



EVERYDAY FAITH

The Lent Course - Leaders Guide

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to lead a group. These notes are designed to help you lead each session in conjunction with the material on the video. Don't worry, as group leader you're not expected to be an "expert" or to have all the answers; your role is to facilitate and enable good conversations to take place within the group.

It will almost certainly help you as leader to watch the appropriate video once before each session. Each session is a mixture of input provided by the video and opportunities for the video to be paused for group conversations or activities. The course could be used for both in person meetings or on Zoom, with the leader screen sharing to show the video and breakout groups being created for the discussion and conversation slots.

Below you will find notes to help you lead each individual session.

SESSION 1: THE CHURCH

Session begins with video introduction and sets out the aim that the course will help churches to ask “good questions” to help them think about what they do, how they do it and where God might be leading them. The video makes the point that we live in times of great change and have lived through many changes.

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (5 minutes)

Discuss the changes they've seen and experienced in their lifetimes (these are not intended to all be “churchy” examples, but might include things like television, men landing on the moon, the internet, changing attitudes in society etc etc)

The video then gives some facts and figures about the decline in Sunday church attendance.

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (10 minutes)

Within the group discuss thoughts on the factors that may have contributed to that decline in attendance.

The narrators then reflect on this change.

The video then goes on to introduce the question “What is church for?” A narrator on the video reads Acts 2:42-47 and then video says that the group leader will explain the next activity.

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (10 minutes)

Leader to use the grid below (also available as Appendix A) and to ask a member of the group to read out Acts 2:42-47 phrase by phrase and the group decide where to put ticks in the grid (some phrases might lead to several ticks eg “breaking bread” might be taken as “Church community life” (eating together) and as “Praise & Worship” (the Eucharist). Once the grid is completed ask group members what they notice about where the ticks are.

SESSION 1: THE CHURCH CONTINUED

Learning About Faith	Praise & Worship	Church Community Life	Social Action	Witness & Evangelism

The video then leads into next activity.

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (30 minutes)

Group leader to read, or ask a group member to read, the following Bible verses one at a time and to allow 5 minutes discussion on each one about what clues they give us to what a healthy church should look like..... answers might include "close fellowship/community", "outward looking and evangelistic", "showing love to those outside the church", "different gifts and ministries needed within the church", "a community of worshippers" etc etc.

All verses available in full in Appendix B

COL 3:16

1 PETER 2:9-10

EPH 4:11-12

1 THESS 5:11

JAMES 1:27

ACTS 1:8

The video then has a very brief contribution from Bishop Saju, before the narrator sets up the final question for group discussion.

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (10 minutes)

Discuss the question "If this church were to close tomorrow, why would that be bad news for the community it's located in?"

Note for group leaders: If group members answer along the lines of "although most of the village don't come to services they'd be sad to see the building go or the church to close" push back gently with a response like "Do you think the New Testament churches we've been thinking about today would have given an answer like that? Is that 'setting the bar too low' in the light of some of the Bible passages we've looked at today? Are we too easily pleased and our ambitions too modest?"

The video closes with a final prayer prayed by Bishop Saju on the video.

SESSION 2: WHAT, ME? A DISCIPLE...

Video narrators introduce the idea of “ordinary Christian as disciple”, talk a bit about the use of the word “disciple” in Scripture and about the disciple as a “learner” or “apprentice.”

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (10 minutes)

Group discussion about their own hobbies and how they initially learned how to do them, and how they improved at them.

Narrator draws out a few things about how we learn and progress in our hobbies and transfers some of the learning to how we might learn as disciples.

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (5 minutes)

Brainstorm and capture on a big piece of paper things that might help us to learn to follow Jesus more effectively. If not meeting in person do as a Zoom breakout group and have the Leader noting down on a big piece of paper and holding it up for all to see at the end of the 5 minutes.

Narrators on video talk about the importance of everyday devotional times of Bible reading, meditation and prayer and of the value of small groups before inviting the group to think a bit about disciples as “learners” and “apprentices”.

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (10 minutes)

A group discussion about the similarities and differences between being “leaners” and “apprentices.”

Narrators sum up some of the differences between learning and apprenticeship and video narrator reads Matthew 4:18-22.

SESSION 2: WHAT, ME? A DISCIPLE.. CONTINUED

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (15-20 minutes)

A Bible study on Matthew 4:18-22. Ask group members to have passage open in their own Bibles.

