



| Altrincham
BAPTIST CHURCH

Resources for Small Group Leaders

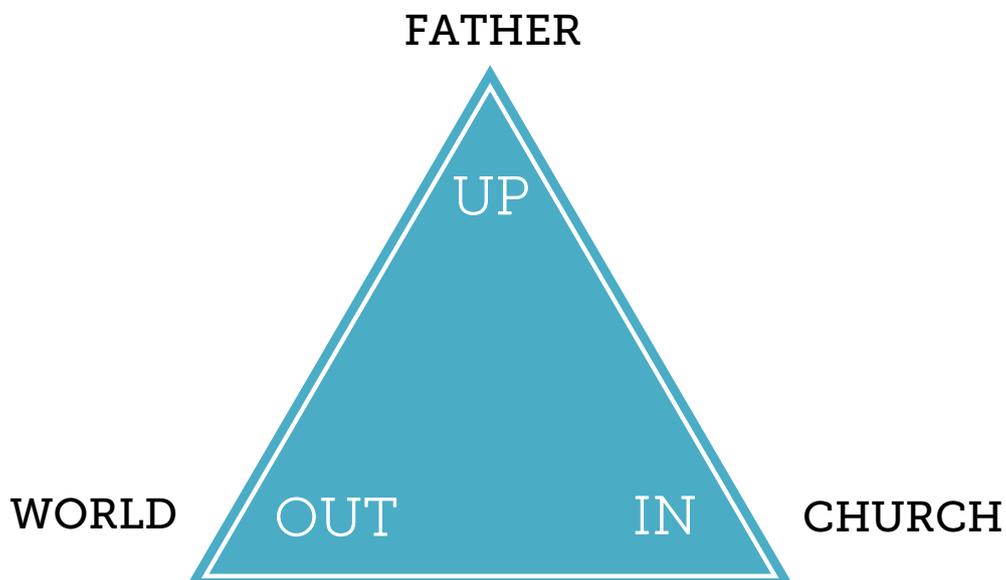
DON'T JUST FEED THE FLOCK

...make people hungry and teach them to feed themselves

DON'T JUST PREPARE THE MEETING

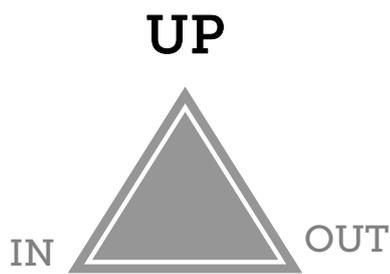
...equip the saints to live as whole-life disciples

UP, IN & OUT

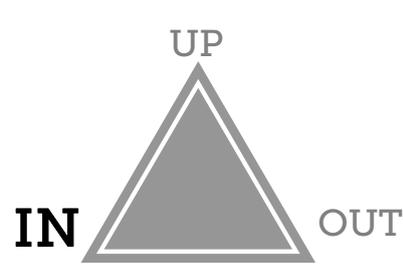


Jesus lived out his life in three relationships: Up - with his Father; In - with his chosen followers; Out - with the hurting world around him. This three dimensional pattern for living a balanced life is evident throughout scripture and is a great model for us as disciples today.

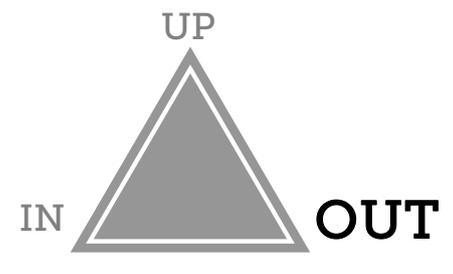
We have taken these three dimensions and suggested that we use them to form the basis for our meeting together in Small Groups, encouraging people:



To enjoy worship; to read & reflect on the scriptures for themselves and hear God speak to them.



To have open, healthy relationships in community where they share the real pressures of life and support one another emotionally and practically, encouraging honesty and accountability.



To see themselves as a witness and representative of Christ everywhere they go and spend time; the aroma of Christ making him known in word and deed.

