

# FOR THE LOVE OF GOD + -

## THE COLONIAL PROJECT: CHRISTIANITY IN THE AGE OF EMPIRE

**Content Warning:** While this segment does not display any graphic images, it does contain mature themes, including references to massacre and rape, and thus may not be appropriate for younger students.

This segment comes from **EPISODE 4: POWER + HUMILITY.**

The church's record of holding power – from Emperor Constantine in the 4th century onwards – has involved terrible acts of coercion, exploitation, and abuse. Yet Jesus set an example of selfless service, and started a “humility revolution” that fundamentally transformed the West and the way we think about leadership and power. For groups like women and indigenous peoples, what has it looked like when Christians have exercised power for their own benefit? What has it looked like when they've exercised it for the good of others? This segment looks at how the Western church was caught up in the project of colonisation, and particularly focuses on the church's mixed record when it comes to Aboriginal Australians.



### THEME QUESTION

Does the Church accept and embrace diversity? Discuss.



### ENGAGE

1. What observations can you make about the following image?



2. Choose or draw an emoji to describe how you feel after reading and viewing the extract and videos below, and explain the reasons for your choice.


a. The following extract from this 2014 *The Sydney Morning Herald* article: [These six charts show the state of discrimination towards indigenous Australians](#) ([cpx.video/discrimination](#)).

“One in five young Australians would move if a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent sat next to them, a survey has found. And the same percentage would keep an eye on an indigenous person if they were shopping. More than one in three young Australians also believe that indigenous people are lazy and have been given an unfair advantage by the government.”

b. “[Stop. Think. Respect. Racial discrimination and mental health](#)” ([cpx.video/respect](#)) from Beyond Blue.

3. Have you ever experienced some kind of discrimination against you or a group you were part of? Have you ever discriminated against someone else or a group of people?

## UNDERSTAND AND EVALUATE

 **WATCH the segment: “The Colonial Project: Christianity in the Age of Empire”**  
([cpx.video/colonialism](#))

1. Describe how Indigenous Australians lived prior to 1788.
2. Outline the importance of the land to indigenous spirituality.
3. In the table below, compare and contrast the intentions of the colonisers with what really happened.

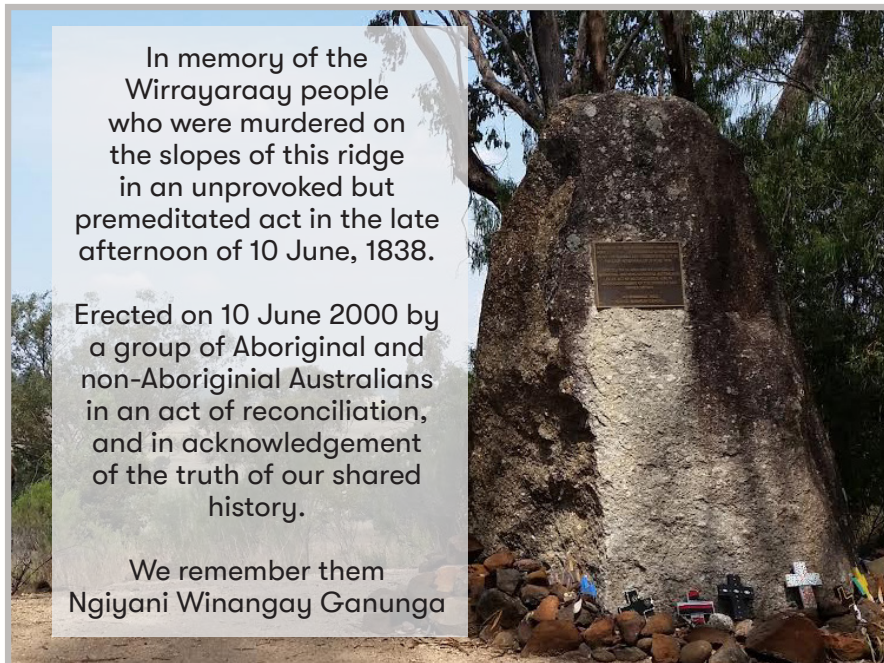
Intentions of the colonisers	What really happened

4. What is your reaction to this quote from Bishop James Moorhouse? What might this show us about the value the church placed on economic development over caring for and protecting Indigenous Australians?



“God did not make the earth simply for the savage tribes to wander over. He made it to be the scene of happy homes which are supported by industry, and if a set of men stood in the way of another set of men doing that work, it was the order of the divine Providence that the hinderers should be swept away. “

5. The bronze plaque at the Myall Creek Massacre and Memorial Site reads:



- a. What is your reaction to Justine Toh’s account of the massacre?

6. Consider the kind of attitudes that seem to have led jurors at the first trial to acquit the accused.
- Outline the underlying beliefs that remarks like these are based on.
  - Discuss if/how these beliefs have changed over time in Australian society.



7. Explain what motivated Christian leaders, including Baptist minister John Saunders, to fight for the punishment of the Myall Creek massacre killers.

"DOES IT SEEM STRANGE TO SPEAK OF THE MAJESTY OF THE NEW HOLLANDERS? THE SAVIOUR DIED AS MUCH FOR HIM AS HE DID FOR YOU. NOW BY EVERY SENTIMENT OF HUMANITY AND LOVE YOU ARE BOUND TO LOVE HIM, TO ADMIT HIM TO YOUR FRATERNITY AND TO TREAT HIM AS A FELLOW MAN." **JOHN SAUNDERS**

## BIBLE FOCUS

- This episode quotes an older version of the Bible, from Acts 17:26, which says "God hath made of one blood all nations of the earth."
  - Rewrite this verse in your own words.
  - Read **Acts 17:24-28**.
  - What do verses 24 and 25 teach us about God?
  - How does v.26 support the idea of all humans being equal?
  - Outline God's desire as stated in v.27.

2. The book of Revelation includes a vision of what will occur when the Lord Jesus returns and brings about the new creation. This helps us to think about what “heaven” will be like.
  - a. Read **Revelation 7:9**.
  - b. According to this biblical text, which ethnic groups will be in God’s perfect new creation (“heaven”)?

## **APPLY**

1. How do you think it could be possible that Christians, who are supposed to think of all people as made in God’s image, could be involved in the mistreatment of Indigenous Australians?
2. Hindsight provides valuable perspective. Most of us will reflect on the actions of the new Australians in the 1800s with disgust. Imagine you are a young person in Australia in 2120 and you are looking back on how Indigenous Australians were treated in 2018. How might you react?
3. Churches in Australia today can be very culturally diverse places. Does this sort of community appeal to you? Why or why not?
4. Do you think it is helpful to think of all people as being “of one blood”? Create a symbolic image to describe how our society might look different if everybody treated other people this way.

## **EXTEND**

1. Research some of the ways that Christian churches, groups and organisations have been involved in reconciliation and positive actions within the Indigenous community. (As a start, you could visit [www.australianstogether.org.au](http://www.australianstogether.org.au)).
2. Consider the examples today of discrimination against indigenous Australians from this 2017 SBS article: “[10 times Indigenous Australians have experienced ‘everyday’ racism](#)” ([cpx.video/racism](#)).
  - a. Imagine you meet someone who engages in this discriminatory behaviour. Write a script of a conversation you could have with them that might help to change their beliefs and behaviour.
  - b. Brainstorm ways you can help to challenge these views in your school or community.