

CoreGroup Guide | Christian In Name Only - Part 2

Written by Jenny Huffman and Christopher Burford

From Pastor Charity

If you haven't done so already, please take a moment to invite your group to our upcoming **One CoreGroup One Day** event.

- Date: Tuesday, May 5, 2026
- Time: 6:30-8:30pm
- Location: McCausland Site
- Theme: Ours to Own

This is going to be an awesome night of food, worship, community, prizes, and so much more. Plus, if we hit 350 sign-ups, I will be dressing up as Tina Turner and singing Proud Mary. You don't want to miss this! Participants can sign up [HERE](#) before leaving your group today.

Welcome

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the word [Distortion](#) as, "The act of twisting or altering something out of its true, natural, or original state." Synonyms include words like twist, slant, skew, and wrap, as well as misrepresent, falsify, deform, disfigure, and manipulate.

As we move into the second week of our sermon series called *Christian in Name Only*, we will be discussing some of the most damaging ways that "Christians" across our country distort who Jesus is and what he stands for to promote their own agendas. Today we begin with a distortion that is, unfortunately, all around us right now: Using Christianity to justify violence, when in fact, Jesus practiced and preached non-violence. Now is the time to reclaim this distorted narrative and get back to the heart of what it means to be Christian!

Opening Prayer

Lord, thank you for this opportunity to gather together once again. Some of us are here today feeling worn out and weary from the world we live in. Some of us feel angry and defensive, ready to fight. Some of us feel burned and bitter, exhausted after yet another fruitless battle. Some of us just feel helpless and hopeless, unsure of where we go from here.

Forgive us, Lord, for the times we forget who You are, and the ways You are always working for what is good and right in this world. Help us to lean into our identity as Christ-followers, in name and in action. Help us to learn from each other, to collectively witness all of the ways you are already leading us, guiding us, and strengthening us. Help us to stay humble and open to your nudging today. It's in your powerful, and peaceful, name we pray, Amen.

Ice Breaker

When things start to feel especially tense and the temperature starts to rise, what is your favorite way to calm down and cool down, to blow off some steam, so to speak?

The Head

Hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the Israelite people faced a great challenge. The powerful Assyrian empire was threatening to take over Israel and it looked like a devastating military battle was imminent. The king believed that God wanted them to go to war, but the prophets pushed back on this idea. Read these verses from the Book of Isaiah to learn more.

Isaiah 2:4

*God will judge between the nations,
and settle disputes of mighty nations.
Then they will beat their swords into iron plows
and their spears into pruning tools.
Nation will not take up sword against nation;
They will no longer learn how to make war.*

- If not war, what does God desire from God's people, according to this scripture?
- We don't often use swords and spears to fight our battles today, but what weapons do we use to bring harm to each other?
- How do humans learn how to make war?

Isaiah 11:6 and 11:9

*The wolf will live with the lamb,
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat;
the calf and the young lion will feed together,
and a little child will lead them.*

*They won't harm or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain.
The earth will surely be filled with the knowledge of the Lord,
just as the water covers the sea.*

- Who is the wolf and who is the lamb, and what do the rest of these animals represent?
- Why is Jesus described as a little child in this verse, and not one of the other more powerful or mighty attributes of the Son of God?
- How would you describe the "knowledge of the Lord" that will cover the earth?

The Heart

Information is available to us lightning fast these days and people in positions of power and influence do not hesitate to use that technology to distort the truth. Religious language is used to justify war, twisted theology is used to promote hate, false teachings online are used to spread fear, aggression, hypocrisy, and lies. Sometimes it all just feels like too much!

- When you scroll social media and/or watch the news, what feelings bubble up for you?
- Aside from living in a world with no war, what does "peace" actually look like?
- How does God's vision of peace compare to your own?
- What challenges do you face when it comes to choosing peace over violence?

The Hands

One of Jesus' most famous collections of teachings comes from the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5-7. It is here that we really come to understand the life Jesus desires for us. This is especially evident in the Beatitudes, a series of declarations or blessings from Jesus. For example, Matthew 5:9 says, "Happy are people who make peace because they will be called God's children." In other versions it says, "Blessed are the peacemakers." In a world so consumed by violence, what does it look like to be makers of peace?

- What did Jesus model for us in his life, ministry, and teaching during his time on earth?
- When a Christian-in-name-only leaves you feeling some sort of way, how will you actively resist violence, in yourself and in others?
- How will you work towards peace instead?
- What invitation can you extend to someone who has been burned by the church?

Closing Prayer

As time and technology allow, listen to this song and meditate on the words together as a group:

"Lord I Need You" by Matt Maher

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LuvfMDhTyMA>

Lord we need you, oh we need you.
Every hour we need you.
Our one defense, our righteousness;
Oh God how we need you.
Amen.

Going Deeper

The memory verse for this series is 1 Peter 2:9 from the Common English Bible (CEB):

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people who are God's own possession. You have become this people so that you may speak of the wonderful acts of the one who called you out of the darkness into his amazing light."

Here are three simple ways to practice memorizing a verse:

1. **Write it** (one time a day on a notecard, in your notes app, or on your mirror).
2. **Say it out loud** (at the same time daily - driving, brushing teeth, before bed).
3. **Pray it** (turn the verse into a one sentence prayer for yourself or someone you love).