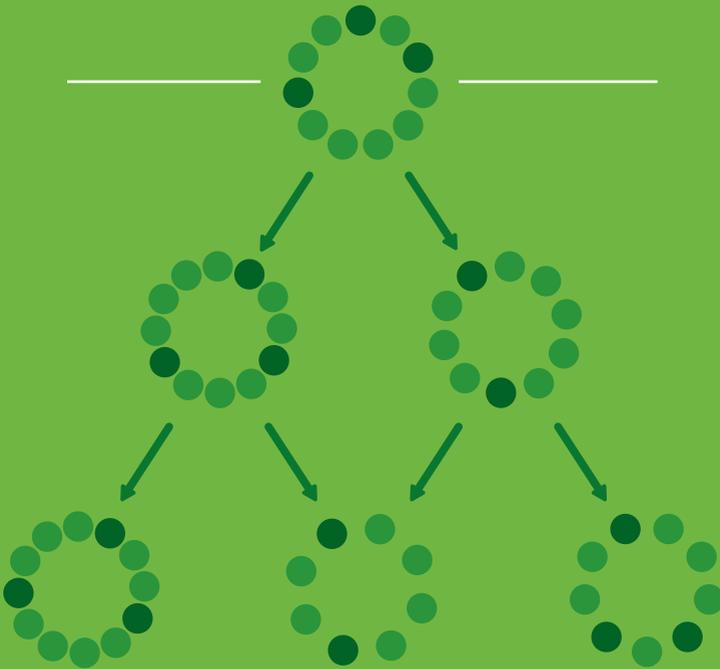




for

# SMALL GROUP LEADING



Four training sessions  
for leading a small group





for

# SMALL GROUP LEADING

## Trainee's Guide

© **Guy and Jocelyn Pembroke 2017**

Members of King's Church Edinburgh where POD began

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

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

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**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**



# 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.

# 1 Shepherds of the Father's sheep

## A. Introduction

The shepherd is the primary picture of a godly leader. God, the Father of Israel, was King David's shepherd, Exodus 4:22, Psalm 23. In making the Father known, Jesus came as the good shepherd who as the sacrificial lamb redeemed God's people. The Holy Spirit now distributes responsibility and equips some to lovingly shepherd God's flock. What a privilege to care for God's flock in the name of Jesus, the chief shepherd.

**Aim of lesson 1:** We want to see clearly the heart of a true shepherd and what it takes to care for **the sheep of God's flock** with all their varying needs.

Read Ezekiel 34:1-16

What strikes you about God's message here?

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## B. Caring for God's sheep

John 10:10-14, 27

1. What are the key characteristics of a true shepherd who follows Jesus?

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Genesis 4:9; Galatians 6:2,5; 1 Peter 5:1-4

2. What are the limits and scope of your responsibility in caring for others?

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2 Corinthians 1:3-5; James 1:19

3. How can you give genuine care?

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4. Can you identify aspects of pastoral care in which you feel weaker and would like to develop?

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**Practical ideas** are provided in these lessons for distinct aspects of leading a small group. The ideas are examples, certainly not intended as a complete list nor to leave you feeling exhausted. Small groups vary in style and one “size” does not fit all; consider the ideas as a resource. They are not “rules” but are designed to facilitate discussions of some practical details of small group leadership.

Read through the practical ideas in **Ideas Box 1** and circle a few that catch your attention. We have circled the first one to start you off!

## Ideas box 1: Pastoral care of a small group



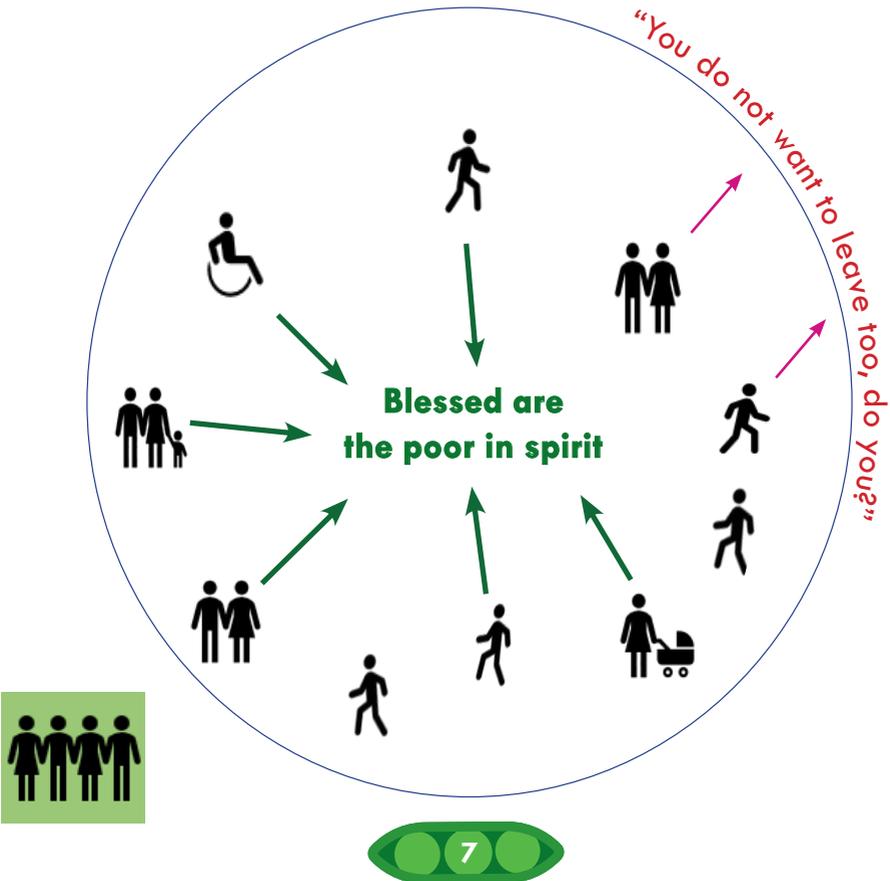
- Pray for those for whom you have responsibility in your personal times of devotion.
- Make the most of every opportunity to look out for those you have responsibility for, especially at the start and end of Sunday meetings, and other church occasions.
- Invite people to your home or arrange to meet for coffee. It can be helpful to state your purpose e.g. “just to encourage one another”, or “to catch up with how life is going for you.”
- If visiting their home, be generous and take something with you.
- Seek to learn about the other person’s background and culture; don’t assume that they will have the same preferences and expectations as you, or that yours are normal/superior.
- As you pray for individuals, be open to receiving a prophetic word for them.
- Be prepared to read a brief Bible passage and to pray together in the moment.
- Take a healthy interest in other areas of life (not just their participation in church activities) e.g. family, employment/studies, recreation.
- Be alert to any bitterness or potentially divisive behaviour.
- Maintain certain boundaries around your time when you feel under pressure to respond. It is rarely necessary to arrange to meet immediately.
- Recognise when you are out of your depth and when someone needs further help.
- Avoid quoting what someone has shared in confidence but bear in mind that the wider group/church/community may be affected (refer to an elder or hub leader for counsel).
- Recognise when it is more appropriate that someone else gives immediate pastoral care (e.g. asking a man to listen to another man) or when more than one person should be involved.

