

OHIO BRIGADE CAMP

BIBLE X | LEADER'S RESOURCE GUIDE

DAY 1 — A Model of Christian Charity

John Winthrop | 1630

Scripture Focus	Matthew 5:14–16 1 John 3:16–18 Galatians 6:2
Sermon	A Model of Christian Charity — John Winthrop (1630)
Theme	We Are Designed to Need Each Other and Serve God's Kingdom
Session Length	45–60 min (adjust questions as needed)
Audience	Young men, Ohio Brigade Camp

SERMON BACKGROUND — KNOW THIS BEFORE YOU LEAD

John Winthrop preached this sermon aboard the Arbella in 1630 — before the Puritan colonists had even set foot on American soil. It is arguably the single most influential sermon in American history.

His central warning: the whole world would be watching. If the colonists lived as God commanded — loving one another, sharing generously, bearing one another's burdens — God would bless their settlement. If they did not, they would fail and shame the gospel before the nations.

Ronald Reagan quoted Winthrop's phrase "city on a hill" in 1988. But the phrase is Christ's — Matthew 5:14 — and Winthrop applied it to a covenant people trying to build something new and faithful. That lineage runs from Christ → Winthrop → the Founders → America's founding purpose.

This is not just history. It is the first brick of the question: What are we — as Christian men — called to be to a watching world?

THE THREE BIG IDEAS — WINTHROP'S FRAMEWORK

1. God Designed Difference — On Purpose

Winthrop opens by stating that God deliberately created rich and poor, powerful and lowly. Why? So that every person would need others. This is not a social accident — it is divine design. The wealth we have is not ours; it is God's on loan to us as stewards.

- Key text: Ezekiel 16:17 — God calls Israel's wealth His gold and silver.

- Key text: Proverbs 3:9 — Honor the Lord with your first fruits.
- Key text: 1 Corinthians 10:26 — The earth is the Lord's.

2. Brotherhood Requires Real Sacrifice

Christian love is not sentiment — it is action. Winthrop calls the community to three concrete duties: giving, lending, and forgiving. These are not optional extras. They are the law of Christ expressed in daily life.

- Key text: 1 John 3:16–18 — Lay down your life for your brothers.
- Key text: Galatians 6:2 — Bear one another's burdens.
- Key text: Philippians 2:3–4 — Put others' interests above your own.
- Key text: John 15:13 — Greater love has no one than this.

3. We Are Ambassadors — the World Is Watching

Winthrop's famous warning was not a boast — it was a charge. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Christians do not get to live privately. Our lives are public testimony. The quality of our brotherhood is the quality of our witness.

- Key text: Matthew 5:14–16 — Let your light shine before men.
- Key text: 1 Peter 2:12 — Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles.
- Key text: Philippians 2:14–16 — Do all things without grumbling, shining as lights.

LEADER COACHING NOTES

These are the things that will make or break this session. Read them before you lead.

Set the Stage — Don't Skip the History

Many of these young men have never heard of Winthrop. Take 3–4 minutes to put him on the map: 1630, aboard a ship, no land in sight yet, and this man is already issuing a charge. That image alone carries weight. The sermon predates the Declaration by 146 years — this is where the American story actually begins.

The "First Fruits" Discussion

The Day 1 study asks: Can our intellect and talent be considered first fruits? Push this. Many boys default to money when they hear giving. Challenge them to think about what they are best at — and whether they have ever offered that to God or held it for themselves.

The Self-Reflection Questions Are the Point

The study ends with hard questions: Where are you storing your treasure? Do you truly live like Christ, or are you living for yourself? Do not rush these. Sit in the silence. Let the question do its work. You are not looking for the right Sunday school answer — you are looking for an honest one.

Watch for the Performer

Some boys will answer every question quickly and correctly. That is not the goal. The goal is conviction, not performance. If a boy answers fast, follow up: "What would that actually look like in your life this week?" Make it specific and personal.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS — WITH LEADER GUIDANCE

Use these to move the group. Not all questions will fit every group. Read your room and go deeper where there is traction.

Opening: Matthew 5:14–16

What does it mean that we "cannot be hidden" as followers of Christ? What are the implications for how you live at home, at school, at camp?

Leader note: You want them to feel the weight of public witness — not guilt, but responsibility. A city on a hill is not a burden; it is a calling.

Winthrop's Framework: God designed us to need each other

If God intentionally created some people rich and some poor, what does that say about how we should view the people around us who have less?

Leader note: Push past charity as pity. Winthrop's point is interdependence — we need each other by design. Brotherhood is not generosity from strength; it is mutual dependency.

Ezekiel 16:17 / Proverbs 3:9

Winthrop says the wealth we have belongs to God — He just loans it to us. How does that change the way you think about your stuff? Your talent? Your time?

Leader note: Open the "first fruits" question here. Can your intellect, your skill on the field, your leadership ability be first fruits? What does it look like to offer those to God?

1 John 3:16–18 / John 15:13

Winthrop says Christian love is giving, lending, and forgiving — not just feeling. Where is the gap between how you feel about your brothers and how you actually act?

Leader note: This is where the study gets personal. Let it. If the group is honest, someone will name a real gap. That is the moment worth having.

Closing: Matthew 6:19–21

Where are you storing your treasure right now? Be honest — not with the group, with yourself.

Leader note: Give them 60 seconds of silence after this question. Do not fill it. Then close in prayer.

CLOSING CHALLENGE — SEND THEM WITH SOMETHING

Close the session with this:

"Winthrop didn't give this sermon after they had built something. He gave it before they had done anything. The charge came first. The covenant came first. The identity came first — and then the life followed. That is how it works for you too. You don't earn the right to be a city on a hill. Christ puts you there. Now the question is: are you going to shine, or are you going to hide?"

Assign them one specific thing to carry into the rest of the day:

- Identify one person at camp today whose burden you can help carry — and do it before lights out.

LEADER NOTES

Notes from this session:

Follow-up needed with:
