

Leading into Discipleship

A short course for leading new believers into life-long discipleship, typically by journeying together with a series of one-to-one sessions.

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Journeying with People: The Reflective Practice Model

Jesus gathered people and took them on a journey. On that journey they were immersed in experiences that they later tried to make sense of. Jesus gave his disciples space to reflect and ask questions, to unpack what they had seen or heard, and to learn through their interactions with him. He also sent them out to go and act on the things they had learned – something we now call a *Reflective Practice Model*.

Each session follows this model:

1. **Reflect:** Look back on what has happened since last time
2. **Teach and Show:** Derive learning from whatever arises, mixing in the new content for this session
3. **Go and Do:** Set challenges, tasks or things to think about for your next session



Reflect → **Teach and Show** → **Go and Do**
(content for the session)

During the **Reflect** stage things will quite likely arise which give opportunities for fresh learning. Explore these and blend in the new content intended for this session's **Teach and Show** stage. The new content will naturally set some challenge or task for the person to implement or think about, with suggestions in the **Go and Do** stage. They can then reflect back on how they got on with these in the next session (thus restarting the loop).

This same *Reflective Practice Model* can actually be used with a whole host of different courses, using the same pattern of *Reflect* → *Teach and Show* → *Go and Do*. The only difference is the content introduced in each session, which can follow a curriculum relevant for the desired course. Examples might be:

- New believer basic discipleship course
- Discipleship development
- Leadership development
- Youthwork
- etc. etc.

Working One-to-One: Tips for Best Practice

The following is a set of tips and dos and don'ts for working with someone one-to-one. Some are especially important when first working with someone you do not know very well.

1. Be diligent and accountable.
 - A. Look through the session content and pray before your session.
 - B. Be there at the agreed place and time.
 - C. If you do not know the person very well, choose a public place for the first few meetings.
 - D. Keep what you talk about confidential (as far as is appropriate).
 - E. Let someone else know where/when you are meeting one-to-one.
 - F. Have someone to report back to every few sessions, giving a summary of how it is going.
2. Get to know the person you are working with (and allow them to get to know you!).
 - A. During the first couple of sessions with someone you do not know very well, you will need to spend a greater proportion of the time listening to where they are coming from.
 - B. Invite the person to tell their story so far. Don't be tempted to interrupt and give all the answers in one go, but rather learn to journey with them from where they are starting from.
3. Show care for the person, but keep in mind the reason you are meeting, i.e. to disciple this person.
4. Set the pattern from the outset of **Reflect** → **Teach and Show** → **Go and Do**.
 - A. For the first meeting, the **Reflect** stage is replaced by getting to know the person / hearing their story.
 - B. Keep to the pattern session by session.
5. Finish by setting the date and venue for your next session, and praying together.

Session 1 Who is Jesus?

Aim

Getting to know each other. Looking to a deeper understanding of Jesus: fully man yet fully God

Reflect (Getting to Know)

Tip: If you already know each other well, this might be an opportunity to talk together about your experiences of faith in a way you haven't done before.

- How are you? / What happened to bring you to this point today? / What is your story?
- Have you been able to share your decision to follow Jesus with anyone?

Teach and Show

- If someone asked you 'Who is Jesus?', what would you say? Discuss together.
- The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the Bible) tell us about Jesus, including the things Jesus said and did. Here are some of those things:
 - Jesus was born to Jewish parents, lived for 33 years, was killed and yet 3 days later was alive again. Although no longer physically present with us, people discover and know his presence today.
 - Jesus said 'I am ... the bread' (John 6:35), 'the light' (8:12), 'the way/truth/life' (14:6). He also said 'The Father and I are one' (John 10:30).
 - Jesus demonstrates the power to forgive, effectively claiming to be God, e.g. Mark 2:5.
 - Jesus came for all of us (John 3:16), not to judge us but to save us (John 12:47).
- What do Christians say, based on what the Bible tells us? Look at the points below.
 - Jesus is fully man and fully God (e.g. Philippians 2:6 and Colossians 2:9–10).
 - If we want to see God, look at Jesus.
 - If we want to see humanity *as it should be*, look to Jesus.
- Jesus is unique in history, and he enables us to meet with God – this is why we give our lives to him, follow Jesus and become Christians, i.e. *in-Christ people*.
- How has Jesus influenced your life? Think about the time before you knew Jesus – do you have a different perspective on it now than you did at the time? Discuss together.