IMMEDIATE NEEDS

You may like to start a meeting by asking *'Is there anything big going on at the moment that anyone would like to share before we start?'* This helps prevent a situation arising where for instance a close relative has died, someone has lost a job, a conflict has arisen, but you only find out at the end of the evening, after the person has sat through the meeting in effect wearing a mask of 'all is ok', when it is not! You will want to watch out that it doesn't become a time consuming exercise covering every concern and bit of news under the sun! The intention is to allow people to be real and to know where someone might be suffering/struggling. After praying for the person you can then move on to other things in the light of that.

WORSHIP IDEAS

1. SONGS

Depending on your group or the song, you can listen to a song or sing along with a song. Most songs are available on iTunes for less than £1.

Think about either a song or scripture that speaks of the themes you want to touch upon. Read the scripture, offer a thought on it as to how it speaks to you, and encourage people to reflect on the theme. Then play the song as a way of worshipfully responding to God. Finish by encouraging the group to pray in response.

Example 1: Tiredness/God renews our strength

Isaiah 40: 25-31

Song: Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord (Brenton Brown)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PArsqbwTdJ8>

Example 2: Pressing on/ fix our eyes on Jesus; commit to running the race; holding on.

Hebrews 12: 1-3

Song: Forever Reign (Running to your arms) (Reuben Morgan)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRBQtIEEkrU>

or

Song: Homeward Bound (Kristene Mueller)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2lYwan5KdgM>

Example 3: God's care for us

Isaiah 40:11

Song: Psalm 23 (Stuart Townend)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A-qLa_2GPcM

Example 4: Having Christ as the foundation of our life, our Rock
Matthew 7: 24-29

Song: Cornerstone (Reuben Morgan)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvLxZEU02uI>

or

Song: Faithful One (Brian Doerksen)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tum3U_28Xc4

Example 5: God is the strength of my heart

Psalm 73: 23-28

Song: Be Thou My Vision (Public Domain)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjLuG4sza3U>

Example 6: The unsurpassed greatness of God

Psalm 89: 1-8

Song: Forever God is Faithful (Chris Tomlin)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gUH_NzfRmbs

Example 7: Humility - getting right before God

Philippians 2: 1-11

Song: Jesus shall take the highest honour (Chris Bowater)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGYVN5RyL1c>

Example 8: Boldly coming into God's presence, to enjoy him

Hebrews 10: 19-22

Song: This is our God (Reuben Morgan)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JAGNUWxdUuw>

2. PSALMS

There are so many things you can do with Psalms - they are a library of heartfelt songs expressing every season of the soul!

a) Ask people to come to the next meeting having found a Psalm that expresses where they are; their voice; their current experience. Share, thank God and pray.

b) Praise Psalms: Pick a Psalm which has plenty of things for which to thank God. Read and ask people to turn the verses to praise, being careful not to go off track into 'praying for' type prayers. There is a great discipline to learn to use the scriptures as the basis for our praise, rather than random thoughts in our heads. It will extend the range of our praise. Here are a few out of many: Psalm 25, 27, 34, 84, 103, 145

c) Psalm 51 is a psalm of repentance; Psalm 22, 42, are psalms of hopelessness, when God seems far away; Psalm 63 is a Psalm of longing and thirsting for God

TEACHING IDEAS

1. JESUS

The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God (Hebrews 1:3) Play 'Open the eyes of my heart' by Paul Baloche <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ry6bzm7K8K4> encouraging people to meditate on Jesus - the one who shows us what God the Father is like.

Encourage people to share a story from one of the gospels which means a lot to them where someone encounters Jesus - what is it you see in him and love in him?

Thank and worship God for those things.

2. IN CHRIST

Use the Bible Gateway website to search for verses using the keywords 'In Christ' and print several onto bits of paper. Ask people to reflect on them; sharing where their experience is less than the verses should be ie. anxiety vs peace; and then pray as a group or in 2's 3's.

3. IDENTITY AND SECURITY AS GOD'S CHILDREN

Ask people to get in a comfortable position sitting or lying down and to close their eyes to distractions.

Play the Maranatha Community's Shalom Prayer meditation CD (11 mins) or The Father's Love Letter CD, both of which are kept in the church office.