Group leader facilitates the Bible Study. Here are some suggested questions to help the conversation get started - but please don't feel restricted by them, and if the conversation develops a life of its own that's fine!

- What might have been going through your mind if you were Simon, Andrew, James or John?
- How do you think James and John's father Zebedee might have reacted? (Possibly favourably, possibly negatively, he was losing his crew and his sons from the family business, so probably with mixed feelings.)
- If we're wholeheartedly following Jesus what kind of reactions might we get from those around us? Can you give any examples of some of these differing responses from your own experience?
- For these four "following Jesus" meant giving up what they were doing, their jobs, in order to follow him – will it mean the same for us? (If it's not our jobs, as in the case of these disciples, what might we need to change as a part of following Jesus?)
- How have you found following Jesus has changed your priorities?
- What have you found to be both the joys and the challenges of following Jesus?
- What do you think it means to follow Jesus rather than just believe in him or admire him?

Narrator on video sums up, and closes with a prayer.



SESSION 3: EVERYDAY PRAYER

Narrator introduces session, AA Milne poem is read by a narrator, narrator introduces videoed conversation between Alison Myers and Chris Webb (Warden and Deputy Warden at Launde Abbey)

Narrator reads the Lord's Prayer



PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (15 minutes)

Questions appear on screen, video narrator introduces activity, Group Leader to pause video and discuss the following questions on Matthew 6:9-13. Encourage group members to have the passage open in their own Bibles. The questions will remain on the screen if you're doing the course "in person", if doing on Zoom go into Breakout Groups and Group Leader will ask each question verbally. Questions as below:

- Look at the Lord's prayer and discuss which parts of it are PRAISE and which parts ASKING?
- Which parts seem to be more concerned with GOD and which with US?
- Do you think the order that those which are more God and praise focussed and those which are more about us and our lives appear is significant?
- To what extent do you think the Lord's Prayer is a prayer to be prayed together in church (after all, it says "OUR Father" not "My FATHER" and "us" not "ME" or "MY") and what extent is it an individual prayer? Is it one or the other or both/and?
- How might the Lord's Prayer be a pattern for your own prayers?

Video narrator sums up Lord's Prayer section and invites group members to share any hints, tips or experiences that have helped them in their prayer life.



PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (5 minutes)

Group leader facilitates group members sharing any hints, tips or experiences that have helped them in their prayer lives (these might be new thoughts or maybe agreeing with from own experience some of the things that Alison and Chris spoke about in the earlier conversation)

SESSION 3: EVERYDAY PRAYER CONTINUED

Video narrator moves conversation on from the subject of prayer to beginning to consider personal Bible reading

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (15 minutes)

Bible verses appear on screen. Leave them there for a few minutes for group members to look at and ask them to pick the one that most appeals to them, catches their attention, or makes them curious and give then group members the opportunity to share their verse with the group (and to say why they chose it.) Verses seen below:

2 TIM 3:16-17 ROMANS 15:4
HEBREWS 4:12 PSALM 119:105

On screen narrator acknowledges that daily Bible reading doesn't always feel easy, introduces short video section of Janette, manager of the Christian Resources bookshop, speaking about various helps available for daily Bible reading.

Narrator introduces short video section of tips from ordinary Christians from a church in the diocese talking about things that have helped them to have a daily time of Bible reading and prayer.

Narrator closes video by widening the scope to think about the benefits of reading Scripture and praying together and leading in a closing prayer.

SESSION 4: EVERYDAY WITNESS.

Narrator introduces session and tees up for first group activity.

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (15 minutes)

Five Bible verses on sheet (Appendix D).

What reason or reasons do each of these verses give for us sharing our faith with those who don't yet share it? If doing in-person print off a copy for each group member, if doing on Zoom email a copy to each group member before the session.

The verses are as follows: with hints for group leaders if group members are struggling to come up with answers!

John 10:10

Leader's hint: we share our faith because our faith contains the "secret" to living life in all its fullness, or - in modern parlance - "living your best life."

John 3:16

Leader's hint: in this verse Jesus presents an unconditional offer but one that is conditionally received claiming that eternal life is only possible by believing ("... that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life)

Matthew 28:18-20 & 1 Peter 3:15

Leader's hint: because we're told to!

Romans 10:14

Leader's hint: if we don't tell them, who will?

