

LEADING THE WAY

Way of Life - a pattern for Christian Living

Journeying Up
Praying- conversing
God  with



“Tree”. Bridget Macaulay. Used with permission

Leaders’ Guide.

Leading the Way is a resource produced by the Diocese of Truro Discipleship Team. It is designed to help individuals, congregations and communities to explore the way of life which will enable them to flourish in Jesus Christ.



CONTENTS

- * Beginning where we are
- * Icebreaker
- * Introduction
- * Bible ‘conversation’
- * Questions
 - ◇ personal
 - ◇ congregational
 - ◇ community/communal
- * Prayer
- * Other resources

These resources undergird and expand the principles identified within the ‘Way of Life’ framework for discipleship. Whilst the ‘Way of Life’ booklet was intended for individual use and development, we have come to recognise the need for churches to consider the same framework for themselves as a body. Equally, we have come to recognise the need for individuals and churches to look beyond themselves, and see how this framework for discipleship might lead to the flourishing of their local community.

This material might be used by a house-group, a working-party, a PCC, or even a whole congregation. The need to consider this particular area might have arisen through Accompanied Ministry Development, through a perceived need within the congregation, or through a concern of the PCC/Ministry Team. There is probably more material here than can be used in one session, so tailor it to your context, or let it spill over into another time.

* Other Resources

See the back of the ‘Prayer- a Simple Guide’ leaflet.

The Way of Life resources for small groups can be found here: <http://www.trurodiocese.org.uk/vision-strategy/discipleship/discipleship-groups/way-of-life-resources/>

The Pilgrim series ‘A Course for the Christian Journey’ has a 6-session course on the Lord’s prayer:

www.pilgrimcourse.org

Examples of daily prayer on websites:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-worship/join-us-in-daily-prayer.aspx>
<http://www.sacredspace.ie/>
http://www.rejesus.co.uk/site/module/daily_prayer/#
<http://www.northumbriacommunity.org/offices/how-to-use-daily-office/>

Places to go on retreat:

<http://www.epiphanyhouse.co.uk/retreats.html>
<http://leeabbey.org.uk/devon/programme/>
<http://www.sheldon.uk.com/>
<http://www.buckfast.org.uk/>

‘Windows Into’ courses are available on ‘The Lord’s Prayer’ and ‘Christian Spirituality’

<http://www.trurodiocese.org.uk/vision-strategy/discipleship/windows-into/>

* Prayer

To draw together all that you have done in this session, pray together the prayer on the front of Prayer a Simple Guide. It could be done responsively like this:

Eternal God, Your Son Jesus Christ
Is the way, the truth and the life
For all creation;
Grant us grace to walk in his way,
To rejoice in his truth,
And to share in his risen life;
Who lives and reigns with you and
The Holy Spirit,
One God now and forever.
Amen

And/or pray together the Lord's prayer, using the words from Matthew 6

* Beginning where we are

Light a candle and place it on a table in the room.

This prayer can be used:

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father,
Ignite in us your holy fire;
Strengthen your children with the gift of faith,
Revive your Church with the breath of love,
and renew the face of the earth,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

* Icebreaker

Who were the people who first taught you to pray?

Were they your parents/grandparents/godparents? Maybe they were Sunday school teachers/youth group leaders/chaplains? Perhaps a friend/ your vicar/ someone in none of these categories.

- What was it they taught you? Think briefly for a minute, then share in 3s.

Bring the conversation to a close.

Invite people to focus on the candle, and in the silence to thank God for the people they have talked about, and all that they learnt from them.

* Introduction

Prayer is one of the ways in which we build up our relationship of love with God, it is part of our journeying 'up'. It is one of the key ways in which we are able to experience God's love for us, and offer our response in return. Fr George Guiver spoke at one of our Diocesan Waymark events about prayer being the 'backbone' of the church - and he challenged us to strengthen that backbone. But prayer can be one of those things that we never dare admit that we struggle with. Sometimes prayer is very hard, sometimes it feels dry and empty, and it can be hard to say that.

