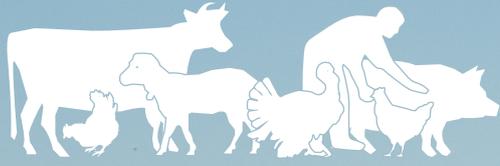


# CREATURE KIND



*Course for Churches*



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Dear Friend,

Welcome to the CreatureKind Course for Churches! We're glad you have decided to lead a group and are available to help you at every step of the process.

#### *Course Overview*

The CreatureKind Course for Churches is a six-week course designed to take a small group of people through a basic overview of the place of animals in Christian history and life. We suggest that you choose a consistent day and time over six weeks to meet with your group, and that you begin each session with a light, plant-based meal. We've included some recipes we like and that are relatively simple to prepare, regardless of your culinary prowess.

#### *Who is the course for?*

The CreatureKind Course for Churches is for anyone who wants to learn more about what Christianity has to say about animals. Some in your group may care deeply about a pet and want to know if they'll see Fido in heaven. Others may be committed to the environment or want to help reduce suffering in the world, but aren't sure how Christianity and animal protection are related. You may also wish to invite non-Christian friends who care about animals, as the course helps to dispel some myths about Christianity's view of animals.

#### *CreatureKind's Philosophy and How the Church Course Relates*

CreatureKind works from within the church to help Christians address the welfare of factory farmed animals. Our work focuses on partnerships for policy change, education, and community-building, and the church course is the cornerstone of our efforts in education.

CreatureKind is committed to building a big tent, to meeting people where they are, and journeying alongside other Christians as we explore together our common call to care for God's creation. It is critically important to CreatureKind that every voice is invited to speak, that every Christian is invited to the fellowship table, no matter how differently we may view the world.

#### *Expected Outcomes*

Above all, at the end of the CreatureKind Course for Churches, we want participants to ask, "What should we do now?" We want the course to inspire a desire for further exploration and concrete action. A group that completes the course may want to engage in deeper study or urge their church to move towards practices that respond to the CreatureKind Commitment.

#### *Recommended Resources*

1. Plant-based food for a light, shared meal
2. Internet-connected computer connected to TV (or videos downloaded in advance and shown offline)
3. Flip chart and markers to record points from group discussion
4. Bibles for Bible Study (or print-outs of Bible passages used each week), in large print or alternative formats as required for group
5. Willingness to have fun, talk about fun questions, and share feedback on the course with CreatureKind!

#### *Other Resources Available to Course Leaders*

The CreatureKind team is committed to partnering with you. As a course leader, you are welcome and encouraged to be in touch with us to ask questions or brainstorm ideas. If you are on Facebook, you may join a private Facebook group for course leaders, to share strength, stories, and peer support. We will follow up with you in a few days to see if you need any help, and when you finish your course, we will collect course evaluations from you.

Please know that you don't need to be an expert in theology, or animals, or anything in order to successfully run a small group course. This leader guide will provide an overview of the course and weekly guides; we include suggestions for recruiting participants, answered to frequently asked questions, and a few tips on facilitating productive discussions. We've also included six of our favorite plant-based recipes, which you are encouraged to share with your group.

**To reach us, please drop us an email: [becreaturekind@gmail.com](mailto:becreaturekind@gmail.com), or reach out on Facebook ([Facebook.com/BeCreatureKind](https://www.facebook.com/BeCreatureKind)).**

Thank you for your partnership,  
The CreatureKind Team

# DISCUSSION —TIPS—

The CreatureKind Course for Churches is designed to be a welcoming, safe place for discussion and exploration. Its primary purpose is to tell the story of animals in Christian history and life, and to demonstrate that the modern church's distance from animal protection issues is a historical anomaly.

The content is gentle and non-confrontational, not assuming any universal required actions by participants (for example, there's no assumption that everyone who takes this course will come to the understanding that a vegetarian diet is a Christian necessity). Even so, some members of your group may at points feel defensive. As the group facilitator, you can help set an open, dialogue-focused tone. You might be leading this course because you have strong feelings about animal protection issues. Avoid preaching or assuming that others may take the path you wish they would in the timeframe you think is most desirable. Easier said than done, right? :) We know. But we have confidence in you!

We highly recommend you read this short guide to facilitating effective group discussions, published by Brown University (<http://bit.ly/1QkLlkd>).

