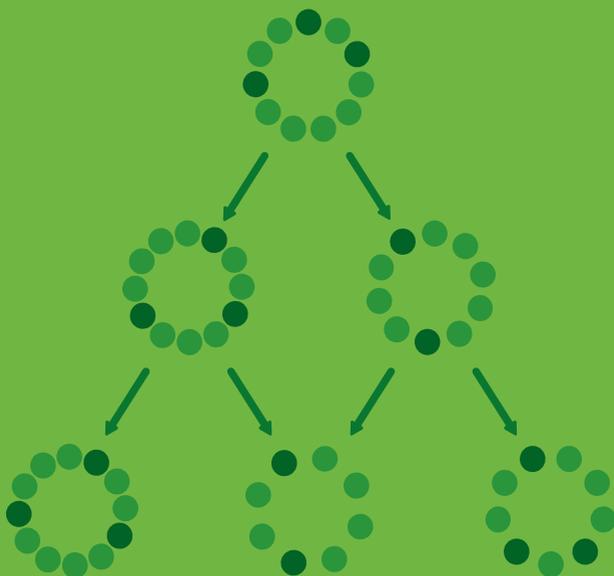


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TRAINING

# SMALL GROUP LEADING

with



**Leader's Guide**

for **P**ath **O**f **D**isciples for  
Small Group Leading

# TRAINING SMALL GROUP LEADING

with



## Leader's Guide

© **Guy and Jocelyn Pembroke 2017**

Members of King's Church Edinburgh where POD began

[kingschurchedinburgh.org](http://kingschurchedinburgh.org)

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**Edinburgh - 2021**

**V.2.0**

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# Foreword

## A Vision for Small Groups

**“And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, [the believers] received their food with glad and generous hearts... And every day, in the temple and from house to house, [the apostles] did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ...” (Acts 2:46; 5:42)**

The New Testament shows us that when Jesus saves people he brings them into local churches that gather in large numbers and small groups in homes.

At King’s Church Edinburgh, where POD began, we want to be a church for all of Edinburgh, a church that preaches all of the gospel, a church that goes into all the world, and a church where all of us are helped to become “all in”. Small groups play a key role in these things happening. As you’ll see during this course, small groups are where people can be loved and cared for, where they can serve and grow together, and where God builds them into the temple of his presence on the earth today.

However good our Sunday meetings are, it is in small groups that people will become part of our community, which is vital for them if they’re to grow into maturity. A guest visiting a church service for the first time, whether they’re a student new to the city and facing many temptations, or a Christian who hasn’t been to church in years needs to be invited to join a small group. Equally, mature church members require the encouragement of long-held friendships and the stimulation of meeting new people. This is just the tip of the iceberg of what small groups should do, and we hope that this course will help you to deepen your appreciation and broaden your expectations of what God will do through any small group that you are part of.

Small group leaders are commissioned by the elders of the church to help with this, and POD for Small Group Leading is a fruitful way to train current and potential leaders. Through its combination of exploring biblical principles, reflecting on past experiences, and doing practical tasks, we’re confident that this course will help you grow in leadership, whether you become a small group leader or not, and that through it God will create more small groups across our city so that we can welcome many more people into the church.

We’re so glad that you’re willing to explore if this is something God is calling you to, and we will be praying that God will speak to you and grow you as you go through it.

**Luke Davydaitis**  
**King’s Church Edinburgh**  
**March 2019**

# Training Small Group Leading with

## Who is this booklet for?

This **Trainer's Guide** is for those who want to equip prospective and current small group leaders. The Trainer's Guide consists of three main sections:

### 1. Introduction

This section is in both the **Trainer's Guide** and in **POD for Small Group Leading** (the **Trainee's Guide**).

### 2. Training Disciples with POD for Small Group Leading

This brief section gives vital orientation to you as the trainer. We recommend you read this before you begin to invite people to **POD for Small Group Leading**.

### 3. POD for Small Group Leading

This section includes the entire **Trainee's Guide** with *comments added in italics* and the green line in the margin highlights the additional text.

These comments will help you as you train others.



**Trainee's Guide**

# Introduction

Path Of Disciples (POD) for Small Group Leading is a practical way to learn to lead a small group and train others to do the same.

