

GET A CLUE

ROMANS 12:2

BIBLE STUDY
LEADER GUIDE



DISCOVERING
GOD IN OUR
CULTURE

Thank you for volunteering to lead these Get a Clue Bible studies! We couldn't share the love of Jesus with these youth without volunteers like you. Your role will be to lead the Bible study, including discussion and activities included within. As you lead through three sessions, youth will learn about cultural discernment, hear the truth of God's Word, find examples within Scripture, and apply it directly to their own lives.

In this packet you will find all the information you need to help guide you as you prepare to lead. If you have any other questions, don't hesitate to reach out to your pastor or more experienced leaders. Again, we are so grateful for you and your willingness to volunteer, and are praying this is a fruitful experience for you and all the youth you lead!

Theme Verse/Scripture Focus:

The theme verse for these studies is Romans 12:2, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." This gives us a good starting point of a summary of what Scripture says about cultural discernment. The Scripture focus will be on various passages that define, explain, and give examples of cultural discernment within the Bible. A variety of passages are included within each study session that match the specific topic presented in each.

Timeframe:

Each Bible study should take roughly 30-45 minutes, depending on the number of students you have, and how engaged the group is.

Modifications:

If you have a larger group, it may be beneficial to break them up into smaller groups for the sake of time, convenience, and connection. Make sure the groups are conducive to a relational atmosphere where the students all feel like they are seen and welcome to share. Some section can be made shorter or longer by adjusting time given to the group.

Goal and Objectives:

The overall goal for these studies is to equip youth with an understanding and knowledge of cultural discernment to use in their daily lives, so that they grow into resilient disciples. The objectives that are accomplished through the Bible studies include the students being able to define cultural discernment, identify cultural discernment in Scripture, identify scenarios in which cultural discernment is useful, and apply what Scripture says about cultural discernment to their own lives.

Materials Needed:

Materials that are needed for this lesson include Bibles for everyone that does not have their own with them (including you), and enough “casefi file” printouts for each student. There are also powerpoints included to go along with each Bible study session. If there is a way to project them during each session that would be beneficial to keep the session learner-centered.

Bible Studies:

Each study is written out in such a way that you can read directly from it like a script, but feel free to ad lib as you feel appropriate. Anything written with ** around it, shows an action that you do not have to read aloud. The three Bible study sessions are attached below for you to use.

My Prayer for You:

I pray these are fruitful studies for you and the students. May God use them to get everyone involved thinking more about how He is at work within our daily lives and culture, equipping us to discern His ways from culture's. My hope is that throughout these studies you are drawn closer to Him, and are empowered to live a life that points you and others continuously to Jesus!

Bible Study Session 1: Cultural Discernment-What is it? Why is it important?

Introduction & Definitions:

- Did any of you play detective or spies when you were younger? Do we have anyone who likes to solve mysteries here? Good! Because over the next couple weeks we will be solving a very important mystery. What mystery you may be wondering? It's a mystery we are all faced with every day. The mystery of cultural discernment. Has anybody heard the phrase "cultural discernment" before? *Pause for responses.*

Does anybody have any ideas on what that means and want to share?

Pause for answers.

You are on the right track. And we will be spending the next few weeks unpacking clues, so we all can become master detectives of cultural discernment.

- To start, let's get a better understanding of what this means. To do this we can first look at what each of those words mean individually.
 - According to the Oxford Dictionary, culture is "the customs, arts, social institutions, and achievements of a particular nation, people, or other social group." So culture includes everything that makes up who a group of people are collectively. We have a certain culture as people living in the 21st century, where we live has its own culture, each generation has its own culture, the Lutheran church has its own culture, culture is all around us.
 - Can you think of any examples of different cultures you've seen and/or some things that make up that culture? *Give the students time to give their examples. Use the suggested answer prompts to help guide the discussion if needed.*
 - *Suggested Answer Prompts:* Cultures-different parts of the world, schools, family cultures, clubs/activities, etc. Things

that make up culture- beliefs, music, art, language, laws, knowledge, etc.

- Now let's look at discernment. Oxford Dictionary defines it as "the ability to judge well." Specifically in a Christian context Oxford defines discernment as "perception in the absence of judgment with a view to obtaining spiritual guidance and understanding." Hearing those two definitions, can you talk with the people around you and come up with a definition of discernment in your own words? *Give the students time to talk with the people around them to create their own definitions. Once conversation dies down, bring them together again to share what they came up with.*

Discernment is the use of judgment and values to make decisions, oftentimes difficult decisions, when the "right" answer isn't always clear. With everyday mysteries you use discernment to interpret clues that help solve the mystery. And that's exactly what we're doing here.

