

Influencers

Biblical Guide for Engaging Culture



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STRONG[®]

curriculum

A world weak on truth needs a strong, trustworthy message. STRONG Curriculum builds stronger churches by teaching all Scripture to produce spiritually mature believers who measure up to the stature of Christ.

A Plan You Can Trust

The Bible has the answers to what students need most. No other book or philosophy contains God's power to save and transform lives. Because of this, we've made it our unwavering commitment to build Strong Students upon the sure foundation of God's Word. With this curriculum, your church can develop teens who will be strong defenders of the faith.

The Strong Students scope and sequence is designed around the seven teaching aims Jesus modeled in His ministry. Since these are Jesus' aims, teachers can be confident in the aims' effectiveness and purpose. Every lesson in the Strong Students scope and sequence addresses at least one of Jesus' teaching aims.

Every lesson also focuses on students' needs. We understand the challenge of teaching the Bible to today's teens because of four barriers culture has pushed on them:

- Struggles with identity
- Subjective view of truth
- Hope in a social utopia
- Belief that a career and wealth guarantee happiness

Strong Students takes care of the tough part for you by striking at the foundation of these barriers and providing a Biblical response to each one. With Strong Students, you can concentrate on communicating to your teens and helping them grow into strong believers in Christ without worrying whether you are effectively addressing the philosophies competing for their minds.

Look for the **BuildUP** icons in the table of contents and on the first page of each lesson.

JESUS' TEACHING AIMS



BELIEVE THE GOSPEL. Jesus taught His students to trust in Him alone for salvation and to share the gospel with others. This aim is obviously fundamental to all the rest



UNDERSTAND BIBLICAL ETHICS. Jesus instructed His students to live according to moral values. These values provided them with the tools to make wise decisions.



INTERNALIZE GODLINESS. Jesus taught His followers to be godly on the inside. He warned them not to become like the Pharisees, with a mere outward appearance of godliness.



LEARN DOCTRINE. Jesus knew the importance of teaching His students the truth and identified doctrine as one of the means for spiritual growth. Wishy-washy doctrine leads to faulty practice.



DEVELOP LIFE SKILLS. Jesus taught His followers to meet life's challenges in a way that honored and glorified God. He gave them the skills to navigate those challenges successfully.



UPLIFT OTHERS. Jesus' life was all about others. Leading by example, He taught His followers to be all about others too.

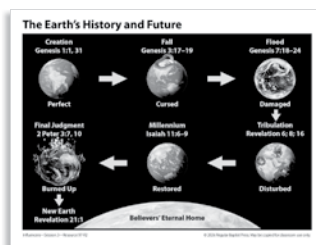
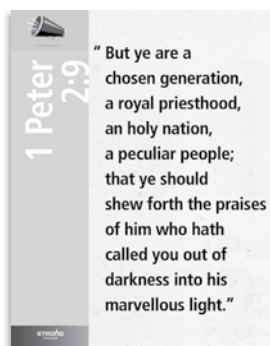


PREPARE TO SERVE. Jesus prepared His followers to serve in the context of local churches that were established soon after His ascension. He emphasized sacrifice and dedication.

This study of current culture provides Biblical answers to present cultural issues. Students will gain confidence in becoming godly influencers on their culture, pointing people to God's truth and grace.

Kit Contents

- ☐ Teacher Guide
- ☐ Student Book
Order one book for each student
- ☐ Card with online download code
Includes videos, PowerPoint, resources, Home Connection Tool, and additional teacher resources
- ☐ Verse Poster
- ☐ Posters



Ordering Information

All materials are available from Regular Baptist Press.

- Web: www.StrongCurriculum.com
- E-mail: orders@rbpstore.org
- Toll-free orders in the United States: 1-800-727-4440
- Fax: 1-847-843-3757
- Canada: Contact your distributor.

The Doctrinal Basis of Our Curriculum

A more detailed statement with references is available upon request.

