

A photograph of a church interior. In the foreground, a young man in a red t-shirt has his right arm raised. Behind him, a diverse group of people are standing and looking towards the front of the church. In the background, a balcony with a decorative red railing is filled with more people. The church has a high ceiling with white arches and a stained glass window on the left. A banner with a dove and the text "Come Holy Spirit" is visible in the background.

tabernacle : penarth

purpose : to reflect God's love in our church,
community and world

Doing Small Groups In A Larger Church

Small Group Leaders' Handbook 2011

Small Group Leaders' Handbook

Welcome to the new Small Group Leaders' Handbook

The Small Group Leaders' Handbook is an evolving document, and will change from time to time as we discover better ways of doing things. We have sought to bring together our aspirations for small groups with the vision and aims of the church, as well as answering any questions raised by group leaders in recent years. At the bottom of each page of the handbook you will see the purpose statement of the church. This is to remind us that the small groups are part of a larger picture, and share the same DNA and purpose as the wider church. It will hopefully, therefore, be a handy reference tool to assist you in all the opportunities and challenges that you face as small group leaders. We are grateful to All Souls Church in Langham Place, London, for their generosity in allowing us to use their fellowship group handbook as a basis for this first publication.

Roger Grafton and Cedric Longville

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1. WHERE SMALL GROUPS FIT

Small Groups lie at the very heart of Tabernacle. In a church the size of Tabs it is impossible for one or two people to effectively pastor the whole congregation or even know when people are missing or in need of some support. For this reason we rely on our network of small groups to act as the primary means of keeping in touch with people and reflecting God's love in our church. Even a great leader like Moses discovered that it was impossible for him to look after the whole congregation of Israel without wearing himself out, so at his father-in-law's bidding he divided the larger group into small groups and appointed leaders to look after them. (Exodus 18:13-26)

In many ways, as well as a pastoral ministry, Small Groups are also the 'front line' for discipling Christians, supporting them through life's challenges and equipping them to be sent out as stronger believers. So your work as a Small Group leader is vital and highly valued. Small groups are also our presence in the wider community across Penarth and our witnesses in every street, and they are also important in our evangelism and outreach ministries. As a result It is wise to be clear on what the vision of the wider Church Family is, and to see how Small Groups fit in with this.

Our PURPOSE

The Tabs purpose statement is rightly repeated often and is central to what we seek to be as a church. It should therefore be adopted as the vision for each Small Group:

**To reflect God's love in our church,
community and world**

We chose these words very carefully and after much discussion together as a Church to describe what we believe our mission and calling is.

REFLECT GOD'S LOVE: The Bible says, "We love because God first loved us." (1 John 4:19). The love that we seek to share with one another and with our neighbours starts with God's love for us, and we seek to reflect that in all that we do. We will seek to follow Jesus' example of preaching and demonstrating the Kingdom of God with our words and our deeds. Whether by telling people about Jesus and preaching the Good News of God's Kingdom, feeding the hungry and clothing the naked, healing the sick and casting out evil spirits, getting alongside the lonely and the outcast or worshipping and praying, we will seek to reflect the love that God has shown us. Our small groups must be founded on the love that each one of us has received from God.

IN OUR CHURCH: The Bible goes on to say "If we do not love a fellow believer, whom we have seen, we cannot love God, whom we have not seen. And he has given us this command: "Those who love God must also love one another." (1 John 4:20-21). Jesus commanded us to love one another (John 13:34), and to demonstrate the love and mercy we have received by the way we treat one another. We want to be generous towards one another in time and money; we want to be patient and forgiving with each other; we

want to express our love for one another in words and actions. In any family there can be disputes or grievances. This is just as true of the Church family as any other. If another member of the Church upsets or grieves one of us, our first response should be to try and forgive them as instructed in Colossians 3:13. If we feel we still need to take action, then we seek to follow Jesus' principle of reconciliation as outlined in Matthew 18:15-18. If we know we have offended or upset someone else, we should be quick to go to them and settle the matter. (Matthew 5:23-24). Loving one another, either in our church or in our small groups is an essential element of our faith in Christ and needs constant attention.



IN OUR COMMUNITY: God has called us to be a gathering of believers in a particular place and at a particular time. We have a responsibility to reflect God's love in the community that God has placed us in through our individual lives, through the gathering of saints in the church building, and also through our small groups which are spread out throughout the community. We should be an example of God's love to our neighbours in what we say and in what we do. We want to tell people in Penarth the wonderful Good News about Jesus, but also demonstrate God's love in practical ways. As such, we are committed to serving the local community in any way that we can.

IN THE WORLD: Jesus told his disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). We want to see the Good News of Jesus shared in every corner of the world, and even our small groups can be involved in this task through our prayers, financial support and through partnership with missionaries or mission agencies.

Our Small Group VALUES

Local church ministry is an awesome, if sometimes daunting, task. We are all in this together; and in partnership with every other area of ministry, we as Small Group leaders seek to do all we can to ensure that:

Our LIVES are transformed by TRUTH (Romans 12:2)

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will."

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Our COMMUNITY is matured by LOVE (Ephesians 4:15-16)

“Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

Our WORLD is engaged with the GOSPEL (1 Peter 2:9-12)

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.”

As leaders we should keep on revisiting and reminding ourselves of these statements – because we are all forgetful! Does your group reflect the Tabs vision in practice? Don't worry if you don't feel you are there yet – that's the point of this manual!



So please:

READ ON because the rest of this handbook is designed to help you do that!

MEET UP with your co-leaders to discuss this regularly. Our plan is to hold regular meetings for small group leaders in the future, and for the pastor and the small group deacon to visit each group every 6 months.

2. LEADING WITH THESE VALUES

The single biggest factor in growing groups that reflect these values is our own Christian discipleship as leaders.

Talkers Must Be Walkers!

Truth and lifestyle go hand in hand; if we proclaim truth, we must live it out:

“The knowledge of the truth that leads to Godliness.” (Titus 1:1)

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.” (Acts 20:28)

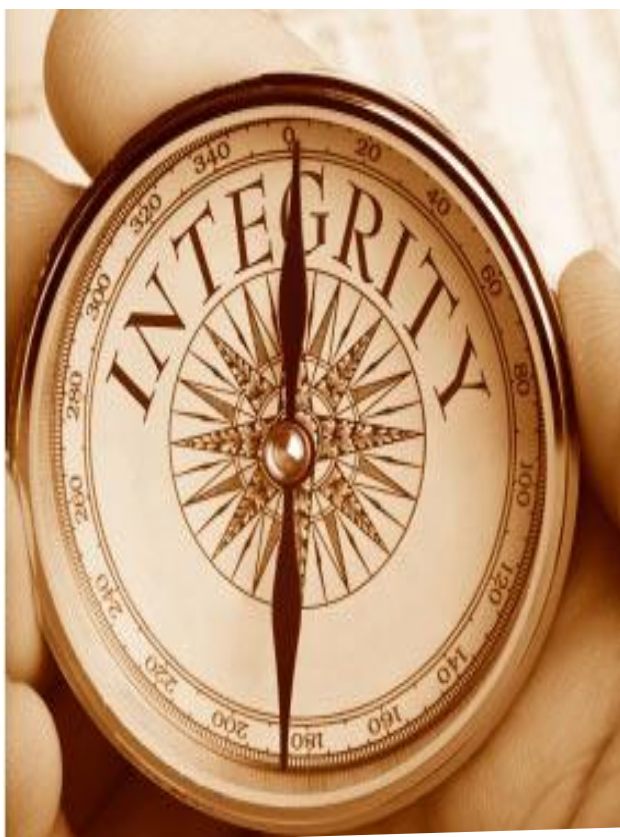
“My people’s greatest need is my own personal holiness.”

Robert Murray M’Cheyne
19th Century Scottish
Minister

Progress Not Perfection!

We all struggle, we all fail and no Christian is perfect! You are probably painfully aware of how short of the mark you fall. But we should all be growing.

“Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.” 1 Timothy 4:15-16



Some Practical Steps

- **Leaders are followers**

The life of a leader is inevitably busy. Yet the most valuable service we can offer our group members is to keep our own spiritual lifelines open to prayer and study. We are first and foremost disciples (or Learners) and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- **Leaders are partners**

One aspect of attending wider church meetings (e.g. Sunday services, Monday prayer gatherings) is to go to Serve and to Be Served. We need to be playing a full part in the life of the wider church family, even if leading a Small Group is our primary ‘job’ in Tabernacle. This is also an integral part of our own growth and discipleship as individual leaders, and sets an example to those who follow us .

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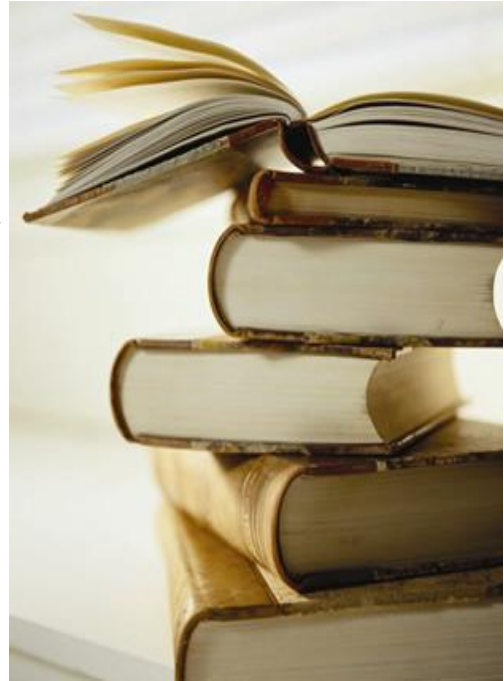
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- **Leaders are accountable**

As leaders, we often struggle and feel isolated. So every leader needs at least one other person (of the same sex) to whom we can be accountable, whom we trust enough to be open and honest. Perhaps you could meet up with another Small Group leader to pray and talk?

- **Leaders are readers**

Our faith and understanding too easily get flabby. We need to be reading the Bible for our own spiritual development, and not just to mine it for material to use in small groups! A balance of Old and New Testament reading, making sure we spend plenty of time in the Gospels, is essential for our own spiritual well-being. Reading a balanced diet of Christian books is also essential if we are to keep spiritually fit.



For Personal Study

Study these passages to see how they apply to your life and ministry

Micah 6:8

1 Timothy 4:12

1 Thessalonians 2:8

Galatians 6:9-10

1 Peter 5:1-14

2 Timothy 2:15

Hebrews 10:24-25

3. OUR SHARED COMMITMENTS

No one takes on a job without a job description. Whilst leading a Small Group is far more than simply 'a job', it is important for us all to know what we are committing to.

“God does not call the equipped; He equips the called.”

Anon

How Tabs Is Committed To You

We are acutely conscious of the big commitment you have made and are immensely grateful to you. We will do our very best as a leadership to ensure we keep saying so and to keep praying for you! We want to do better in the future in this area than we have sometimes done in the past. The Gospel ministry of Tabs simply would not be possible without your partnership. The leadership acknowledge the key place of small groups in our life together, and in recognition of this have allocated a deacon (Cedric Longville) to oversee small groups and represent them on leadership council.



We are committed to helping you in your service by providing:

resources: study notes and other study material. We will make sure these are the best that we can produce, and delivered to you in good time for you to prepare your studies.

training: we have run small group leaders' training in the past, and many of you have been on these weekends. We will run this training again for new leaders from time to time, and provide continuation training for all leaders.

We will also be running **resource meetings** to help you in leading the study material that is being provided (see below).

pastoral support: primarily through the Small Group Leaders' Support Team: Cedric and Helen Longville and Pastor Roger, but also via the other elders and leaders of the church. In addition to providing support for leaders it is our desire to regularly visit small groups during their normal meetings

regular prayer: through the Tabs prayer diary; at prayer meetings; at staff meetings on a Tuesday morning and at leadership meetings.

Resource Meetings

At the start of each new term or study series we will provide extra material and training for small group leaders to help them get to grips with the material they are being asked to present. These meetings will be an opportunity to hear what the vision and purpose behind the new study group material is, and provide additional background information about the study booklet and the subject being studied for that term. All leaders will be

welcome to attend, but you may also wish to bring along members of your group to share in the evening. These support meetings are not the same as the small group leaders' meetings which will take place regularly. These meetings will be reserved for the leaders of the groups and will be an opportunity to feed-back on how your group is going and address any difficulties that you might be having.

Getting Help

The small group deacon and his team are your "first port of call" for help with:

- anything related to leading your group (including handling issues raised by members)
- your own personal development as a leader
- identifying new leaders
- problems within your group, including issues around difficult people or relationship problems in your group.
- adding new people to your group. We are happy if someone wants to join your group, but it is vital that you let us know so that we can make sure you have enough study booklets and be aware of how big (or small) your group is. Also, the pastors and elders are sometimes aware of pastoral issues or problems that you may not be aware of, and it would be helpful if we were aware of who is joining your group both for the wider health of the church and the protection of your group.



Please do talk to Cedric or Helen regularly, since many major issues can start small but rapidly become big problems. Cedric and Helen can be contacted on cedricandhelen@btinternet.com or by telephone on 029 2071 0352.

Cedric also has a pigeonhole in the church foyer. As do you if you are a small group leader! Have you checked it recently?

What You Have Committed To

- **Being part of the church leadership structure.** By being a small group leader, you are also part of the leadership of the wider church. This means that as with other elected leaders, we expect:
 - ✧ Regular attendance at and involvement in at least one Sunday Service at Tabs.
 - ✧ Regular attendance at "The Stand" prayer meeting.
 - ✧ Regular attendance at Church Meetings
 - ✧ Support for the leadership council and pastoral staff with your prayers, words and actions. Small groups are not 'mini-fiefdoms' in opposition to the main leadership of the church! If you cannot support the leadership and decisions of the church through the church meeting, you must consider your position as a small group leader.

- **Being a leader of a Small Group.** Being a small group leader is a serious responsibility, and is not an easy task. There are a number of expectations placed on you by your small group and the wider church:
 - ✘ Meet with your co-leader for prayer, mutual encouragement and discussion of the particular needs of your small group.
 - ✘ Pray regularly for each member of your small group yourself.
 - ✘ Diligently and prayerfully prepare for small group meetings, delegating (but not abdicating) responsibility for a particular study or evening where appropriate.
 - ✘ Care for and look out for members on Sundays, at the prayer meeting and through the week. If someone is missing unexpectedly, try to find out why and see if there is a problem you can help with. If necessary, let the pastors, elders or small group deacon know. If a member is sick or in hospital **always** let the pastor know.
 - ✘ Co-ordinate support in times of crisis, making sure people's practical needs are taken care of where appropriate. This can be done in co-ordination with the 'frozen meals' programme in church, pharaoh's pantry or the 434 fund if necessary.
 - ✘ Create a group culture of mutual encouragement, love and support. You are not expected to do all the work of running a small group yourself. However, as leader you are expected to make sure that the work is being done properly by someone!
 - ✘ Encourage members to grow and use their gifts (e.g. Doing training, joining the worship or ministry teams, doing after service tea and coffee or communion set up/ washing up or being part of the welcome teams)
 - ✘ Occasional (same sex) mentoring and individual support for members in your group
 - ✘ Identify and mentor potential leaders, including replacement(s) for yourself in due course. This is often overlooked, not least because sending a valued member of the group to lead another group may be the last thing you want to do! But please bear in mind that we need to find a new Tabs Small Group leader every few months, so the more help that we can get the better! Please do not ask people to take over yourself – it is vital to speak first to pastor Roger or Cedric before approaching the individual. There may be pastoral, spiritual or disciplinary reasons you are not aware of as to why someone is not suitable to lead a group at this time. For this reason **all** small group leaders are appointed by leadership, not by the groups or other small group leaders.

Contrary to common belief, being a Small Group leader is not a life sentence! While there is wisdom (for both your own and the group's sake) in committing for a minimum period of leadership, you are free to (and probably should) pass the baton on in time. Alternatively, there is no reason why you cannot arrange a 'sabbatical term'. This could simply be for a break or perhaps to have a chance to lead a course such as Alpha, the Marriage Course or the Parenting Course or to allow you to undertake some training yourself.