4. ADVENT

A Season of waiting when we focus on the return of the King. The Kingdom is here in part but we wait for it to come fully when he returns. We experience longing and anticipation.

Use the Bible Gateway website to search for verses using the keyword 'waiting' - there are lots in the Psalms about trusting. Write/print them out on bits of paper and distribute.

Encourage people to think about the discipline of waiting:

We live in an instant culture and are to live differently: Rom 12:1-2

The Old Testament is full of heroes who learnt to wait and trust God.

Q. In what area do we most long for breakthrough for ourselves or for others?

Q. What are we waiting/trusting/hoping for?

Q. Pray for breakthroughs

Song: Strength will rise as we wait upon the Lord (Brenton Brown)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PArsqbwTdj8>

5. PROMISES OF GOD

Print out some promises on a side of A4 and distribute either whole or cut up. Encourage people to meditate on the promises and then turn them into praise and thanksgiving.

6. SHARE

Share thanksgivings and testimonies from the last week or two

UP - IDEAS YOU COULD USE TO FOCUS ON UP

1. READ A BOOK OF THE BIBLE TOGETHER

Each week people need to be told what we are reading over the course of the coming week and might be encouraged to jot down particular things which strike them and impact them as they are reading Scripture. We want them to share not just what they have read, but how this has impacted them (changed them, built faith in them, caused them to think and act differently etc). We also want to pray into one another's lives, asking God to equip us to live in the reality of his word.

So, you might choose to ask three simple questions:

1. What has God said?
2. How has this affected you?
3. What help do you need in order to respond more fully to what God has said? (leading into ministry).

As people share, others can chip in and offer their own reflections and expand upon what has been shared.

2. THE 'SWEDISH' METHOD OF BIBLE STUDY

This is a method you can use with a Bible passage that may or may not be related to preaching on Sundays.

People write three different symbols on a piece of paper: candle, question mark and arrow. Against the candle they note down verses, thoughts etc which have struck them for the first time or with particular force; against the question mark things they don't understand; and against the arrow, directions to follow, commands to obey, actions to take etc. This then becomes the basis for group discussion and sharing. If you use this structure then you will have to be careful to make sure that the discussion moves beyond the theoretical and that people are encouraged to share the impact of Scripture upon them and to express their particular needs for God's help.

3. WHAT HAS GOD BEEN TEACHING YOU THROUGH EXPERIENCES YOU ARE HAVING?

This works best if there is genuinely something that you have learnt from a recent experience. Ask people to consider what God has been teaching them recently. While they think, you go first and share something God has taught you and explain the circumstances in which you learnt it.

Encourage others to share.

In a prayerful way, speak words of encouragement over one another, affirming the growth you see taking place.

4. GROWING THROUGH HARD TIMES

Hebrews 12: 4-13, Deuteronomy 8 - Caution for when life is going well

-  When we discipline children what are we aiming to do?
-  Share how God is doing these same things in your life.
-  What is the result of God's discipline? Heb 12:11 harvest of righteousness; Deut 8:7 lack nothing
-  Can you see good results from God's work in shaping, rebuking and training you?
-  Consider the benefits of hunger and lack. Draw out how we recognise our emptiness and need of God; we experience his provision and our dependence on him.

5. SHARE WHAT GOD HAS BEEN SPEAKING TO YOU THROUGH BIBLE READING

Going through a Gospel. Get everyone in the group to get a copy of Kings Cross by Tim Kellor, which charts Mark's Gospel and read a chapter before each meeting ready to discuss. Frame some questions to discuss the areas you want to home in on.

6. SERMON SERIES

Look at the theme of sermon series and find something complementary

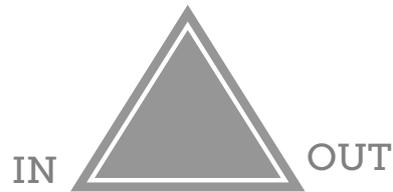
7. GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The New Testament has 4 passages that highlight gifts of the Holy Spirit. Read Ephesians 4: 1-16; 1 Cor 12: 1-11; Romans 12: 3-8; 1 Peter 4: 7-11. You could use one or more of these passages to explore different Spiritual gifts and help one another identify which they have and which they would like.