5. What other practical tips would you like to add from your own experience of giving or receiving pastoral care?

*We have expanded on the topic of giving pastoral care in Appendix 1.*

### Knowing the flock

God cares for what is going on in a small group. While some will show they are learning to depend on the Lord ("the poor in spirit" Matthew 5:3); others will be sadly leaving the path (John 6:66-67); with others it's not clear (to our eyes!) what is happening. Then there are more (in the green box) who, as yet, are not in any small group. The Lord will help us to care for all types of people.



## C. Feeding God's sheep

Proverbs 27:23; Matthew 13:10-23

6. Why do some bear fruit after hearing the Word and others do not?

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Hebrews 5:11 – 6:3

7. Sheep need to feed constantly. Two types of person are identified in this passage. How can you discern what kind of teaching a small group needs?

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8. When you think of your knowledge of the Bible and how it relates to life, how do you think you could be better prepared to teach others?

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The small group provides a great opportunity to build **one another** up through feeding together from the Word. A shepherd does not normally put food in the sheep's mouth. A shepherd knows where there is appropriate pasture and provides a setting - with the Bible open – where all can develop.

Read through the practical ideas in Box 2 and circle a few that catch your attention.

## Ideas box 2: Leading a Bible discussion in a small group



- Introduce the passage or topic, avoid digressing too much from the word of God and steer the conversation to a clear conclusion that encourages a life lived to honour Christ.
- Before you ask someone to read aloud, make sure they are at ease to do so (around 20% of people will not be).
- Draw people out by asking them questions. To encourage all to take part, we often ask someone by name to read a verse or two and then ask them a question about that section. Normally we let new people just listen the first couple of times they visit a group, unless we sense they are keen to take part.
- Steer the dialogue without dominating; don't be quick to fill the silence; open things up by asking what others think. Every comment does not need to be addressed to the leader.
- Think about questions that the group may ask about the topic and be ready to respond.
- Seek to develop a culture where people are talking with each other, not at each other in collective monologues.
- When someone asks you an unexpected question during the discussion, and you don't know the answer, be honest! And offer to find out.
- Avoid arguing, speculation and obscure doctrinal controversies as they normally do not help people to understand and live the Christian life.
- Use open questions (How? Why? What?) instead of closed questions (which are normally answered by Yes/No).
- Give practical examples of how a teaching has affected your life or someone else's.
- Be flexible and break the discussion for prayer if a need arises.
- Getting other people to contribute their perspective on the passage after someone has given an unlikely or unhelpful contribution can move the discussion in a more positive direction.
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**9. What other practical tips would you like to add from your own experience of leading or being part of a Bible discussion in a small group?**

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*We have expanded on the topic of preparing and leading a Bible discussion in Appendix 2.*

## **D. Planning two practical tasks**

**Tasks** are designed to develop practical skills both for leading a small group as a group, and for serving the individuals within the group. Thus, some tasks are for the group setting, others for conversations with individuals.

### **Practical tasks to complete before session 2:**



#### **TASK 1:**

A pastoral conversation (meal/coffee/drink/walk) to encourage one person/couple/family associated with the small group. Have in mind a specific purpose for this - e.g. to get to know them better, to chat about their beliefs, to help with a practical need, etc. As part of your preparation for this task, read Appendix 1 "Pastoral Conversations". There is no expectation you'll apply it all in one conversation!



#### **TASK 2:**

To lead (or share the lead of) a Bible discussion in the small group, with the intention of helping to meet an identified need of the group. As part of your preparation for this task, read Appendix 2 "Leading a Bible discussion". Again, learning through the task is the aim ... Perfection may come later!

## **E. Pray for one another**

**Note:** You need to prepare for question 2 of the next lesson.

## 2 Serving together as family in the body of Christ

### A. Recap and review the practical tasks

How did the pastoral conversation(s) go? [Task 1]

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What were your strengths and weaknesses when leading the Bible discussion in the small group? [Task 2]

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### B. Introduction

In the first session we saw that the primary picture of leadership is that of a shepherd. The other key description is a humble servant. Through the Scriptures we see that leaders are simultaneously servants of God and servants of the church, Christ's body. The health of the small group is directly promoted by the humility that the Spirit gives to those who keep that dual focus.

