

# shaped by God

the diocesan vision for mission



# stepping stones

a brief guide to Christian nurture courses

from the Department of Mission and Ministry  
updated August 2009

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## Stepping Stones to faith

For most people, coming to faith is like a journey, but the journey does not end with making a commitment, it becomes a lifelong pilgrimage. The ministry of **evangelism** can be understood as helping people make the journey. One of the marks of mission identified in the diocesan vision, **Shaped by God**, is that each church would embody *confident, and yet sensitive, evangelism*. Another mark of mission focuses on *transformed lives and communities*. One of the ways in which these happen is through what are known as '**nurture courses**'. Every church can engage with evangelism by including nurture courses in their overall strategy, and most studies of growing churches highlight that a regular pattern of nurture courses is a key contributor to their growth.

Jesus said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"  
Matthew 28:19

The expression 'Nurture Course' arose in the 1980s in connection with the Billy Graham campaigns of that decade. Because Christianity had become a distant concept to so many in the UK, small groups were set up towards which new converts were directed. They proved effective; 72% of those who attended nurture groups went on to join a local church compared to only 23% of those who did not join the groups.

Nurture courses were originally intended to strengthen those who had recently come to faith but the expression has now come to describe courses ranging from pre-evangelism all the way through to discipleship courses for mature Christians.

'Nurture' brings to mind the ideals of raising children. They are taught the basics of life and given the skills that they will need in order to become successful adults; they are fed and surrounded by loving relationships as they grow. For these reasons 'nurture courses' is a good generic title – though not one to put on a poster!

This resource seeks to encourage churches to use nurture courses both as places of enquiry for seekers and also for deepening and developing Christian understanding and faith among those who have already made a commitment to Christ.

This guide looks at a number of courses, some familiar and others less well-known, in order to help you choose the one that best suits your needs at the moment. The more well-known have less commentary, assuming some prior knowledge on the part of the reader!

It is often the case that nurture courses are first run with the home congregation in order to get a feel for the process – and this can have a profoundly beneficial effect on a church. Experience with running Alpha and Emmaus has shown that it is not uncommon for there to be a drop in apparent success after the second or third course; however, perseverance at this stage produces steady increases in the numbers of newcomers.

If your church has not run a nurture course before, or for some time, or you'd value discussing how it's going, there are people who can help. Training and other resources are also available. Just call Church House (0116 248 7400) and ask for Barry, Mike or Stuart from the Mission & Ministry team.

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followed by:

## **Other resources that could be used evangelistically, including:**

- Foundations 21
- Nooma

## **Other related courses & resources of interest, especially various areas of discipleship some suitable as the basis for confirmation or post-evangelistic courses, including:**

- Landings
- The Christian Life and Why It Makes Sense
- Lost for Words
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- Deeper Encounter: Total Forgiveness
- Deeper Encounter: Serve the Lord
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- Growing Leaders
- Imagine
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- Wesley Ministry Network
- Discipleship Explored

**Helping People to take the Next Step**, an article by Bishop Stephen Cottrell

# THE ALPHA COURSE

explore the meaning of life

[alpha.org](http://alpha.org)

The Alpha Course (from Holy Trinity, Brompton Road) consists of a series of talks addressing key issues relating to the Christian faith. The teaching method is a meal/refreshments, followed by a talk or video and then time in smaller discussion groups. *Alpha* is for seekers, new Christians and those who want to brush up on the basics. Slightly adapted courses are available for different contexts, such as use in prisons, with students, seniors, those in the workplace, Youth Alpha, those in a catholic context, and those in the Forces. Videos are also available in other languages. A wide range of resources, including videos of the talks, are available from [www.alphashop.org](http://www.alphashop.org). Recently, an express version of the talks has been released (reducing talk length from 43 to 20 minutes). A full set of the DVDs is available for under £100. Course manuals (needed for each participant) cost around £1.50 each, also recently redesigned. A starter pack with everything needed to run a medium sized course (from DVDs to manuals, invites to training resources). Booklets are also available with the text of each talk for those who miss a week.

## **Strengths:**

Strong relationships are built up and groups often wish to continue to learn together. The course is widely used by a huge number of churches and is very effective. In particular it places the sharing of the gospel within a social context such as a meal. There are also a variety of spin-off courses for specialist groups such as "Youth Alpha". Strong brand name and national publicity, especially each September, helps attract people. National surveys suggest over 20% of people in the UK are aware of Alpha. Easy-to-use resources. National training conferences. Network of local advisers. Blends doctrine and experience. The relational and fellowship elements foster a sense of belonging before believing. The weekend or day away is often of especial importance in the journey of faith. Range of follow-up material available. Works well from very small groups to much larger ones.