8. LECTIO DIVINA

Sacred Reading/Biblical Meditation. Choose a particular section of scripture and give people time (in silence) to zero in on particular words or phrases and let God speak to them. Then share reflections as a group. For more information on Lectio Divina go to www.lectio-divina.org/

UP



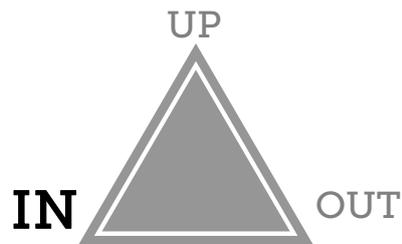
-  How much space & time am I giving myself for daily prayer?
-  When did I last spend a significant time alone with God?
-  Is my awareness of and engagement with God's presence throughout the day increasing?
-  When and how has God spoken to me recently?
-  Am I feeling close or distant from Jesus?
-  When did I last study or meditate on scripture and what did God reveal?
-  What negative factors and feelings are affecting my faith in God?
-  Am I carrying unresolved guilt, shame or fear?
-  What evidence is there of the love, joy and peace of Christ in my life?
-  Am I focussing on and expressing thanks for things I have recently seen God doing?
-  What have I enjoyed reading recently and how has it challenged me?
-  Are there areas of life where I am trusting in God to act in a supernatural way?
-  Am I aware of areas of weakness, alert to temptation & making progress with any changes I need to make?
-  How am I experiencing pleasure and fun?
-  Am I taking myself too seriously or am I still able to laugh at myself?

IN - IDEAS YOU COULD USE TO FOCUS ON IN

1. ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

A life group is a great place to cultivate a culture of accountability - where we intentionally choose to be honest about how we are doing and give people permission to ask us searching questions.

-  Choose the questions from the 'IN' section and ask people, 'When you read the list which questions does the Holy Spirit highlight? Where do you feel him prodding you, bring challenge?'
-  Pick one specific question and ask everyone to think about and discuss it.
-  Ask people to look at the 'IN' questions and find the one area where they are feeling great joy and breakthrough, and one question that gets under their skin, where there is a bit of a struggle.
-  When someone shares an area where they are challenged it is worth helping them reflect on the issue and move on to think of positive steps they can take to change things. You can then ask at a later date how they are doing in this area - this is accountability!
-  It is important for people to know support and not judgement. Pray for one another in the light of what is shared.



-  Am I demonstrating vulnerability and experiencing intimacy in my relationships and friendships?
-  How am I demonstrating respect and honour for others?
-  Am I mindful of what God thinks of me, or controlled by the fear of what others are thinking about me?
-  How am I making my critical friendships, family/spouse a priority, and would they agree that my life demonstrates this?
-  Am I practising Matt 18 and facing necessary confrontations with courage, grace and truth, or avoiding them altogether?
-  To whom, or what, do I turn to for comfort and what am I doing to relax?
-  Have I continued to remain angry with another recently, including myself?
-  Have I damaged another person by my words - privately or face to face?
-  Have I secretly wished for another's misfortune?
-  Do the members of my MC/Small Group feel valued and encouraged and do they love and support one another?
-  Is a sense of fun one of the hallmarks of my MC/Small Group?
-  Is my life characterised by generosity of spirit, time and money?

2. JOYS & PRESSURE POINTS

Every 2-3 weeks it is worth asking the following question or something similar:

-  What is the one thing giving you greatest joy or greatest concern at the moment?
-  Pray for one another in the light of what has been shared

3. EAT TOGETHER!

Different people can bring/make different courses. 'Fun' meals like fondues and raclettes work well. Ask each other 'dinner questions' such as...

-  What did you want to be when you were a child?
-  What would your perfect day look like?'
-  Who do you most admire/who inspires you most and why?
-  Imagine you had a budget of £5k - what would your dream holiday be?

4. ACTIVITIES

Think of different activities you could do together to deepen your relationship. i.e. wine-tasting, a meal out, a barbeque, a picnic in the park, a walk in the woods, a weekend away together etc.

OUT - IDEAS YOU COULD USE TO FOCUS ON OUT

If I had a sizable budget what would I love to do to further God's Kingdom here in the Altrincham/Manchester area?