## Who is this POD for?

**POD for Small Group Leading** is for people who demonstrate a desire to learn more about leading a small group. These include:

- Members of the church who want to learn to lead a small group.
- Existing leaders who want to lead their small group more effectively.
- Leaders who want to train others to lead a small group. The graphic on the front covers illustrates leaders (the dark green peas) seeing other leaders develop for the ongoing healthy multiplication of small groups.

## What is POD for Small Group Leading about?

This is a contribution to the continuous multiplying of Christian leaders. In four sessions, a small group leader's responsibilities are seen through the lens of the main Biblical pictures of the church. We discuss practical ideas about the "nitty-gritty" of leading a small group\* and reflect on some guided tasks.

We invite you to learn in a clear and practical way about serving God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, in the context of the church.

1. **Shepherds of the Father's sheep**
2. **Serving together as family in the body of Christ**
3. **Priests together in the temple of the Holy Spirit**
4. **Leaders with a vision of Christ and his Bride**

\* Local churches use various terms to describe small groups, for example, "community groups", "house groups", "life groups", etc. For simplicity, we have used the term "small groups" throughout this POD. While the teaching focusses on trans-cultural Biblical pictures, the flavour of the "nitty gritty" will inevitably vary both from small group to small group as well as from church to church.

We also recognise leadership structures vary from church to church. In addition to elders, this POD refers occasionally to “hub leaders” who in some congregations are entrusted by elders or senior leadership to give support to leaders of small groups.

May the Holy Spirit give you joy as you apply the teaching to your own situation.

## How much time is required?

We will meet for two or three hours once a month. [Some have found it helpful to meet once a fortnight, covering half a session in each meeting.] The four sessions thus take place over four months. This timeframe allows reasonable time to complete the course tasks, and for you to reflect on small group leadership.

We ask trainees to prepare for each session beforehand by reading the Bible verses and writing a response to each question. The act of writing clarifies your thinking and helps you to remember what God teaches you. One or two thoughtful sentences for each question is appropriate.

It can be helpful to agree dates for the remaining sessions at the end of the first session.

## What does it take to grow through this POD?

Before starting **POD for Small Group Leading**, we invite you to take time to ask God to help you grow through the three aspects of each session:

1. Time for building relationships - character development.
2. Understanding God’s purposes for his people - knowledge development.
3. Discussion of practical tasks - gifts and skills development.

Learning in a context like this requires both the leader of the POD and those being trained to be willing to collaborate with the Holy Spirit. While the leader will respect your freedom to respond to God’s grace, we also encourage you to give the leader permission to speak freely into your life so that you are better equipped. As you come with an open heart, we are confident that God will grow you in leading others.

# Training Disciples with POD for Small Group Leading

*“You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others.”*

## 2 Timothy 2:1-2

We believe God wants a multiplication of healthy leaders who are equipped to serve the body of Christ and train other leaders. POD gives a clear and simple framework for the multiplication of disciples and leaders. Just think of God’s design for multiplication in creation and the harvest of peas that arises from sowing just one pea that was grown in a peapod. Similarly, God uses growing leaders to train more leaders, to build his church.

These materials have been designed to give you confidence that you can train others effectively in a time efficient way. This discipling process will complement learning from the healthy examples of leadership the trainees have observed.

## Distinctives of POD

This POD is a clear and practical way to learn with others what it means to lead a small group. Other tools may share some common aspects with POD but this is the way we describe POD to those considering using it.

- P** **Personal** - we keep the numbers to three or four in a group - including the trainer(s). Like Jesus, we take initiative to invite individuals to learn with others. We share a meal or dessert together before each lesson. That environment and size of group give plenty of time and space for people to ask their own questions and build lasting relationships.
- O** **Open** and highly flexible. Given the simple approach, groups can start throughout the year, at any time and any place that suits the group. We look for people who are teachable and **Open** to learn more about leading a small group.
- D** **Direct** and targeted, in that in just four sessions we help equip small group leaders through **Discussing** the primary Biblical pictures of the church, as well as reviewing practical tasks designed to develop the skills required to be a fruitful small group leader.