Go and Do

- Read a Gospel (e.g. Mark – just 16 chapters).
- Think on some of the teachings and actions of Jesus – which of these challenge your own life?
 - Remember he welcomes us again and again, even when we mess up!
- Explain to someone you love and trust what Jesus means to you.

Now set the date/venue for your next session, and pray together,
e.g. *Jesus I thank you that you ...*

Session 2 Why Did Jesus Die?

Aim

Exploring Jesus' life, death and resurrection: God enters and suffers in our humanity

Reflect

- What struck you as you were reading about Jesus in the Gospel?
- How have you felt challenged by Jesus' teachings and actions?
- Have you been able to share what Jesus means to you with anyone? How did you get on?

Teach and Show

- Christians declare that God is love (1 John 4:16). All these aspects of love belong to God: love reaches out, is patient, kind, not easily angered, and keeps no record of wrongs (see 1 Corinthians 13:4–8).
 - Yet what does *perfect* love do in the face of wrong and hurt? Discuss together.
- Jesus uses the image of *laying down* his life (see John 10:11 and John 15:13). He repeatedly told his followers that he had to die ... but it would not be the end (see Mark 8:31, 9:31 and 10:33).
 - Hundreds of years previously, a man of God had a sense that God would send someone to suffer on our behalf, or even somehow suffer instead of us (see Isaiah 53:4–6).
 - Christians therefore understand Jesus' death as God reaching His own hurting (and hurtful) creation in love. See Romans 5:8 as an example in the Bible of a one sentence summary.
- We all know of examples of self-sacrifice. Yet would Jesus' death *without* resurrection be complete or make sense? Look at 1 Corinthians 15:16–19 as you discuss this together.
 - For Christians the life, the death, and the resurrection of Jesus are *all* important, together showing us that life has purpose and is intended to go on past death.
- There are many images one might use to try to describe what Jesus achieves on the cross. Discuss together what you think of this example: *a parent lovingly holding a toddler having a tantrum, taking the toddler's blows, hoping to exhaust the toddler's angst.*

Go and Do

- Read again an account of Jesus being killed, but then being alive again (suggest John chapters 18–21)
 - What hits you as you read and ponder this?
- Consider that Jesus did all this *for you* – what is your response?
- Tell someone that God loves them! No one is beyond the reach of God's love.

Now set the date/venue for your next session, and pray together,
e.g. *Thankyou Jesus for dying for me, may I know your resurrection life ...*

Session 3 The Holy Spirit

Aim

Exploring the Holy Spirit and being open to His filling: God is three persons in relationship; the Spirit is the person of God at work in the world ... and in us!

Reflect

- What aspects of Jesus are you finding straight-forward, and what aspects hard to get your head around?
- What reaction did you get in telling someone that God loves them?

Teach and Show

- If someone asked you 'What is the Holy Spirit?', what would you say? Discuss together.
- The Spirit of God is at work through the whole story of the Bible (see Genesis 1:1, and then Acts 7:55 for just two of many examples).
- The Spirit is a person – we see the Spirit with Godly and human emotions (e.g. Ephesians 4:30).
- The early Christians concluded that God is best understood as *three persons in relationship* – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 - They are inseparable, and lovingly work to draw us into relationship with God and each other. This is why Christians understand that relationships of all sorts are so fundamental to being human.
- Do you think the Spirit is at work in you? Discuss together.
- The Spirit walks *with us*. Jesus describes the Spirit as an advocate (John 14:16). To follow Jesus is to live 'by the Spirit' (see Romans 8:14), i.e. letting the Spirit take us forward.
 - How might we invite the Spirit to walk with us and lead us?
- The first disciples changed from being scared believers into bold proclaimers of Jesus by God filling them with the Spirit (see Acts 2:1–4). Thereafter other new believers were filled too (see Acts 10:44).
- We are urged to 'be filled' with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18) – and note the original language was '*be filled and go on being filled ...*'.
 - How might we invite the Spirit to fill us, again and again? Discuss together.

Go and Do

- Ponder the chart (Appendix A: What the Spirit Does). Where do you see the Spirit at work in you?
- Make a habit of praying daily: “Lord Jesus, fill me with your Spirit – may I know you more closely”.
- Step back from a situation – ask God to show you how He sees it. How might God want you to speak or act?

Now set the date/venue for your next session, and pray together,
e.g. *Lord Jesus, please send more of your Holy Spirit.*

Session 4 Faith, Doubts and Discipleship

Aim

Recognising that building relationship takes time & effort, and goes through the ups & downs of life

Reflect

- How have you experienced God working in your life recently?
- Have you felt prompted or led in a particular way?

