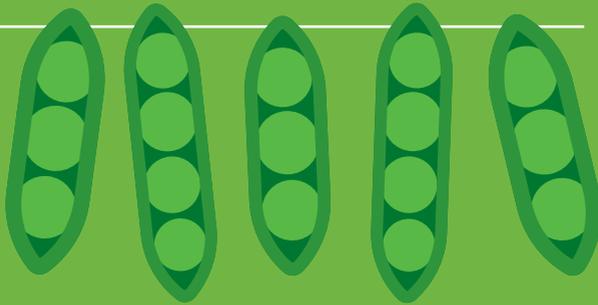

1

PATH OF DISCIPLES



Four lessons to understand
the Good News of Jesus in a
clear and practical way



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Members of King's Church Edinburgh where POD began

kingschurchedinburgh.org

For training, the Leader's Guide and booklet/downloadable pdf of this course, contact:

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Scripture quotations taken from THE HOLY BIBLE,
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Path of Disciples 1

Introduction

Path of Disciples (POD) is a fun and practical way to learn with others.

Who is POD 1 for?

POD 1 is for anyone and everyone, but especially for:

- Those who are unsure about Jesus but are open to learn more about Him.
- Those who have said “Yes” to God, and want to understand the good news of Jesus better.
- Those who want to help others to know and follow Jesus.

What is POD 1 about?

POD 1 presents Jesus, and the good news about Him, as a firm foundation for life. We invite you to learn in a clear and practical way through these four lessons:

1. **The grace of God**
2. **Our downfall and God’s glory**
3. **Jesus the King**
4. **Our response to God’s good news**

As you come with an open heart, we are confident that God will meet you on the Path of Disciples.

The person who gave you this booklet will help you find a Bible. You can also download the free YouVersion app which has translations of the Bible in many languages.



1 The Grace of God

We live in uncertain times when life doesn't always turn out quite as we thought. Many of us face challenges such as financial worries, broken relationships, caring responsibilities, job pressures, loneliness, and physical, mental or emotional ill health. And for others, things seem OK but then they wonder how life could become more meaningful.

Jesus told a story to show that, whatever our circumstances, God wants to welcome us into a wonderful new life with Him.

Read Luke 15:11-32

As we were reading this story, what most stood out for you?

Through this story Jesus tells us how God longs to welcome those who return to Him. The story also illustrates that it is out of his grace - his undeserved love - that God offers a welcome into his presence now and ultimately when we die. Our belief of what will happen to us after death can deeply shape our sense of purpose now. So, both for now and for later, it is really worthwhile to consider this important question:

1. We hope *this doesn't happen!* ... If you had a serious accident and you were to die today, what do you think would happen? Are you confident that God would welcome you home?

God tells us in the Bible that He longs for each of us to know Him and to experience a new kind of life. This new life has a beginning but no end, this is eternal life. He offers us this lasting new relationship with Him as a gift. God is like the father in the story - He loves to rescue people from a life (and a death) without Him. We will see that knowing God as Saviour is life-changing.

Paul wrote about this to his friend Titus. He looked back at their previous way of life, how God had saved them and given them new life.

Read Titus 3:3-7

2. V.3. How was their previous way of life before they experienced the love of God?

3. Vs.4-5a. Why does God save people?

When you think of how we have lived, do we deserve to be rescued?

How does God's mercy affect your attitude towards Him?

4. Vs.5b-6. How does God save people?

Paul now reminds his friend Titus why they had been put into a right relationship with God - it was by God's grace, from start to finish.

5. V.7. What is the result of God so graciously saving people?

Read Ephesians 2:8-9

6. Paul here sums up the giving and receiving of salvation. Can salvation be earned through leading a good life? Why or why not?

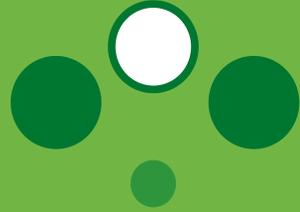
Read Luke 15:25-32 again

Through the story of the father's love for both of his sons, Jesus taught that God warmly accepts those who trust in his undeserved love and so are relying on his grace. Such people enjoy God's love now and forever.

7. What did the older brother think his father's acceptance depended on?

8. What do you think God's acceptance of you depends on?

The heart of the Father



In the story of the father and his two sons in Luke 15, Jesus wants to show us his Father's heart. Just like the father in the story, God the Father is excited and glad about all who return home to Him. He does not want to punish, and He does not wait for people to beg or plead with Him.

God sees our hearts turn to Him and He runs to meet us. He forgives us, accepts us back into his family and gives us dignity again. This is shown in the story by the robe, ring and sandals given to the returning lost son.

Like the father in the story, God is excited when He sees his lost son or daughter come back to Him. The Father's heart jumps for joy over each person who comes back to Him. We need to rely only on God's grace and compassion to forgive us. There are no barriers to stop us coming back to God; this is the case for each and every one of us.

God loves you and has wonderful good news for you. He offers you eternal life and his salvation, as a free gift. This is the grace of God. God requires your response to his offer.

2 Our downfall and God's glory

A leader of a discussion group once said: "Put your hand up if you have never done anything wrong." Just one person raised their hand, as a joke, to which the leader replied with a smile "Liar!" Most of us can recognise quite easily that we are not the people we ought to be, and at times we seem not to be as content as we would like. Why is that? Why do we often not enjoy life as God intends us to?

Read Genesis 1:27-28; 2:15-18; 3:1-9

What strikes you just now about God and people in this account?

The Bible teaches that our Creator designed and defined what it means to be human. God created people for an enjoyable and satisfying relationship with Him, to care for his world and to love our neighbour as ourselves. He enabled us to make good and wise choices for our own good. Tragically the first man and woman doubted God. They were deceived into thinking that they would be better off living their own way rather than God's way. They established what turned out to be a common pattern for humanity: they wanted to have the last word and live as they please. But this choice brought serious consequences for their relationship with God, and they died as God had said they would.

Let's consider how we have chosen to live.

"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." **Romans 3:23.**

James 2:8-11

1. How can we know God's glorious standard?

Why is breaking just one of his laws serious? (Consider James 2:11).

God's law displays his character. God speaks as much about motives, desires, feelings and thoughts as about actions. His law brings us a right understanding of the character, nature and meaning of sin.

James 4:17; Galatians 5:19-21

2. In what ways have we fallen short of God's standard?

It is wise to reflect on what ultimately motivates us, whether it is our Creator God or the pursuit of material possessions, prestige, pleasure, self-fulfillment or perhaps something else. Because of our sin, it is easy and common to have something other than God that motivates us, consumes our energies, our money and our time, in fact that starts to control our lives and is like a "god". Our Creator calls this idolatry.

Psalm 24:3-4

3. Who is good enough to approach God?

Our sin prevents us from enjoying God's wonderful presence now and after death. When we die each of us will face God as our true and just judge.

"People are destined to die once and after that to face judgment."

Hebrews 9:27.

Revelation 21:6-8

4. It isn't easy to consider judgment but we cannot avoid the consequences of our choices. How will God judge those who sin and follow other "gods"?

As we have read in Revelations 21:6-7 - and this is God's desire for all people - there is a better path with a better destination. The one true God, the creator of all that exists, knows all about you wherever you are. He is just but also full of compassion. He longs to free you from the burden of other "gods", from the guilt and shame of sin and from the rational fear of judgment. He wants to save you so that you can experience forgiveness and the love, joy and peace of living in his presence, now and forever.

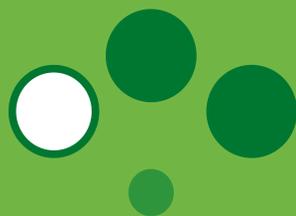
Psalm 139:1-7

5. How do you feel when you consider that God knows everything about you?

Psalm 147:3-5

6. What do you learn about God's power?

The heart of the Spirit of God



Just like parents who instruct their children, the Spirit of God teaches us. God helps us to understand the reason why we exist. It is because He chose to create each one of us with a purpose: to know Him, learn to love others like Jesus and show them his goodness.

Even though we have made a mess of this, God loves us. Through the Bible, the Holy Spirit invites us to experience God's eternal power and goodness and to reject those things that look attractive in the short term, but lead us away from God and separate us from Him.

God invites each one of us into a personal and intimate relationship with Him. God has made it possible for us to walk with his Spirit every step of every day, and be aware of Him at our side.

In spite of our downfall, God still loves us deeply and paid for the gift of salvation in the most loving and powerful way. He achieved this through his chosen King, Jesus, our Saviour.

3 Jesus the King

Jesus stands head and shoulders above other leaders. His example and attitude to the abuse of power led to a distinct view of leadership; today we still refer to political leaders as ministers or public servants. When facing injustice he demonstrated the power of non-violence; today we admire his saying “Turn the other cheek”. He challenged forms of religion that cause more harm than good. He embodied a moral code for living which for centuries has been the ethical basis of our legal system. No wonder each year is measured since the time of his birth. Yet beyond all this, the achievements of his death and resurrection have proved life-changing for millions.

Read Luke 23:32-43; 24:36-45

As you read this, which aspects of the account are most meaningful for you?

He is God's Son

John 1:1-3, 14, 17-18

1. What did God reveal through his Son, the Word, when He became human?

He became the man named Jesus

Acts 10:36-38

2. What did Jesus do during his life on earth?

1 Peter 2:22-23

3. How did Jesus respond when under pressure?

1 Peter 2:24; 3:18

4. Why did Jesus Christ die and what did He achieve by his death?

Peter also spoke of amazing acts of God after Jesus died.

Acts 2:32-36

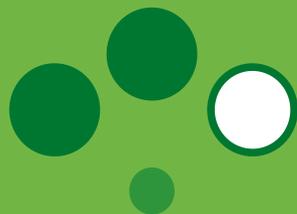
5. What are those acts of God?

A day is coming when God will publicly distinguish between those who have believed the good news of the Lord Jesus and those who have not.

2 Thessalonians 1:6-10; Matthew 24:42-44

6. What will happen? And when?

The heart of the Son of God



Jesus invites all who are tired and worn out to come to Him and He will give them rest. To our surprise, Jesus chose to describe Himself as gentle and humble. He is not at all a reluctant Saviour who is pointing the finger. Jesus suffered on the cross with arms wide open, inviting us to come to Him.

It was here at the cross that God's gentle heart, his justice for sin, and his compassion for sinners all came together to rescue us. The Son of God is powerful and yet tenderly invites us to come to Him in our struggles.

The Lord Jesus has shown He is a King without parallel through his life and completed work to reconcile the world to Himself. His name means "God saves" and He passionately longs for us to see we need Him and respond to Him and his death for our sins. We can trust Him. We can know the King of glory personally.

In the next session we will see God's delight when we humbly recognise our need to be reconciled to Him and, in our thirst, respond to his free gift of new life.

4 Our response to God's good news

When people hear the good news of the grace of God, there is always a response. Here are some examples:

- Some choose not to trust Jesus as Saviour, preferring to manage their lives without reference to God and what He says.
- Others procrastinate, choosing to sin and serve other “gods”, thinking there might be a more convenient moment to ask for forgiveness.
- Others consider the cost of becoming a disciple of Jesus and decide it is too great.
- Yet others hear the good news, accept God's offer of forgiveness and receive the gift of eternal life. They are saved and enter a new relationship with God. The Holy Spirit will then empower them to live God's way.

Read Luke 19:1-10

As you read this, what do you think of this man's response to Jesus?

Let's see how God wants us to respond to his offer of salvation.