**Aim of lesson 2:** To see clearly, from a whole group perspective, the need to encourage others to use their gifts as we serve together as **brothers and sisters in the body of Christ**.

Read John 13:1-17

What do you hear God saying to you though this incident?

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## C. Humble servants

Romans 12:1-2

**1. Leaders need to demonstrate the commitment of a holy and obedient life in the church, their family and the wider community. How can you ensure that you remain humble as you accept responsibility for serving others?**

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Romans 12:3

**2. In what areas do mature Christians who know you well and have seen you serve, consider you are gifted? [You may need to ask one or two people. This is all about realising what God has given you by his grace]**

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**What do they think are your weaker areas in terms of gifting? Do you agree?**

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### Benefitting from the wider family

As you think of leaders you respect, some are wired to strengthen what already exists, while others bring into being new things. Small groups tend to follow the gifting of their leaders – for instance, some groups are strongly pastoral, while others are more fervently evangelistic, while yet other groups passionately pursue the prophetic, etc. Christ has given different key leaders for the equipping of his people – apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and

teachers, Ephesians 4:12-13. We do not need to choose between consolidating and expanding. The apostolic approach requires the church - and its small groups - to consolidate and expand, simultaneously. To achieve this, you could invite input from others in the church to build up the group in areas where you are weaker.

God does not expect leaders to do everything nor directly lead every aspect of the small group on each occasion. Like Nehemiah, servant-hearted leaders provide an overall steer as they delegate multiple aspects of small group life (leading prayer, teaching, pastoral care, administration, discipling someone new, leading worship, etc.).

### D. A well-functioning body

Christ is the head of the body, the church, which grows through Him and for Him, as each member does their work. Serving the body of Christ in this context should not feel like the burden associated with planning all the intricacies of a large family wedding, on your own ... each week! Instead, life in a small group is like a regular family meal where responsible adults share the work and encourage others to help.

#### Romans 12:4-5

**3. In your own words how would you describe the relationship between different members of the body of Christ?**

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#### Romans 12:6-8

**4. How can you encourage your small group to serve one another?**

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## E. Serving together as family

The most frequent way the New Testament describes the relationships between members of the body of Christ is “brothers and sisters”. We are family.

**Romans 12:9-16**

**5. Think of some life events that have occurred over the past 12 months in people's lives in your small group. Based on this passage, how could you nurture a warmer family atmosphere as a group so that together you are better equipped for future life events?**

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Read through these practical ideas and circle a few that catch your attention.

Remember, they are suggestions, not rules!

## Ideas box 3: Growing close community in a small group



- Encourage each person to share a high and a low from the week. Some call this “Roses and thorns”.
- Give regular space for testimonies. For instance, have an evening when a number of group members give testimonies: how they became a Christian or a key time of spiritual growth in their lives.
- From time to time, have a time of focussed listening prayer for one or two individuals in the group. Ask someone to write down any prophetic words given so that they can be passed to the individual for them to weigh.
- Serve together helping someone, or a group in the church (e.g. prepare and serve a student lunch).
- Serve the wider community in a practical way (e.g. litter picking, feeding the homeless).
- Have a prayer night.
- Arrange a Bring and Share Sunday lunch or a picnic for all ages.
- Vary your small group activities: Have a games night or a film night, with pizza.
- Meet in someone else’s home.
- Go for a weekend walk that includes stopping for cake, or a takeaway meal.
- There’s a theme here of food :-) ... eat together. As Andy Moyle says in *Friends, Food and the Gospel*: “Food transcends and bridges culture”.
- If members of your group have children or a spouse who doesn’t attend, think of events that could involve them. Some of the ideas in Box 4 will be suitable.
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**6. What other practical tips would you like to add from your own experience of building close community?**

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We considered a leader’s pastoral care in the first session, but such care also acts as an example through which a leader helps and encourages the group as a whole to care for each other. It may seem obvious, but meeting regularly and frequently is key for people to get to know each other.

**F. Seeing the small group grow numerically**

**John 13:34-35**

**7. Why do you think a loving community is critical to numerical growth?**

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**A missional outlook**

A healthy small group will not just be welcoming to Christians but also to the wider community. Friends or family can feel more comfortable being introduced first to one or two others in the small group, before meeting the group.

Regardless of how many in the small group are currently speaking to others about Jesus, we rely on God to awaken us all to serve as a growing team on mission. Leaders have a part in this since as Kenneth Strachan stated: “The expansion of any movement is in direct proportion to its success in mobilizing its total membership in continuous propagation of its beliefs.” Acts 8:4 is a snapshot of one time of fulfilment of this aspect of God’s plan.

Read through these practical ideas and circle a few that catch your attention.

## Ideas box 4: Seeing the small group grow numerically



- Pray together for the growth of your group.
- Be intentional at Sunday meetings in finding new people to join your group. The Welcome team will be aware of your group but nothing beats a personal invitation from a leader! If possible, introduce new people to one or two in your small group so that they start to know others as well.
- Offer to meet new people beforehand for a coffee and to accompany them to the group.
- To avoid the small group becoming inward-looking, give opportunity to group members to tell of opportunities God has given them to speak about Jesus in everyday life.
- As a group walk around your neighbourhood praying and listening to God's heart for your community.
- Engage in an evangelistic activity as a group – this will raise Gospel awareness in the group. E.g. join an evangelistic team in the church one week.
- Schedule activities to which you can invite others. Christians will gather on such occasions anyway, so let's make the most of special events in the year to intentionally **invite new people** such as neighbours, friends and family members. Events will vary according to local culture but also go international! - Here are some occasions: Burns night supper (around 25th January); St Patrick's Day (17th March); an international theme night (on any national date); Shrove Tuesday (pancakes); summer (BBQs, picnics and walks); start of term social (meal); festivals' events; 5th November (fireworks); carols in the community; New Year's Eve party – as you can see, it's not difficult to plan regular occasions.
- Promote and pray together for church events like the Christmas carol services. Invite to Alpha launches, Easter, baptisms.