- The verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures
- Only one true God
- The Trinity of the Godhead
- The Holy Spirit and His ministry
- The personality of Satan
- The Genesis account of creation
- Original sin and the fall of man
- The virgin birth of Christ
- Salvation through faith in the shed blood of Christ
- The bodily resurrection and priesthood of Christ
- Grace and the new birth
- Justification by faith
- Sanctification of the believer
- The security of the believer
- The church
- The ordinances of the local church: baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper
- Biblical separation—ecclesiastical and personal
- Obedience to civil government
- The place of Israel
- The pretribulation rapture of the church
- The premillennial return of Christ
- The millennial reign of Christ
- Eternal glory in Heaven for the righteous
- Eternal torment in Hell for the wicked

How to Teach **STRONG STUDENTS** Lessons

Leading a Student to Christ

STRONG STUDENTS has been designed to help you clearly present God's Word to your students. Each lesson will guide students through the Bible, encouraging them to interact with the material and apply it to their lives.

Familiarize yourself with the resources included in the kit and on the download pages so you can maximize your effectiveness in the classroom. The key resources you need are Student Books, the PowerPoint (download), and the Home Connection Tool (download).

Encourage students to use their Student Books during each lesson so they can follow the PowerPoint presentation by taking notes. The words to fill in the blanks are either part of the outline or highlighted in orange in the sentences in the PowerPoint.

Some of the PowerPoint presentations contain additional slides that obviously tie into the teacher guide lessons. Make sure you review the PowerPoint presentations before teaching.

The student books include a daily devotional. Encourage your students to complete them after coming to class.

The Home Connection Tool gives the parents of your students an idea of what you are teaching in class. Consider emailing those to each family represented in your class. You can find them on the downloads page using the code on the download card.

Before Each Lesson

- Read the Scripture Focus passage several times.
- Do the Time with God section of the Student Book to know what your students are studying.
- Memorize the key verses.
- Prepare the materials you will need for each activity.
- Work through the Bible Study section and carefully plan the lesson.
- Plan how you will apply the Bible lesson to your students' lives. Make sure what you say is clear and shows students how they can use the lesson.
- Pray for yourself, your students, and your lesson.

AS A TEACHER, your most important concern is the personal salvation of your students. Find out whether your students know Jesus Christ as their Savior in a way that doesn't introduce doubt in their minds. An easy and gentle way to find this out is to give your students several minutes to write out an answer to a question like, How can a person get to Heaven? Collect their answers and read them during the following week. If any of your students seem confused about salvation, you can present the gospel to them and provide the opportunity for them to receive Christ. If possible, deal with students individually.

The Plan of Salvation

- Everyone is a sinner. No one can live up to God's perfect standard (Romans 3:23).
- Sin's penalty is death (Romans 6:23).
- God loves us and sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to pay for our sin. Christ died in our place (John 3:16; Romans 5:8).
- When a person places his trust in Jesus' payment for sins, Christ becomes his Savior. His sins are forgiven, and he receives God's gift of eternal life (John 1:12; 5:24).
- Everlasting life begins the moment we trust in Jesus (John 3:36).
- After that, nothing we ever do will take us out of God's hand; we are secure (John 10:27–29).
- The experience of the new birth (being born into God's family) is not based on a feeling, but on confidence in God's Word (1 John 5:11, 12).

Encourage students to pray, but explain that prayer does not save a person. Prayer is how we communicate our inward thoughts to God. Ask new believers to explain what they have done and what has happened to them.

Discipleship

Encourage new believers to read the Bible, and explain the importance of prayer. Also explain 1 John 1:9 to them so they can deal with sin in their new Christian life. Make it a priority to follow up with new believers.

Knowing Your Students

Description of Physical, Social, and Emotional Development

- I MAY feel developmentally out of step with my peers—behind or ahead in physical changes—as I experience puberty.
- I MAY be sensitive about my weight and body shape and worry about whether I am normal.
- I AM developing my own sense of identity.
- I AM more interested in and influenced by my peer group than by the adults in my life.
- I MAY be moody, depressed, or anxious about academic or social issues in my life.
- I AM very focused on myself and may feel both high expectations and lack of confidence.
- I AM better able to express feelings through talking, but I tend to respond dramatically, feeling that no one else has ever experienced the same feelings and emotions.
- I DO NOT always exhibit the emotional maturity that matches my more adult-like appearance. I have trouble thinking before acting; sometimes I seem silly and unfocused on the task at hand.