## **Weaknesses:**

*Alpha* comes from an Evangelical background and does not cover in depth aspects of faith that some Christians would consider basic – for instance, the sacraments and social ethics. Lack of flexibility - little permission to adapt. Some people consider three sessions on the Holy Spirit too many for an introductory course. Some churches are finding that Alpha assumes some knowledge already and requires some form of preliminary time first.

# Start!

Start! by Robin Gamble is a six session basic introduction to the Christian faith. The sessions use a mix of video input, time to chat, simple discussion activities and space for reflection, in a style which is down-to-earth, enjoyable and honest. It is for use in small groups. It is designed to help people:- think through where they are going in their lives; learn to ask questions about the Christian faith; discover the good news of Jesus; consider how they want to respond to it – and to him. Start! often works best with groups of five to ten people, with several leaders.

The sessions assume no previous knowledge of anything Christian and the course is sometimes used pre-Alpha.

Start! Used to be available from CPAS, but is now only available from the people who run Leading Your Church into Growth (<http://www.leadingyourchurchintogrowth.org.uk/?p=23>) for around £40. The pack comes with everything you need to run a course, including various resources for leaders.

## **Strengths:**

Accessible, practical, user-friendly and avoids 'churchy' language. Starts at the 'contact' rather than nurture stage – can be a good pre-Alpha/other course. Learning style pitched at working-class culture. Short - only six sessions. Very creative use of video. Inclusive presentation - black/white, male/female. Can work well with baptism families, wedding contacts and similar.

## **Weaknesses:**

The course is very basic and could seem patronising to some. Few answers given on difficult issues like suffering and other religions  
Only a starter - needs a follow-up



**EMMAUS**  
the way of faith

## **Emmaus**

Emmaus (by Stephen Cottrell, Steven Croft, John Finney, Felicity Lawson and Robert Warren) is based on a catechumenate model but still has a fifteen-session nurture course at its heart.

This course tries to strike a balance between explanation and exploration. There is liturgical material - rites to mark the different stages of the journey - and information about sponsors to accompany people on the journey. *Emmaus* has three stages - Contact, Nurture and Growth - and is published in six volumes, so, unlike most other materials, starts a lot earlier and goes a lot deeper. Further information from [www.e-mmaus.org.uk](http://www.e-mmaus.org.uk)

*Emmaus* is for seekers, beginners and disciples. *Youth Emmaus* is also available. Many churches using the Alpha course, use *Emmaus* growth courses as part of the follow up.

### **Strengths:**

The authors of *Emmaus* come from a cross-section of Christian traditions. The resource materials can be used in a variety of different settings. Theological breadth - 5 authors of differing traditions  
Flexibility - adaptation encouraged. Starts at 'contact' stage  
Uses greater variety of learning styles than most courses. 'Growth' modules provide excellent follow-up to 'Nurture' course or Alpha

### **Weaknesses:**

Because there's a lot of it, it can seem complicated. Length - 15 weeks is a big commitment for each of the three stages. No videos. Needs more preparation by leader than many courses. Lack of 'belonging' for participants - no meal or weekend away though this could be slotted in.

# The Beta Course



The Beta Course is written and presented by Dr Sara Savage, Rev Dr Fraser Watts and Ruth Layzell from the Psychology and Christianity Project at the University of Cambridge. All three are extremely clear in their presentations, blending together their considerable insights from the Bible story, theology and psychology as well as their own personal Christian/human experiences. For more information about the course visit [www.beta-course.org](http://www.beta-course.org)

Beta was designed for Christians who are seeking to develop their faith, personal lives and Church community. It was not designed specifically for seekers, but it could be an excellent way of exploring Christianity. It would also be helpful to those who have drifted away from Church due to a lack of in depth teaching or experience of an authentic Christian community. The course is particularly suitable for students and graduates. It will appeal, in particular, to those who are articulate and well read. It maybe less suitable for others.

## **Strengths:**

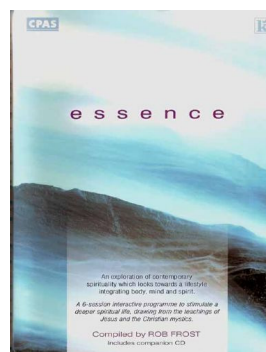
Simple to use, an ideal course to use in a newly established homegroup. Beta would work best in an articulate, well-educated culture. Beta is an exceptionally well produced, holistic, ten week course linking Christian faith with personal development and pastoral care. It aims to help people to: understand more fully what is to be Christian, become more whole, grow in Christian community.

The tone of the course is decidedly pastoral and therapeutic. Emphasis is placed on the importance of relationships (including our relationship with God) and the need for healing and wholeness in ourselves and in our relationships. There are excellent resource lists and bibliographies to help participants explore, reflect or develop further.

## **Weaknesses:**

Culturally, it is very Classic FM!

# Essence



Essence has been produced for the unchurched in particular. However, in the introduction the author, Rob Frost, relates how 'hungry committed Christians are for something less cerebral and more experiential in their faith'. He then goes on to comment on how Christian participants have 'found Essence stimulating and refreshing'. This is part of the appeal of the course. As well as opening up Christianity to non Christians, it would also be helpful in introducing Christians to wider, richer experiences of Christian faith and life. It is a six part course. It is especially suited for those who would consider themselves 'spiritual', giving them an experiential introduction to the Christian faith. Available directly from [www.kingsway.co.uk](http://www.kingsway.co.uk) at £19.99.

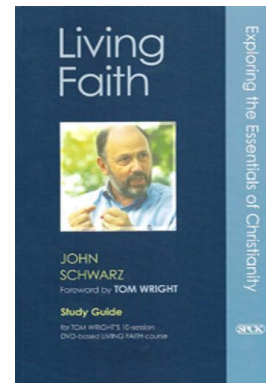
## **Strengths:**

Essence would be particularly good for young people and young adults. It would also make the basis of a very stimulating Church or Youth weekend. The course material is suitable for a wide range of abilities although intellectuals might find it a bit lightweight. The course material is well presented and thorough. The technological requirements will be easily managed. The preparation of rooms and materials will be more time consuming than for other courses but the return on this investment will be a much higher level of experiential activity. Essence would work well in a variety of fresh expression contexts. Alternative worship communities and café churches could use the course. Some youth churches, and those that arise out of a concern for the community or the local environment would find Essence very helpful.

## **Weaknesses:**

Inevitably the experiential approach will not suit all learning styles, and some might be impatient for learning more about "the faith" more quickly.

# Living Faith: Exploring the Essentials of Christianity



Living Faith draws on the scholarship of Tom Wright to explore the biblical story, Christian history and doctrine. The material is presented in the style of a University tutorial, over ten weeks. For those wanting a good introduction to, or a reminder of, the essentials of the bible, Christian history or doctrine this is a very helpful resource. The course material is presented in a book and on DVD. Prior to each session participants are asked to read the appropriate chapter in the book (five or six pages). The group then view the DVD material (25 minutes). Each DVD session begins with a succinct introduction of the topic by Tom Wright, followed by dialogue between Bishop Tom, Marilyn Sharpe and Joel Quie. The leaders' guide then offers questions for group discussion.

Running throughout the material is an emphasis on the stories of creation and new creation, and the absolute centrality of resurrection. Bishop Tom powerfully presents the link between personal salvation and the need to share in God's mission of putting the world to rights. The key questions of 'Who is Jesus?' and 'What does it mean to follow him?' are addressed throughout. For further information visit <http://www.spck.org.uk/livingfaith>

## **Strengths:**

The course is aimed at Christians new or established. It would be very useful as a follow up tool for an individual or a group that wants to know more about the Bible, having had their appetite whetted by an Alpha course for example. It is very simple to use. It could easily fit into an established home group. The scholarship is both deep and broad.

## **Weaknesses:**

It is hard to see Living Faith working as a complete course in many fresh expressions contexts. If most fresh expressions are engaging with younger, post modern, 'spiritual' people who learn in many different ways, this may not be the course to do. However Living Faith could work in a fresh expression that was established for a senior common room, a group of business people or for others who enjoy using their minds and would not thank you if you asked them to make a collage or meditate for ten minutes in an open field.

# Glad You Asked



This resource starts from a respect for people's understandings and beliefs. An innovative seeker course with excellent apologetic content that can help people at all stages of faith. It offers a fast-paced exploration of life's big questions followed by an imaginative presentation of Jesus' life. The style is contemporary and interactive, offering bite-sized presentations on DVD and big open questions to be thrashed out by a small group. The material took shape from an international survey of students: 'If you could ask God one question and knew you would receive an answer, what would it be?' The course provides an open forum to consider some of the most popular questions, while at the same time presenting the Gospel in a non-threatening way. It aims to model three values:

- Reality (found only in God).
- Relationships (respect, care and compassion for each individual)
- Discovery (questions are warmly welcomed, and people allowed to form their own conclusions).

