

Leaders' Notes

These notes are intended to help the leader make the most of the following material. It may be that you decide not to do all the sessions or to do only parts of some of the sessions. It is important to make sure that you tailor the material to your context so that it will be as effective as possible.

Be Prepared

To make the most of these sessions you will need to spend some time in preparation. You will need to work out how many sessions you are going to use and which ones. You should make sure that the sessions or parts of sessions that you use do challenge people in line with the aims of the course as outlined in the preface. It is hoped that the sessions will provide suitable and helpful teaching material. The purpose of this material is to challenge us as disciples of Christ – specifically with respect to the way we use our money.



The material will need introducing and the sessions will need a facilitator(s). The leader/facilitator should be at home in the material and will need to have made some decisions beforehand about how to guide people through the sessions.

Conventions for Group Work

When a group first meets it is important to establish some conventions about how to relate to one another. This might seem obvious but people will come with different expectations and experiences. We should expect people to say what they think and feel and to disagree with us.

You might think about agreeing some conventions for group work in your first session. These might include:

- *Be open and open-minded* – we want to learn from one another and so it is important for all the members to contribute if they are able. We should expect to differ on some things and even to disagree strongly.

- *Avoid giving and taking offence* – we should be able to say what we think but we should always be mindful of others too. Be prepared to respond constructively to people with whom you disagree. Be respectful of one another.
- *Be engaged and positive* – if we want to make the most of the sessions we need to be committed to engaging in the various parts of the sessions. It is also better to offer constructive criticism rather than negative feedback. If something isn't working for you then make a suggestion about what to do next time.

Hopefully the group will gel quickly and people will enjoy working with one another. Paul often speaks about building one another up – in that way we become more Christ-like as a Church.

Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.

Ephesians 4:29

Each of us must please our neighbour for the good purpose of building up the neighbour. For Christ did not please himself; but, as it is written, 'The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me.' For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:2-6

Welcome and Hospitality

Paul writes that we should welcome others as Christ welcomed us.

Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Romans 15:7

As Christians we recognise the gift of one another. Each of us is made in the image of God and we should always remember that – especially when it seems difficult to do so!

It is good to make sure that everyone is welcomed into the group, whatever type of venue you are using. It will depend where you are meeting how you arrange this.



If possible, you might enjoy giving and receiving hospitality. How will this work if you are meeting in the same venue or the same person's house? How will it work if you meet in different homes? Will there be refreshments? Who will prepare them?

All who arrive as guests are to be welcomed like Christ, for he is going to say, 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me.' When guests arrive or depart the greatest humility should be shown in addressing them: so, let Christ who is received in them be adored with bowed head or prostrate body.

Chapter LIII, The Rule of St Benedict

Introductory Worship

Each session begins with people offering thanks for something. The leader should help people to share. Perhaps you might like to go first or offer suggestions of things for which people might be thankful for on that day.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-7

A prayer relevant to the session gathers the thanksgivings together. This course follows on from the *Transforming Lives* courses and so as the session is offered to God the *Transforming Lives* prayer is said together.

Sharing

When there is a time of discussion and sharing it may be that the leader will have to either get the ball rolling or keep things on track. It is good to let discussions roam far and wide but it is not good to stray too far from the subject matter for long! Try and keep people engaged and focussed. It is in the times of sharing that you will probably most likely witness moments of truth and grace – and that's when there will be a building up of one another in love.

Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual edification.

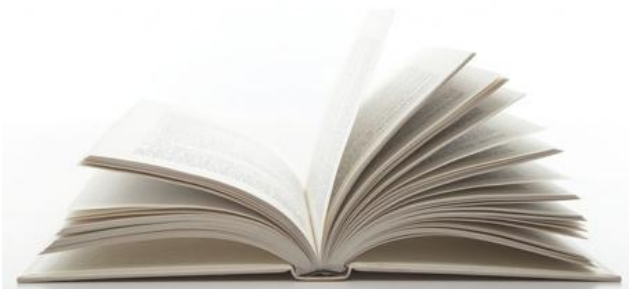
Romans 14:19

Opening the Scriptures

All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness....

2 Timothy 3:16

Reading Scripture can sometimes be a confusing and lonely exercise. Reading Scripture together, on the other hand, is often when we get most from it (you might like to think about the story of Philip and the eunuch in Acts 8.26-39). Hearing how the Bible speaks to others and to groups of people is very fruitful. Try and devote a good amount of time to considering the passages of Scripture and do persuade people to join in. No questions are stupid questions. Always ask the Spirit to inspire you as you open the Scriptures.



Exploration



Each of the sessions has one or more slots for exploring the themes together. The course is designed to offer some teaching and these sections will help the group explore the themes of the session in the light of Christian life and thought.

You will need to work out how you wish to use this teaching material. When you have read through all the *Exploration* and *Exploring Further* material in the session, and decided which parts you want to use, you will need to think about how to present it. It is possible to read the material through at the session – perhaps with different voices – or people could make sure they have read it before they arrive.

As leader you may want to present the material yourself, making judgements about what is appropriate and what is relevant to the group.

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power.

Ephesians 1:17-19

Challenge

Each session will offer some specific challenges. The Gospel should always challenge us, especially when we think we have all the answers. Some of these challenges will be personal but some of them will be challenges to your church.

If you think there is a specific challenge to your church then see if the group can find some constructive ways of bringing it to the wider congregation. See what others feel. How will you address the challenge? Try and help people remember that the result of any challenge should be to build up the church as a whole. It is an opportunity to seek harmony and not division!



May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 15:5

Meditation

Material is included which should allow some space to meditate on what has been learnt in the session. Give people time to let their thoughts and feelings take shape and for the issues of the session to sink in. You may want to introduce some quiet at this stage. Don't be afraid if the quiet seems uncomfortable at first – once people have learnt to be quiet together they will usually value the opportunity.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Psalms 19:14

Worship

The worship sections are not meant to act as service sheets. A variety of material is presented and you will want to choose which parts you use. The worship will allow people to respond to God. Circumstances will suggest whether you can sing or have music. You will also be able to shape the worship so that it allows for both individual responses and a corporate response.

The canticles are usually printed with a refrain at the beginning and end which everyone can say. You may want to have the leader say the odd verses with everyone else saying the even verses – or you could split the room into two.

Everyone can join in with the 'Glory to the Father...' towards the end. (You may wish to observe the short pause in the middle of each verse – this gives the reading a 'liturgical rhythm' and teaches us to listen to one another as we begin to speak in unison).

Although it is often chosen for its relevance to specific sessions, do feel free to use the worship material across sessions. You may find something which works for your group.

[B]e filled with the Spirit, as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves, singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 5:18b-20

And finally: *Enjoy yourself!*