- We can use both of those individual definitions together to create our definition of cultural discernment. The definition we are going to be working with in these studies is "the ability to compare the beliefs, values, customs and creations of the world we live in with those of the world we belong to, the kingdom of God." So it's the ability to compare- which is discernment, beliefs, values, customs, and creations-which is culture. Simply put, cultural discernment is being able to recognize and distinguish between ways of worldly culture and God's Word and direction to us as believers in Christ Jesus, knowing when they do and do not align, and how to respond accordingly.

The World's vs. God's Culture and Clues:

- The question now is what worldly culture are we talking about and how do we know what the culture we have in Christ is?
 - We know now that there are many cultures we could be a part of, but for this study we are going to be focusing on the culture you live in as youth in this day and age. Think of the beliefs, music, art, language, knowledge, social atmosphere and other components that make up society today. This could include the unique vocabulary you use everyday, tv shows you watch, who your friends are, clothes you wear, what you eat, the technology and social media you use, what you're taught in school and so much more. Can you think of other examples of things that make up your culture in today's society? *Give students time to think and share with the whole group.*
 - What about the culture, or what we practice as Christians? How do we know what that is? Well, God reveals this to us through His Word in the Holy Scriptures. The Bible tells us how God's calls us to live, act, and believe as His children. Here's the thing though, while God's Word can line up with the ways of our culture, it doesn't always happen like that. In our baptisms we are claimed as God's own which means we follow God's direction first, over everything else. This is where cultural discernment comes into play.
- Cultural discernment is put into practice when we are faced with situations or scenarios in which we are not sure how God's Word and promises in Scriptures line up with what our culture presents to us. These instances require us to become detectives of God's clues and culture's clues, in order to clearly distinguish how we are supposed to address the situation.

- What are God's clues and culture's clues? Well, culture's clues are those aspects of situations that point you to culture, what it is and where it's guiding you. God's clues are clearly found in God's Word to us. We read it, hear it at church, and pray to follow what they say and where they guide.
- Knowing and discerning the two different clues is one thing, but how do we know which to follow? Scripture has some clues that help us to know that. *Have students look up each Scripture and ask for a volunteer to read each. After, read the provided comments and explanation before moving on to the next verse.*
 - John 17:14-16: "I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world."
 - Here Jesus clearly says that baptized believers are not of this world, just as ~~he~~ is not of this world. We may be living in the world, but we are not of the world. This in but not of theme is picked up in other parts of Scripture as well.
 - John 15:19: "If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."
 - This is another instance where we see the in but not of theme mentioned in the Bible. It is clear that we are called to focus first and foremost on God and His clues (Scripture) over those of our culture.
 - Colossians 3:2-4: "Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory."

- These verses give us the reasoning why we are to look for God's clues over culture's. Christ died, taking upon our sins and transgressions, so that we may be free to live in Him. And we are united in death with Him as Romans 6:5 says, meaning that we share in His victory over our sinful nature that likes to cling to the clues of culture. We are now called to follow God with the gift of the Holy Spirit so we may appear with Him in glory when He returns.
 - We follow God's clues in His Word over culture's because we may be living in this world, but we are not of it. We are baptized and forgiven Children of God. Christ has already died and won victory over all of culture's brokenness and sin that lead us away from Him.
- Our theme verse, Romans 12:2, sums all of this up into one sentence.
 - *Have the students look up that verse, and ask for a volunteer to read it aloud. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."*
 - When we can assess a situation by discovering and discerning the clues of God and culture, we are better equipped to go through the situation in a way that glorifies and pleases God.

Daily Life:

- So how is this all used and implemented into daily life? Well, in everyday situations you can be looking at our culture and God's Word for us. After recognizing and discerning both for what they are, you can start using them to navigate the situation. Acknowledge clues of culture for what they are, but don't let them take over where God clearly speaks. Remember to always base everything on what Scripture says, let it be your guiding light as faithful baptized children. You can work through any situation led by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to the best of your ability. When we fail, we can find forgiveness and a new chance.

