</b>					

*The Victory of Reason*

Day 11 pp. 101–122 (stop at “Frugality”)

**pp. 104–105**

The phrase “faith in reason” is interesting, especially since many still hold to the false belief that faith and reason are somehow inherently in opposition. Although Stark does not tie in philosophical arguments for Christianity in relation to reason, it’s interesting to note that “faith in reason” is indeed very much what non-theistic evolutionists (naturalists) must have in order to accept that human reasoning is at all valid or reliable. The problem is that, within a naturalistic universe, human beings, including our minds, are the products of an undirected, impersonal process. Given these facts within the non-theistic worldview, how is it that human reasoning should be at all trusted?

Day 12 pp. 122–144 (stop at “On To”)

**pp. 130–131**

The Flanders region encompasses portions of modern-day Belgium, France, and the Netherlands (see the map on page 132).

**Note:** There are no notes for Day 13.

Day 14 pp. 161–184 (stop at “Crumbling”)

**pp. 176–177**

Obviously, the behavior on the part of “radical Calvinists” that involved the destruction of religious artwork is hardly in keeping with a biblical approach to art. While it is true that we are to avoid idolatrous forms of artwork, biblically speaking, representational artwork need not be idolatrous. More on this is addressed in Weeks 8 and 9, particularly in Schaeffer’s *Art and the Bible*.

**Assignments/Discussion Questions**

Day 15 Assignments/Discussion

**Assignments****Western Culture**

1. Select an aspect of Western culture influenced by Christianity and research and write about the topic. Options may include Christianity and art, literature, philosophy, music, social justice, government, law, science, etc. Is Christianity still influential in the area you selected? If not, why do you think its influence in that area has waned? What might Christians do to revive the Christian influence in certain areas?

### **Democracy**

2. Arrange to visit city hall where you live, if possible requesting a guided tour and opportunities to ask questions of your city officials. Find out about how your local government works. For instance, what positions are elected and what positions are appointed? How often are elections held? Are there volunteer opportunities you might consider? If you'd prefer to learn more about your state government feel free to adapt this project to the state level. If visiting your state capitol building is not possible, research the website for your state government. You may also wish to adapt this assignment to learn more about the U.S. federal government and how it functions. If you are not a U.S. resident or are inclined to research another country, feel free to research the governmental structure of a non-U.S. nation. How is the government structured? Is it a democracy?

### **Discussion Questions**

#### **Democracy**

1. Do you think the Christian influence on Western democracy has been exaggerated? Why or why not?
2. Is there a danger of placing too much emphasis on the Christian influence on democracy in the formation of the United States? Why or why not? ■

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## **Section Three**

Discussion Questions and Answers

## Discussion Questions and Answers

Below you'll find a list of discussion questions related to the topics and readings. Discuss these questions aloud with your students. Many of these questions are intended to help your students recall and articulate broad understanding of the material and critical thinking skills rather than rote memorization of material.

### Week 1

#### Western Culture

1. In general terms, what role did Christianity play in the foundation of Western culture? *(Answers will vary, but may include mention of Christianity's influence on government, art, music, literature, architecture, religion, morality, etc.)*
2. Do you find D'Souza's presentation of "the spiritual basis of limited government" convincing or not? Why or why not? *(Answers will vary. See chapter 5 in What's So Great About Christianity?)*
3. How has the Christian view of human dignity influenced Western culture? *(Answers will vary, but in general the Christian emphasis on human dignity has influenced Western culture in a variety of ways including its legal system, ethical assumptions, charity, etc.)*

#### Democracy

4. How did Christian ethics transform the pagan world? *(See Christianity On Trial, page 4 and following.)*
5. How has Christianity contributed to balancing power between the church and the state? *(See Christianity On Trial, page 10 and following.)*

### Week 2

#### Western Culture

1. According to Stark, what are the "blessings of rational theology"? *(See chapter 1 of The Victory of Reason.)*
2. How has Christian thinking influenced the development of the areas of science and technology in the West? *(Answers will vary, but in general Christianity contributed to the rise of scientific and technological progress due to its emphasis on exploring and understanding God's world. See also chapter 2 of The Victory of Reason.)*

### Week 3

#### Democracy

1. Do you think the Christian influence on Western democracy has been exaggerated? Why or why not? *(Answers will vary.)*
2. Is there a danger of placing too much emphasis on the Christian influence on democracy in the formation of the United States? Why or why not? *(Answers will vary.)*

### Week 4

#### Democracy

1. Stark spends a great deal of time addressing questions about capitalism and its Christian affinities. Whether you agree with Stark or not, do you find his arguments convincing? Why or why not? *(See material in Part II of The Victory of Reason.)*
2. How did Christianity contribute to democracy in America? *(Answers will vary, but in general Christianity influenced the foundation of America significantly. Whether or not this makes the origins of America a "Christian nation" or not is debated, but the influence is, nevertheless, very real. Look for broad answers, but for an overview see chapter 8 of Christianity On Trial.)*
3. What do you think democracy would look like in the world if Christianity had never existed? What political ideologies might countries like the United States follow? Would the general trend for the world be better or worse? *(Answers will vary, but obviously without the influence of Christianity many benefits the world has reaped would be lost.)*

### Week 5

#### Social Justice

1. What is social justice? *(Broadly speaking, social justice relates to bringing justice to society. If things are not right (unjust), then social justice should seek to make them right (just) by active engagement in culture. Examples of social justice causes can include civil rights, women's rights, matters relating to the sanctity of human life, outreach to help the poor, bioethics matters, involvement in stopping human trafficking, and even environmental stewardship.)*