Effective Responses

- Provide emotional and spiritual support and encourage students to develop a strong sense of self as a valuable person created by God.
- Accept students as they are and avoid comparing them to others. Resist stereotyping. Not every tall boy is a basketball player.
- Generate an atmosphere of acceptance and love for all, demonstrating interest and care for each student.
- Create an atmosphere of mutual respect so youth feel they are part of a community.
- Help build genuine relationships by honestly sharing mistakes and life experiences.
- Help students talk through the ramifications of their choices without asking, How could you? What were you thinking?

- Avoid arguments by remaining calm and not engaging in banter over an issue.
- Be patient with the tendency of some youth toward constant personal grooming.

Cognitive (Learning) Development

- I MAY be hesitant to try new things for fear of embarrassing myself in front of my peer group.
- I AM developing new thinking skills and am able to think about multiple options and possibilities.
- I CAN think more deeply and significantly about abstract ideas such as faith.
- I AM developing a stronger sense of right and wrong.
- I MAY be ready to take significant steps in areas of faith and Christian growth.

Effective Instructional Methods

- Create an open and stress-free environment where youth can learn and share concerns in a confidence-building atmosphere.
- Provide background information, a purpose to the lesson, and understanding of the text.
- Combine love, high energy, enthusiasm, and seriousness with engaging ways to present the lesson.
- Use personal stories that illustrate Biblical principles to keep students engaged in learning.
- Provide honest answers to questions.
- Stimulate thinking in areas of salvation and Christian growth.
- Help Christians work through issues of assurance of salvation and to begin studying the Bible for daily decision making.
- Encourage students to articulate Biblical principles of right and wrong that they are learning from God's Word.
- Invite volunteers to look up and read aloud Bible passages. But don't put students on the spot or ask them to do things that make them feel foolish.

SESSION 1

INFLUENCING CULTURE

Scripture Focus

Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 Peter 2:1–12

BuildUP Theme



BELIEVE THE GOSPEL

God calls believers to show His glorious greatness to a culture mired in sin and darkness.

Measurable Response

Students will evaluate their present influence on their culture.

Memory Verse

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Teacher Preparation

- ☐ What does the world think of you? Do they see you as one of them or as different from them? Why?
- ☐ Read 1 Peter 2:1–12. Peter exhorted first-century believers to be different from their culture. And while first-century culture is drastically different from our culture today, Peter’s instructions still apply to us. That’s because in every era since the first century, worldly culture has promoted pleasing and indulging self. Culture always elevates self above God and others.
- ☐ God wants believers to live counter culturally so they might direct unbelievers to consider their lostness and their need for Christ. Your students need to commit to living in the light of the gospel instead of trying to diminish their light to become acceptable to the lost living in spiritual darkness.

Cultural Barrier

This session addresses teens’ struggles with identity. Culture wants them to conform and adapt, to blend in and adopt present-day ideals. But God has called believers to live counter to worldly culture. In Christ, believers are God’s own special people. They serve His purpose in the world by being known for serving others and for focusing on glorifying Him instead of themselves. The world desperately needs teens who build their identity based on their relationship with Christ.

Session Starters

Option 1—Your Favorites

Gather

- Paper and pens.
- Whiteboard and marker.

Steps

1. Organize the students into pairs. Give each student a piece of paper and a pen. Write the following categories on the board: sport, restaurant, vacation spot, dessert, and person.
2. Students write what they think their partner's favorite is for each category.
3. Students exchange papers and circle the answers their partner got right. Students share how well their partners knew them.
4. Discuss knowing about people's favorites.

ASK: What is the most obvious favorite you have?

ASK: Why can others identify it so easily?

5. Transition to the Bible study.

Peter described responsibilities we have as believers. One of those responsibilities is to praise the Lord. We should be so well known for praising the Lord that others would have no problem identifying Him as our favorite Person. Praising and serving God consistently will help us influence our culture for Christ.

Option 2—Who Are You Reflecting?

Gather

- List of well-known characters.

Steps

1. Before class make a list of possible characters (historical and Biblical figures and fictional characters) that all students would recognize. Make sure you choose figures with recognizable traits or actions (e.g., David killing Goliath or George Washington crossing the Delaware).
2. Direct the class to face the front of the room. Choose one student to

stand behind the class so that he or she can't be seen. Silently assign him a character. Choose another student to stand facing the class, so that he or she is the only one who can see the student at the back of the class.