- Start thinking about situations in your life that discerning clues of God and clues of culture could be beneficial in navigating what to do. Maybe it's conversations you've had with friends, something you've heard in school, or seen on social media. What situations make you question what God has to say about it, and how we are called to navigate them as Christians? Throughout the rest of this study over the next couple weeks, we will be further investigating some of those situations.
- We will also look more in depth at some tools to help us discern clues in another Bible study. For now, remember that when we discern clues of God from clues of culture, we can help guide ourselves and others, through the use of Scripture, towards God and His will for us as His called and chosen people. When we do this, we can live as Romans 12:2 calls us to. "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

Closing Prayer:

- Dear God, thank you for this time to be together to start discovering your culture and clues, and how they are different from those of the world. Please guide us as we are living in the culture of this world, yet start to identify your culture that you call us to live in. Be with us as we dive in more on how to not only recognize cultures' clues and your clues, but also how we use them to live according to your will. In your name we pray, Amen.

Bible Study Session 2: Cultural Discernment in the Bible-Looking at how Bible Characters Used it

Cultural Discernment in Scripture:

- After last week's Bible study we now have an understanding of what cultural discernment is. Let's review quickly. What is the definition we are using for cultural discernment? (*Let them answer before giving the definition: the ability to compare the beliefs, values, customs and creations of the world we live in with those of the world we belong to, the kingdom of God.*) What clues are we looking for when using cultural discernment? What are some examples of each? (*Give them time to think and answer: God's clues and Culture's clues.*)
 - Before we start using the clues of God and the clues of culture to unpack our own mysteries, today we're going to look at how some people from the Bible used cultural discernment.

Daniel:

- Let's start by looking at Daniel in the Old Testament in Daniel chapter 1. (*Have them open up their Bibles to Daniel chapter 1 and ask for volunteers to split up the reading of the whole chapter.*) Talk with the person next to you about what clues of God and clues of culture you see in Daniel's case. (*Give them time to discuss, have them share with the whole group, then go over the answers below.*)
 - In this chapter, Daniel is among a few men selected by the king to learn the literature and language of the Chaldeans. While there, the king provided Daniel and the others with his royal food and wine. The problem being that this food violated God's law on what Daniel could and could not eat. Daniel was getting clues from culture that told him to eat the royal food, while the clues from God told him not to.

- So what did Daniel do? (*Ask for volunteers to answer.*) Chapter 1 verse 8 tells us “Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king’s food, or with the wine that he drank.” Daniel interpreted the clues and applied them by proceeding to call upon God to help prove to the king the faithfulness of the Lord through a trial run of eating only vegetables and water. By doing this he not only discovered the clues, but applied them in a way that wasn’t defiant or disrespectful, but rather glorified and pointed others to God. Daniel solved the case by using cultural discernment.

Peter:

- In the New Testament, Peter writes letters of encouragement on how to use cultural discernment. Let’s read 1 Peter 2: 6-12. (*Have them open up their Bibles and ask for volunteers to read.*)
 - In 1 Peter 2, Peter writes to God’s people who are “sojourners and exiles.” He says in verse 11, “I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.” Doesn’t this sound a little bit like what we’re talking about? How does that relate to cultural discernment? (*Give them time to think and ask for volunteers to share answers.*) We, as people set apart as God’s children, should judge between culture’s clues, or passions of the flesh as Peter calls them, and look for God’s clues to lead us. In the rest of chapter 2 Peter continues to give similar encouragement that helps to decipher between culture’s clues and God’s clues, and how we are to respond to both in a way that respects others yet still follows what God’s Word says.
 - Peter knew what it was to fail to live as God's disciple and to be influenced by the crowd. Peter also trusted Jesus' forgiveness when we fail and a reminder to continue to learn and try.

Jesus:

- Jesus as both God and man was the ultimate example of cultural discernment. He wasn't afraid to point others towards the what God desires regardless of the culture around him. A good example of this is in His interactions with scribes and Pharisees, like in Matthew 15:1-6. (*Have them open up their Bibles and ask for volunteers to read.*) Talk with the person next to you about what clues of God and clues of culture you see in this passage. (*Give them time to discuss, have them share with the whole group, then go over the answers below.*)
 - Here the scribes and Pharisees come to Jesus concerned about their traditions they have put into place, and Jesus calls them out for placing their traditions over the Word of God. Jesus saw that they were listening to the clues of culture telling them that their traditions were top priority, and not discerning the clues of God that pointed them to Scripture.
 - Another example in which Jesus uses cultural discernment is when He is on the cross. Open up your Bibles to Matthew 27:39-44. (*Have them open up their Bibles and ask for volunteers to read.*) What clues of culture do you see Jesus being faced with here? (*Give them time to think and ask for volunteers to share answers.*)
 - Here people are passing by Jesus and taunt Him as He hangs on the cross. They make comments such as "If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross," "He saved others; he cannot save himself," and "He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him." Jesus hears all of this, and knows it is well within His power to do just as they are saying. He very easily could follow these clues from culture and save Himself by coming down from the cross. But Jesus also knew the clues He had from God. He