- Use a map to discuss where current members live, areas that do not yet have a small group and to pray for future hosts and leaders.
- Cast vision discussing the multiplication of your small group with the group members well in advance of it happening so that there is an expectation of change and growth. Plan this (including the training of future leaders) in coordination with the hub leader.
- ...

**8. What other practical tips would you like to add from your own experience of building a small group numerically?**

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## G. Planning the next two practical tasks

**Practical tasks to complete before session 3:**



### **TASK 3:**

To arrange (or help arrange) a small group meeting with the aim of developing one or two other (named) people in the use of their gifts, for the benefit of the small group. Sometimes it is helpful to pair up a person who is stronger in the faith with someone who is weaker.



### **TASK 4:**

To arrange (or help arrange) a small group meeting/ activity which, by faith, could build up close community and grow the small group numerically.

## H. Pray for each other

# 3 Priests together in the temple of the Holy Spirit

## A. Recap and review the practical tasks

What growth are you seeing in the loving use of gifts in the small group? [Task 3]

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How would you evaluate the efforts that have been made to build the community and grow the group numerically? [Task 4]

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## B. Introduction

We are not a chance group of disciples who happen to meet together. Christ died to make us a people that are his very own, Titus 2:14. Regardless of our cultural or social differences, God is completing the most significant construction project in history. He is building us, like living stones - not uniform bricks - into a beautiful temple full of his wonders, for the blessing of others. A temple built by God, for God, where He lives today by His Spirit.

We are now a people set apart for God, trusting Him and belonging to Him and each other, a people called to holiness, purity and intimacy with God. In this session, we'll consider what is required to lead such a people.

**Aim of lesson 3:** To welcome and depend on the powerful transforming presence of God as we lead others to maturity. Together we are **priests in the temple of the Holy Spirit.**

**Read 2 Samuel 6**

**What do you learn about leading God's people in his presence?**

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**C. Working hard with God's energy**

**Colossians 1:24-29**

**1. What mystery has God now made known?**

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**2. What was Paul's stated objective for everyone in the church?**

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**3. How did Paul seek to reach this goal?**

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## D. Leading God's people in worship in the Spirit

1 Peter 2:4-10

**4. How does a small group show that they are a representative part of God's holy royal priesthood?**

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Psalm 95

**5. The Psalmist is leading God's people in worship. What elements in this Psalm are involved in doing that?**

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2 Corinthians 3:17-18

**6. How can you welcome and recognise God's glorious presence?**

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Reflect on 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 and 1 Corinthians 14:26 and the opportunities to freely contribute in small groups (as well as in larger gatherings).

Read through these practical ideas about nurturing an environment in which the small group is strengthened through the manifestation of the Spirit.

## Ideas box 5: Leading worship in a small group



- Welcome God's Spirit with expectancy.
- Start with praising God either with live or recorded music or acapella.
- Having the words of songs is essential, especially for new members. Song books are available from the church office, or just print out the lyrics. When selecting songs, bear in mind that some are more easily sung by a small group while others are best sung as performance pieces.
- The small group is an excellent setting for people to gain experience in using their gifts for the good of the body.
- Lead by inviting open participation so that the Spirit makes Himself manifest through the prophetic, tongues, a song, a word of instruction, etc.
- Resist the temptation to fill the silences or to quickly take control when you are unsure what God is doing. Give God space to be God.
- Give opportunities for the group to pray for the gifts of the Spirit.
- Value when individuals are taking first steps in worship, gently encouraging the participation of the timid when you sense they have something to bring.
- Discern where individuals are gifted and individually encourage them in the use of their gifts.
- Recognise the prophetic, weigh words and pray into them.
- Be open to set aside time for emotional, mental and physical healing.
- If you sense your group needs to develop in an area e.g. the prophetic, yet you feel ill-equipped, seek support from another leader. We are in this together.
- ...

**7. What other practical tips would you like to add from your own experience of worshipping God when on your own or with others?**

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## **E. Leading God's people in reliance on God**

**John 15:5-8**

**8. What are the essentials for fruitfulness in service?**

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**How are you practically seeking God and enjoying Him?**

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Read through these practical ideas and circle a few that catch your attention.