3. As the student in the back acts out a character, the student facing the class must try to mirror his exact actions. By observing only the mirrored actions, the rest of the class tries to guess who is being portrayed. Allow 30–60 seconds. Repeat with different students as time allows

4. Discuss mirroring actions.

ASK: How did interpreting mirrored actions make this game more challenging than normal charades? *The person mirroring the actions might not be following the original actor's exact actions.*

ASK: As you tried to mirror someone's actions, were you tempted to do it your own way? Why or why not?

5. Transition to the Bible study.

We are Christ's representatives in the world. It's part of our mission as believers to show the world what He's like. As we do, we must follow Christ's example as closely as possible rather than relying on our own ways or on examples set by the world. As we mirror His ways and reflect His nature to unbelievers, we effectively influence our culture for Christ.

Bible Study

Peter wrote his first epistle to first-century believers scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Many of his readers were experiencing persecution for their faith. The Roman culture clashed with their Christian beliefs and lifestyle. The Romans sought to silence the Christians' counter-cultural messages of salvation through Christ and devotion to God. Peter's words encouraged believers to rejoice in their connection with Christ and to reject their pagan culture. As they rejoiced in their salvation, they would give themselves opportunities to influence their culture for Christ. Peter's instructions translate to today, giving us a Biblical perspective on living as believers in a culture that is counter to Christianity.

I. Grow by God's Word (1 Peter 2:1–3)

A. Make a radical separation from sin (2:1)

Peter opened chapter 2 of his letter with a call to believers to lay aside specific sins so they might stand out from their culture rather than

blend into it. Earlier in his letter, he had instructed them to love one another fervently with pure hearts (1 Peter 1:22).

READ: 1 Peter 2:1.

The attitudes and actions that Peter identified (2:1) obviously clash with God's desire for believers to love one another (1:22). Peter told his readers to lay aside all malice (wickedness, depravity, or evil conduct), envy (displeasure from another's advantage), all deceit or guile (hypocritical acts), and all evil speaking or slandering (belittling others).

ASK: Where do you see the sins that Peter identifies appearing in today's culture?

"All" in Peter's instructions means "every kind" and "every degree." So, Peter called for a radical separation in all settings and from any kind of evil actions, envy, hypocrisy, and belittling of others. Christians should lay aside such sins whether they are alone, with unbelievers at school, with family members at home, or with other believers at church.

ASK: What reasons might Christian teens give for acting like the world when they are with unsaved friends? *They don't want to be considered weird; they want to get along with everyone; they don't want to hurt friendships; they don't want to be pressed to share or defend their faith.*

Peter didn't leave room for excuses in verse 1. He expected the first-century believers to be radically different than the Romans. God expects the same of believers today. But believers won't be radically different on their own; they need to feed on God's Word.

B. Have an insatiable desire for the Word (2:2, 3)

READ: 1 Peter 2:2. **ASK:** How do newborn babies demonstrate their desire for milk? *They cry out until they are fed and satisfied. They don't give up expressing their need.*

Newborns need as many as eight to twelve feedings in their first few days. They are relentless in their pursuit of milk because it satisfies their hunger and allows them to rest, find strength, and grow. Peter wanted believers' appetites for God's Word to be like a newborn's appetite for milk. Believers should crave God's Word because it causes them to grow as believers, becoming distinct from and effective influences on their culture.

READ: 1 Peter 2:3.

Peter knew by experience that the Lord is "gracious." By "gracious" he meant that what the Lord offers believers through His Word fits their needs. God's Word satisfies believers. They never find God's Word to

"If" carries the sense of "since" in 1 Peter 2:3.

be bitter and detestable. Sin, by contrast, always leaves the believer unsatisfied, disillusioned, and disappointed. Sin's aftertaste will always be bitter and destructive and never sweet and strengthening.

Believers who crave God's Word and "feed" on it regularly will experience the contentment and joy that they never experienced while sinning. Tasting God's Word through thorough study and application of its truths makes believers different from the world. They live satisfied while unbelievers around them go spiritually hungry.

II. Shine Through Spiritual Connections (1 Peter 2:4–8)

Peter jumped to a second metaphor to help believers understand their place in culture. He called each believer a "living stone."

A. Connected to believers (2:5)

READ: 1 Peter 2:5.