4. WHEN YOUR GROUP MEETS

The life of a Small Group is far more than just its weekly meeting; but it can never be less than its weekly meeting. Your group will only grow as a group if the meeting is going well. So what should a group meeting (based on the vision and values mentioned above) look like? Surely, key ingredients must be:

- **Time to build genuine community** (making people feel welcome, perhaps over a meal and non-study time together)
- **Time to praise and worship God** (it may not be possible for every group to sing together, but there are many ways that we can worship together!)
- **Time to be transformed by truth** (through study of the Word)
- **Time to share what we have learned** (through prayer for one another and putting what we have learnt in the study into practice in our witnessing)



Serving The Group By Watching The Clock

Your job with your co-leader is to keep the meeting moving, especially if others are involved in leading. So please:

Start promptly Even if some aren't there; begin the meeting on time. Start late regularly and members will come late regularly.

Plan your time How you divide up the time may vary every now and then. The key thing, however, is that you deliberately keep each of the four ingredients (above) as central.

End promptly Remember some members may have a bit of a journey at the end of the meeting, or family waiting for them. Also, be sensitive to your hosts – don't let the group outstay their welcome.

Sharing Responsibilities

Do share the responsibility for different parts of your time; it's a great way for members to serve one another, and it's not physically possible for you to do everything. However, please remember that not everyone is gifted in this area; just as some won't be gifted in cooking a meal for 12, so others won't be gifted in leading the study.

Here are some of the jobs to share out:

- Co-ordinating rota for refreshments or meals
- Mission Partner link.
- Overseeing prayer time, recording prayer requests and keeping absentees up to date

- Occasionally co-ordinating the group's care for a member who is sick or in need



In the end, the final responsibility for each aspect of the evening rests with you, not least in the task of ensuring the Bible is well taught and applied. However, delegating tasks, encouraging and training others, developing other people in their skills and allowing space for members to serve one another are all part of a leader's responsibilities.

If your co-leader is the one leading a particular study, then your role is primarily to support and observe (especially looking out for those who are being left out or to see where time gets taken up). You can then share feedback and comments when you next review your group.

Tips To Get The Most Out Of The Meeting

The simplest thing when planning your meeting is to work out when you want the meeting to end and then plan your timetable backwards accordingly. You should ensure you include the following:

Time to build genuine community

Some groups have a meal together or begin with refreshments, but this may not always be practical. If you do have a meal, don't feel any pressure to serve top class food!

The key is a decent time to talk: sharing news or concerns, following up on prayer requests, discussing progress or discipleship challenges from previous studies. (See Sections 9 & 10)

Time for worship

If you have a guitarist or pianist in your group, or if you have people who are confident in their voices and can worship acapella style, then all well and good. If not, then consider worshipping by saying psalms together, using poetry, music on a CD, liturgical worship (there are many resources on the internet) or using creative arts in worship. The only limit on how we worship corporately is our imagination!

Time to be transformed by truth

- Open in prayer: depend on God's Spirit to transform us through his word. Perhaps you could ask a quieter member to open in prayer in advance.
- Read the passage: perhaps split the passage for 2 or 3 members to read. Remember: some may not be happy to read aloud (e.g. if they are dyslexic or very shy), so do not insist that someone reads if they say they would prefer not to.
- Ask questions: your task is to LEAD AN INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY NOT TO GIVE A MONOLOGUE! Use the questions in the notes (and any others you prepared beforehand), but be flexible. You don't have to ask every single question if the discussion is going well. However, ensure that the passage directs the discussion and that everyone grasps the heart of the passage. Remember: it's God's Word that transforms our lives, as His Spirit helps us apply it. (See Section 5)



- Involve everyone: as far as possible, encourage all members to participate. Each person has a valuable contribution to make to the group's understanding. This does not mean, however, that everyone's insight on a passage is automatically right! Let the Bible be the benchmark of what is a true and faithful interpretation. (See Section 6)

- Make sure you give time to root what you learn from the Bible with practical applications. The Bible is given to transform us and, therefore, so should a Bible study!

- Keep to time! You don't need to cover the whole passage or complete every study. Far better for people to leave hungry than exhausted. However, if you regularly fail to get through the

whole study, just check that you are not getting caught up in unnecessary detail or by red herrings.

- Summarise: a good final test of a group's understanding is whether or not they can summarise the passage in one sentence.

Time to depend on God

A common mistake is to close Bibles as soon as the study is over. Keep them open, so your prayer time flows out of your study, using the passages' phrases and lessons to fuel your praises and prayers. As well as the group's immediate needs, make a point of praying for non-Christian friends, and your group's Tabs Mission Partner. (See Section 14) For more suggestions and ideas on growing your group in prayer, see Section 9.

Remember the 4 W's as a guide to your group meeting. We begin with making people



feel **Welcome**. This is followed by **Worship** which leads us into studying the **Word**. As we let God's word transform us, we should consider how it affects our lives as we go out of the group to be **Witnesses** in our homes, workplaces and community.

5. PREPARING BIBLE STUDIES

Preparation is crucial: If the group is to understand and apply the passage well, then the leader needs to have grasped it well enough to be able to guide them through it. To support you in this work, we will try to provide you with:

Commentaries: which we will try to make available through the church resources centre. Our hope is to make the money available soon to provide several sets of good commentaries. We will also recommend online resources.

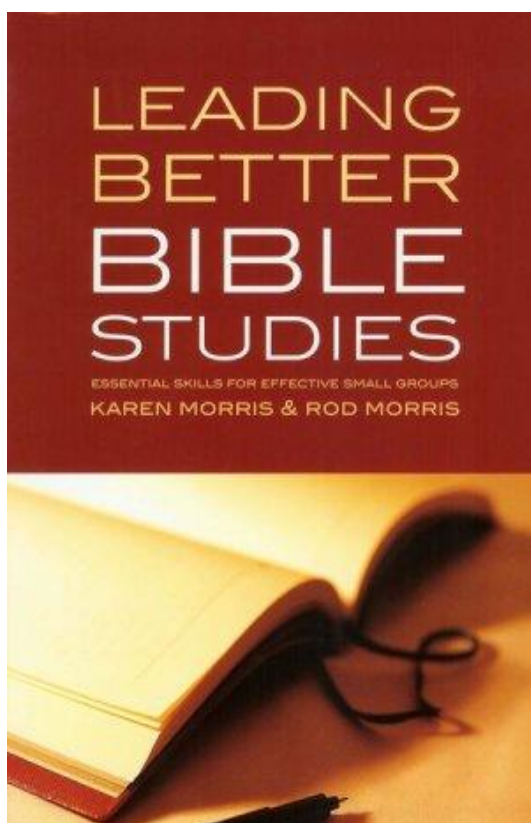
Preparation Notes: usually written 'in-house' alongside the study material, these aim to give you guidance during your preparation.

Resource Meetings: Before each series of studies, we will offer an evening to help you prepare your meetings (see page 6).

Why An INTERACTIVE Bible Study?

An interactive Bible study has a different, and equally important, role to the sermon or personal Bible study. There are many benefits:

Teaching One Another: Studying God's Word together helps us to grapple with truths we might otherwise misunderstand or ignore.



Applying with One Another: The insight of other members is invaluable as together we think through specific applications.

Modelling to One Another: It models to younger Christians how they should (and can) study the Bible themselves (not just picking favourite verses out of context).

Encouraging One Another: Sharing truth together is intrinsically encouraging.

PLEASE NOTE: These benefits will only be enjoyed if the study is genuinely interactive and NOT A MONOLOGUE!

CRUCIAL STEPS In Preparing Bible Studies

Leading a good Bible study is a difficult job! It demands a lot of effort and preparation, for which there are few (if any) shortcuts. It is not, therefore, something that you can do just at the last minute, half an hour before members arrive (we're sure that no Tabs Small Group Leader would ever dream of doing such a thing!)

All these steps will hopefully come as second nature to those who have been doing this for years. Still, even old hands occasionally need to check themselves against the standards of best practice.

- **Step 1: PRAY!**

How can we expect to understand God's Word without his help? (E.g. Psalm 119:18 & 2 Timothy 2:7)

- **Step 2: IMMERSE yourself in the passage**

READ THROUGH SEVERAL TIMES, preferably in two or more translations. Usually the notes will have been prepared using the NIV and if the study series relates to a sermon series, the readings in church will have been from the NIV, so it will almost certainly be helpful to use the NIV in your preparation. If you have access to the internet, you can read parallel versions at websites such as www.biblos.com or www.biblegateway.com.