## Ideas box 6: Leading prayer in a small group



- If you are leading the Bible discussion, limit the discussion. Arrange for someone else to expectantly lead the group in God's presence so that there is fresh grace - prayer is the engine, not an extra.
- Start by inviting two or three to express thankfulness to God, perhaps for what you've discussed or after reading a few verses from a Psalm. Pray briefly, and from the heart, so that others can follow your example.
- Relate prayer to the Word discussed, to God's promises and his glory, Isaiah 48:11.
- When you lead in specific areas for prayer, speak little and pray much. Encourage brief prayers.
- Vary approaches to joint prayer: all raising voices together, silently, two or three praying out loud, writing requests. Emphasize that this is prayer together (e.g., all say yes or Amen!).
- Safeguard time to listen to God and to hear Him speak.
- Use the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) together and as a model for guided spontaneous prayer.
- Read aloud one of Paul's prayers, e.g. Ephesians 1:15-19, 3:16-19, Colossians 1:9-10, and then pray them for one another.
- Pray for local/national/international events and governments. This is helpful for keeping a group's perspective outward-looking.
- For praying about what is currently occurring in people's circumstances, break into twos and threes, particularly to pray through personal highs and lows. Be willing to ask for prayer for yourself, you need support in prayer(!) and it's an example to others.
- Promote prayer for pastoral needs at other times, with the person's permission, through a small group Whatsapp group.
- Plan occasional meetings given entirely over to worship and prayer.
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**9. What other practical tips would you like to add from your own experience of communicating with God when on your own or with others?**

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See **Ten Prayer Nuggets** downloadable from [pathofdisciples.org](http://pathofdisciples.org) for further tips on leading prayer.

## **F. Planning the next two practical tasks**

**Practical tasks to complete before session 4:**



### **TASK 5:**

To lead (or help lead) a time of open worship in the small group with expectancy that the Spirit will fill the group.



### **TASK 6:**

To be led by the Spirit in leading (or helping lead) a time of prayer in the small group. Read through **Ten Prayer Nuggets** available on [pathofdisciples.org](http://pathofdisciples.org)

## **G. Pray for each other**

Pray for each other that the Spirit will fill you for leading his people.

# 4 Leaders with a vision of Christ and his Bride

## A. Recap and review the practical tasks

What did you sense the Holy Spirit was doing/saying in the time of worship you led? [Task 5]

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How do you think the small group is developing in the manifestation of the presence of God?

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How could you improve your leading of a prayer time in the small group? [Task 6]

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## B. Introduction

**Aim of lesson 4:** To grasp a **growing leader's vision of Christ and his Bride**, discuss the next steps in service and invite the Holy Spirit's empowering.

Read Nehemiah 1:1 – 2:9

What impacts you about this leader and his vision?

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## C. The Bride of Christ

Revelation 7:9-10; 19:7-9

1. How might this future prospect enrich our service now?

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Proverbs 29:18

2. Why is vision or revelation important?

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### Fill the earth through multiplication

In Acts 5:29, after arresting the apostles, the high priest said to them: “you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching”. May God now give us vision to fill our area with the good news of Jesus! A key way this will happen is through nurturing apprentices who will lead small groups. As the group grows both numerically and in faith, you and your hub leader can discuss what you need to have in place to be able to multiply. Timing and momentum are important - one key factor is that once average attendance is more than 12, the group dynamic changes and, if the group does not multiply, individuals’ attendance often weakens. As a leader, you work towards multiplication of the small group from the start.

3. How did the apostle serve strategically in the light of the vision?

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Read through these practical ideas and circle a few that catch your attention.

## Ideas box 7: Starting a new small group



- As the group grows, coordinate the start of a new group with the hub leader.
- Consider having an assistant leader whom you train on the job using this POD.
- A short while before you multiply, honour existing group members by asking them to pray about which group they will be part of. In some ways a group will divide geographically, but this will also be based on relationships. Look to God to establish viable groups which will in turn grow and multiply. This can happen in various ways, for instance, sometimes two groups will pool resources to form a third group. Hold a final joint evening when you pray for those who will lead the new group as well as for one another.
- From the start of a new small group, pray for the ongoing multiplication of leaders to continue to serve those God wants to transform by the message of his grace.

- Have three or four copies of the Bible (same page numbers) for those who visit the group.
- Have the words of songs (the church office can supply songbooks).
- Arrange an initial social occasion with group members when you remind people of the vision given through the church's elders including seeing a multiplication of disciples, leaders and small groups. Plan the first month's worship/teaching/prayer – who leads what, content of a teaching series. After the first month it can be helpful, especially for involving others, to plan a further three months, but hold your plan lightly.
- Find out who is currently attending the church but not in a small group, the church office will be able to provide this information. Inviting people to join a new group is easier than trying to get them back into a group they haven't clicked with.
- Set up an email list to contact all the group members. Ask for the email addresses of any members you don't already have (this request will be in accordance with current data laws).
- Form a WhatsApp group.
- Ask new people if they want to be added to group emails / WhatsApp, as they join the group.
- ...

**4. What other practical tips would you like to add from your own experience of seeing new small groups start?**

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## D. Future service – next steps

This POD has focused on the ongoing development of character; understanding God's purposes for the church through the Word and the Spirit and growing in gifts and abilities for leading others.

**5. How do you believe God has been speaking to you about serving Him over these past months?**

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2 Peter 1:5-8

**6. Character:** What area would you like to see the Spirit change?

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2 Timothy 2:15

**7. Understanding God's purposes:** How can you present yourself to God as a better equipped worker?

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1 Corinthians 14:1

**8. Gifts and abilities:** What would you like the Spirit to give you so as to be better equipped to serve others?

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## E. Pray for each other

## Appendix 1 – Pastoral conversations

This section builds on the first session's Bible teaching about the importance of the heart of a shepherd. It complements the nitty-gritty of the **Ideas box 1** where we started to discuss **How** we can do this. Like other aspects of Christian service, pastoral care is caught as much as taught. For this reason, we suggest you come alongside someone who is a good role model and reflect on how they care. We hope you find these notes helpful as you think through **Task 1** which is described at the end of session 1.

### Who?

It's good to recognise whom you are responsible for – in this context the individuals associated with your small group, whether they be mature church members or occasional visitors. It can be helpful to have a list of names to pray for. It's amazing how often pastoral needs come to mind when we pray regularly for our people. Usually, a small group leader will relate to some in the group better than to others. We want to ensure nobody is overlooked and, for this purpose, it can be useful to informally distribute responsibility as the small group's leader. As part of maintaining appropriate boundaries, generally a male leader will care for the men and a female leader care for the women.