Narrator summarises and leads into next activity.

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (10 minutes)

Discuss: Why do we sometimes find it hard to talk about our faith to others?

Narrator summarises and leads into next activity.

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (5 minutes)

Sheets are given out (Appendix E) and group members encouraged to tick every box that describes something that had an influence on their COMING to faith. Not their growth in faith, but their initial coming to faith. If doing in-person print off a copy for each group member, if doing on Zoom email a copy to each group member before the session.

SESSION 4: EVERYDAY WITNESS CONTINUED.

Narrator introduces next activity.

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (2 minutes)

Using same sheet, each group member now to put just ONE tick, isolating what they see as the single most important factor of all the ones they've ticked.

Narrator introduces next activity.

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (5 minutes)

Invite group members to share where they put their single tick.

There is input from both narrators, before one of the narrators explains the next activity. Having explained that we have 2 stories to share ("God's story" and "our story") and explaining the activity, group leader pauses the video.

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (5 minutes)

Group members all need a plain sheet of paper. If meeting in person the group leader can have paper ready and hand it out, if meeting on line group leader to tell group members in advance to have pen and paper with them. Group members have 5 minutes to either draw or write (not massive essay - bullet points are fine!) how they understand "God's story", sometimes known as "the gospel", which is ours to share.

Narrators show examples of "God's story" slips from when they've done this exercise in churches. Narrators then go on to talk about "our story" (sometimes described as our "testimony") and explain a format for telling your own faith story in two minutes using a before/how/after pattern.

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (10 minutes)

Group members given 5 minutes to plan how they would tell their own journey to faith story in 2 minutes using the before/how/after pattern. Invite group members to share theirs with the person sat next to them if they feel happy to (if in person) or a couple of people to volunteer to share theirs with whole group (if on Zoom).

Narrators sum up and then show very short film clip of Jon speaking about how to answer difficult questions if you don't know the answers and then conclude with closing prayer.

SESSION 5: EVERYDAY ACTION

Both narrators introduce session, leading to them introducing the first group activity.

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (5-10 minutes)

Discuss the question: "What are the distinctively Christian reasons for social action?"

If group members are struggling to come up with answers you may wish to suggest some such as; because we're commanded to, out of gratitude for all God has done for us, because we see all people as being made in God's image, to imitate the example of Jesus.

More input from narrators including some well known Bible verses on social action and justice before narrator introduces next group activity.

PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (15 minutes)

Leader asks a group member to read James 2:14-17 (other group members encouraged to have their Bible open at the passage).

Then group leader to ask the following questions to stimulate discussion:

- What does this passage teach about the relationship between faith and deeds or good works?
- Is it possible for some Christians to be "faith" Christians (all ideas, beliefs and theology) and some to be "deeds" Christians?
- What does the example given of a brother or sister without food and clothing tell us about God's heart for people? (Especially if you look back a few verses to Chapter 1 verse 27)
- How do we understand these words in James when we look at them alongside Paul's words in Ephesians 2:8-10

More input from video narrators, giving some summing up thoughts on the James passage, our motivations for showing Christian loving service of the world and the relationship between faith and actions. Video interview with Florence Gildea, Bishop Martyn's Social Policy Advisor, moving into narrator introducing next activity.

SESSION 5: EVERYDAY ACTION CONTINUED

▶ PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (10-15 minutes)

Ask the group to list all the activities your church is actively involved in or supports, both locally and further afield (so could include missionaries or Christian agencies you support as a church financially) on a large piece of paper (completed in the room if in-person or by the leader on Zoom) as a way of auditing your current involvement with Christian social care and action.

Ask group members what they notice about the list. Is it balanced or is all your social action focused on similar things? If it is, do group members think that it's because God has called them strongly as a church to concentrate on those issues, or might they widen their sphere of involvement? If the church has no real engagement and all of its finance goes to maintaining its own activities and building and all of its energies into Sunday services do group members see that as an area of weakness in their witness that needs to be developed?

Narrator sums up and moves group into next activity.

▶ PAUSE VIDEO - Group Activity (10 minutes)

Ask group to discuss what currently untapped opportunities for loving service exist in your locality.

This will be very much determined by your own local area and context, but might include issues around childcare, poverty, environmental concern, debt advice etc etc. Is God calling you into something new?

Video narrator sums up session and draws whole course to an end and closes in prayer.