Pastor Roger highly recommends the E-sword Bible software programme which can be downloaded free from their website at www.e-sword.net.

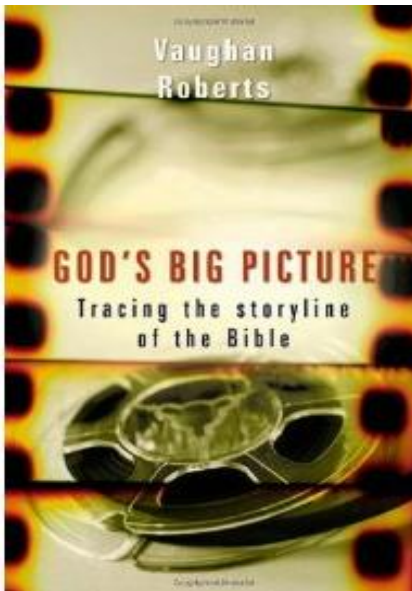
Once you have downloaded the basic module, you can open the programme and download extra resources including additional translations of the Bible (including Greek and Hebrew versions), versions with Strong's numbers and definitions, commentaries, dictionaries, maps and many other resources. Most of these resources are free, but some cost a small amount.

OBSERVE! *"What does the passage say?" not what you THINK the passage says!* This task is primarily about finding disciplines to overcome over-familiarity and haste. Here are some things to look out for:

- Repetitions and central ideas/words: what ideas recur or seem important?
- Surprises: ask yourself, "Why does it say that" or "In what way is it unexpected?"
- Context: when was it written, by whom, to whom?
- Flow: how does this passage fit in with the narrative or argument flow?
- Other Bible References: if places, events or people are mentioned, discover what else the Bible says about them. You should not need to go outside the Bible for information. If you're not sure where to look, then use a Bible Dictionary or Concordance.
- Questions: jot down things you don't understand (you won't be alone!) and use these to bring an agenda to the commentaries and other resources you are using.

INTERPRET! *These are all the 'Why'/'So what?' questions*

- Why does the writer say this, and why does it come here?
- What would we lose if we didn't have this passage?



- How does this fit in with the writer's purpose in writing the whole book?
- How does this fit in with the story of the whole Bible? How does this affect its significance? (*Vaughan Roberts' God's Big Picture is very helpful for this.*)

APPLY! *These are the 'Now What?' questions*

- Are there precedents, details or principles for us to follow? If not, why not? If so, on what grounds?
- From the perspective of God's overarching plan, has God done anything subsequent to your passage that affects how it is applied? *E.g., in Matthew 10, Jesus tells the disciples only to preach to the House of Israel. But by Matthew 28, he has now opened up his commission to go out into the whole world.*
- How does this apply to your own walk?

It is **ONLY NOW** at this stage, that you should even consider contemplating even the remotest possibility of opening a commentary!!

Step 3: REFER to commentaries, sermons and other resources

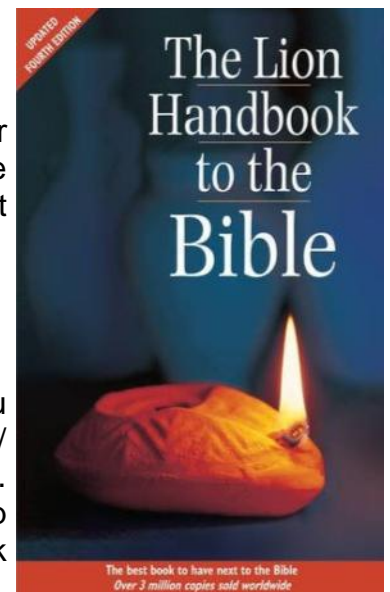
Do use 1 or 2 commentaries and/or reference books on the passage, and listen to any relevant Tabs sermons or other preachers. However, no one is infallible so ALWAYS measure what is said against the benchmark of Scripture.

Step 4: SUMMARISE the passage

Distil the passage's purpose, content and main ideas or argument into one sentence using your own words. This theme sentence should reflect how all the thoughts in the passage fit together.

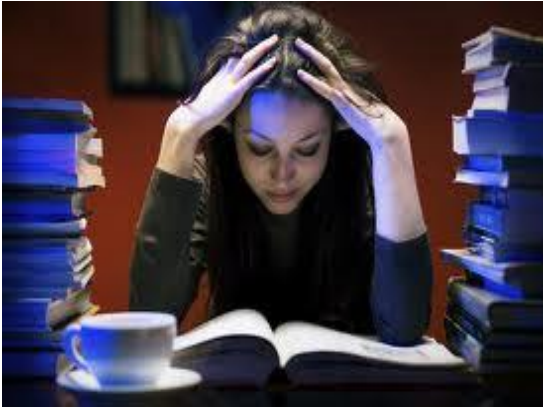
Step 5: WRITE your own questions (if you wish)

- Questions will often be included in the study notes, but you can always write your own. If you do, keep your theme/summary sentence in front of you as you write questions. This will keep you on track with the core issues and help you avoid digressions. All your questions should work towards people grasping this essential idea.



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- Write questions under the same 3 categories you used in your preparation:
 - Observation questions
 - Interpretation questions
 - Application questions

- Aim to AVOID these sorts of questions:
 - Questions which encourage one word answers
 - Closed questions (expecting 'yes' or 'no')
 - Questions that are too obvious or don't provoke discussion
 - Questions which are too long or complicated
 - Questions which specify the number of answers you want
- Variety is good: so every now and then, work out a different introduction to the study (e.g. a question to introduce a contemporary issue, a pastoral case study or even media clips). Again, the study notes will often include this, but you can always include your own input if you wish.

Step 6: PRAY again

If you can do nothing else, then prayer must underpin your preparations. Pray before you begin, whilst you are preparing, after preparing and during the study!



6. GROUP DYNAMICS

There will be several types of people in your group. Your job is to care for each one and to find ways of including them in appropriate and sensitive ways. Here are a few general “types” of people you may encounter, with some suggestions for how to handle them positively. Remember, the Lord can use “difficult people” to help US to grow!

'Type'	Characteristics	Effect on group	Handling them well
Talkative	Jumps in to answer every question Answers in long monologues	Others don't bother to speak Others tune out or never engage with what's said	Sit next to them and reduce eye contact with them Talk to them privately and ask them to help draw others in
Silent	Rarely speaks or contributes	Group misses out on their valuable input into the study	Ask them beforehand if they would read the passage Give them eye contact & affirm them Split into smaller discussion groups and ask them for feedback
Domineering	Seeks to control the conversation/study	Others feel intimidated or impatient Others are unwilling to contribute	Reduce eye contact If they interrupt, ask them to let the other person finish Ask others to comment on what they've said Ask for contributions from those who haven't spoken yet
Know-it-all	Treats the questions as easy Tends to answer immediately Knows all the 'sound' answers	Group is quiet to avoid sounding ignorant Complex and pastoral issues are over-simplified Younger Christians get confused	Ask them to clarify comments Follow-up with more in-depth questions Get to know them – is it all head knowledge or are they applying it? Perhaps ask them to lead a study!

'Type'	Characteristics	Effect on group	Handling them well
Argumentative	Tends to disagree with anything people say	Group is intimidated or exasperated No one contributes to avoid argument	Avoid being drawn into the argument Ask what others think Talk to them privately about their effect on the group but affirm them (a sign of insecurity?)
Angry	Assumes others' comments are against them Gets easily offended	Others may isolate them Group may even get into arguments or joke about them	Get to know them and find out why they are angry If there is a real issue, apologise! Model constructive and gracious disagreement
Distracting	Goes off the point regularly onto a red-herring or their 'pet subject'	Group gets distracted from the main point You may not get through the whole study	Be sensitive but don't always comment on the contribution. Find a good answer to get everyone back to the passage If there is an issue they need to discuss, ask if you can postpone it to after the study
New Christian	Has a basic knowledge but often shows lack of understanding Comments can seem wrong or irrelevant	Some get exasperated with them and sit in silence Others pounce when a wrong answer is given	Ask what others think, but only if you can be sure they won't pounce on the error! Gently help them to see what the passage really says by asking more questions Be affirming
English as a 2nd language	Sometimes struggles to understand what's being said Tends to be quiet and withdrawn	Group can isolate them or treat them as being less intelligent	Ask clear and easy to understand questions Repeat other contributions in plainer English Encourage them to use the Bible in their own language and to share insights from their own translation Ask how the Bible applies in their culture



Handling Answers That Are Clearly Off Target!

