

## Religion 20 - Ethics: Contemporary Discipleship II

### *Discerning How to Follow Jesus in a Complex World*

Our faith formation program in Grades 9 - 12 is designed to engage students on a deeper level regarding who they are in God's story. This is a very personal journey of discovery for each student as they "*Learn, to shape God's world.*" While it isn't always a comfortable or easy journey, it is a significant one as they are asked to research biblically, think critically, and love God, others, and His creation *more*.

#### WHAT IS IT?

**Contemporary Discipleship II - *Discerning how to follow Jesus in a Complex World*** explores current and sometimes controversial topics through a series of presentations and mentored dialogues. We begin with the Old Testament, examining the Law and teaching of the Prophets. Then move into the New Testament to examine what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount ( Matthew 5-7) and what we learn from the story of His Transfiguration, where God says: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!" (Mark 9:7b). Both these passages will encourage and equip students to put Jesus' words into practice (Matthew 7:24). Each student's personal points of reference - their reading of the Bible, their parents' and churches' perspectives - are expected to be brought into the review process **and respected**. In the end, students are asked to reflect on what they learned about themselves, others, and their Christian faith through the exploration of the topic.

#### WHY DO WE HAVE THIS COURSE?

Facing contemporary social, political, and ethical questions head-on in a safe and caring environment is part of our secondary school experience based on three lessons:

1. High School students express an explicit and authentic desire to explore topics that are or will affect them going forward. In a 2017 CCS survey, they specifically stated: "*We want more space to discuss topics that are important to us!*" Quite frankly, in most cases, they are already engaged in dialogue on these topics with peers and social media. Our intent at CCS is to provide a biblically-based format to shape these discussions in the context of faith.
2. CCS Alumni have repeatedly told us that they wish Christian high school had better prepared them for the discussions, challenges, and topics they encountered in university and in their daily lives.
3. Research shows that a previous lack of intentional engagement on topics of social, moral, or religious significance by Christian adults with young people has contributed to the decline of current generations identifying with the church or the Christian faith. At CCS, we believe it is important that we engage students in these crucial conversations *before* graduation in an attempt to reverse this trend.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Barna Group: <https://www.barna.com/research/six-reasons-young-christians-leave-church/>

More than comparing and contrasting details or perspectives, the process in our Contemporary Discipleship class directs students to delve deeper into their Bible and Church traditions, encourages conversations at home and at Church, and challenges them to faithfully follow Jesus in our complex world. Use the email below if you would like more information on the process followed and to see the early feedback.

## WHAT WILL OUR TOPICS BE?

Students will be involved in selecting the topics for conversation - and what they choose probably won't be too surprising to parents. Most will be drawn from headlines, sermons, chats with friends, family experiences, social media posts, and personal curiosities. Suffice to say, students through today's personal technology, are bombarded with information at an unprecedented level. Getting them to think about and address these topics within the framework of our Christian identity is the challenging goal before us.

Topics in previous classes have included (but are not limited to): Creation & Evolution; Abortion; Welfare; Divorce; Sexual Orientation / Gender Identity (SOGI); Women in Church Office; Sex, Purity & Marriage, etc. This is by no means a complete, limited, or exhaustive list.

***Parents and guardians will be made aware of the schedule of topics for the class. If they do not wish their student to participate in a particular discussion, alternate activities will be provided for their student during the correlating class periods covering the topic.***

## HOW WILL CLASS DISCUSSIONS BE HANDLED?

We recognize that CCS is a diverse Christian community, made up of more than 125 congregations representing nearly 20 denominations plus many independent churches. As students begin to engage these topics from their distinct traditions, it will become apparent that not everyone thinks or responds alike. As part of mentoring and monitoring a safe space for personal expression and constructive dialogue, our instructors will prioritize mutual respect between participants. This includes their language, behaviour, questions, and other expressions. Our objective will be to guide students carefully through the process so that they can come to think critically, live by the power of the Holy Spirit, and articulate a position that is rooted in the Bible.

Ultimately, these guided and practiced discussions will prepare students to talk and work with others - whether Christians or not - in ways that demonstrate their abilities to:

1. Rooted in God's story
2. Respect diverse opinions
3. Reflect the image of Christ

## FINALLY...

As you can see, this engagement strategy is a process rather than a single destination. Please pray for us as we partner with home and Church to make disciples.

If you have any encouragement, questions or concerns please email [info@calgarychristianschool.com](mailto:info@calgarychristianschool.com).