

Church Leader's Guide For Youth Groups, Adult Education, and Small Groups

Welcome to ChristianCourses, a fully online, nonacademic credit Christian university with content from leading biblical and theological educators.

These courses can easily be used in a small group or in church education settings. The following suggestions will help you begin and facilitate discipleship and training programs. Sample program schedules, announcements, and bulletin inserts are included in the Appendices to this document.

Step 1: Select courses and create user accounts.

ChristianCourses offers individual courses and programs to meet a variety of ministry needs. To determine the best fit for your group, carefully review the course descriptions online. A complete description for each course can be found by clicking *Read more* at the end of each course introduction.

Each participant will need to create an individual user account by going to the ChristianCourses.com homepage. New users can click on the *Get started here* button to obtain additional information for creating a free student account and beginning their studies.

Step 2: Organize and prepare for group meetings.

Determine and announce a start and completion date for the course or series. A minimum of one lesson per week is suggested in order to maintain a reasonable schedule. Reference Appendices 2 and 3 for sample course schedules.

Prior to the first group meeting, the course facilitator should carefully review all content in the lesson for the week. The facilitator is also encouraged to enroll in and complete the *Group Dynamics* course, which can be found in the *First Steps in Effective Leadership* track. This course will assist the facilitator with the various group dynamics and issues that he/she may experience during the study.

Please see the promotion sequence in Appendix 1 for more detailed ideas.

Step 3: Facilitate group meetings.

The step-by-step approach to all ChristianCourses lessons will guide facilitators and students through the course to ensure that all are well prepared for group meetings. The following options are available to assist facilitators in leading the courses.

Facilitation Option 1:

Provide a brief overview of the lesson content (10 to 20 minutes) to ensure that those who were unable to complete the suggested outside study are able to participate. Utilize the resources that are a part of the ChristianCourses lesson as a part of the overview. Examples of available resources include the following:

- ▶ The Bible Survey courses include a basic Bible commentary that can be referenced for additional ideas and notes.
- ▶ Many of the courses have multimedia learning activities that can be printed and handed out or viewed as a group on the Internet.
- ▶ There are numerous charts and maps throughout the courses that can be printed for distribution and discussion.
- ▶ Each lesson includes a lecture transcript. Participants should be encouraged to print the lesson transcript and bring it to class, including questions or comments related to the lecture. Provide extra copies of the transcript.
- ▶ Utilize the Bible reference links to read and/or listen to select Bible passages for discussion. Go to <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio> for an audio Bible reading by Max MacLean.

Encourage additional class discussion and participation once you have completed the lesson overview. Some excellent sources of topics for class discussion include:

- ▶ Lesson goals
- ▶ Discussion and journal questions
- ▶ Passages of Scripture related to the lesson (utilizing the online commentary)
- ▶ Lesson reading requirements
- ▶ Brief audio or video segments

Use the remainder of the class time for discussion. At the end of your discussion, announce the lesson for the following week and encourage the group to review it prior to the group meeting. Close in a time of prayer.

Facilitation Option 2:

Utilize an Internet-connected computer and projector to show portions or all of the lesson video, which can replace a portion or all of the lesson overview mentioned in Option 1.

Although some lessons are 30 minutes or more in length, consider breaking the lecture into short video segments of 10 minutes or less followed by discussion questions related to the video segment. In this format, 3 or 4 video segments can be handled during a typical meeting. Use the “full screen” setting when viewing videos to ensure that the video is visible to the participants.

If an Internet connection is not convenient, some courses are also available for download or on CD or DVD.

Use the remainder of the class time for discussion. At the end of your discussion, announce the lesson for the following week and encourage the group to review it prior to the group meeting. Close in a time of prayer.

Lesson Ideas Community Forum

You can share your creative ideas or lesson plans with others by using the *Contact Us* tab at ChristianCourses.com (bottom of page). We often post submitted ideas on the website that may benefit other participants.

Appendix 1 – Promotion Sequence and Resources for Launching

The ChristianCourses studies are designed to meet learners at every level, from beginner to advanced Bible student. This approach should be emphasized in all communication in order to ensure maximum participation.

Prior to launching ChristianCourses Connection, the ministry leadership team should become well acquainted with the courses and curriculum. The ChristianCourses content is unique and is filled with hundreds of multimedia enhancements. Familiarity with the content ensures the enthusiasm from the ministry leadership needed in promoting the program.

The following is a suggested promotion sequence, followed by links to printable bulletin announcements and promotional posters.

Prior to Launch

3 to 6 months prior:

- ▶ Meet with the ministry leadership to review the course content and selected study tracks to ensure full support of the effort.
- ▶ Identify a launch date for ChristianCourses Connection and solicit small- group and adult-education leaders as course facilitators. Course facilitators should begin their own study at least three months before the launch and should meet together biweekly to share ideas and support one another. Encourage facilitators to take the *Group Dynamics* course at ChristianCourses.com in order to be trained in leading their group.
- ▶ Develop a group of prayer supporters who meet regularly for updates and to pray for the ministry.
- ▶ Secure facilities and manage any other logistics needed to launch and facilitate the program.