### When?

As far as it depends on you as the small group's leaders, keep the lines of communication open with each person associated with your small group in normal times as well as times of individual crisis. Be alert to what is most appropriate on different occasions, whether text, phone call, a quick coffee or a longer meet up.

### What?

Pastoral conversations are opportunities to go deeper with someone than the limitations of a small group meeting allow. It's a chance to hear how they are really doing, and to build a relationship with them. These conversations are not meant to only happen when someone is experiencing a crisis. In fact, at those moments you should be looking to involve hub leaders, the church elders, and/or professional help if appropriate, rather than dealing with the person and their situation by yourself. Most of the time normal care is what almost everyone needs. That's a relief as most of us are not professional counsellors!

## **Where?**

If you are expecting to have a longer conversation, agree to meet at a time and place that will facilitate this. It's important that both of you are comfortable and are able to talk openly and yet privately. This could be in a home or a public place. As you get to know the person better you may learn if they like to walk and talk, or prefer their own home, etc.

## **How?**

When the conversation is arranged, pray beforehand for your own heart and for the other person. This will help you be ready to lead in prayer, read, or refer to, Scripture and share any prophetic word the Lord may give you. We are modelling a walk with God in daily life, outside a church meeting context.

To illustrate a pastoral conversation, think of how a hand has a unique set of fingerprints on five fingers. Each conversation will be as unique as the individual is. You want the conversation to be friendly and natural, yet sometimes it can be good to plan what you will talk about. Throughout the conversation you want to be open to the Holy Spirit and, of course, to anything the other person wants to discuss.

We can't cover everything in any one conversation, but there are five areas to keep in mind. This is not a clinical approach but rather one in which you think about the other person, it's about being loving and considerate rather than careless and clumsy. To think beforehand about a conversation may not seem natural to some, but then many things don't feel natural at first, like riding a bike, until you learn to do it naturally! A humble person appreciates that they meet the other person at one point in their lives – they have a past, present and future. Respect boundaries within the relationship especially when you are starting to get to know the person. To build up trust (and to avoid the sense of a probing interview), be prepared to speak of your own life as well. The Holy Spirit, the great Comforter, will help us come alongside others. If there is a sensitive moment, it can be helpful to say "Please don't feel you need to say what you don't want to" and give the person a moment to "re-group". So here are the five areas to keep in mind:

**H**Health: How are you? Emotionally, physically, mentally.

**A**ctivity - Studies or work or at home. Be alert to struggles including the ability to pay basic bills.

**N**earest - Friends, family, flatmates.  
Listen to relational tensions and loneliness.

**D**earest - God. Consider God's first question, Genesis 3:9.  
What do you think God is up to in your life? How can I help you grow?

**S**ervice. Serving in the church and in the community.  
For example, do you feel useful in the small group? How are you seeking to develop in serving?

Finally, before you run out of time, it can be good to ask: "Is there anything else you'd like to mention?" This gives the person a further message you care for them. It may be wise to respond briefly and offer to come back in the next few days/weeks, when you've been able to pray and reflect.

Conversations are fluid, and in mentioning areas to consider, there is no intention to promote a mechanical approach. Any conversation without love will be like a "clanging cymbal" in the ears of the other person, 1 Corinthians 13:1. Our pastoral styles will vary, yet here are some top tips for loving the other person:

- Ask God to help you see the other person with his eyes.
- Listen well.
- Don't jump to conclusions.
- Don't be domineering.
- Avoid setting human standards (legalistic pastoring).
- Be willing, but not eager, for the key conversations in which you may need to bring truth from the Word and confront poor choices.
- Encourage – everyone needs courage to live well.



## **And after the conversation?**

Remember details – sometimes it helps to make a brief note afterwards so that you can pray for the person in an informed way and follow through on anything else you have offered to do. A good follow-up question often encourages people that you really want to hear them and that they can open up to you. Say something along the lines of, “Could you tell me more about that?”

Luke 24:13-35 gives an invaluable opportunity to see the Lord Jesus at work in a pastoral conversation. We are all learning to do this better and you can trust God that He will grow your ability to care for others.

## Appendix 2 – Leading a Bible discussion

In a similar way to pastoral conversations, our styles of leading a Bible discussion will vary; in part this will depend on our gifts. This section complements the nitty-gritty of the **Ideas box 2** where we started to discuss **How** we can do this. Regardless of our approach, it is helpful to have some notes prepared beforehand by, or for, the leader of the discussion.

### The “main message”

This is the key message the Spirit wants to communicate for our lives through the Scriptures being discussed. It is an invaluable discipline to discern and write it down in one sentence. This requires careful study of the Word along with prayer for insight. This work to identify the main message will bear fruit as the leader will then be able to effectively guide the group to respond to God's word. Without a main message, the leader probably does not have a clear idea as to where they are leading the group in the discussion. Normally the leader will mention the main message in their opening comments.

Read a section of the Bible with the group and then here are two possible approaches to communicate the main message which you have prayed through.

### A simple approach

The Holy Spirit wants to lead us to know God and to love people. Three questions provide a useful framework for discussion of any part of the Bible:

- What does this tell us about God?
- What does this tell us about people?
- How should we apply this to our own lives?

### A developed approach

We've included below a worked example of another approach where we look at a section of the Bible, verse by verse. Notes such as these are not normally intended for distribution to the group because we want discussion to be creative and in part, spontaneous; all life requires structure – written notes are both an aid to memory and also help to give some structure to the discussion. The additional footnotes explain this developed approach.