Course materials can be obtained via <http://www.innovista.org/> The full Glad You Asked pack is now £29.99.

## **Strengths:**

The course is very simple to use. The Leader's handbook and the DVD are extremely clear. Even the biblical texts used have been printed out. Glad You Asked was originally designed for students and it still great for them. However, the latest versions have been edited for wider use. The course would work well as an alternative to Alpha. It would also be excellent for Christians who wanted a refresher course on apologetics. Glad You Asked would work very well in a range of fresh expressions. It would be particularly suitable for youth congregations, student churches cell churches and café churches. Glad You Asked is a most welcome addition to the range of Evangelistic Small Group Resources. It is extremely well produced and very timely. It is a good course for those exploring the claims of Christianity in a post modern/spiritual/multi-faith age and for those wanting to brush up on the foundations of their faith.

## **Weaknesses:**

Those using Glad You Asked will need to think in advance what follow up course to use themselves (Emmaus, for example, could be helpful). The course would work best in an articulate, well educated culture. Its origins with students does mean some of the language maybe a barrier (for example, words like 'teleological' and 'epistemic'). The change between sessions 1-5 to sessions 6-10 can seem rather abrupt. Does assume a high level of participation, at least in each opening activity.

# Christianity Explored



"Developed over 10 years, Christianity Explored is an informal course for people who'd like to investigate Christianity, or just brush up on the basics. It explores who Jesus was, what His aims were, and what it means to follow Him."

Christianity Explored is a ten-week course that introduces people to Christianity using the Gospel of Mark as its basis. Written by Rico Tice and Barry Cooper and originally run as a course at All Souls Church, Langham Place in London - where it is still in use - this widely used course aims to introduce people to Jesus as they read the gospel of Mark. The two-disc DVD set includes nearly four hours of material and is filmed on location around the United Kingdom. As well as being really easy to use, the DVD set features improved picture quality and a re-mastered soundtrack as well as subtitles, a trailer, a preview and a 40-page guide to using the series. Postcard-sized invitations with space on the reverse to add your own greeting and course details. Perfect for giving away at evangelistic events or sending to someone you'd like to invite to a Christianity Explored course. For further information visit <http://www.christianityexplored.org/>

## **Strengths:**

Strong on grace. Teaching people to handle the Bible. Illustrations from contemporary films and novels. Meal and weekend away - belonging before believing. Talks shorter than Alpha. Invitations have been thought about - postcard invites include the following three statements; You don't need to know anything about the Bible. You won't be asked to read aloud, pray or sing. You can ask any questions you want.

## **Weaknesses:**

Can feel heavy on sin and judgement. Only one session on the Holy Spirit. 'Masculine' feel - lots of rugby stories

# Talking About...

## Short Courses by Damaris



*Talking About* is a new film resource published on DVD by Damaris. Every six months an additional topic is published. The first of these, entitled *Talking about Jesus*, is a useful evangelistic aid, with others in the series (such as prayer, forgiveness, love, mission and justice) being useful discipleship resources.

Each DVD is packed with short films (about 4 minutes each) that fuse images, interviews, music, discussion and words from the Bible - all related to the theme of the DVD. They are designed to introduce themes and lead into more in-depth discussion, rather than to replace sermons or talks. The accompanying leaders' guides make them ideal for use in small groups. Over six weeks, there are four three videos per session, with room for discussion in between each. Sample videos, purchasing and more information from <http://www.damaris.org/cm/church/tajesus>

### Strengths:

Well presented, well made videos with contemporary design and references. Wide range of people interviewed on each topic, giving both different emphases and expressing them in different ways. Simple structure – each topic has three video's: what, what does this mean, what does this mean for me? Because the clips introduce themes which are developed in conversation it works well on plenty of levels: both evangelism and on-going discipleship. Can be used in small groups or one-on-one.

### Weaknesses:

Occasionally uses churchy language. Needs an experienced leader to help move the discussion on. Biblical quotes can be quite long so video may need to be replayed in places to give people a chance to hear again.

## The Y Course

Out for a few years, the Y Course has recently been updated to reflect the times. An eight week



**THE Y COURSE**

cringe free • totally relevant • cynic friendly



course to help people engage with the Christian faith. Free from jargon and clichés, the course gives space to identify important issues. An eight session, video based course with accompanying participant book. Each session has two short video interviews (featuring a panel of diverse experience). Can be a useful pre-Alpha tool. More information from <http://www.ycourse.com/>

# ALF (about Life and Faith)

[www.childrensministry.co.uk](http://www.childrensministry.co.uk) or [www.vizaviz.org](http://www.vizaviz.org)

From the Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham, "Helping children to discover Jesus and become His followers. ... ALF is a six session discovery course for children aged 7-11 that is crammed with activities, games, craft, interactive teaching notes and a professionally produced DVD."



