

NEXT STEPS

Welcome to Next Steps, a relational journey designed to equip and grow confidence in those who are new to following Jesus or those who have missed foundational steps in their discipleship.

We articulate discipleship as an invitation to “follow Jesus with us”. The Apostle Paul writes to the church in Thessalonica two thousand years ago that “...Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.” (1 Thessalonians 2:8). The ancient understanding of life together is the foundation to discipleship. Next Steps will provide some answers to questions but not all and will address some topics but cannot address all topics involved in Christian discipleship. Next Steps is not just information being transferred, rather, the hope is participants can develop trusting and safe relationships with others to enable them to begin a longer journey that will go far beyond the length of Next Steps and allow them to continue seeking and finding Jesus together.

Next Steps has 5 sessions that will unpack the following topics:

1. What is a Christian?
2. Encountering God through Scripture
3. Encountering God through Suffering and Sacraments
4. Encountering God through Community
5. Encountering God through Prayer and Service

Each session will include teaching on the specific topic and discussional questions.

Some of the sessions will include recommended resources to go deeper on the topic or guides to format prayers.

Note for Leaders

When leading Next Steps, we advise you take a posture of curiosity, rather than carrying the burden of having all the answers. We do not want to create a dynamic where we are “master”. We want to help connect participants with Christ and help them go deeper into their own story. So, ask questions rather than feel the need to have all the answers.

We want to honour people’s time. So we would give 90 minutes for each Next Steps session. This includes time to watch the video content and enjoy good group discussion.

You may be using Next Steps to journey with someone one-on-one or as part of a group discussion. We recommend the ideal group size for this is two leaders with a group of four or five participants. We have given recommended times for discussions with this group size in mind, but amend this to suit how you are using Next Steps.

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN?

SESSION 1

Video

You will be prompted to pause for conversation.

Group Discussion (10mins)

How would those in your world describe what a christian is?

Video

This will cover the following content:

Revelation

- Creation
- Fall (Genesis 3:5)
- Christ (Colossians 1:15)
- Cross (Romans 5:8, 8:32)

A christian is the person who has had a revelation of the truth that “life is in God and not somewhere else.”

Group Discussion (30mins)

Share your journey of revelation and how you came to trust in Jesus.

Video

This will cover the following content:

Response

- Confession (Luke 15:21)
- Justification(Luke 15:22, 1 John 1:9,)
- Sanctification (1 John 1:8, Galatians 5:16, John 15:26)

Group Discussion (30mins)

What is something you want to remember from what you heard in this session?

Pray Together

Memory Verse

Romans 5:8

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH SCRIPTURE

SESSION 2

Video

You will be prompted to pause for conversation.

Group Discussion (5mins)

Can you remember the first time you interacted with the Bible?

Video

This will cover the following content:

Why should we read the Bible?

- The Word is soil (Psalm 1:1-3)
- The Word is hidden treasure (Matthew 13:44)
- The Word is a weapon (Matthew 4)

How do we read the Bible?

- Find a translation you like
- Context – we won't always understand
- One Big Story – find threads and themes along the way
- Read with someone else
- Humility
- Holy Spirit as our teacher (John 14:26)

Group Discussion (50mins)

What's your relationship with the Bible like?

What challenges do you face when it comes to reading the Bible?

What has been helpful in navigating some of the challenges faced?

Extra Resources

A study Bible; Lectio 365; The Infographic Bible; The Bible Project

Pray Together

Memory Verse

Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.

That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers.

ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH SUFFERING AND SACRAMENTS

SESSION 3

Video

You will be prompted to pause for conversation.

Group Discussion (5mins)

Using one word, describe how you have seen those in your world respond to suffering?

Video

This will cover the following content:

Lament

- Permission
- Structure

Individual Exercise (20mins)

Write or reflect quietly on your own prayer of lament (see appendix “writing your own prayer of lament”).