1 to 2 months prior:

- ▶ Place an announcement in the church bulletin, e-newsletter, and other media communications such as web, email blast, social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, etc.
- ▶ Place promotional posters around the church.
- ▶ Commission a group of 10 or more “buzz agents,” either leaders or participants, to become familiar with ChristianCourses and to invite others to participate. A personal invitation is very effective in bringing people to the launch as well as in building spiritual community.

1 month prior:

- ▶ Invite friends and neighbors to attend and to promote the event with posters and bulletin inserts at their local churches. Consider inviting non-Christians who may benefit from courses such as *World Religions Basics* and *Worldview Basics* that examine the foundations of the Christian faith.
- ▶ Make weekly ChristianCourses announcements from the pulpit beginning one month prior to the launch.
- ▶ Ask each participant to bring at least one friend to the official launch.



Launch Date

The week of the launch, it is very helpful to set aside time during or after the church service for an informational and commissioning service.

- ▶ Reference the bulletin insert with the course options and ask that people visit the website for more information. Note that maximum benefit will be attained by supplementing individual study with participation in an adult education class or small group.
- ▶ Using a computer connected to the Internet and a projector, display the ChristianCourses website. Demonstrate the easy-to-use features as you browse through portions of the *Genesis–Leviticus* course (Lesson One), *SoulCare 101* (Lesson One), or another course or lesson of interest.
- ▶ ChristianCourses Connection can also be launched in conjunction with a sermon series on a book of the Bible. A suggested sermon topic is “The Transformation of Your Mind” with the reference Romans 12:1-2. A PowerPoint template is available at [PowerPoint Sermons](#) and sermon ideas are available at [Sermon Central](#). This teaching encourages people to learn more about the Bible book presented in the sermon through their personal or group study.
- ▶ Encourage the congregation to visit the [ChristianCourses.com](#) website during the week and commit to attend one of the adult education classes or small-group opportunities the following week.
- ▶ Pray for God’s wisdom and guidance as your congregation begins this spiritual journey together to go deeper in His Word through the ChristianCourses Connection program.



Appendix 2—Suggested Annual Calendar

Level 1: Repeat yearly for newcomers*

*Instruct newcomers to go to ChristianCourses.com to create an account and review courses.

Series Introductions/Tutorials/Goals	Week 1
How to Study the Bible	Weeks 2-4
Getting to Know the Bible.	Month 2
Developing Your Spiritual Life.	Month 2
World Religions Basics: A Comparison of Major World Religions	Month 3
Worldview Basics: A Comparison of Major Worldviews	Month 3
Old Testament Basics.	Months 4-7
New Testament Basics	Months 8-11
Theology Basics	Month 12

Level 2: Repeat yearly; Level 1 prerequisite suggested

Old Testament Survey	12 courses; one per month
New Testament Survey	12 courses; one per month

Level 3: Select individual courses or tracks from ChristianCourses Catalog

When participants have completed Levels 1 and 2, they will have an excellent foundation for further study. Any course from the tracks below can be used as a single course for a short-term study. ChristianCourses offers more than 130 courses, providing many years of theological studies for dedicated students.

SoulCare: Shepherding (2 months per course)

- SoulCare Foundations 101: The Basic Model
- SoulCare Foundations 201: Understanding People and Problems
- SoulCare Foundations 301: Provisions and Practices
- SoulCare Foundations 401: Community—Where SoulCare Happens
- Ministering to People in Pain

Basic Theology/Apologetics (1 month per course)

- Theology Basics
- 10 Reasons to Believe in the Christian Faith
- 10 Reasons to Believe in a God Who Allows Suffering
- 10 Reasons to Believe God Became a Man
- 10 Reasons to Believe in the Existence of God
- 10 Reasons to Believe in Life After Death
- 10 Reasons to Believe Real Christians Can Look Like They're Not



- 10 Reasons to Believe in the Resurrection
- 10 Reasons to Believe in Christ Rather Than Religion
- 10 Reasons to Believe in the Bible
- The Miracles of Jesus

First Steps in Christian Ministry and Leadership

- Introduction to Public Speaking1 week
- SoulCare Foundations 101: The Basic Model1 month
- Leading from Your Strengths2 weeks
- Foundations of Effective Leadership1 month
- The Four A's of Leadership for Women1 month
- Group Dynamics1 month

Other Tracks (see catalog)

- Teacher Training 1
- Teacher Training 2
- Teacher Training 3
- Old Testament (Basic)
- Old Testament (Advanced)
- New Testament (Basic)
- New Testament (Advanced)
- Evangelism/Global Outreach
- Advanced Discipleship





Appendix 3 Suggested 2-3 Month Calendar (8 and 12 Week Segments)

Level 1: Repeat yearly for newcomers*

*Instruct newcomers to go to ChristianCourses.com to create an account and review courses.