One question for each five minutes of discussion is about right to encourage people to look afresh at the Word itself. There's no rule for the ideal discussion length but a 30-minute discussion normally leaves time for other elements of small group life; any longer may become wearisome.

## A sample Bible-life discussion on Matthew 4:1-11<sup>1</sup> The word of God in temptation<sup>2</sup>

**Main message:** Like Jesus, let's use the word of God to respond well to temptation.

Opener: When you think of the news in recent months, what do you think are some of the more common temptations people face?<sup>3</sup>

*Today we'll see how Jesus faced all kinds of temptation yet remained pure.*

Read Matthew 4:1-11.<sup>4</sup>

1. Vs.1-2.<sup>5</sup> Christ was strong in the Spirit, yet vulnerable. When do you think you are particularly vulnerable to temptation?

*When tired, hungry, alone, in the lull after a special celebration (Jesus had just been baptised).<sup>6</sup>*

*Let's briefly go through the three temptations here:*

- 
- 1 The Bible passage(s) upon which the discussion is based. The focus on the word of God comes from a firm belief in the effective power of the sword of the Spirit, i.e., the Word, (as distinct from human opinion).
  - 2 The topic. It may be related to a Sunday sermon. The main message is distinct.
  - 3 An icebreaker to show the group how the main message relates to life; this is essential to engage the group from the start. The icebreaker usually stems from wider life, not from the previous Sunday's sermon.
  - 4 Reading the entire passage reinforces that we are seeking to apply Scripture to our life with the help of the Spirit.
  - 5 Most questions are based on an identified verse(s) which are read again before asking the question. Open questions are more than a comprehension exercise, rather they serve to open up a dialogue about the Bible passage so that those who have a spiritual appetite build each other up through understanding and applying the Word.
  - 6 Optional comments for the leader are here provided in italics. When someone else is using these notes, this gives a certain amount of hand-holding for less-experienced leaders and/or for those in a season when they have less capacity. When praying beforehand for those in the group, the Spirit will give you other specific comments which you can note down.

2. Vs.3-4. What was the potential appeal of this temptation?

*Instant satisfaction of a real physical need. Physical temptations include a lack of self-control in eating and drinking. We can stay pure with the Spirit and the Word.*

3. Vs.5-7. This temptation is more subtle. How was the devil trying to test Jesus?<sup>1</sup>

*Through twisting the meaning of Scripture, the devil was testing Jesus for any possible pride, asking Him, through an act of showing off, to assert His position as the Son of God.*

4. Vs.8-10. How do you think the devil tried to deceive Jesus in this third temptation?

*Replacing God because our Father, not the devil, is the giver of every good gift<sup>2</sup>; there is a hefty price tag when an individual, family or a society focuses on prosperity, entertainment and travel experiences.*

5. When you see how Jesus responded each time with Scripture, how would you sum up his view of Scripture?

*The Lord considered Scripture, in the case of Deuteronomy written at least 1500 years before his birth, to be:*

- *God's reliable and authoritative word.*
- *Essential for knowledge of God's will and rejection of temptation.*
- *Clear in its instruction.*
- *Sufficient to test the truth of any other statement about God and our relationship with Him.*

*As Christians, we follow Christ in his full acceptance of Scripture and desire to honour Him.<sup>3</sup>*

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1 It is good to keep the questions to the point and minimise the use of double questions.

2 We limit reference to other Scriptures, but James 1:17 within another passage on temptation, could be referenced for the leader.

3 This is the longest section of commentary from the leader, only required if the points are not already stated by the group members. Too much commentary results in a mini-sermon, which we normally want to avoid in a small group.

6. Reflecting on our discussion, what would help you to be in a position to act like Jesus did when tempted?<sup>1</sup>

*Recognising the Spirit leads us into situations of temptation so that we might honour God.*

*Knowing the truth (the Word), keeping verses in mind to combat lingering temptations (e.g., perhaps meditate on James 1:19 if you lack patience).*

**Main message:** Like Jesus, let's use the word of God to respond well to temptation.<sup>2</sup>

Let's move into prayer. We want to think ahead about the place the word of God will have in our lives. Let's now pray for each other that we might know the Spirit's help to resist temptation with the word of God.<sup>3</sup>

*End note for the leader<sup>4</sup>: You could encourage the group during the week to compare this temptation with the temptation in Genesis 3.<sup>5</sup>*

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1 Individual application.

2 Repeat the main message within the conclusion (consider the impact, Ecclesiastes 12:11).

3 Corporate (group) application, leading into prayer.

4 Note the discussion notes fit on one side of A4 (if you remove these foot notes!). Measured brevity encourages engagement.

5 We could have added comparison in the main discussion with the temptation in Eden, but this would have extended the discussion and perhaps unnecessarily distracted from the passage being studied.

## Afterword

Whatever the next step in your service of God is, we hope you've been blessed by doing **POD for Small Group Leading**.

If you, your course leader, and hub leader are agreed that now is the time for you to start leading a small group, you should start talking through when and where the group should meet, and who the leadership team should be.

Your elders are here for you, will be praying for you and have put a structure of care in place with hub leaders to ensure you continue to get the encouragement and challenge that all leaders need.

Above all, the God of all grace is with you, willing and able to help you as you take a new step of faith with Him.

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

## Further resources selected by Luke Davydaitis

### For you as a growing leader...

A good study Bible can be a real help for dealing with tricky passages and hard questions in your group. Luke's favourite is the *ESV Study Bible* (Crossway); the *NIV Zondervan Study Bible* (Zondervan) and *NLT Study Bible* (Tyndale) have also been recommended.