## POD is a setting for growing (think peas!)

POD applies the principles for training leaders as follows:

- POD is a **Path** with clear signposts showing the way forward, in this case to be equipped as a small group leader.
- We help people by leading them to a **Point Of Decision** ... Apart from their suitability, are they prepared and willing to serve as a small group leader at this time?
- POD is not just about teaching the Bible (though we treasure the Word); nor is POD just sharing life (though we may enjoy the choice of **Pudding Or Dessert!**), nor is POD just a mechanical “How To” manual. POD is for **discipling and equipping Christian leaders**.
- POD helps others develop understanding primarily from what the **Word** says rather than from what the POD writer or POD leader says.
- POD is taught by leaders who listen to the **Holy Spirit** who alone opens and changes hearts.
- POD is **church-based**, produced under the authority of church leadership with the purpose of contributing to the church’s growth.
- POD is **simple** in format. There is sufficient in this **Trainer’s Guide** for a busy leader to run with.
- POD is therefore inherently **reproducible**; when someone has participated in a POD, and responded in heartfelt obedience, they are equipped to lead others in that POD.
- There are **teaching methods** modelled by Jesus, wired within each session:
  - Jesus used both story and concepts since people vary in how they learn. (Each POD lesson starts with story, then leads to concepts).
  - He pitched his teaching at a level which his disciples could understand and were ready to accept.
  - He asked open questions which promoted a dialogue through which his disciples were nurtured.
  - He understood his disciples’ context and needs.
  - He spoke of his own practice of hearing his Father.
  - He was ready to teach in the moment.
  - He looked for both heart - and head - obedience, often expressed in community. (This includes, but is richer than Bible comprehension).
  - His teaching frequently had immediate relevance.

- When teaching, Jesus built in accountable practice, sending his disciples out and then listening to their reports on their return.
- The Word became flesh. He was an accessible, exemplar and vulnerable teacher.

You may want to pray each of these points into your discipling practise. It is all the above factors together which make POD a setting for growing.

## Leading a POD session

**Prepare** beforehand by praying for yourself and the trainees that your hearts would be open. Take the time to read through the lesson and Bible verses, jotting down what the Spirit highlights to you as you prepare. This approach will serve as an example for those you are teaching.

Before the first lesson, give those you are teaching a copy of the trainee's **POD for Small Group Leading**. Ask them to prepare - one or two thoughtful sentences for each question is appropriate. This process helps disciples to absorb the teaching.

Share a **meal or dessert** together. This time is key to build the kind of relationships which facilitate discussion of our relationship with God and character, as our growth in practical skills. Take the opportunity to share how you are and how you have been serving both within and beyond the church community. You are modelling a lifestyle.

As leader, pray briefly before reading aloud the **Introduction** of the lesson.

Each lesson then continues with a Biblical narrative followed by an intentionally very open question. It is helpful to ask this question to each person by name, not only to encourage all to participate, but also, as you listen to the responses, you will often hear ways in which the Spirit is connecting each one with distinct aspects of the truth. Understanding what the Bible teaches about leading God's people is important, but we also pray that people will engage with the truth in their hearts. Discussion of the narrative helps to set the basis and spiritual tone for the other questions.

Through POD, we model the confidence that Jesus had in the Scriptures. When necessary those who lead others need to gently help them to distinguish between their own thoughts and what the word of God says. Avoid arguing and speculation and obscure doctrinal controversies as they do not help people, 2 Timothy 2:23. If serious disagreements or genuine curiosity arise, speak to those with teaching responsibilities in the church.

PODs are intended to be flexible tools. Please don't feel you need to cover every question. Growing disciples need to feel free to ask their own questions. Don't feel limited to the questions in the lessons. We encourage a Berean attitude as described in Acts 17:11. If you do not know how to answer a question, say so, and offer to find out. It can be helpful to make additional notes during the discussion to follow up on ideas the participants raise.

## Tasks

Tasks help to set clear expectations and give a framework to chat through some of the practical detail of small group leadership. We want small group leaders to be clear on what their role involves, and be equipped in how to do it according to the gifts that God has given them. Tasks introduce some of the practical aspects that small group leadership involves, and give a nurturing opportunity to learn how to do these things well.

## Healthy boundaries

- A leader who equips others brings testimony and warmth and gifts to the task but encourages others to make their own commitment to the Lord.
- Although your friendship is important, trust the Holy Spirit to apply the Word to the trainees' hearts. Those you train will not lead a small group in exactly the same way you do and may well develop beyond your experience.
- Sometimes we do POD with only one person, but we find learning in a group context is usually richer, healthier and less intense. We follow Jesus' example, in that He normally trained leaders in a group context.
- It is helpful for one another to keep those overseeing you informed about how the course is progressing.