*A few points we think are especially important:*

- Leader: know thyself! If you normally dominate conversations, make a conscious effort to pull back and create ample space for others to share.
- If you find yourself wanting to ask your participants a question, make it an open-ended one, instead of a "yes" or "no." This will encourage more sharing.
- Establish ground rules, including the assumption that people will speak in kindness and share from personal experience ("I" statements, rather than "you" or "they" statements).
- Let fruitful conversation happen on its own.

We recommend that where there are readings from the Bible or a theologian to discuss, leaders ask for a volunteer (or multiple volunteers) from the group to read them out loud.

Finally, if someone asks a question about a theological or biblical issue that is either unrelated to the current discussion or that you aren't sure how to answer, feel free to say, "That's a great question! We're going to discuss that in a later week, can we revisit it then?" Write down the question and email us. We'll help you formulate a response, or point you to additional resources. This is not a heavy theological course, and it is easily accessible to a wide range of people with diverse backgrounds, experience, ages, and education.

Any questions before you get started, or as the course goes along? Let us know! We are here for you to help with any aspect of running the course.

# COURSE — — OUTLINE

## Week One

Introduction: What's Christianity got to do with animals?

## Week Two

Why did God make animals?

## Week Three

What does faith in Jesus mean for animals?

## Week Four

Will animals go to heaven?

## Week Five

What are we doing to animals?

## Week Six

How should Christians treat animals?

# WEEK-BY-WEEK GUIDE FOR LEADERS

## — WEEK 1 —

### Introduction: What's Christianity got to do with animals?

#### **Introductory Note:**

Each session overview suggests an order and timing for the session. As the group facilitator, you are welcome to modify this schedule as needed for your group.

#### Session Overview:

0 m	Opening Prayer	2 m
2 m	Introductions	3 m
5 m	Meal	25 m
30 m	Video 1: Introduction to the CreatureKind course	5 m
35 m	Discussion: What's Christianity got to do with animals?	20 m
55 m	Video 2: What's Christianity got to do with animals?	10 m
65 m	Reactions	5 m
70 m	Bible passage for discussion: Psalm 104	15 m
85 m	Theology: quotation for discussion	15 m
100 m	Final thoughts & questions?	5 m
105 m	Blessing & depart	

#### **Leader Notes**

The purpose of this session is to introduce participants to the basic truth that Christians have a long history of caring for animals, a history that is rooted in biblical texts and the actions of the early church parents. The session demonstrates the independent relationship that animals have with their Creator.

# WEEK 2

## Why did God make animals?

### Session Overview

0 m	Opening Prayer	2 m
2 m	Introductions	3 m
5 m	Meal	25 m
30 m	Discussion: Why did God make animals?	10 m
40 m	Video: What's the point of animals?	5 m
45 m	Reactions	15 m
60 m	Bible passage for discussion: Gen 1:20-2:3	15 m
75 m	Reactions	10 m
85 m	Theology: quotation for discussion	15 m
100 m	Final thoughts & questions?	5 m
105 m	Blessing & depart	

### Leader Notes

The purpose of this session is to encourage participants to think more deeply about what scripture and early church history have to say about the place of animals in God's creation and our role in caring for them. Many of us have more to learn about what biblical texts and church tradition have to offer the human-animal relationship.

# WEEK 3

## What does faith in Jesus mean for animals?

### Session Overview

0 m	Opening Prayer	2 m
2 m	Introductions	3 m
5 m	Meal	25 m
30 m	Discussion: What does Jesus have to do with animals?	10 m
40 m	Video: Jesus and animals	10 m
50 m	Reactions	5 m
55 m	Bible passage for discussion: Mark 10:35-45	25 m
80 m	Theology: quotation for discussion	20 m
100 m	Final thoughts & questions?	5 m
105 m	Blessing & depart	

### Leader Notes

The purpose of this session is to explore how Jesus' life and ministry can inform a Christian's understanding of human-animal relationships. When the question of Jesus' view of animals comes up, people often jump to the question of whether or not Jesus ate meat. This session focuses on a bigger-picture view of Jesus and animals, looking at the promise of the peaceable kingdom, instead of narrowing in on the particulars of Jesus' social and historical context.

# WEEK 4

## Will animals go to heaven?

### Session Overview

0 m	Opening Prayer	2 m
2 m	Introductions	3 m
5 m	Meal	25 m
30 m	Video: Jesus and animals	10 m
40 m	Reactions	10 m
50 m	Bible passage for discussion: Romans 8.18–25	30 m
80 m	Theology: quotation for discussion	20 m
100 m	Final thoughts & questions?	5 m
105 m	Blessing & depart	

### Leader Notes

The purpose of this session is to encourage participants to think about the implications of our assumptions about how animals fit into the whole scheme of creation. Considering whether or not our beloved pets will join us in heaven is one common starting point for Christians as they ponder human-animal relationships, and we hope this discussion helps participants to consider how the reconciliation of all creation back to the Creator ought to influence how we treat all fellow creatures, not only the ones with whom we share our homes.