Teach and Show

- Who do you know the best or the most intimately? Think how long this relationship has taken to build.
- In Mark 1:16–17 Jesus calls Simon & Andrew, and says he will *make them* fishers of men.
 - Their status is assured right at the beginning (Jesus calls them), but they are not instantly fishers of men; to be followers of Jesus is an ongoing process.
- Jesus never promises it will be easy, but he does promise to be **with us** through thick & thin, e.g. Matthew 28:20. Recall also the Spirit is an *advocate* supporting us.
 - See another promise of the Spirit in Matthew 10:18–20. Discuss your feelings about this promise.
- Things happen, questions and doubts come ... but God remains the same. We learn to put the facts about God first, and base our faith in Him on these, rather than relying on emotions which will inevitably vary.

Facts – Faith – Feelings *not the other way round!*

 - Psalm 118:1 God does not change even if we do – His love endures forever!
We may have doubts – He remains the same.
- God is for us, and Jesus has *already* done everything necessary for us. Look at Romans 8:34 and consider how much it encourages you to know that Jesus is praying for us to succeed.
- Walking with Jesus and getting to know Him better is called discipleship. All Christians are life-long disciples or learners of Jesus.
 - Our desire, for ourselves and for other Christians, is to grow in faith and know God even better. This is expressed in Ephesians 1:17–19. Discuss together how much more God wants you to know Him.

Go and Do

- Read Psalm 28 – a poem in the Bible. Think how the poet describes God and calls to Him. Think how the poet's mood changes through the poem.
- Make the prayer in Ephesians 1:17–19 your own.
- Think how you might encourage someone else who is having doubts about their faith. Try your encouragement if you get the opportunity.

Now set the date/venue for your next session, and pray together,
e.g. Lord Jesus, help me to know you better.

Session 5 Spiritual Habits for Life

Aim

Exploring good habits to take up for a life-long walk ever closer to Jesus

Reflect

- About what do you find yourself having doubts?
- Have you had opportunities to encourage or affirm others?

Teach and Show

- In general, how do we get to know someone and become closer to them as a friend?
- What is the most precious thing we can give someone, over and over?
 - For all of us, time spent together is incredibly precious. 'Being spiritual' at its simplest is making time and space for God in the ordinariness of your life.
- Bedrock habits of a disciple are:
 - Praying – finding set times that work best for us; plus learning to pray *on the go*.
 - You could start with a simple 'breath' prayer, e.g. 'Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me'.
 - Reading the Bible – suggest Gospels first, then Acts, then the letters. Plenty of notes/aids available!
 - Joining others to worship, learn and build community – more on this in session 7.
- Other habits to suggest:
 - The Discipline of OFF Make space – turn off phone, find quiet, put down work.
 - Share the Walk Link with others to discuss & pray (like you are doing here).
 - Ever Closer to Jesus Harbour an ongoing desire to be closer to and more like Jesus.
 - Margin for Jesus Leave space in your life with *no* agenda – space for Jesus!
- These are habits we *take up* – they are **not** rules & regulations pressed down on us.
 - We are saved by grace, not our work or achievements (Ephesians 2:8–9).
- Put simply, God wants time with us: consider the above habits by thinking about yourself as a young child resting in your parent's arms.

Go and Do

- Before the next session find some quiet, sit down, and read & ponder Psalm 150.
- Commit to make *one* positive adjustment to your life schedule/rhythms to take up a new spiritual habit.
- Can you encourage someone else to *stop*, and make space in their life for God?

Now set the date/venue for your next session, and pray together,
e.g. *Lord Jesus, let us be still before you now ...*

Session 6 Evil and Our Own Past Hurts

Aim

Exploring the problem of evil: understanding evil in the context of Jesus and His Kingdom

Reflect

- Have you been able to find time to simply be with God?
- Where do you find yourself naturally wanting to praise God?