knew it was God's will for Him to stay and die on the cross, despite the cruel taunting He endured. He knew that in order for those people, and for us to be forgiven, He must be crucified, so He remained. Here, even facing death, Jesus listened to God's clues.

- Remember, Jesus is both fully God and fully human. Which means that He knew all of the clues and how to discern them properly, because He is God. But He also lived a fully human life, meaning that He was still faced with the situations and temptations that required Him to use cultural discernment.
- We can take comfort in this knowing Jesus not only knew and used cultural discernment, but trusted that God would bring Him through some of the toughest cases. And just as He did for Jesus, God will do for you too. These are just two of the many examples in which Jesus points out cultural discernment and demonstrates how to apply it.
- And this is the foundation we have when using cultural discernment in our own lives, which we will look at in the next Bible study. We are not the first people to use cultural discernment, in fact it goes all the way back to the time of the Bible. Jesus Himself, used it and set the ultimate example of discerning God's clues and cultures. This is the encouragement we have moving forward, discerning the clues in our own lives.

Closing Prayer:

- Dear God, thank you for the examples of cultural discernment that we see throughout Scripture. As we continue to reflect on them and other examples, please help us to continue to master our ability to discern your clues from culture's. And thank you for sending your son, Jesus, to set the ultimate example for us in His life, death and resurrection, giving us your forgiveness and hope. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Bible Study Session 3: Application-Cultural Discernment in Their Lives

Personal Application and 4 Questions:

- We have spent the last few weeks diving deeper into cultural discernment. Now that you know what cultural discernment is and have seen it in the lives of people from the Bible, you're ready to apply it to your own life. And that is what we will be doing in this study. But how do you do that? It seems easy to tell the difference between the clues of God and the clues of culture when looking at other people's lives and situations that you aren't involved in. But when it's happening to you in the moment, how do you tell what is what? How can you discern God's voice in the face of culture?
- Let's look back on what our theme verse has to say about this. *Have someone read Romans 12:2-"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." We are clearly called to not give into culture's clues and to "transform" our minds to discern the clues of God. While this may seem intimidating, we are going to help break it down into four simple questions you can use as tools to help test your mind and discern the clues and will of God.
 - These questions are: What's right? What's wrong? What's missing? What's confused?
 - By running through these questions when you are in the midst of a challenging situation, you can quickly and easily start to discern where God is working and where culture is taking over.
- First, let's look at each of these questions a little more in-depth, starting with What's right?
 - When looking at the situation, what are some things that stand out to you that are "right?" In what ways can you see God and Scripture working in the background, and what parts of the situation are following a Christian worldview? These things

should be recognized and celebrated.

- Second, What's wrong? Where is sin, death, self-focus, deviating from God's will and what Scripture says about the situation. A good starting place in this is to look for items of the situation that make you feel uncomfortable or uneasy, then start to identify why they are making you feel that way using God's Word. Once these sin and brokenness are identified, we should work towards repentance, confession, forgiveness and with the Holy Spirit, finding a better way.
- What's missing? is the next question to ask yourself. In what ways is God being ignored or set aside? Where is God present and how can His Word direct our next action? Where does there need to be forgiveness and witness to God's grace and promises? Now, we're not saying that you should try squeezing God in the situation or justify sin. Rather, we are asking where God already is within the situation and is not being recognized. How has God already given His love and grace even if we "missed" it? Remember, that God is already at work in every situation whether we see "missing" parts or not.
- Finally, What's confused? After going through the other three questions, what parts of the situation can you still not wrap your head around? Where do things seem to be backwards or misunderstood? Where is it especially hard to differentiate the clues of God vs. clues of culture? Once you've thought through what's confused, the next step is to think about what can be clarified and how?
- This may seem like a lot to think about all at once, especially when you're in the heat of the moment of a specific situation in which you need to discern clues right then and there. But, just as with anything else, the more you practice the better you will become.