Faith and repentance

John 3:16-18

1. What is the choice Jesus presents to us?

Romans 10:9-10

2. What does a person believe to be saved?

Isaiah 55:6-7

3. What does God require of us?

What does that mean for you?

Acts 3:19

4. Why do we need to have a change of heart and repent?

Making it personal

5. Our sin separated us from God. Have you been reconciled to God yet? Why do you think that?

Your response to the good news of Jesus is so important. We have seen that God wants you to choose his way and trust Him. You can accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour today and so enjoy eternal life. Perhaps, for you, this is an opportunity to reaffirm your heart's desire to follow Jesus as your Lord.

6. What is your response to God today?

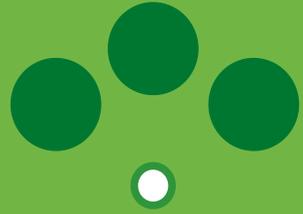
If you have decided to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour, or desire to reaffirm your trust in Him, you can tell God with your own words. Use this prayer as an example:

“Father God, I recognize that I have sinned and that I need your forgiveness. I believe that your Son the Lord Jesus died for me and I want to leave my sins behind. I trust in Him as my Saviour. I ask you to give me your Spirit and so empower me to change and obey Jesus as my Lord. Thank you for graciously hearing my prayer. Amen.”

John 5:24

7. If you have put your trust in Jesus as your Saviour and Lord, what has happened to you now?

Your heart response



God knocks on the door of our heart. Let us be like Zacchaeus in the Bible. Let us hear the soft and gentle voice of God calling out our name. Yes! Jesus, the Son of God, knows your name and is speaking to you right now. He calls you to change in your attitude to Jesus, to others and to yourself. May we be humble enough to listen to his tender encouragement to welcome Him and follow his lead. He loves you.

Let us trust Him and open the door of our heart to Him. Even now, God helps us to respond by saying yes to Him. We can invite Him in, asking Him to live with us, take charge and help us to turn away from our old ways of living. His promise is to take away our old heart of stone and to give us a new heart as we enter eternal life today.

If you have not yet accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, then He still loves you greatly. He longs for you to change your mind and ask Him for new life.

If you have accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, then we recommend you start **POD 2** which will help you to understand more about your new life in Christ and the power that is available from the Holy Spirit.



suggested reading

Selected by Luke Davydaitis

These books can help you with questions about the truth of Christianity:

- *Questions of Life*, Nicky Gumbel. Based on the Alpha Course, this book answers 15 key questions about Christianity.
- *If God, Then What?*, Andrew Wilson. Conversational-style and fast-paced book that considers some of the deepest questions and how they point us towards God.
- *Confronting Christianity*, Rebecca McLaughlin. Subtitle “12 hard questions for the world’s largest religion”. Addresses the main objections people have to Christianity and presents some of the evidence that it is true in a contemporary style.

These books can help you with questions about God:

- *The Prodigal God*, Timothy Keller. Considers the two wrong ways to approach God, and how He wants us to know Him.
- *The Good God*, Michael Reeves. An excellent and rich but brief examination of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- *Christ Our Life*, Michael Reeves. Also brief but also deep, looking at what Jesus has done for us.

These books can help you with how God rescues us, and our new life in Him:

- *God’s Lavish Grace*, Terry Virgo. A short book that explains what the Bible teaches about God’s acceptance of us and love for us.
- *What’s So Amazing About Grace?*, Philip Yancey. Lots of personal stories of how there’s nothing we can do to make God love us more, or less.
- *Reclaiming Adoption*, ed. Dan Cruver. Adoption is an important term for understanding what God has done for us and how He relates to us. This brief book gives lots of detail for appreciating this.

OPEN
TO
LEARN?

1. GOD'S
GOOD NEWS



2. WALKING
WITH GOD



3. SERVING
GOD



DISCIPLES: LEARNING TO FOLLOW JESUS