If you could do anything to change the world, what would you do? What little steps can you take to help towards that goal?

1. ON THE SPOT

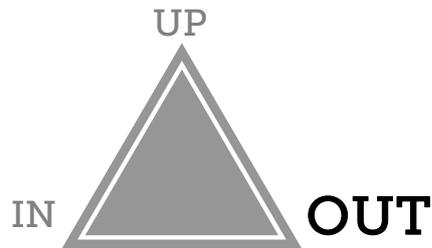
As well as praying for friends and contacts, this is a good opportunity, from time to time, to put one of the group 'on the spot' and pray concertedly for them, for their own area of Kingdom concern and influence, and for God's equipping of them.

2. PLAN AN EVENT

Think about those with whom you are in contact and whether there is an event you could organise that would appeal to them. Do it!! Are there people you can ask to help that would help them get more involved?

3. QUESTIONS

Go through the 'OUT' questions together but sure this does not replace **doing** 'OUT'!



-  Am I devoting enough time to relationships with non-Christians and people of peace?
-  How am I modelling an evangelistic lifestyle?
-  What am I going to build faith in a God for whom nothing is impossible?
-  What risks of faith have I taken recently?
-  Is there a culture of thanksgiving & testimony in my Mc/Small Group?
-  Is my discipling of others being true to scripture and transforming people's lives?
-  How am I making time for and encouraging the use of the gifts of the Spirit in my MC/Group?
-  Do I have an expectation that the Kingdom of God will "break in" through me?
-  In what ways am I ministering and helping people to minister healing and freedom in the power of the Holy Spirit?
-  Is my MC/Small Group encountering the presence of God in worship?
-  How am I increasing awareness of social justice and developing a love for the poor in my MC?
-  In what ways is my MC/Small Group good news to our community/those outside the group?
-  Are people coming to faith through the members /ministry of the MC?
-  Could the members of my MC/Small Group clearly articulate its vision and values?

DVD RESOURCES

Purchase online or ask Helen & Lindsay and there is enough demand we could buy them for Small Group leaders to share.

THE ROAD TO MATURITY - a six week course by Mary Pytches
As Christians we are all on the road to maturity but sometimes the journey is made harder by unresolved issues from the past which block our path. This course is designed to uncover what these might be and to implement their removal so that we may continue along the road unhindered by the past

THE MARKS OF MATURITY - a six week course by Mary Pytches
The process of change is fundamental to the Christian life. A continued transformation should be taking place within each of us. In *The Road to Maturity* we looked at blockages to maturity and how to remove them. *The Marks of Maturity* will examine indicating factors for maintaining progress: Self-denial; Taking Responsibility; Commitment to Communicate; Dedication to Truth; Relinquishment and Exchange; Celebration.

THE JESUS AGENDA - a nine week course based on Isaiah 61 with Joel Edwards.

How and why should we be good news to the poor? What does that look like today? What are our responsibilities as a local church in liberating those who are oppressed? We love God's promises of freedom and favour, but what is our part in demonstrating them to a watching world?

LIFE ON THE FRONTLINE – a six week course by LICC (London Institute for Contemporary Christianity)

This creative and practical small group resource is a six-session DVD series for small groups seeking to help one another live fruitfully and faithfully for Christ in the daily places of life and work. Each session has a short film, discussion material, Bible reflections and stories illustrating how the principles have been worked out in real life.

NOOMA by Rob Bell

Each short story covers a specific topic, and lasts about 10 to 14 minutes.

Twenty-four different films have been created, each with a different theme:

- 001 | Rain: "Things don't always work out the way we want them to."
- 002 | Flame: "What's up with the word love?"
- 003 | Trees: "Do our lives really matter?"
- 004 | Sunday: "Why do we do the things we do?"
- 005 | Noise: "Why is silence so hard to deal with?"
- 006 | Kickball: "Why can't we always have what we want?"
- 007 | Luggage: "It isn't always easy to forgive."
- 008 | Dust: "Does God believe in us?"
- 009 | Bullhorn: "Can we separate loving God and loving others?"
- 010 | Lump: "A lot of us have done things in our lives we are ashamed of."
- 011 | Rhythm: "What does it mean to have a relationship with God?"
- 012 | Matthew: "Suffering the loss of someone we love can be the most difficult thing in life to deal with."
- 013 | Rich: "Maybe God has blessed us with everything we have so we can bless and give to others."
- 014 | Breathe: "Our physical breath is actually a picture of a deeper spiritual reality."
- 015 | You: "Some of the central claims of the Christian faith are the source of many discussions and heated debates. But are we always debating the right things?"
- 016 | Store: "We all get angry about things from time to time."
- 017 | Today: "How much time and energy do we spend wishing things were how they used to be?"
- 018 | Name: "Why are we so concerned with what other people think, say, or look like?"
- 019 | Open: "What if there's more to prayer than just God listening and answering?"
- 020 | Shells: "What are we really doing with our time?"
- 021 | She: "When we omit the feminine, are we missing a very fundamental part of God's nature?"

- 022 | Tomato: "Do we try so hard to live the perfect life that we miss out on how to truly live?"
- 023 | Corner: "Why is it that often when we get what we want, we still feel empty?"
- 024 | Whirlwind: "What do we do when there aren't nice, neat answers?"

WORK TALK – a seven week course by Geoff Shattock

A seven part course to help you work well by working spiritually. You are invited to see Jesus display powerful stress management skills. Eavesdrop as He dispenses hope, captures the moment and juggles priorities. Watch Him battle with discouragement, isolation and exhaustion yet remain real, spiritually alert and true to Himself. Follow Him as He completes the work He was born to do. In short to let the Man who changed the world change the way you work.

Dealing with Personal Pressure and Stress; Being Good News to Others; Balancing Work and Home Life; Standing Alone for What is Right; Being Real; Working Through to the End; Spirituality and Security in Work and Life

FREEDOM IN CHRIST – thirteen sessions by Neil T Anderson

Leader's need to do the course themselves before leading it.

The Freedom in Christ Discipleship Course is designed to help every Christian grasp the truth of who they are in Christ, resolve personal and spiritual conflicts through genuine repentance, and move on to maturity. Jesus commanded us to go and make disciples. Although churches have made many converts, we have made far too few real disciples. Many ordinary Christians struggle to accept basic biblical truth and live it out. We often take a painfully long time to mature. This course is suitable for both new and experienced Christians, and is particularly appropriate for those who have gone through an Alpha or Emmaus course. Presentations on the accompanying DVD are by Steve Goss.

JOURNEYS (PRE-CHRISTIAN) – a five week course by Rob Harley
A five week DVD journey exploring the Christian faith through real people, amazing stories and changed lives. Designed to introduce interested 'spectators' to Christianity, utilising 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'.

GLAD YOU ASKED (PRE-CHRISTIAN) – ten sessions by Ken Boa & Larry Moody

Glad You Asked is a ten-part DVD (or video) based course that creates a place to explore spiritual questions. The questions explored come from a survey of students who were invited to say what questions they would ask of God. The premise behind the course is that it is good to ask questions. Glad You Asked uses questions to help people think through their opinions, weigh up the evidence for the claims of Christianity and form their beliefs.

ALPHA EXPRESS – fifteen sessions by Nicky Gumble

Easy to run in a home or in The Hub. These fifteen video sessions are the core teaching of the ten-week Alpha Course. Each talk deals with an essential question of life, such as: Who is Jesus?, How can I be sure of my faith?, How does God guide me?, How can I resist evil?, What does the Holy Spirit do?, and How can I make the most of my life? Designed to be approachable, relevant, and thought-provoking, these videos will help your Alpha Course guests to begin wrestling with these questions and start seeking real answers together in the truth of the Gospel. This set offers the shorter, "express" talks (22-25 minutes) which are ideal for whenever you have a shortened period of time.

NOTES

Altrincham Baptist Church
Hale Road
Altrincham
WA14 2EW

Tel No: 0161 941 3052

Email: church@altrinchambaptist.org

For more information on small group resources please contact...

Helen Roberts
helenroberts@altrinchambaptist.org

or

Lindsay Lonchar
lindsaylonchar@altrinchambaptist.org