# POD for Small Group Leading

## with comments

*Before starting this lesson, set the context by drawing out key points from the Introduction (on pages 2 and 3 of both this [Trainer's Guide](#) and the [Trainee's Guide](#)).*

*If you have jumped straight to here (perhaps most of us have done that at some stage!), we encourage you to read through this [Trainer's Guide](#) from the start just to understand how we train with this POD.*

## 1 Shepherds of the Father's sheep

*You might discuss their experience of small groups over the meal/dessert e.g. asking what they think makes a good or poor small group.*

### A. Introduction

...

**For the rest of this Leader's Guide  
please see [pathofdisciples.org/resources/](https://pathofdisciples.org/resources/)**

# **POD** Resources

## **POD** for Small Group Leading

The Trainee's booklet. Four training sessions for leading a small group.

### **POD1**

Four lessons to teach the Good News of Jesus laying a firm foundation for those who are open to learn – POD 1 has also proved useful to give training in discipling others.

### **POD2**

Four lessons to teach about walking with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as well as with each other in the church.

### **POD3**

Four lessons to teach about serving God the Father, with the love of Jesus, and in reliance on the Holy Spirit.

## **Making Disciples with** **POD**

Leader's Guide for teaching POD 1, 2 and 3 with a view to multiplying and equipping loving disciples of Jesus.



## **Share Life**

Four lessons to learn how to tell people about Jesus and equip others in this.

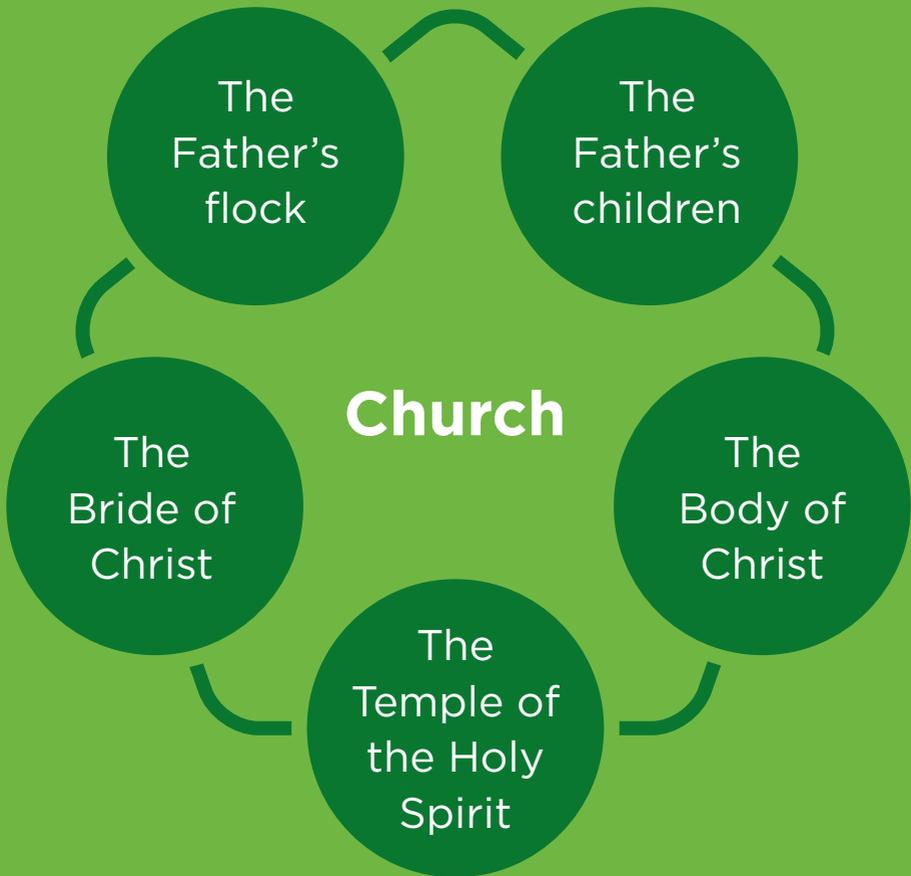
## **Training others with** **Share Life**

Trainer's notes to help you equip others, using **Share Life**.

Further information is available at [pathofdisciples.org](http://pathofdisciples.org) including downloads.

We are happy to arrange an Introduction to POD, including how to start using POD. To discuss POD or for ordering any of these materials, please contact:

[POD@pathofdisciples.org](mailto:POD@pathofdisciples.org)



Disciples learning to lead in the church,  
God's people, where all are:

Sheep, sons/daughters, sisters/brothers  
members, priests and living stones