Video

This will cover the following content:

Shivah – Seven Days (John 11)

- Grief cannot be hurried.
- Grief should not be hidden internally but expressed externally.
- Grief needs community and space.

Group Discussion (20mins)

One of the leaders, share your journey of suffering with those you are with, identifying the barriers to encountering God and also how you experienced Him in the middle of your suffering.

Optional Exercise

Make space for those who wish to, share their prayer of lament.

Extra Resource

Book: Where is God in all the suffering? – Amy Orr-Ewing

Pray Together

Memory Verse

Psalms 34:18

The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

Optional Exercise

Communion – see appendix page for “communion guide”

ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH COMMUNITY

SESSION 4

Video

You will be prompted to pause for conversation.

Group Discussion (10mins)

If someone was to ask you, “who are you”, what is the first thing you would respond with?

Video

This will cover the following content:

What is community?

- One in Christ (Galatians 3:28)
- Removing the grave clothes off each other (John 11:44)
- One body (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

How do we “do” community?

- Can’t say “I don’t belong” (1 Corinthians 12:15-16)
- Can’t say “they don’t belong” (1 Corinthians 12:21)
- Community is not the end – it is the beginning
- We must be present to others
- We must learn to ask for help

Group Discussion (50mins)

Through your experience of community, what has God formed in you?

How present do you feel to others and what prevents you being present to others?

Do you find it easy to ask for help and what might stop you from asking for help?

How can we cultivate healthy community which enables everyone to grow and what ingredients are necessary for this?

Pray Together

Memory Verse

Galatians 3:28

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

ENCOUNTERING GOD THROUGH PRAYER AND SERVICE

SESSION 5

Video

You will be prompted to pause for conversation.

Group Discussion (10mins)

What has been your experience of prayer? Have you found it easy or difficult?

Video

This will cover the following content:

Being with Jesus will result in service

- We serve Him better when we know Him
- Mary at Jesus' feet (Luke 10:38-42)
- Mary anoints Jesus' feet (John 12:1-8)

Group Discussion (25mins)

How do you find listening in prayer?

What does it feel like to be prompted by the Spirit to do something?

How do we test those prompts to know they are from God?

Video

This will cover the following content:

Serving others will bring you to Jesus

- When we serve others, we are serving Jesus (Matthew 25:40)
- We know Him better when we serve (Mark 2:1-12)

Group Discussion (25mins)

What makes it difficult to be a servant of all in your everyday life?

How have you experienced Jesus as you have served others?

How can we become more attentive to God's voice in our day to day, so we are ready to always serve?

Pray Together

Memory Verse

Matthew 25:40

The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

APPENDIX 1

WRITING YOUR OWN PRAYER OF LAMENT

1. ADDRESS

Start your prayer by choosing the way you wish to address God and perhaps naming something he has done for you in the past.

For example: Shepherd God who has led me, Father God who has loved me...

2. COMPLAINT

Describe what is happening or happened.

3. PROTEST

Explain, unfiltered, why this is upsetting and how this feels.

You may wish to declare your innocence or the unfairness of this situation.

4. REQUEST

Tell God what you want him to do for you.

5. EXPRESSION OF TRUST

Finish by placing your confidence in Him again.

APPENDIX 2

COMMUNION GUIDE

One of the key reminders when we take communion is recognition of Jesus as our co-sufferer and the truth that we all suffer together.

When we receive communion, we remember that God did not stay afar off and allow us to suffer alone. Rather he became flesh dwelt among us and suffered with and for us. He himself was broken and cried out on the cross in lament. When we receive communion, we receive his broken body and shed blood as a sacrifice. We join him in his suffering, and we remember that he joins us in ours.

We also join one another in our shared sufferings as we partake together. The Bible instructs that we pause before we receive communion to remember the sacredness of what we are about to do, not to take this bread and cup without due reverence for Christ's sacrifice. But we come by grace. - Come and receive "this is the body and blood of Jesus broken and shed for you."

Read - 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 - Eat and drink together.