Peter called believers "living stones" because they have a spiritual connection as part of the Church, the Body of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23). The Holy Spirit lives in all true believers and spiritually connects them to form a living temple to God (Eph. 2:21). As part of the temple of God, they offer spiritual sacrifices to the Lord. Paul called believers' spiritual sacrifices "living sacrifices."

READ: Romans 12:1, 2.

As God's Word transforms believers' minds and makes them increasingly less like the culture, they give themselves (their bodies) to the Lord as change agents in the world. Believers can live obediently to God's will by the Holy Spirit in them and through their mutual help and support as connected living stones. They obey God in that they live holy lives (1 Peter 1:13–16) and tell the lost about God's greatness. Their salvation in Christ makes their sacrifice of themselves possible and acceptable to God (2:5).

ASK: How has God's desire to change the culture through you affected how you view your purpose in this world?

B. Connected to Christ (2:4, 6–8)

READ: 1 Peter 2:4.

The Jews rejected Christ as a liar and a fraud (John 1:11). He came as "light," but they preferred darkness (John 3:19). He came as the promised Messiah, but their blindness was so great that the priests and rulers rejected His claims despite His miracles and teachings. Some individual Jews accepted and praised Jesus, but the nation in general rejected and crucified Him.

God, of course, views the Son quite differently. Since before creation, the Father planned to offer salvation to the world through the Son. The Son willingly carried out the Father's plan to bear the sins of the world on the cross. The Father views the Son as precious and prized because there would be no hope for humanity without Him.

READ: 1 Peter 2:6.

Peter quoted Isaiah 28:16 to emphasize Christ's role as the believer's foundation and cornerstone for their saving faith. Christ is both the solid rock foundation on which He builds His church and the Stone that unites and holds together all the "living stones." Those who put their faith in Christ's work on the cross will always be connected to Him, their cornerstone and foundation.

Peter quoted Psalm 118:22 and Isaiah 8:14 in 1 Peter 2:7 and 8.

READ: 1 Peter 2:7, 8. **ASK:** What is the difference between how believers view Christ and how unbelievers view Christ? *Believers value Christ as precious because they share in His honor through salvation. Unbelievers view Christ as offensive.*

As believers, we must recognize Christ's preciousness to us and live in such a way that others recognize the preciousness of Christ too. We must influence our culture by showing them the tremendous difference Christ makes in our lives as our Savior and as the foundation for our lives. Our lives should "glow" with Christ's greatness.

ASK: What does your life say about Jesus? Do you demonstrate by your choices that Jesus is "precious" and great?

"A stone of stumbling" (2:8) refers to Christ as an obstacle against which the unbelieving kick. A "rock of offense" speaks of Christ as a ledge or a solid rock over which the unbeliever trips. The "stone of stumbling" and "rock of offense" were related especially to unbelieving Israel's view of Christ, but Peter made the reference broader in scope by stating that it includes those who stumble (are scandalized) at the word, meaning the gospel (1 Cor. 1:23). The disobedient or unbelieving resist the person of Christ and the gospel in the Word of God. Eventually the Stone will judge and condemn them for their sins.

III. Represent God as Priests (1 Peter 2:5, 9, 10)

Peter added to the living stones metaphor by comparing believers to priests.

A. Represent God as holy priests (2:5)

READ: 1 Peter 2:5.

God expected the Levitical priests of the Old Testament to be holy and clean. Under the New Covenant all believers are members of a new

priesthood. God still expects believer priests to be holy and separated to Him (1 Peter 1:13–16). Positively, being holy means living obediently to God's commands. Negatively, being holy means not living according to the sinful desires that characterize the lost in the world (1:14).

ASK: Why must believers live as holy priests before the world?
To demonstrate the seriousness of sin and to give their message of salvation from sin credibility.

Believers who long to live like the world need to remember God's coming judgment on sinners. God's wrath will be severe and permanent (John 3:36; Rev. 20:11–15). Sinners need believers to be holy priests so they can see the futility of living according to their sinful lusts.

B. Represent God as royal priests (2:9, 10)

READ: 1 Peter 2:9, 10.