**Other resources that could be used evangelistically, including:**

## **Foundations 21**



Foundations21 is a purpose built, web based, discipleship course that covers most of the Christian basics and aims to bring people to a place where they can identify their key gifts and ministries. A particularly innovative and inspiring feature of the course is the quiz at the beginning that enables participants to identify their Gospel Learning Style. The site has four gateways - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – through which participants enter the rooms (sections) of the course.

The twelve rooms are:

1. Jesus.
2. The Bible.
3. God the Father.
4. The cross and resurrection.
5. The Holy Spirit.
6. The Church.
7. Prayer.
8. Worship.
9. Intimacy with God.
10. Christian lifestyle.
11. Christian ministry.
12. Christian mission.

A particularly valuable feature of the site is the devotional material that is included. Participants can use Foundations21 for their daily prayers, readings and reflections. Two things are very striking. The first is the visual impact. There is lots of vivid colour, imagery and pictures. The inclusion of film clips from the places which Jesus visited during his life and ministry are particularly helpful. The second striking feature is the amount of detail that one can go into. There are lots of options, choices and pathways to follow. The course really does strive to respond to the different ways that adults learn.

Foundations21 has been designed for anyone who wants to explore the basics of Christian faith and discipleship. Input is drawn from a variety of Christian leaders and thinkers and alternative perspectives are offered on questions such as 'Who is Jesus?' and 'What is prayer?'

The course is beautifully produced with good clear instructions. Time will tell how it works out in practice. Given the amount of care that has gone into its production one would expect it to work well. Some of the talking head pieces are very sound bitey. Some may prefer fewer 'vox pops' and more fully developed responses to questions. This is clearly a project of the 21st century and very much in touch with contemporary culture. For younger people in particular, those who are used to going to the web before books for learning and information, this is a much needed resource. **As of 2009 there is no charge for this facility.**

Worth a view and can be found at <http://www.foundations21.org.uk/>

## NOOMA DVD series

Nooma is a revolutionary product that is changing the way people experience spirituality – a series of short films on DVD with a 32 page discussion guide.

It's not a book or a cassette tape. And it's not a CD or a two-hour movie. It's a new format called NOOMA® — short films, between 10 and 14 minutes long, about God and our lives. Since its limited online release in November 2002, NOOMA has impacted millions of people. Because of this initial success and great potential, Zondervan has partnered with NOOMA to bring these films to the world.



NOOMAs are appropriate for personal and small group settings, congregational meetings, and much more. Like parables, they use the experiences of our lives to teach about the fullness of life through Jesus, tackling issues like forgiveness, discipleship, and unconditional love. The study materials accompanying each NOOMA encourage meaningful discussion with relevant questions and biblical references.

Rob Bell, a leading pastor and breakthrough communicator in the Christian community, is featured in the first series of NOOMAs.

A full set of Nooma DVDs is available from the Mission and Ministry or Young People for Life teams at Church House, or for further information visit <http://www.nooma.com>

## Other related courses of interest, including:

### Landings

[www.landingsUK.org.uk](http://www.landingsUK.org.uk)

Developed by the Paulist Fathers in the USA, **Landings** is currently used in several Roman Catholic Dioceses in the UK. Described as a “ministry of compassionate listening” it allows people who have been away from regular worship to tell their stories and share their experiences within a small friendly group (a mix of other ‘returners’ and ordinary parishioners). Lay-led, (apart from the sacramental ministry at the final retreat day that follows the 8 weekly meetings), it is highly structured yet gentle and enjoyable, focusing on faith sharing and prayer. **Landings** is a dedicated programme for welcoming Catholics back to the Church, although with a few slight modifications it has been successfully used in other contexts too. It can’t be ‘bought off the shelf’ but is taught at workshops.

### Christian Life and Why It Makes Sense

DVD Pack with Leader's Guide and Resources CD ROM

Many Christians don't have the understanding or confidence to share their faith with non-believers which is where this six-part series may just prove invaluable. Fronted by Steve Gaukroger, and based on his book *It Makes Sense*, this resource for home groups includes contributions from Derek Tidball, Peter Riddell, Anna Robbins, Alister McGrath, Mark Greene and others.



Each section looks at a specific point such as "Why God Exists" and "Why Bad Things Happen" — the sort of issues people use as objections to Christianity. Difficult issues are discussed and the programme provides an outline for a home group meeting to follow.

This is a high quality production and Gaukroger is an interesting and animated presenter. The contributions from the 'experts' are excellent as well and the accompanying CD ROM provides the resources needed for participants. A good teaching/training resources for ordinary church members.

## Lost for Words

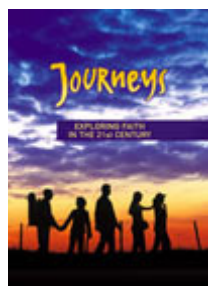
[www.cpas.org.uk](http://www.cpas.org.uk)



A resource to help people of every age share their faith naturally. It now includes three separate courses (children, youth and adult) with leaders notes, a CD-ROM with Powerpoint presentations, handouts, activities and publicity material. Course cost is under £40, direct from CPAS. Over six sessions, each lasting 90 minutes.

## Journeys

[www.greatjourneys.org](http://www.greatjourneys.org)



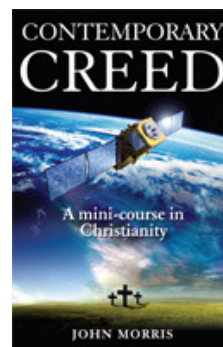
**Journeys** is a 100% Kiwi-made course, designed to introduce 'spectators' to the Christian faith. It's fronted by investigative TV journalist Rob Harley. Since being launched, **Journeys** has been run in more than 1000 New Zealand churches. **Journeys** is a five week DVD journey exploring the Christian faith through real people, amazing stories and changed lives. The course utilises a unique blend of stories of faith, told by regular people whose lives have been impacted by God. **Journeys** features powerful interviews about spiritual encounters, and shows how faith works at 'street level'.

## Contemporary Creed

[www.contemporarycreed.org.uk](http://www.contemporarycreed.org.uk)

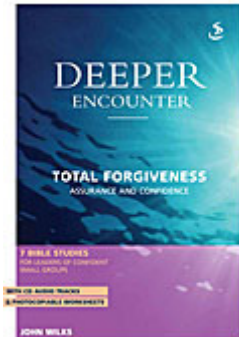
**Contemporary Creed** aims to translate ancient beliefs into today's language. It is written for those who, like the author, do not find it easy to believe and whose faith is marred to doubt.

It offers an intelligent pathway through sixty intellectual problems of traditional Christian beliefs. Described as a 'novel and popular mini-course on modern Christianity, in transparent English, without jargon'. It requires a basic familiarity with the Bible. 'It would be good for discussion groups or by couples, or as a personal manual of Christian instruction.' (Archbishop John Sentamu).



## Deeper Encounter: Total Forgiveness

[www.scriptureunion.org.uk](http://www.scriptureunion.org.uk)



At one level, forgiveness is simple – the free gift of grace bought for us on the cross of Christ. But the realities can be more challenging. Drawing on insights from the Gospels and 1 John, there are level sessions for confident small groups, accompanied by an audio CD and printable notes for each group member, so only one copy per group is required.

## Deeper Encounter: Serve the Lord

[www.scriptureunion.org.uk](http://www.scriptureunion.org.uk)

We readily accept that the career missionary serving overseas has been 'called' by God. But can the Christian working on the supermarket checkout, or caring for children at home, be said to be 'called'? Seven questions for confident small groups, accompanied by audio tracks on CD and with question sheets also on CD, so only one copy per group is required.



## Foundations – Purpose Driven discipleship

<http://www.purposedriven.co.uk/>



Described as a course exploring '11 core truths to build your life on'. **Foundations** is a resource for teaching Christians the essential doctrines of Christian faith, providing the theological basis for living a purpose-driven life. DVDs, participants and leaders guides available.

## Freedom in Christ

[www.ficm.org.uk/discipleship](http://www.ficm.org.uk/discipleship)

A 13 week course designed to help every Christian understand the truth of who they are in Christ, resolve personal and spiritual conflicts and become a fruitful disciple. Described as 'an easy and effective way for any church to implement effective discipleship'.



Excellent range of resources including leader's and participant's workbooks. Course teaching available on CD and on DVD.

## If you want to walk on water, you've got to get out of the boat

[www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com)

A 6 session study course based on the book of the same title by John Ortberg. A resource for Christians that is a 'journey on learning to trust God.' Relating the story in Matthew 14 to life today, the course aims to help participants 'discover how to discern God's call, transcend fear, risk faith, manage failure and trust God.' Sessions include DVD clips, Bible study and group discussions. Range of materials available including participant's guide, leader's notes, DVD.

