

Adapting material

To make all this happen you will need to adapt the material for the uniqueness of your group. It is not sacrosanct so select, alter and add as needed. Look out for:

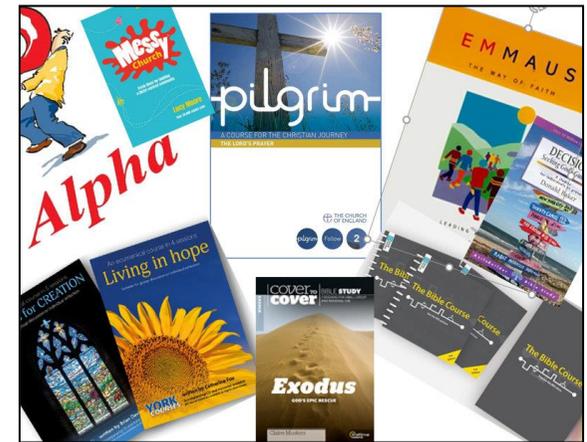
- Can people answer these questions? Try answering them yourself.
- Rewrite closed questions as open questions. Closed questions require yes/no or a right/wrong answer ("Why did Mary and Joseph have to stay in a stable?") They check understanding but do not generate discussion. Open-ended questions require people to think ("Why might God have chosen to send the angels to shepherds?").
- Note, rewrite or omit problem questions that might cause difficulties: Is there a sensitive nerve that this question might touch? Might this question lead the group off topic? Will this question degenerate into entrenched positions?
- Ask "So What?" Why ask this question or share this information? It is very easy to share everything learnt in preparation, whether, or not, it is helpful.
- Choose the most important questions. Mark those you want to ask and assign a rough timing. Only ask the other questions if you have time or they become relevant.
- Check the balance of the session. Is there an inwards, upwards, outwards balance? Is there a variety of approaches? Is there new learning, space for experience and practical application?



Remember this is God's work, not yours. God can and will work through you. By being open to God and preparing well you give God more space to act.

God is thrilled that you want to offer your time to this, God cares about each one of your group and God is the one who will take care of their growth.

Choosing and Adapting Group Materials



Choosing Materials

Any group leader who needs to find their own material for a Bible Study, Home Group, Lent Course, or Enquirers session is spoilt for choice. There are so many excellent and inspiring ideas on the web and in the Christian bookshops, it is worth a browse. If you lead a prayer group, or an All Age small group, then material is less easy to find, but is growing.

But sometimes choice can be overwhelming. There are two sites which offer recommendations and assessment of courses:

- Diocesan website: <https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/small-group-leaders-sessions/>
- CPAS DiscipleKit <https://www.disciplekit.org/>

In deciding what course to use take into account:

- Your group. Consider the:
 - level of their faith and knowledge - push them a bit.
 - relevance to their lives.
 - what they like in a study - tricky theological questions or practical application? Videos or books?
- Your Aims - does this course fit your aims?
- Is it affordable but well produced?
- How much leader's guidance is there? How much do you need?

Do not worry too much about your choice, or indeed, lack of choice, if your church sets the course. The materials are only a tool for God to speak through. How you lead the group is what makes the difference.

In using your materials and planning a session consider how to balance:

- Inward focus. The individuals and their relationship to each other,
- Upward focus. The encounter with God, prayer and listening,
- Outward focus. The group looking beyond itself to serve others.



Why are we meeting?

Groups meet for many purposes: support; prayer and worship; encouragement; to grow in faith; to learn more; to meet God; for companionship and belonging; to explore other's beliefs and experiences.

As leaders you will need to discern the priorities for your group. Perhaps involve the group in writing a short sentence of its key purposes. This will guide how you use the materials you are given.

Some of your goals will happen just by being together, others need more help.

As a Christian group one of the key aims is spiritual growth and discipleship. The following can help:

- Treat each other as adults. Allow each person to develop their own faith. Don't tell them what to believe. Allow doubts, questions, differences of opinion, uncertainty and laments. You do not have to have an answer to everything.
- Use experience. We learn best when things expand experience. So, make time for personal connections and sharing. Be sensitive as to when to allow the group to go off topic and when to guide it back to the session.
- People learn in different ways – by talking, thinking, doing, listening. Have variety.
- Put it into action. Knowledge alone does not make us mature Christians; we must live the story. Help people to formulate, for themselves, something concrete for the next week and report back on the impact it had.
- Encourage each other, counter negativity, turn moaning into opportunity. We need encouragement to grow.