- You won't be an expert on discerning culture right away, but the hope is that after these Bible studies, you will have a good start to try to implement it into your personal situations. This doesn't mean you have to go out and perfectly answer all four questions in every scenario right away either. Take it one step, one question at a time, slowly building up your cultural discernment skills until it becomes a habit and you can start adding in more questions. If you intentionally work on doing this in your daily life, soon you will be a master detective in discerning God's clues from culture's.
- An important first step with all of this is to remember to go to God about any difficult situation. If time allows, go to him in prayer in the midst of the conversation before you start discerning clues and answering these questions. If not, talk to Him before or after. Philippians 4:6 says, "do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God." When we go to Him first, we do not have to worry or be afraid of the situation we are facing in front of us. And remember that no matter what He is always with you, guiding you every step of the way. "Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10.
- Now that you know and understand these tools of discernment a little bit better, let's look at some examples that you might run into to start putting them into practice. We are going to split into groups, then I'll explain the situation, and give your group some time to think through the questions before we come back together as a large group to discuss what you came up with. *Split the youth into groups of equal proportions, depending on the size of the group.*

Example Situation #1:

- Situation 1: Technology vs. In person
 - You are talking with a friend about joining a Bible study group together. You know of a few different youth group studies happening at your church that you could join, and suggest them to your friend. They tell you that they would rather join a Bible study group online, as the in person groups seem like more work and less convenient. How do you respond? Think through the four questions and how they work in this scenario. Remember to discuss with your group. After all, good detectives don't solve cases on their own, but they reach out for help and assistance when needed.
 - *Give the students time to work through the four questions in their small groups. After the discussion seems to die down, have them come back together as a large group to discuss each question. Use the suggested answer prompts below to guide and affirm the discussion. Make sure to use the Scripture provided to back everything up with God's word.*
 - *Suggested Answer Prompts:*
 - What's right? Both people want to join a Bible study and be in God's word. They are planning to actively take steps to grow in their faith, using each other as accountability partners. Praise God for the people in our lives that draw us closer to Him.
 - Scripture:
 - 1 Thessalonians 5:11: "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."

- Proverbs 27:17: “Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another.”
- What’s wrong? There is a difference of opinion about whether to do the study online or in person. You think you should be in person, but your friend thinks it is more work and less convenient. You are unsure about how to approach this conversation and which study should be decided upon.
 - Scripture:
 - Hebrews 12:14: “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.”
 - Romans 12:10: “Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.”
 - When discovering clues of what’s wrong, don’t forget to do so in a loving manner.
- What’s missing? Remember to keep God at the forefront of this conversation. Either way, you will still be in the Word growing with Him. Try finding missing items such as a mutual understanding of the pros and cons of both options.
 - Scripture:
 - 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”
 - Isaiah 55:11: “so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,

and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

- What’s confused? You are not suggesting online Bible studies are wrong, as they are still a great resource to use. But you also know the importance of being in community with other believers face to face.
 - Scripture:
 - Hebrews 10:24-25: “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”
 - Acts 2:42: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”
 - Now that you have explored these questions a little bit and tried using them yourself, let’s debrief. What stood out to you as the easiest to answer? The hardest? Were there any parts you have questions with? *Give the kids time to answer, and provide helpful feedback.*
- The next step is applying it all. You have all these answers to the four questions, but how do you use them in the situation or conversation?
Let the youth respond and give their ideas.
 - First, make known your thoughts to the other party as appropriate. In this case, let your friend know what you think is right and wrong about the conversation. Add the missing parts in, and clarify any confusion.

- Then, discuss and work through the situation, with God and His word guiding you. Keep going through the steps until a mutual agreement is reached that is pleasing to both parties, and in accordance with God's will.
 - In our first example, this may look like reaffirming the right that you both want to study God's Word. Pointing out the wrong, identifying your friends' comments, and honestly admitting the apparent difference you are wanting to work through. Then, add in the missing. Give opportunity for both you and your friend to share the full side of your point of view, and compile pros and cons of both. Look to Scripture when possible to see what God has to say about the subject. Finally, clarify what's confused. Don't discourage your friend's enthusiasm for being in the word, or even the use of online resources. Simply, state your case of why it's important to be in community with other believers, and why you think that is the best option for this scenario.
- *Pause and ask for any questions or comments before moving on to situation 2.*

Example Situation #2:

- Situation 2: Dating Non-Christians
 - One of your friends tells you that they like this girl in their class. They get along together great, have similar interests, and a lot of the same views on life. The only problem is that she is not a Christian. However, he insists that if they start dating, he could introduce her to Jesus. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, she might be curious about faith or even come to share the Christian faith.