## Lifelines

[www.anglicanshop.com](http://www.anglicanshop.com)

**Lifelines** is described as an accessible guide for use in Christian study groups, house groups and other small group settings and is intended for those interested in exploring, or new to, the Christian faith. It looks at some of the issues that concern everyone in a society where God has been marginalized or forgotten.

## Sean (Study by Extension for All Nations)

<http://www.sean.uk.net/>

A range of courses available for new and more mature Christians to enable ongoing discipleship, e.g. *Life to the full* – 18 home studies to help new Christians think through the basics of living out their faith as new believers. Described as 'ideal for post-Alpha'.

## **The Life You've Always Wanted**

[www.zondervan.com](http://www.zondervan.com)

A 6 session study course by John Ortberg. A resource that aims at guiding participants 'down the ancient path of the spiritual disciplines.' It looks at how we may grow in discipleship through integrating the spiritual disciplines into our lives. Sessions include DVD clips, Bible study and group discussions. Participant's guide, leader's notes, DVD available.

## **Mind the Gap**

[www.agape.org.uk](http://www.agape.org.uk)

**mind<sup>the</sup>gap** This training course addresses the issue of the 'gap' between church culture and a society in which there is a great spiritual hunger. 6 workshops help participants understand better the context in which their church is set and consider what method of evangelism would work best. Each workshop uses video clips and the course comes on DVD with supporting materials on CD for printing off leaders' and participants notes.

## **A Passionate Life**

[www.lifeshapes.com](http://www.lifeshapes.com)

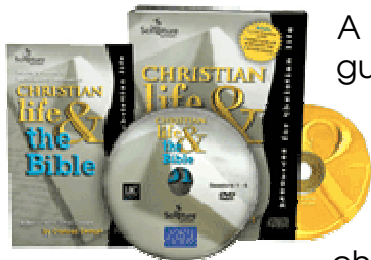
An easy to read guidebook that takes the reader through eight shapes providing memory models for key areas of discipleship. This has been developed into a training course with an eight session DVD. The resources are:

- a circle of repentance and faith
- a semi-circle of rest and work
- a triangle of relationships
- a square of priorities
- a pentagon of ministry
- a hexagon of prayer
- a heptagon of life
- an octagon of peace



## Christian Life & .... Resources for Small Groups

[www.christianlifeand.com](http://www.christianlifeand.com)



A series of DVD based teaching resources with leader's guide and participants' notes. **Christian Life & Why It Makes Sense** aims to give people the teaching and confidence to tackle some of the most common objections to the Christian faith. **Christian Life & Children** explores our role as individuals and as a church family, in the spiritual growth of children.

**Christian Life & Today's World** is to help us understand and engage. **Christian Life & the Bible** covers what the Bible is and what it is supposed to do. **Christian Life & Global Mission** looks at how to make a difference in today's world. **Christian Life & Work** asks if work can really be part of God's plan.

## Becoming a Contagious Christian

[www.willowcreek.com](http://www.willowcreek.com)

**Becoming a Contagious Christian** is a well-tryed, 6 session course designed to equip Christians for effective relational evangelism in today's world. It avoids stereotyped approaches that feel intimidating to many Christians. Instead, it shows ordinary believers how they can share the gospel in a natural and powerful way while being the person God made them to be. Each session's exercises, discussions, self-assessments and video vignettes give step-by-step guidance to help participants become effective communicators for Christ to those around them.

The aim of the course is described as being able to enable Christians to:

- demonstrate a contagious Christian character
- build spiritually strategic relationships
- direct conversations toward matters of faith
- communicate their faith in a style that's personal and natural
- explain biblical truths in a style that's personal and natural
- explain biblical truths in everyday language
- respond to the most common objections to Christianity



to

Extensive resources include 2 x DVDs, leader's and participant's guides.

## Growing Leaders

[www.cpas.org.uk](http://www.cpas.org.uk)

**Growing Leaders** is a practical resource from CPAS. It is more than just another course. Over a year, its unique mix of teaching, mentoring and practical application focuses on:

- leadership rooted in Christ
- deepening commitment to long-term services
- essential skills for the task



The **Growing Leaders** pack includes:

- leaders' notes and resources
- photocopiable handouts
- the Growing Leaders paperback
- CD-ROM with PowerPoint presentations, brief training videos, additional handouts, resources and software

**Recently, the Growing Leaders range has expanded to include a specially written course for young people. An excellent resource to use with emerging young leaders.**

## Imagine

<http://www.licc.org.uk/imagine/>



This 50 minutes film explores the main reasons for the church's difficulties in envisioning, equipping, resourcing and supporting Christians for today's world and proposes a simple but radical way forward, focusing on two great biblical truths – the concern of the Creator-redeemer God for every aspect of our lives and Jesus' mandate to make disciples not converts. The DVD comes with extra resources making it highly flexible for use in one, two or three session formats in small groups, cells, leadership teams or churches.