John Pritchard, the former Bishop of Oxford, helpfully tells us to focus on the most natural responses in our lives:

- when good things happen, we feel grateful
- when we see or hear amazing things, we are filled with wonder
- when we mess things up, we want to say sorry
- when we come across need, we want to ask for help

Each one of these natural responses can be turned into prayer, by turning it towards God, and this can get us re-started.

But prayer, like any other conversation, needs to be about listening as well as speaking. If you read the 'simple guide to prayer' leaflet in your own time, you'll find suggestions for ways in which we can listen to God: during the course of the day, through reading the bible, and through silence.

• Community

How do we let the community know that prayer is important to us, and that we pray for things going on around us?

Some churches decide to pray for particular streets in their community, and drop a note through people's doors letting them know, and inviting prayer requests. Other churches let people know they are being prayed for on the anniversary of a significant event (death, marriage, baptism).

- ⇒ Is there anything outside our church that invites people to come in and pray here if they so wish?
- ⇒ Do we ever pray outside our churches, in a public way?
- ⇒ What events/places might it be appropriate to pray for in this way?
- ⇒ Have we ever thought about a prayer walk/pilgrimage through our community?

Would I consider attending a quiet day or retreat to have some extended time dedicated to God and myself?

⇒ Could I invite some other people to come with me?

- **Congregational.**

What are the ways in which as a church, we seek to help people in their prayer lives?

What else could we do?

How might the use of spiritual accompaniment (eg Way Guides) or spiritual direction (via Epiphany House) help people develop and grow in their prayer lives?

⇒ If the church is left open during the day, do we have a place where people can find quiet and make their own prayers?

⇒ How might we make that place special and inviting?

Consider some of the following:

Having set times for a 'drop in' or 'quiet time' provision. What ideas spring to mind? Hold a parish Retreat, invite a speaker, or hold a quiet day to explore prayer more fully. What ideas do you have that might make this different and exciting?

Give each participant a copy of the 'Prayer- a Simple Guide' leaflet if they don't already have one, and encourage reading (again). If you feel that more teaching is needed in this area, you could go through the simple guide leaflet in more detail - but don't just read directly from it!

- * **Bible 'conversation'**

We are going to spend some time now listening to God through a passage from the Bible.

Matthew 6.5-15

Participants will find the full text in their booklet

Explain to the group the full process for this Bible conversation before you begin. Ensure people know that they will not be made to say anything if they don't want to. The process is this:

Have someone read the passage aloud, followed by a time of silence (at least long enough for people to read it again for themselves).

People are encouraged to note a word or phrase that particularly strikes them, and to stay with that word/phrase, being open to what God might be saying to them through it.

Give everyone an opportunity (by going around the group) to say what their word/phrase is (and no more). People can 'pass' if they wish.

Have a different person read the passage again, followed by a time of silence, in which people can consider further the meaning of their word/phrase.

Going around the group, invite people to say something briefly about what it was in the word/phrase which struck them. People can 'pass' if they wish.

Have the passage read for a final time, followed by silence, during which people are invited to make a personal (silent/written) response to God if they wish.

Now that you have explained the process, use an opening prayer and go through each step.

Holy Spirit of God;
open our ears and our minds,
our hearts and our spirits,
that we may hear you speaking to us
through these words of Scripture.
May we be ready to be encouraged and challenged,
guided and changed.
For the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

*Questions

In the light of this Bible passage, and what it has been saying to people, consider one or more of these groups of questions (also in participants' booklet).

It would be possible to split the participants into 3 groups, to consider one category of questions each, and to report back to the rest.

Alternatively, you may wish to allow people to consider the personal questions themselves later, alone or with a spiritual guide.

If the people of the church are struggling to know what they are about, perhaps it would be best to focus on the congregational questions.

Or if you feel your congregation needs to learn to look beyond themselves, perhaps the community questions will be most appropriate.

These resources are here to be used by you in whatever way feels most appropriate for your particular context.

• Personal

What has helped me to pray over the years, and what do I find helpful now?

- ⇒ Do I ensure that I make time to listen to God?
How much? How often? How do I respond?

Is there something on the 'Simple Guide' leaflet that I think I ought to try out to deepen my prayer life?

- ⇒ When can I do this?
- ⇒ Would it help if I had someone else to pray with?
- ⇒ Who could I ask about this?