How you do this will obviously depend on the type of person who has answered and the degree of sensitivity that is required. However, here are a few tips:

- Direct them back to the passage with questions like 'What does the passage actually say?'
- Open it up to the group for their take on the answer.
- Play 'devil's advocate' and follow the answer thorough to its logical conclusion.
- Don't be afraid to contradict – while there may often be a range of legitimate answers, it is not the case that all answers are legitimate. There is such a thing as bad interpretation!

7. INTEGRATING NEWCOMERS

One of the joys of Tabs life is the constant flow of new people coming to Penarth and the Tabs family. They bring a wealth of experience and gifts, and have much to give to our community life.

However, this also brings its challenges. Particularly crucial is how we can best integrate them into Small Groups. In all this, we do not want to create bureaucracy for the sake of it! We simply want to find the best small group for each person to join and as far as we can tell, this is the best way to do it. Of course, we are always open to suggestions for improvements to the system.

How The Joining Process Works

1. First Contact: Most join Small Groups after coming to church and being invited along to a group by existing small group members or leaders. We are happy for members to join a small group via this route provided that you let us know (see page 7). This is for the protection of all involved, and so that we know how best to administer the small group system.

2. Application Form: Some people join small groups by a different route. When people ask for membership of the church, they fill in a form which asks them if they are in a small group, and if not would they like to join one. If they answer 'yes' they are allocated to a group by the small group deacon or the pastor as outlined below.

3. Consulting You: If we allocate someone to your group, you will receive their details. When you receive this, please confirm with Cedric Longville within one week whether or not that person can join your group. It would help a great deal if you could explain why you cannot take the person on. It may be that you have no more space, or there are some interpersonal difficulties in your group which makes receiving a new member difficult. Whatever the reason, we will respect your decision, but it is helpful to know why.

4. Your Move: If you accept the newcomer, please make contact within 7 days. He/she will be expecting a leader to get in touch, but will not have been given your name in case there is a reason you cannot accept a new member. If the person is not coming to you, we will need to make alternative arrangements quickly.

As you will realise, this is quite a complex logistical exercise. To help us to help you in the best way we can, please:

- be prompt in replying to our requests
- take the initiative to keep us informed if you have new members or vacancies in your group.

Depending on the size of a room where you meet, the maximum for most Small Groups is 12.

Who Can Join Small Groups?

Tabs Small Groups are for ALL regulars of the church family, whether or not they have joined the membership. We are constantly seeking to encourage every church regular to

be part of some sort of small group. We would also like to allocate people who cannot get to church regularly (because of illness or infirmity) to be associated with a small group who will visit them from time to time, pray for them and help with their pastoral care.



Why only Tabs members?

We usually restrict membership to those who regularly attend Tabs for two important reasons:

- If members are not sitting under the regular teaching at Tabs and sharing in our purposes, problems can arise because of theological differences that lead to unnecessary conflict. We sometimes make exceptions, but this is not the norm.
- Ministers and leaders of other churches can (quite reasonably) become upset if they think we are 'sheep stealing', especially if that church has its own small group system. There would have to be a very good reason

for someone to want to worship at another church, but make use of our small groups resources!

Occasionally people want to stay in Tabs groups even after moving to a different church. There are no hard and fast rules here but you should consult Cedric Longville or Pastor Roger before saying 'yes'. Factors to take into account are the person's reasons for leaving Tabs (if they have left because they are unhappy at Tabs or in conflict with the leadership, then it is inappropriate that they remain in a Tabs small group), whether or not the new church offers small groups and the impact on your group's dynamics. Again, do talk with the Support Team if you are in any doubt about any of this.

How To Help A New Member Settle In To Your Group

Think back to how you felt when you first joined Tabs. How were you treated when you first joined a Small Group? If you've been at Tabs for too long and can't remember how you felt(!), ask new members for their thoughts. Here are some tips:

Before the Small Group meeting...

- If possible, make sure everyone in the group knows in advance when the newcomer is joining (but don't tell everything about them as it can be intimidating to discover they are already 'known') Perhaps ask someone to look after them on the night.
- Arrange to meet the newcomer at church (go out for a meal afterwards?) so you can explain what to expect at your group e.g. meeting times, group members, next Bible study, what they should bring (Bible? Money for meal?), your Mission Partner etc.
- Explain how Bible studies work – all are welcome to comment...but stress that he/she can be silent and observe if he/she wishes.

- Check you have his/her correct contact details (address/phone/email) and check any dietary requirements if you meet for a meal. Ensure they have your name and contact details and all the details for how to find the place where your group meets (address, tel. no. and directions).

During the meeting of the Small Group...

- Perhaps you could meet the newcomer and bring him/her to the venue. Certainly suggest arriving slightly early, to meet others individually as they arrive.
- Keep referring to group members by name, so he/she can learn them.
- Explain “in-jokes” or comments about past group events. Never assume they understand Tabs jargon!
- Ensure he/she’s not left out during the meal or refreshments.
- Encourage the Bible study leader not to direct questions directly at the newcomer and to use names as much as possible.

Prayer time:

- Stress the confidentiality of requests .
- Explain that all may share topics for prayer and pray, but no-one has to.
- If prayer topics relate to previous weeks, summarise the background, if possible.

At the end:

- Try to gauge his/her reaction to the group.
- Clarify when you will see him/her again – try to arrange time to meet them informally perhaps with your co-leader.
- Check if he/she needs a lift to get home.

After the meeting...

- Let other group members (who weren’t there) know he/she has joined the group.
- Keep stressing members’ names at the next Small Group meeting.

What If It Doesn’t Work Out?

If a newcomer fails to show up at the meeting, or comes only once, please do keep in touch with him/her and make contact again before each meeting. If after about two or three months the person still hasn’t attended, or they seem unwilling to join, please do let Cedric or Helen Longville know as soon as possible.

- We will contact the newcomer to ask if he/she still wishes to be part of a group
- We will then let you know whether you should try to maintain contact with them.

Please don’t feel you’ve failed if someone decides not to join your group; there are many different reasons why people decide not to, and often these are not related to the way a group welcomes them.

8. INTEGRATING INTERNATIONALS

We have been privileged at Tabs to have an increasing number of overseas visitors worshipping with us in recent years. Internationals will always need more care than most other group members, especially when they first arrive. A number who have joined Tabs fellowship in the past have testified to their loneliness within their group because they never felt like they belonged. It was as if group leaders and members assumed that their presence as fellow members was enough. But it is not:

- They may struggle with English, especially when it's conversational, fast and in a group setting.
- They don't get the peculiarities of British (or Welsh) culture.
- They may not have any other support (like family) and so expect and need more from their church friends.

The result is that some have left groups, or (as a result of advice from fellow-internationals) not joined them in the first place to avoid disappointment.

WE MUST DO A BETTER JOB
if we are to fulfil the Tabs vision of
Reflecting God's love in our church, community and world



If internationals are to see that Small Groups are the primary place to belong to the Tabs community and to meet people who are not internationals, we will have to work hard to dispel their understandable anxieties and fears.

Becoming More 'International-Aware'

The advice in the previous section on Integrating Newcomers obviously still applies, but extra thought is needed here. Small things like where they sit in the meeting, explaining things in conversations, ensuring everyone welcomes them personally (etc.) are all vital.

- **Socialising:** spending time together outside the formal group time makes a huge difference. How about asking your international member to cook a meal from their home country for the rest of the group if that seems appropriate? They may love doing

that as a way of serving others and feeling that their own culture is affirmed. Having meals together is of HUGE importance. However, some internationals have limited financial means, so be careful not to put people in an embarrassing position, or a position where they feel obligated to take on a meal they can't afford.

