

FOR THE LOVE OF GOD + -

HOW TO JUDGE THE CHURCH: A MUSICAL ANALOGY

(You may want to use this lesson as the final, summary lesson in a series, after having looked at several other segments from the documentary covering both the “better” and “worse” of Christian history.)

This segment comes from **EPISODE 1: WAR + PEACE.**

From Jesus’ command to “love your enemies” to the idea of “holy war” is a giant leap. Yet from the Old Testament through to the Crusades and the inquisitions, Christian history is full of violence. Has Christianity been a major contributor to war? How have the followers of a crucified leader managed to get things so wrong? And what difference has it made when they have followed his example of peace-making and non-violence? Using a musical analogy, this segment holds up the beautiful “composition” Jesus wrote and that has had lasting resonance, despite the fact that his followers have not always “played in tune” with his teachings.



THEME QUESTION

Is it right to judge a religion or belief system based on the actions of its adherents? Why or why not?



ENGAGE

1. Discuss in small groups:
 - a. Do you play, or have you ever played, a musical instrument? If so, which one?
 - b. Describe how well you played this instrument in the first month after taking it up.
 - c. Have you ever given a really bad performance? Explain what happened.
2. Read this article, “[Five of the worst ‘SNL’ musical performances](#)” ([cpx.video/snl](#)). Which stands out to you as the worst, and why?
3. Should we judge the quality of a song based on a bad performance?

UNDERSTAND AND EVALUATE



WATCH the segment: “How to judge the church: A musical analogy”

(cpx.video/cello)

1. Contrast the performances of the professional cellist and John Dickson. What is the point the segment is trying to make with this musical analogy?



2. Thinking back to other segments you have studied, in what ways have Christians played “out of tune” with Jesus?
3. What are some examples of when Christians have played Jesus’ tune well?
4. John Dickson says that Jesus’ “ethic of love has given us much of what we value most in the world today”. What are some of these things?
5. On the line below, mark to what extent you agree with the presenters that the religion of Jesus Christ shouldn’t be dismissed on account of the many sins of his followers. Explain your response.



Disagree



Agree

BIBLE FOCUS

READ Luke 6:27-31, Matthew 6:19-21, and Matthew 23:1-12.

1. Summarise what these verses teach about the “composition” Jesus wrote.
2. In what way is this composition “beautiful”?
3. In what way might this composition be controversial?
4. What would be the impact on the world if more people played in tune with these teachings of Jesus?

APPLY

1. Read the following comment from online user “Mitor the Bold”, written several years ago in response to one of the Centre for Public Christianity’s articles. Write a response to Mitor’s comment, making references to the Bible verses above and the musical analogy from this lesson.

THE BIBLE HAS INSPIRED GENOCIDE, TORTURE, AND MURDER. IT HAS INSPIRED COVER-UPS AND PAEDOPHILES, RACE HATRED, HOMOPHOBIA, AND MISOGYNY. IT CONTINUES TO FUEL ALL THESE THINGS IN MANY PLACES AROUND THE WORLD. THERE IS NOTHING “BEAUTIFUL AND POSITIVE” ABOUT THE BIBLE – IT IS A BOOK OVERFLOWING WITH HATRED, PETTY JEALOUSY, REVENGE, AND SICKENING VIOLENCE.

2. What is one new thing you’ve learnt studying *For the Love of God* that you’d like to keep reflecting on?

EXTEND

1. Read this article from John Dickson, “[Does religion unite or divide us?](#)” ([cpx.video/unite](#)). In what ways do the ideals of Christianity both unite and divide?
2. Take a “Guided Tour” of one of the following episodes of *For the Love of God*, and write down three new things you learnt or stood out to you:
 - a. [War + Peace \(cpx.video/tour1\)](#)
 - b. [Rights + Wrongs \(cpx.video/tour2\)](#)
 - c. [Rich + Poor \(cpx.video/tour3\)](#)
 - d. [Power + Humility \(cpx.video/tour4\)](#)