# WEEK 5

## What are we doing to animals?

### Session Overview

0 m	Opening Prayer	2 m
2 m	Introductions	3 m
5 m	Meal	25 m
30 m	Overview of human impacts on animals	15 m
45 m	Reactions	10 m
55 m	Videos: treatment of farmed animals	15 m
70 m	Discussion	30 m
100 m	Final thoughts & questions?	5 m
105 m	Blessing & depart	

### Leader Notes

The purpose of this session is to understand what happens to the animals who produce the vast majority of meat, dairy, and eggs consumed today in Europe and North America. We have carefully selected videos to present the facts in the least graphic or shocking way possible. It is important to give participants a chance to offer their own responses to the videos. Finally, it is CreatureKind's strong preference to avoid manipulating participants into dietary change. We trust that gathered Christians who learn more about factory farming will engage in prayerful and faithful discernment about possible changes in life practices.

# WEEK 6

## How should Christians treat animals?

### Session Overview

0 m	Opening Prayer	2 m
2 m	Introductions	3 m
5 m	Meal	25 m
30 m	Video: Course recap and a practical question	10 m
40 m	Reactions	10 m
50 m	Bible Study	15 m
65 m	Discussion	30 m
95 m	Experience evaluations and feedback	10 m
105 m	Blessing & depart	

### Leader Notes

This session is designed to help participants wrestle with the question, “Where do we go from here?” Now that the group has worked through the place of animals in Christian faith and come to understand how we are treating animals today, consider what to do next. In addition to discussing how individuals might respond, this session encourages the group to consider how they as a group can move forward, what practical steps might make sense, and how the group might work together to incorporate the course's discussions into the broader church context.

We’ve provided a number of Bible passages in the session handout. You may choose to review all the passages or just a few, stay in a big group or split into smaller groups. If you are unable to review all the passages, you may encourage people to continue their study at home.

**\*Important Note\*** Please ensure that participants complete an evaluation form (and return those forms to us if they are on paper, rather than the online form). This feedback is critical for our ability to continue to offer the course for free, to help us understand how the course may need to be adapted, and to determine what additional materials or courses ought to be developed.

# — SUGGESTIONS FOR — RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

So you want to run a CreatureKind Course for Churches! This course is designed to work with groups of various sizes, but smaller groups of between 6-12 people might offer the most fruitful conversations.

Depending on your church's policy or procedures, your first step might be to discuss the course with other church members and church leadership. We recommend you share initial information and some of CreatureKind's work with people who might help you implement the course in your community.

There are a number of marketing materials that you can use to recruit participants, including:

- One-minute promotional video
- Poster
- Small fliers
- Discussion invitation/sign-up sheet

We recommend that, in addition to recruiting from your immediate circle of acquaintances, you work with your church community to help publicize the group. You can:

- Put up posters in common areas of your church building
- Use the small fliers for bulletin inserts
- Include the course in your church announcements and/or printed bulletins
- Request that an email be sent to church members about the course
- Talk to the church leader who helps oversee small groups to get additional ideas for your particular context

# — SUGGESTED RECIPES —

Here are six of our favorite, crowd-pleasing, and simple recipes that you can use to provide a light meal to participants. Please be sure to check with participants in advance to see if they have any food allergies. If you need additional ideas to accommodate specific needs, please contact us.

**Vegan Creamy Cheesy Broccoli Soup:**

<http://zachspuckler.com/vegan-creamy-cheesy-broccoli-soup/>

**Vegan Chili & Cashew Sour Cream:**

<http://ohsheglows.com/2014/02/05/my-favourite-vegan-chili-with-homemade-sour-cream/>

**One-Pan Sweet Potato Bake:**

<http://makingthymeforhealth.com/one-pan-mexican-sweet-potato-bake/>

**Creamy Polenta and Mushrooms:**

<https://www.loveandlemons.com/creamy-polenta-mushrooms/>

**One-Pot Mexican Casserole:**

<http://www.glutenfreeveganpantry.com/one-pot-mexican-casserole-vegan-gf/>

**One-Pot Peanut Sesame Noodles and Veggies:**

<http://ohmyveggies.com/one-pot-peanut-sesame-noodles-veggies/>