- **At Tabs:** make a point of looking out for them at Tabs meetings (like services or the prayer meetings) and introduce them to others you know in the church. Please ensure they are never left marooned and so have to resort to browsing the Resources Centre alone.
- **Language and Culture:** this should go without saying! But please remember that the standard British practice of merely repeating ourselves at a HIGHER volume is not helpful!
 - Speak slowly, avoid (or explain) English idioms and British cultural references.
 - Avoid cultural jokes or (offensive?) generalisations (a common topic of conversation amongst internationals is the sharing of cultural faux pas they have heard!).
- Be sensitive e.g. one of the hardest things about learning a language is not being able to enjoy and make humour. Despite perhaps being a real wit in their mother tongue, internationals can be reduced to the level of school children in a foreign language.



During the Bible Studies: there are a number of specific things to watch out for.

- **Language:** avoid all unexplained Christian jargon (despite having good English, they are unlikely to have learned specifically Christian vocabulary); explain all references to previous studies.
- **Mother-tongue translations:** encourage your internationals to bring their own language Bible version as well as the English one you use. Encourage them to share the insights and questions that arise from their own version. This can be very enriching for everyone in the group.
- **Print out:** perhaps you can print out any additional material you will be using – but this is not recommended as standard practice because it doesn't aid a good interactive discussion.
- **Applications:** be careful to ask how to apply the study lessons in ways that cross cultural boundaries, and also in ways that are specific to our different contexts.

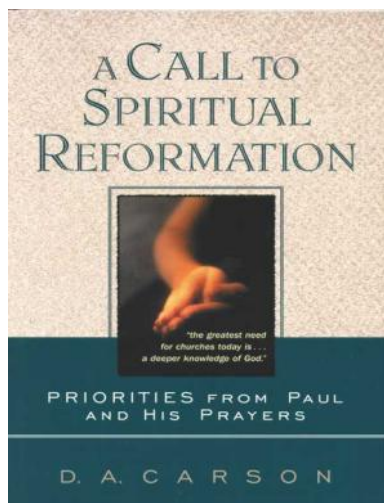
The Privileges Of Integrating Internationals

Having internationals in our groups presents us with wonderful opportunities and is one of the joys of being part of such a diverse church.

- **Deepening Our Own Discipleship:** welcoming the stranger and/or foreigner is a Christian duty (cf 3 John), but it is also a joy. We can learn huge amounts from those who see through our cultural blind spots and share different experiences of the Lord's goodness and gospel. We should regard the extra care needed to integrate internationals as an opportunity for our growth.
- **Broadening Our Horizons:** having international members broadens our horizons far beyond the local and parochial. It helps us to understand better the multicultural realities of many of our big cities and even parts of Cardiff, and be more informed as we pray for places where there is strife or persecution, or where we have sent Mission Partners. You may also make new lifelong friends from countries you would never dream of having any connection with.
- **Training Opportunities:** many internationals are in the UK for a relatively short period of time before they return home (often to take up important or influential jobs). Whether you like it or not and for better or worse, their experience with you will influence how they understand small group life. So see this as an opportunity to train up folks who may have influence in their home churches. How about encouraging them to lead a study every now and then – but ensure that you provide adequate support and help for the preparation. Perhaps suggest meeting up beforehand to go through the study and their questions.
- **Service Opportunities:** encourage your internationals to find areas in the wider church to serve. Many will never offer to do this at what is supposedly a 'British church', unless they are first approached. The list of needs is almost limitless. If a group does this together, even better.
- **Mission Opportunities:** From time to time internationals come to church who have not yet entered a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Maybe they just want to experience our culture more fully, or maybe being away from home is an opportunity to explore the Christian faith (especially if they come from a country where Christianity is persecuted or discouraged) Their lives can be changed forever if they come to faith, possibly through your small group ministry. You can also have a global impact if that person returns home, maybe to a non-Christian culture, as a believer and witness!
- **Future Leaders:** never rule out the possibility that one of your international members is the best future leader of the group. We would love to see more internationals involved in leadership at Tabs, but the reality is that we primarily rely on people like you to 'talent spot'.



9. GROWING THE GROUP IN PRAYER



Prayer is fundamental to the life of a Small Group, both when you meet and in between meetings.

- Feel able to share praises and prayer needs and pray out loud.
- Be committed to pray for one another throughout the week.

None of this will happen without mutual trust. A leader should also model simple, brief and clear prayers that don't intimidate the shy or unsure. Ensure there is sufficient time to pray even if this means cutting the study short.

Handy Hints

Sharing requests

- Initial quiet: a few moments to gather thoughts before launching into requests.
- Don't use requests time as diagnosis time! Get on and pray!
- Model openness and brevity in your own requests.
- Insist on group confidentiality.
- Appoint a 'scribe' who maintains a prayer request book (vital for seeing answers to prayer!). Some groups encourage everyone to take notes – but again, confidentiality is crucial.
- If someone expects to be absent, ask them to send requests in advance.

Prayer topics

- Insist on times of praise. Thank God for answered prayers.
- Pray for your church! Pray for the Pastor! Pray for the Leaders!
- Pray through the application of the passage you've been reading.
- Pray for non-believing friends & family & outreach events at Tabs.
- Pray for your group's Mission Partner.
- Choose a different prayer focus week by week (e.g. an issue in the news or church life).

Praying during the meeting

- Suggest time for praising and thanking God first (it's amazing how quickly people slide into intercession).
- Perhaps for some of the time, get into groups of 2s or 3s. This may encourage the reluctant to pray (perhaps for the more individual/personal things).

Praying between meetings

- Perhaps you could appoint a 'scribe' to send out prayer requests after each meeting (this is especially helpful for those who couldn't be present).
- Keep in touch between group meetings. Encourage members to contact each other to see how events you've prayed for went and find out what else to pray for.
- Encourage members to form prayer triplets to meet at other times of the week.



tabernacle : penarth
purpose : to reflect God's love in our church,
community and world

10. GROWING THE GROUP IN EVANGELISM

Reaching out with the gospel lies at the heart of what it means to be a Christian. Despite our critics, we are not driven by an arrogant sense of superiority or being spiritual 'know-it-alls'. We are clearly far from being omniscient! **No, we reach out because of our overwhelming indebtedness to God for our salvation and our wonder at being incorporated into His future** – so we love people enough to want them to share in both.

There are many ways to evangelise, as individuals and as groups, and to a large extent, how we do this will depend on all kinds of factors, like circumstances, temperament, gifting and training. But above all do not forget this basic reality:

God's church is God's gospel visual aid!

Our culture and world are crying out for authentic relationships and authentic communities but it is tragic that the church is not the first place people think of to find them. In fact, God's people on earth were always intended to be God's visual aid:

“His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Ephesians 3:10-11

So we should never underestimate the power of a Christian community's witness. In fact, your Small Group should be uniquely placed to reach out with authentic community life and witness. Don't be afraid to ask God to use his own visual aid!



Nevertheless, there are important principles for leaders too:

Leaders should model evangelism as we model the whole Christian life

If we are not actively engaged in evangelism ourselves, either we will not encourage others to be, or (if we do) we will rightly be dismissed as hypocrites.

- Consider each area of your life and list the unbelievers you have contact with (friends, colleagues, neighbours, family, regular encounters at the newsagent or the bank etc). If you don't know many why not join a sports club or start a new leisure interest to make new friends?
- Pray for them and for opportunities to befriend them. Pray for gospel opportunities.
- Make time in your diary for these people and love them as friends (not as “targets”).

Leaders should encourage evangelism because we all need challenging in it

- Mentor: to stimulate and support people in their personal evangelism (e.g. giving advice on difficult questions).
- Stimulate: see below for group event suggestions.
- Pray for our evangelism: this keeps it on our own and the group’s agenda.
- Support Tabs evangelistic events: encouraging people to make the most of Guest Speakers, events etc.

Making The Most Of Tabs

Throughout the year there are a number of services and events which are designed to make inviting non-believers easier for you. Our church will only grow significantly if its members bring along their un-saved friends and family! We currently have about 350 people at Tabs, which means in theory we have 350 evangelists. Everyone can give someone an invite to Alpha or a Christmas service:

The Tabs Annual Rhythm

There is a rhythm to the Tabs year which is naturally structured around the major events of the church and school year. It is very helpful if every member of your group understands it, so that they can be informed in their prayers and plan ahead. They should also be encouraged to invite people to these events. When there are leaflets or invites available at Church, make sure you take a few extra to give to your small group members. Maybe you could ask each member to tell the group who they intend inviting, and then keep them accountable to find out if they did?