**LICC – Toolbox**  
[www.licc.org.uk](http://www.licc.org.uk)

**Toolbox** is an integrated, interactive programme designed to help people:

- develop a robust Biblical method for interpreting the Bible and applying it to contemporary life
- develop specific skills in reading contemporary culture through a biblical lens
- apply those skills to contemporary issues and to their own life context
- develop a vision for whole-life Christianity and understand the inhibiting impact of the sacred-secular divide on church life and Christian mission and living.



**Wesley Ministry Network**

The Wesley Ministry Network has developed a collection of video-guided study resources that brings the teaching of some of the world's best theologians to local congregations. Eight short-term Bible and theological curricula provide high quality adult educational materials in the broad mainstream of Christian theology.

- Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense
- A life Worthy of the Gospel
- Serious Answers to Hard Questions
- Women Speak of God
- Journey Through the Psalms
- In God's Time
- Religion and Science: Pathway to Truth
- Devotion to Jesus

**See:** <http://www.wesleyministrynetwork.com/> for more information.

## **Discipleship Explored**

<http://www.christianityexplored.org/de/course-trailer/>

A follow-up to Christianity Explored, from the same publisher and in the same style (see initial section on evangelistic courses for more information on this). In the same format (meal, short talk, DVD clips and discussion) and over eight weeks Discipleship Explored is based on Paul's letter to the Philippians (much like Alpha follow-up, 'a Life Worth Living'.



# Helping People to take the Next Step

(Written by Stephen Cottrell, Bishop of Reading)

There are thousands of people growing up in Britain today who would like to find out more about the Christian faith. Some of them have reached that stage of the journey where they are ready to come to church – these are the people who find their way into the worshipping life of the church year by year. (This is good, but they are few in number). There are more people who have reached a stage on the journey where they are ready to explore the claims of faith through a course. (This is why nurture courses like [Alpha](#) and [Emmaus](#) have been so hugely successful in recent years, and why building a place of nurture is such a vital part of the evangelistic process).

The majority of people are further back down the road. They are not atheists. All the surveys of recent years show that most people have some sort of belief in God. Other evidence in our culture indicates a growing interest in spiritual things. These are people who have never had the opportunity to engage with issues of faith nor heard the gospel presented in a way that connects with the issues they are facing. When this is done there is a resonance: the longing of the human heart stirs in harmony with the longing of God.

The evangelising church seeks to create an environment where this can begin to happen. For many of them the next step will be to join a nurture group. But often some sort of stepping stone will be needed to get there. This is what the evangelistic event can achieve.

At every event where the gospel is being shared there should be a clearly sign-posted next step. This could be -

- Another similar event
- An invitation to explore faith more seriously by joining a nurture course
- A visit from someone to talk about matters of faith

However, it is still difficult to give voice to this awakening of faith. People will feel embarrassed about saying they have been moved by what has been said and unsure about what the next step should be. This is where it is very important to give simple practical help.

One of the best ways of handling this part of the process is through a response card. At most evangelistic events a card like this will be extremely useful, giving the reticent and the hesitant (i.e. most people!) the chance to make a response. And because the cards are handed out to everyone, no one feels singled out, and everyone, no matter where they are on the journey, has the chance to say how they feel and whether they would like to

find out more. The card can also provide other useful information for developing this sort of ministry. And, of course, no one has to fill it in.

A certain lightness of touch is required in introducing this part of the event. Everyone usually moans at having to fill in a dreaded evaluation sheet. But if it is kept short and simple, and if the opportunity to express interest in exploring faith is explained, hundreds of people have found that this is the way their journey to Christ begins. By hundreds, I do not mean hundreds at one event, but twos and threes and fours at lots of small events over a period of time as churches begin to weave this way of doing evangelism into the tapestry of church life. And for the people who respond this is a hugely significant step they are taking. Perhaps for the first time in their life they are expressing a desire to know God, or at least a desire to find out about God. And if we don't give people the opportunity to make this response then the journey to faith will be all the harder. Usually the only thing getting in the way is our own embarrassment.

Visiting is also vitally important. If the team of people who are putting on the event can include some who are willing to visit those who have made a response, then this, more than anything, will give clear expression of our loving concern.