Teach and Show

- Imagine you were trying to stop others winning a treasure hunt – what tactics might you employ?
 - Evil tries to come between us and God – trying to distract and throw us off course to prevent us being in relationship with God.
- Consider this statement: “All human problems are caused by a break-down of relationship”.
 - How much do you agree with the statement?
 - Now contrast this with God – who is love, three persons in relationship and community.
- Colossians 1:13 gives an image of 2 dominions (or rulers): *darkness* and the *Kingdom of God*.
 - Jesus rescues us, so we can enter the Kingdom of God. It is like *changing operating systems* (think computer software) – we are now loading and running the Jesus software, clearing out the viruses!
 - *but* as humans we still mistakenly return to the old darkness. Consider why this is a problem.
- Still in verse 13, in the Kingdom there is forgiveness and redemption = *buying back to how it should be*.
 - The Spirit pin-points things in our lives that need dealing with. He does this lovingly & gently, *at the right time* – it is part of the journey of walking with Jesus.
 - When these times occur, be open to receiving prayer for the Spirit to heal & restore in your life.
- Romans 5:8 says 'While we were still in the wrong, Jesus died for us'; 1 John 4:19 says 'we love because He first loved us'.
 - God's Kingdom is a *grace economy*, i.e. it is all about God's initiative & gift to us even though we didn't deserve it – we simply have to respond! Discuss your response to God in recent weeks.
- We are now called to live in this grace economy. See Ephesians 6:10–17 – our struggle is *spiritual*, not with specific people or actions. Consider what God has already done and provided to help you.

Go and Do

- Ponder what people/situations/things challenge you. How do you want to respond going forward? Can you respond by turning to prayer?
- Ask for prayer for areas in your life that you know need attention.

Now set the date/venue for your next session, and pray together,
e.g. Lord Jesus, show me how to stand strong in you ...

Session 7 The Bigger Community of Faith

Aim

Exploring the reality that God doesn't expect us to *go it alone*: He calls us with others to be a community of faith (i.e. 'church'), for which He has His purposes

Reflect

- Have you noticed God giving you a concern about anything recently (e.g. a situation, item in the news)?
- Have you felt God pin-pointing anything particular in your life recently?

Teach and Show

- Recall that God is three persons in relationship – i.e. God Himself embodies community.
 - God calls and builds us into community: people together in Jesus – see Ephesians 2:19–22.
 - The Bible uses the image of *household* (in Ephesians 2:19) – *extended family* coming together.
 - “The Christian faith is intensely personal, but never private” (J. Wallis) – we are not expected to live the Christian life alone, but instead to live our faith in public with the mutual support of others.
 - Have you considered the benefits of belonging to a larger, loving family?
- Jesus gives gifts to *all of us* to enable us to be equipped and built up together – see Ephesians 4:11–16.
 - God has purposes for His people together – see Ephesians 2:10.
 - Start to think about the kinds of things you are good at, or the things you are passionate about.
- The original Greek word 'church' is 'ekklesia', meaning the 'called out people' or 'assembly of people'.
 - Jesus never set out blue-prints for an *institution* – He simply called people to follow Him ... but to do that *together* with Him as the head of the group.
 - Therefore church is simply '*people together following Jesus*'.
 - The Spirit calls us out and leads us together to be His people, living in contrast to the world, telling the world that Jesus is alive today (Acts 1:8 – you *will be* my witnesses).
 - What steps might you take to not only continue following Jesus, but to do that forming community with others?

Go and Do

- Try visiting a church worship service, and/or connect with an established group of Christians.
- Pray for opportunities to tell colleagues, family members and others about Jesus.

Now suggest next steps of discipleship, and pray together,
e.g. *Lord Jesus, help me share you with others ...*

Appendix A: The Work of the Spirit

A brief summary to give out, showing different aspects of the Spirit's work

The Holy Spirit ...

Draws us closer to God

The Spirit points us to Jesus and the Father, and constantly desires that we draw closer [see John 3:3–8 and Ephesians 1:17]

Confirms our Relationship with God ... gives us a new status to call God 'Daddy'

The Spirit enables us to *know that we know* – deep down 'heart' knowledge (instead of just 'head' knowledge) ... confirming that we belong with God as our own heavenly Father [see Romans 8:14–17]

Integrates us into the Family

The Spirit works to bring us together with other believers – not clone-making but drawing together even with our differences and diversity [see Acts 9:10–18 for one of several examples of the Spirit working to unite different and new believers]

Brings out Godly Qualities – the 'Fruit of the Spirit'

The natural qualities we might say belong to a 'good person' – developed & enhanced in our own lives over time [see Galatians 5:22–23]

Gives Gifts for Service – the 'Gifts of the Spirit'

Enables us to do things we wouldn't naturally be able to do. Some are clearly supernatural, others are human skills that the Spirit enhances in us to enable us to serve beyond our normal human capability. [See 1 Corinthians 12:7–11 and Romans 12:6–8 for two of the lists]