Autumn	<i>End September: Early October</i>	Back to Church Sunday Alpha Course (for 10 weeks) Harvest Festival Women’s Events
	<i>Late November</i>	Church Anniversary
Christmas	<i>December</i>	Carol Service Crib Service Midnight Communion Christmas Day
Spring	<i>Easter</i>	Good Friday Easter Saturday Vigil Easter Sunday Services
	<i>Sunday after Easter</i>	Memorial Service
Summer	<i>July</i>	Holiday Club Big God Tent
	<i>August</i>	Soul Survivor

How Alpha works

The Alpha course is designed primarily for people who aren't churchgoers and each course is open to everyone who would like to attend.

As a course, Alpha attracts a diverse range of guests of different ages and backgrounds, holding many different viewpoints. Over 7,000 churches are currently running the Alpha course across the UK in rural and urban settings, including every major UK city.

People find out about the Alpha course in a number of ways - a recommendation from a friend, a poster, flyer, newspaper article or advert, or through the website or an internet search.



Alpha

Guests do Alpha for a wide variety of reasons - some want to investigate whether God exists; others are concerned about what happens after death. Some people have particular questions that they would like to discuss; others want to understand other people's beliefs or would like to explore what the purpose of life is. Many guests have never been to church, others may have attended church occasionally but feel they have never really understood the basics of the Christian faith.

Alpha courses are based around small groups of about 12 people, hosted by one or two leaders whose role is to facilitate and encourage discussion.

Courses vary in size, from one small group meeting in a home, to hundreds of people in a larger venue. Some Alpha courses are held over morning coffee or during a lunch hour, most are evening courses, typically lasting 2 hours. Whatever the course size, people tend to remain in the same small groups for the duration of the course so they can get to know each other, continue discussions and deepen friendships.

The whole Alpha course usually lasts for 10 weeks, with a day or weekend away in the middle. Each session begins with a meal or refreshments - a chance to get to know others in the small group. There is then a short talk, which looks at a different aspect of the Christian faith each week. This is followed by a time of discussion in the small groups, where everyone is welcome to contribute their opinion, ask questions and discuss with the rest of the group.

The emphasis is upon exploration and discovery in a relaxed and informal environment. There is no charge for attending the Alpha course.

Organising Your Own Events

There is nothing to stop you planning your own event as a Small Group. In fact, this can do wonders for your group's sense of cohesion, and can make what sometimes feels scary far less intimidating. Why not plan something that leads naturally into a central event at church? Alternatively, could you host an Alpha course in your small group and invite members' family and friends to attend? All the materials are available free of charge from the church office.

Here are some other ideas:

- Combine with one or two other groups to put on joint events: e.g. a wine tasting evening, or something sporty! Like 10 pin bowling.
- Dialogue Suppers: these can be very successful, and many guests actually appreciate the chance to discuss important matters. Friends are invited to a supper at which there will be a very short talk between courses to stimulate discussion. Then see where it goes. Some tips for how to do this well:
 - Ensure that non-Christians are in the majority otherwise it might feel intimidating.
 - Use a speaker from outside your group (e.g. a ministry team member) so that your friends can feel more comfortable about being direct. The speaker takes the flack while you keep your friends (hopefully)!
- Drinks before Tabs events: e.g. a mulled wine party just before the December Carol Service or a special tea after the Crib Service where you can invite your friends and their small children.



11. GROWING DISCIPLES

A disciple is literally 'a learner' – someone who is learning from the Lord Jesus. However, unlike learner drivers, Christian disciples will never shed the 'L' plates, until the day of the Lord's return. We are all making our way in life as people who always have more to learn. The primary qualification of someone who discipled others is that they are a little further along the road!

So what is our hope for each member of our Small Group? In the light of the values of all Tabs groups (outlined at the start), our aim should be for:



- Each one's LIFE to be transformed by TRUTH (Romans 12:2)
- Each one to mature in LOVE for the COMMUNITY (Ephesians 4:15-16)
- Each one to engage his/her WORLD with the GOSPEL (1 Peter 2:9-12)

Notice the way in which Paul's priorities affected how he prayed for people and ministered to them:

"We have not stopped praying for you, asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work..."

Colossians 1:9-10

Notice also from these verses how discipleship starts with the mind, which then transforms a person's will which in turn transforms their lifestyle. So our longing and prayer for each group member is for them to grow in Christian maturity. This is obviously very hard to quantify, but one way to look at it is like this:



So, here are two questions you could ask yourself about each group member:

- Is their knowledge transforming their lifestyle, or remaining as head knowledge?
- Is there a healthy desire to grow both in understanding and in serving the Lord and others?

This chart illustrates how we might be able to identify the different aspects of an individual's road to maturity:

KNOWLEDGE	High	<p>Good Bible knowledge, but...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not applied into daily living, aspirations and attitudes • Can easily be puffed up by knowledge and is in danger of arrogance 	<h1 style="color: red; font-family: cursive;">CHRISTIAN MATURITY</h1>
	Low	<p>Perhaps a new Christian or else spiritually "stuck" and so...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May need spiritual "milk" not "meat." • May need extra friendship, love and encouragement 	
		Low	High
		APPLICATION	

Discipling Others With Integrity

Discipling others involves the positive impact of one life (ours) on another life (theirs). Helping others grow as disciples is as much about who we are as about who they are. Our character, our priorities, our attitudes rub off on group members, whether we like it or not! So it is vital that we are working hard to grow as Christians ourselves, both in terms of deepening our knowledge and extending its application in our lives.

Do our group members see enough of our lives to work out how to imitate us, and so follow Christ? Could we echo these words of Paul to our groups?

"Whatever you have learned, or received, or heard from me, or seen in me, put it into practice."

Philippians 4:9

"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

1 Corinthians 11:1

Our Growth, Their Growth

Here is a helpful checklist of things to look out for, both for ourselves and for our group members:

- Are we clear that the Gospel is all about grace and that we live by grace?

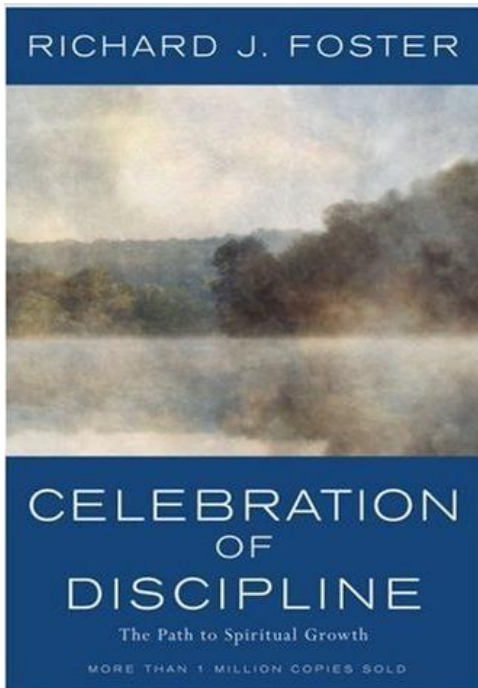
- Are we active in telling others about God's grace?
- Are we seeking to grow spiritually and to cultivate habits to encourage this? (e.g. Bible study, prayer, seeking wise friends etc)
- Are we good stewards, seeking to use all we have (time, money, possessions) for God's glory and the benefit of the wider church?



Hopefully the following are taken as read for you as Small Group leaders. But to what extent do they apply to members of the group?

- Are they committed members of the group and regular attendees at church?
- Have they identified their gifts, and are they looking for opportunities to use them?

Helping Group Members Grow



So what are the things we can do to help this happen? Here are a few simple tips:

- **Be yourself:** don't hide behind masks.
- **Be honest:** be willing to share your struggles with the group, but don't overburden them.
- **Be a friend:** meet with members outside the group time.
- **Use the Bible:** deliberately rely on the Bible's wisdom rather than your own. Point people back to it, even if only in passing remarks.
- **Identify gifts:** help members work out how to use them (perhaps as a group?).
- **Be challenging:** willingness to challenge where necessary is a sign of love so be persistent, patient but gentle.
- **Pray** with them sometimes, pray for them always!
- **Meet up:** perhaps meet every six months to help them set relevant goals and encourage them in growth.
- **1-2-1:** maybe offer to meet one-to-one with someone every few weeks to study the Bible in more depth, but remember the advice on page 37 on meeting one-to-one.
- **Encourage accountability:** perhaps you can help members to start prayer triplets or accountability friendships.