Series Introductions/Tutorials/Goals	Week 1
How to Study the Bible	Weeks 2-4
Getting to Know the Bible.	Weeks 5-8
Developing Your Spiritual Life.	Weeks 9-12
World Religions Basics: A Comparison of Major World Religions	Weeks 1-4
Worldview Basics: A Comparison of Major Worldviews:	Weeks 5-8
Theology Basics	Weeks 9-12
Old Testament Basics (Part 1)	Weeks 1-8
Old Testament Basics (Part 2)	Weeks 9-12
New Testament Basics (Part 1)	Weeks 1-8
New Testament Basics (Part 2)	Weeks 9-12

Level 2: Repeat yearly; Level 1 prerequisite suggested

Old Testament Survey	12 courses; one per month
New Testament Survey	12 courses; one per month

Level 3: Select individual courses or tracks from ChristianCourses Catalog

When participants have completed Levels 1 and 2, they will have an excellent foundation for further study. Any course from the tracks below can be used as a single course for a short-term study. ChristianCourses offers more than 130 courses, providing many years of theological studies for dedicated students.

SoulCare: Shepherding (2 months per course)

- SoulCare Foundations 101: The Basic Model
- SoulCare Foundations 201: Understanding People and Problems
- SoulCare Foundations 301: Provisions and Practices
- SoulCare Foundations 401: Community—Where SoulCare Happens
- Ministering to People in Pain





Basic Theology/Apologetics (1 month per course)

Theology Basics

- 10 Reasons to Believe in the Christian Faith
- 10 Reasons to Believe in a God Who Allows Suffering
- 10 Reasons to Believe God Became a Man
- 10 Reasons to Believe in the Existence of God
- 10 Reasons to Believe in Life After Death
- 10 Reasons to Believe Real Christians Can Look Like They're Not
- 10 Reasons to Believe in the Resurrection
- 10 Reasons to Believe in Christ Rather Than Religion
- 10 Reasons to Believe in the Bible
- The Miracles of Jesus

First Steps in Christian Ministry and Leadership

- Introduction to Public Speaking1 Week
- SoulCare Foundations 101: The Basic Model4 Weeks
- Leading from Your Strengths2 Weeks
- Foundations of Effective Leadership4 Weeks
- The Four A's of Leadership for Women4 Weeks
- Group Dynamics4 Weeks

Other Tracks (see catalog)

- Teacher Training 1
- Teacher Training 2
- Teacher Training 3
- Old Testament (Basic)
- Old Testament (Advanced)
- New Testament (Basic)
- New Testament (Advanced)
- Evangelism/Global Outreach
- Advanced Discipleship



Endorsements and Testimonials

Professional Endorsements:

“I’ve spent my life in theological education as a president and as a professor. And one of the desires of my heart is that everybody gets a chance to study the Bible in whatever depth they want. I’ve found a tool that does that. It’s called Christian University GlobalNet, and its companion website ChristianCourses.com. I recommend it to you highly as an educator, as a Christian, and as somebody who wants you to go as deep as you can go in the Word of God.”

Haddon Robinson, Ph.D., Harold John Ockenga Distinguished Professor of Preaching and former President, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

“Christiancourses.com is a wonderful way to join the thousands around the globe who are deeply desirous of going deeper into the Scriptures and the teaching truths that our Lord has left us. Not only has it fortified the lives of believers to go on to new heights with their Lord, but it has also been the means by which new service for the Lord can be effected, for after one has experienced the joy of learning about their Lord and His Word, the next thing you want to do is to share it with someone else. These courses are uniquely suited to do just that as they provide a new delivery means and rich content. Enjoy yourself and your walk with the Lord up to the hilt by choosing to study with these courses.”

Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., Ph.D., President Emeritus Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

“I think most of us would agree that the Internet is certainly a mixed bag. There’s a lot on the Internet that we think is pretty bad. But one of the great gifts that the Internet has provided is Christian University GlobalNet and ChristianCourses.com. The opportunity to study the Scriptures, to come in on a FastTrax course, or to stay with a long-term study of the Scriptures, all of that is available to you.”

Alice Matthews, Ph.D., Professor Emerita of Educational and Women’s Ministries and former Academic Dean at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

Student Testimonials:

“I was quite surprised when I was first shown this site by a preacher friend of mine. Thank you so much for putting this very much needed site together. I happen to be a pastor of a small congregation, and we cannot afford to pay for the education that I need. I have been to seminaries, and I thank God through Jesus Christ for each and every one of them. At last I get to study the two things I really need, and that is public speaking and the Bible, at my pace. Just the first lesson has given me a new drive, a new perspective, and has enhanced what I already thought I knew. Thank you so very much.” (Student)

“I really love this site! I believe God is connecting and healing His people through this ministry. I love to do courses and research God’s Word. I love to learn. I would truly love to continue to see more on how to counsel others. God always brings the hurting my way. So if we could continue in the counseling with Scriptures, that would help me. Keep up the great job!” (Student)

“I just wanted to say thank you to whoever keeps this website up and running. What a *wonderful* tool to learn more about who I am as a Christian and to learn more about my Father in heaven! I have wanted to go to



seminary for a long time, but I cannot afford it right now. This wonderful site has become a place for me to continue learning and knowing God without having to pay the cost of tuition. Thank you so, so much for this wonderful service! I have just completed my first lesson, and I can't wait to learn more and finish my first course. Thank you, thank you, thank you! God bless you.” (Student)

