Lesson 1: Jesus—Yes! Christianity—No!

The First purpose of this Leader's Guide

The first purpose of this Leader's Guide is to share with you how Christ comes into our midst today when we unite in faith and pray Bible-based prayers. As faith in His presence spreads, your whole church plus many other churches can share the joy, the grace and the power of His Holy Presence. We need to ask ourselves a heart searching question: "Is prayer changing our form of Christianity into the likeness of Christ?" If your answer is "no," then study on!

During the sixties, one of the placards carried by protesters said, "Jesus—Yes! Christianity—No!" Let's face it, the Christianity most people have observed falls tragically short of demonstrating the attractive love, gentle humility, powerful grace and beautiful holiness that characterize the Lord Jesus Christ.

Evidence that Christianity today is seriously short of Christlikeness is not hard to find. The percentage of Christian marriages ending in divorce is about the same as in the rest of American society. In fact, a 19-year-old girl once asked Dr. James Dobson, "With all the broken marriages and heartaches, is it worth it to get married?"

Churches are splitting apart in alarming numbers. By one estimate, 10,000 churches in North America split every year. One missionary went to the field supported by seven churches, but four of these suffered such devastating splits that they could not continue their support. One church had only twenty people left in a three million dollar facility! A fifth supporting church was losing so many people following a split that their support was also in jeopardy.

Ethics in the American Christian community are about the same as in the unbelieving world. A Gallup poll reported:

While religion is highly popular in America, it is to a large extent superficial; It does not change people's lives to the degree one would expect from their level of professed faith. In ethical behavior, there is very little difference between the churched and the unchurched.[1](https://www.praywithchrist.org/leaders-jesus-yes-christianity-no#endnote)

From our surveys, we have found that only about ten percent of the population have what we call 'transforming faith.[2](https://www.praywithchrist.org/leaders-jesus-yes-christianity-no#endnote)

We need to discover prayer fellowship that tunes into the presence of God and transforms lives. When faith in Christ is no longer binding our marriages and churches together in the grace and power of Christ's holy life of love, something must be done.

Still there is hope. The Gallup organization research on prayer confirmed this. As news of their survey spread across the country, letters began coming in, revealing a widespread hunger for a life-transforming relationship with God through prayer. Notice the questions they asked:

Is prayer changing me? Is it making a difference in my life? Is my prayer life bringing me closer to God? Am I moving toward giving control of my life to God? Do I consistently try to tune into His presence? Are my prayers helping me deal with my own sense of self-worth? Are they helping me develop a more loving relationship with others?[3](https://www.praywithchrist.org/leaders-jesus-yes-christianity-no#endnote)

Poloma and Gallup observed:

The true measure of prayer is whether it transforms the old self into the new self, and changes the way we relate to others...**If we allow God the opportunity to come into our private worlds bringing with Him the good news of his personal love, we will never be the same. His love will change us."**[3](https://www.praywithchrist.org/leaders-jesus-yes-christianity-no#endnote)**(Emphasis added)**

We are reminded that coming to God need not be a complicated task. We need only recognize that God is near, seeking to lead and empower us.[4](https://www.praywithchrist.org/leaders-jesus-yes-christianity-no#endnote)

The Second Purpose of this Leader's Guide

The second purpose of this Leader's Guide is to share with you insights and practical steps to build prayer groups or partnerships that give Christ the opportunity to come into your marriage, your circle of Christian friends, and your whole church family "bringing with Him the good news of His personal love" that changes lives and builds a new kind of community, and then to be able to communicate and teach these truths to your circle of influence for the Lord.

RESEARCH FOR INSTRUCTOR:

1. Using your concordance, look up the following key words in both Old and New Testaments:
   * Pray/Prayer/Praying
   * Faith/Faithful/Faithfulness
2. Write down key verses. Using the cross-references in your Bible, look up any related verses.
3. Search these verses prayerfully, asking and expecting the Lord to reveal new insights to you.

POINTS FOR DISCUSSION:

* Let's talk about the questions people are asking:
* Is prayer changing me?
* Is it making a difference in my life?
* Is my prayer life bringing me closer to God?
* Do I know God better than I did a year ago?
* Am I moving toward giving control of my life to God?
* Do I consistently try to tune into His presence?
* Are my prayers helping me deal with my own sense of self-worth?
* Are they helping me develop a more loving relationship with others?

Endnotes

1 George Gallup, "George Gallup Looks at Religion in America," RTS Ministry, Vol. 11, No. 2, Summer 1992, 10.

2 ibid.

3 Margaret M. Poloma and George H. Gallup, Jr., *Varieties of Prayer*, A Survey Report, (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1992), 131.

4 ibid.