How do you help your friend navigate this scenario? Think through the four questions and how they work in this situation.

- *Give the students time to work through the four questions in their small groups. After the discussion seems to die down, have them come back together as a large group to discuss each question. Use the suggested answer prompts below to guide and affirm the discussion. Make sure to use the Scripture provided to back everything up with God's word.*
- *Suggested Answer Prompts:*
 - What's right? It is not an inherently bad thing to be in relationship with others, in fact Scripture encourages us to. And it is great that your friend wants to share Christ with others, and help them grow in their relationship with Him. God is doing great things through your friend and his willingness to disciple others!
 - Scripture:
 - 1 John 4:7: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God."
 - Mark 16:15: "And he said to them, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation."
 - What's wrong? While being in a relationship with others is a good thing, scripted by God, dating relationships are a little different and require more commitment and standards. God's word tells us that we should be careful about who we date and how they will impact us spiritually.

- Scripture:
 - 2 Corinthians 6:14-18: “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever? What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore go out from their midst and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.”

- What’s missing? A Biblical perspective of the situation could be helpful. It seems that your friend has found lots of clues from culture and may need help finding clues from God. He might be missing the importance of putting our relationship with God over everything else.

- Scripture:
 - *See above Scripture for What’s wrong?*
 - Proverbs 31:30: “Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.”

- What's confused? It seems like the type of relationship wanted and the type that is most beneficial may be confused. It also seems that your friend may not fully understand the impacts this kind of relationship could have on himself and his personal faith.
 - Scripture:
 - 1 Kings 11:4: "For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father."
 - Proverbs 13:20: "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm."
 - With this case, we are not saying not to date non-Christians, as every situation is different. However, accountability with other Christians is crucial for you to stay on the right track in such a scenario. On the other side of things, dating a Christian could also go wrong. No relationship is perfect, but accountability is important in all cases.
 - Now with this situation, let's look at applying it all again. You've thought through these questions but how do you bring them up with your friend?
 - Again we are going to start by making known your thoughts to the other party as appropriate. In this case, let your friend know what you think is right and wrong about the situation. Add the missing parts in, and clarify any confusion.

- Then, discuss and work through the situation, with God and His word guiding you. Keep going through the steps with your friend until they have a better understanding of how to respond to their situation in light of God's word.
 - In this specific instance, this may look like encouraging your friend on what is right in this situation. Lift him up for his willingness to share God with others. Follow that up by gently pointing out the wrongs, and what Scripture says about them, helping them to find the missing clues from God. Finally, clear up any confusion by patiently walking alongside your friend, helping him to discern more clues along the way.
 - *Pause and ask for any questions or comments.*

Summary and Encouragement:

- Hopefully these examples get you thinking about how to use the four questions as tools to help discern clues of God from clues of culture in your everyday life. And as we said earlier, don't be afraid to reach out to other faithful Christian detectives around you. Just like all other aspects of our Christian lives, we are not meant to discern these clues on our own. Talk with those around you about what sticky situations you're trying to navigate, which of the 4 questions you struggle with, your experience using the 4 questions in real life scenarios, etc. Peers, family, Pastors, DCEs, and other trusted adults, are all great people to talk with and use as support as you practice to become a master detective of God's clues in today's culture. Remember that they are also improving their detective skills and you can be mutually beneficial to each other as accountability and support.

- We can be reminded that we don't always follow God's guidance! Yet, God is always willing to forgive us when we repent. There is no way for us to continuously avoid the persuasion of this world, but we trust Jesus' death and resurrection makes us right with God even when we fail.
- And most importantly, always use Scripture as your source of guidance and answers, especially when you are lost or confused on how to handle the situation yourself. God is always with you, working through His Holy Spirit to help you use cultural discernment to discern clues that lead you and others closer to Him. Keep prayerfully practicing how to look for God's clues, and keep using your cultural discernment. Standing firm in our baptism, we can keep trusting God to guide you, and keep living lives as God's master detectives, glorifying Him in all you do.

Closing Prayer:

- Dear God, thank you for the tools you have given us to discern your clues from the clues of culture. We know that it is only through you and your Word that we are able to be master detectives of cultural discernment, and we praise you for that. Please continue to guide us as we are faced with everyday situations that require us to discern these clues, that we may continuously point ourselves and others towards you. In your name we pray,
Amen.