The Church is something new, a chosen people from all nationalities who are born into a new family by spiritual new generation at salvation. Being a part of God's family makes believers "royal priests" (cf. Rev. 1:6). Christ is our king. We serve as His royal representatives on earth now and will one day rule with Him in His earthly Kingdom (Rev. 5:9, 10).

To live as God's royal priests means we proclaim the praises of Christ Who called us out of spiritual darkness to live in His marvelous light.

ASK: What praiseworthy truths about Christ could you share with the world? *His sacrificial and unprejudiced love; His sufficient grace for facing life's trials; His glorious plan for believers in eternity.*

ASK: What might sharing Christ's glorious praise look like in your life?

IV. Live as Sojourning Pilgrims (1 Peter 2:11, 12)

Though we live as royal priests, we are also strangers and pilgrims on earth.

A. Reject the world's system (2:11)

READ: 1 Peter 2:11.

The word "strangers" or "sojourners" describes those who have no rights or legal status. The word "pilgrims" identifies those who are only temporary dwellers. Our citizenship is in Heaven in that we are not part of the world's system and values. Satan gives direction to the worldly system that opposes God and believers (Eph. 2:2; 1 John 5:19).

Peter begged the scattered believers to abstain from the fleshly passions that Satan and the world promote and that war against believers'

Peter primarily wrote to believing Jews scattered throughout the Roman Empire. "Gentiles" are unbelieving non-Jews. But in a broader sense, Peter is addressing how all believers conduct themselves before the lost.

souls. To "abstain" means to hold back constantly. The phrase "fleshly lusts" speaks of strong desires that are both typical of the flesh and contrary to God's holiness. Forgetting we are strangers in the world and adopting its thinking and philosophies will hurt our ability to carry out our spiritual roles as holy and royal priests in the world.

ASK: When do you feel the struggle between wanting to fit in with the world and knowing you need to live distinct from the world?

B. Reflect Christ's character (2:12)

READ: 1 Peter 2:12.

Positively, Peter instructed his readers to keep their conduct honorable before the world. Honorable actions are those that reflect a believer's inward spiritual reality. Christ saved us and made us righteous, so we ought to live righteously in the world. As we do, some will respond to the gospel and glorify God in the "day of visitation," a reference to the day God intervenes in a person's life, either to save or judge the person.

Memory Builder

Gather

- Whiteboard and markers.
- Flashlight.

Steps

1. Write 1 Peter 2:9 on the board and review its meaning.

God chose believers to be an elect "race" within humanity. They are spiritually bonded together to be "priests" who have direct access to God and who act as Christ's ministers in the world. Believers are "royal" in that they are heirs with Christ and have a place in His future Kingdom. As a "holy" nation, believers are to be distinct from the surrounding culture. God holds believers as His precious possession. He expects them to proclaim His praises for calling them out of darkness to live in His glorious light.

2. Darken the room. Students take turns using the flashlight to point out a key phrase from the verse then telling a specific way believers should stand out from their surrounding culture. After each student's turn, erase the phrase and lead the class to read the verse, filling in the missing words
3. Continue until most of the verse has been erased and students can recite it from memory.

Session Application

Gather

- Paper and pens.

Steps

1. Review the lesson.

Peter instructs believers on influencing worldly culture for Christ. He calls on them to lay aside sin and develop an appetite for the Word so they might grow spiritually. He teaches them about their spiritual connections to one another through the Spirit and to Christ. He calls on them to represent Christ in the world as holy and royal priests. And he reminds them that they are pilgrims who must show Christ's character in a world driven by fleshly lusts.

2. Give each student a piece of paper and pen.

Think of four areas of your life in which you encounter worldly culture (e.g., school, social media, playing on a team, part-time job). For each area you write on your sheet, evaluate your current influence on those around you. Think about your attitudes, reactions, speech, and behavior in these surroundings. Do you tend to blend in, or can people see a difference in your life? Does your life reflect the light of Christ into the dark world? Jot down possible changes you can make in your life in each environment.

3. Organize students into small groups to discuss the areas of life they recorded. Encourage them to share ways they might be more effective influencers for Christ in those areas. Guide students to discuss how they might support each other in living distinctly from the world rather than trying to fit in with surrounding culture.

Session Takeaways

Before dismissing the students, draw their attention to the Time with God page in their student books. Instruct them to complete the study on their own. The activity will help students consider how they might more effectively influence others for Christ.