*The Spirit-Filled Church*, Terry Virgo (Monarch). This book by the founder of Newfrontiers describes the vision for church that we're trying to build at King's.

*Everyday Supernatural*, Mike Pilavachi & Andy Croft (David C. Cook). Very friendly and amusing, with stories of God's power at work today and clear explanations of how you can experience this for yourself.

*A Praying Life*, Paul E. Miller (NavPress). Containing the author's story of parenting a child with learning difficulties, and learning to pray as he does so.

*The Good God*, and *Christ Our Life*, both by Michael Reeves (Paternoster). Two brief but profound books exploring the Trinity and what Jesus has done for us.

*Women of The Word*, Jen Wilkin (Crossway). Despite the title, this book is packed full of helpful advice for men and women about how to understand and interpret God's word.

*Humility* by Andrew Murray (various publishers), *Humble Roots* by Hannah Anderson (Moody), *The Freedom of Self Forgetfulness* by Timothy Keller (10Publishing). Three great books on a key characteristic of leaders: humility.

You can find many more recommendations on Luke's blog:  
<http://www.lukesblog.org/p/helpful-resources.html>

## For your group...

*Holy Spirit Course.* A seven-part teaching series by Dave Holden on the Holy Spirit: who He is, what He does, and how we can know Him and his power more in our lives. <http://newgroundchurches.org/media/series/16/>

*Battle For The Mind.* A three-part teaching series by Dave Holden to help Christians get their thinking right. Our thought-life profoundly effects our faith and daily life, and Dave's teaching will help many people understand what's going on in their head and learn how to apply the gospel to themselves and others.

<http://newgroundchurches.org/media/series/18/>

*Don't Waste Your Life.* A book and study guide by John Piper about living your life fully for God.

*The Prayer Course.* Using the Lord's Prayer as his mode, 24-7 Prayer founder Pete Grieg talks about how and what we pray. <https://www.prayercourse.org/>

*The Reason for God DVD and Discussion Guide.* Taking Timothy Keller's excellent apologetics book and making it into a series of discussions with believers and sceptics (discussion guide also available). <https://www.thegoodbook.co.uk/the-reason-for-god-dvd>

*Living God's Word: Discovering Our Place in the Great Story of Scripture,* J. Scott Duvall & J. Daniel Hays (Zondervan). An in-depth guide to understand and teach the truth of God's word.

*Share Life,* Guy Pembroke. Four sessions for learning how to tell people about Jesus. The course includes a section: Further Ideas for a Small Group.

*Reading God's Word Together.* A useful resource for encouraging a small group to read together. Available here: <https://www.kingschurchedinburgh.org/resources/reading-gods-word-together/>





# POD Resources

## Training Small Group Leading with POD

Trainer's Guide for teaching **POD for Small Group Leading**.

### POD 1

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.

### POD 2

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

### POD 3

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.

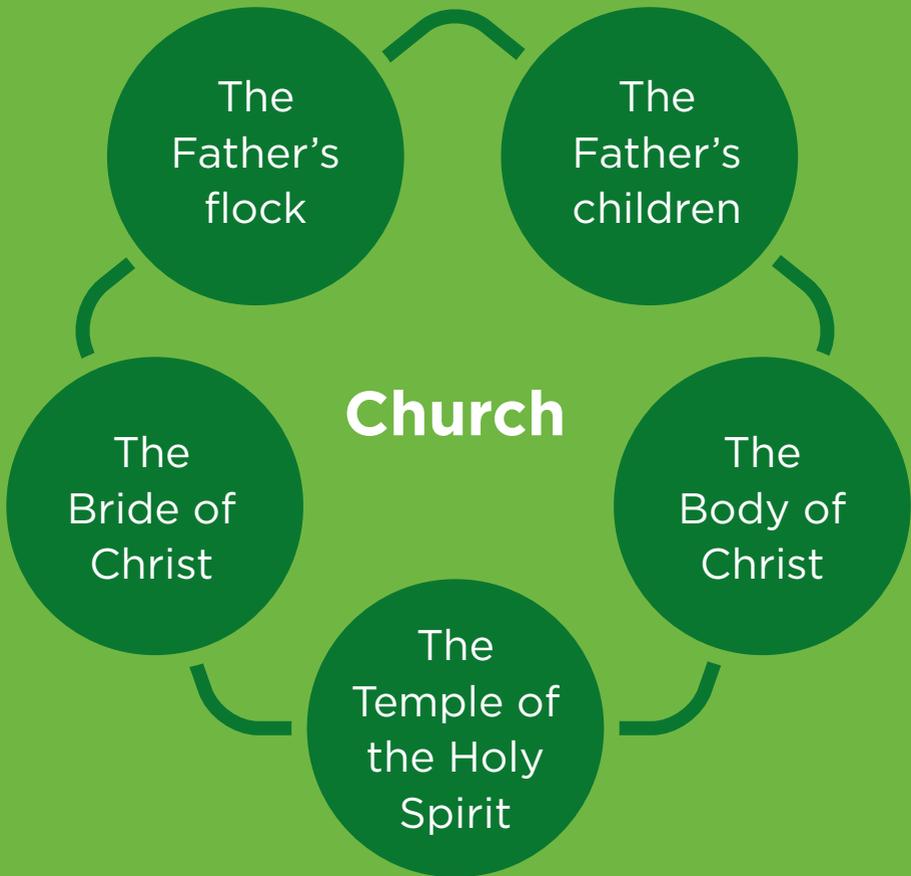
## Training others with Share Life

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