Counting The Cost Of Discipling Others

Growing disciples will of course take time, effort and prayer on our part. We should all know our own limitations and we will all have a variety of different commitments. There will always be only so much that each of us can manage.

However, we all need to come to terms with the fact that all Christian ministry involves sacrifice as we give ourselves to the people for whom we have God-given responsibilities. It is **HARD WORK** but it is **CRUCIAL WORK!** Let's commit ourselves, with Paul, to building for eternity, not just for now.

“For what is our hope, our joy, or the crown in which we will glory in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ when he comes? Is it not you? Indeed, you are our glory and joy.”

1 Thessalonians 2:19-20

12. GROWING THE GROUP IN SERVICE

One of the myths about Tabs is that we are big enough not to need any more help. That couldn't be further from the truth. It is estimated that Tabs needs partners to undertake 225 activities each week, serving coffee, leading worship, doing welcome, looking after children's groups, preparing communion, doing the printing and so on, and so on...

That's a lot of people! However, we do not encourage service simply to get jobs done around the church. Service is a crucial element of a person's spiritual development.



Why Should We Serve?

Throughout the Bible God's people have been marked out as a serving people. We are called to use our gifts to serve one another, the church and the wider community. While work life makes many demands on us, we must set service as a priority by remembering why we serve:

- We serve because of God's great gospel of salvation (Romans 12:1-2)
- We serve because Jesus served (John 13:1-17, Philippians 2:1-11)
- We serve because our Spirit-given gifts are needed by the whole church body (1 Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:1-16)
- We serve because we all grow through service (John 7:16-17, Ephesians 4:16)

Encouraging A Vision For Service

It is estimated that in any church about 20% of the people do about 80% of the work. The difference between a church member and a church partner is that a partner is **committed, connected, pro-active**, and **prepared to take risks** to serve. Helping our group move from one to the other may mean handling some common objections:

"I've got nothing to offer!"

That's simply not true. God has given gifts and talents to each of us. Sometimes, our job as leaders is primarily to grow people's confidence in their God-given abilities.

- **Identifying gifts and talents:** There are plenty of resources (like questionnaires) to help with this. Pastor Roger hopes to run a course early in 2012 called 'God's GPS' to help members identify their gifts, preferences and style.
- **Identifying areas of interest:** If we are doing something we feel passionate about, our service is likely to be much more joyful and committed. So do ask what areas are of personal interest, but don't be restricted by them. Sometimes areas which people never even considered before could be just the right thing!
- **Identifying time and availability:** Time is always precious in the modern world so

be realistic. But don't be afraid to challenge and stretch people: is our use of time always the most productive? In the end, the issue is often not a lack of willingness to serve, but having life priorities that are not in line with kingdom priorities.

“I don't know what to do!”

There are **always** service opportunities in a church like Tabs:

- Our small groups will only function when members serve one another.
- Our church will only function through the service of its partners.
- Our communities will only be impacted if we are willing to serve them.

Encourage each group member to work out what the different areas of need are, and about where (not 'if!') they could serve. Perhaps you could consider it on 4 different levels:

Serving in the **Small Group**

Serving in the **Church**

Serving in the **Local Community**

Serving in the **World**

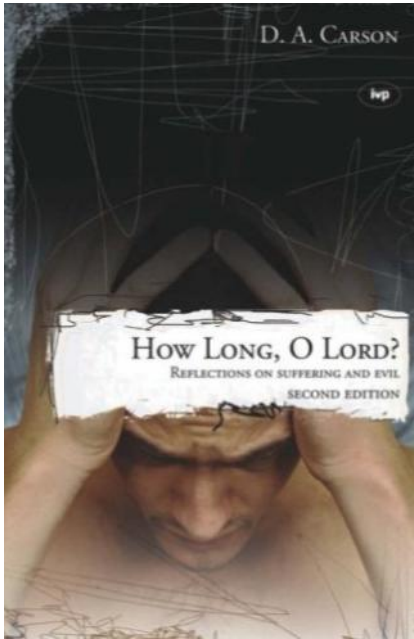
To give an idea of the sorts of areas that need help, here is a brief (and certainly not exhaustive) list:

- Children's and youth ministry on Sunday
- Children's and youth ministry mid-week
- Welcome teams
- Stewarding
- P.A. and projection systems
- Serving coffee
- Preparing Communion
- Maintenance team
- Helping run Alpha
- Receptionists

“I don't know how to go about it!”

Small Group leaders should be the first port of call for dealing with this. You can be sure that there will be some area of service for everyone. As a small group leader you will hopefully know your members well, know their gifting and preferences, and be able to pray with them as they seek their place in serving the wider church. Think creatively and be pro-active in identifying how we can serve. Remember: we can serve as individuals, as a small number of friends, or even as a whole group. How about taking on a project that you can do together as a Small Group?

13. PROVIDING PASTORAL CARE



Pastoral care is a huge subject, but Small Groups are often the first place where someone's difficulties come to light. A member may approach you or someone else directly about something. Their mood or repeated absences may also indicate that all is not well.

Realistically, pastoral issues are best dealt with in one-to-one situations not in the group. This should be handled thoughtfully and prayerfully. The important thing to realise at the outset is that you are not on your own in this ministry, even if you find yourself as the first port of call. You are part of a wider Tabs pastoral team who are here to support you as you support others. Your first port of call for help and advice is Pastor Roger, to whom you can always speak in confidence.

It hopefully goes without saying, but never arrange a one-to-one with a person of the opposite sex. Specific circumstances may make it unavoidable, or you may have professional expertise and thus follow professional procedures, (e.g. if you are a doctor). However, this is the exception not the norm.

Pastoral Situations Which May Arise

Be sensitive to what people are dealing with, and take note of signs of stress or difficulties hinted at by prayer requests, answers in studies and general demeanour.

A gentle word or specific question may be all that is needed to show support. But sometimes, of course, things will be more serious.

There are three broad areas of pastoral situations that you may encounter. However, there will of course usually be overlap:

- **Spiritual:** Someone may be experiencing a period of spiritual dryness and finding Christian life difficult, or may be battling with doubts and besetting sins. Perhaps prayer is very infrequent or a sense of joy and purpose has disappeared.
- **Practical:** There may be a practical problem they face (e.g. illness, financial or unemployment) or they may have experienced some change in their lives.
- **Emotional:** Bereavement, relationship break-up, coping with their life situation, some forms of depression.



The degree of seriousness, of course, will vary as will how you should respond.

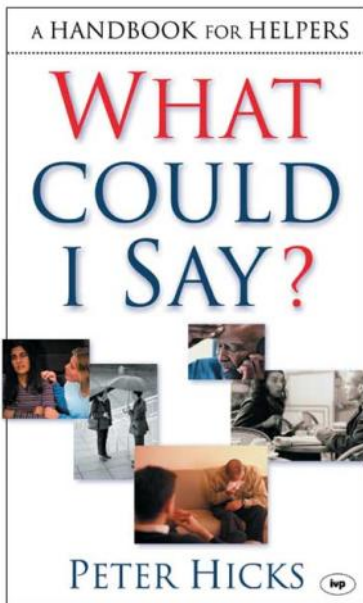
Responding To Pastoral Issues

Pray! Whatever the situation you will need wisdom. Pray with your co-leader (but only share details if appropriate and you have permission) and seek it from the sovereign wisdom-giver.

- **Listen!** What is the heart of the issue for this person? Let them tell the story or explain the situation in their own time and in their own way.
- **Keep on listening!** It is so easy to get impatient and jump in too quickly. People are often not looking for solutions immediately but just want someone to hear what they have to say. Please be aware that it can take some time before the person has decided whether or not they can trust you – you may not get the whole story the first time you meet.
- **Discern!** This is a crucial stage in helping anyone: make sure that they are seeing the appropriate person. The sorts of issues you need to be considering are:
 - Am I the right person for this situation? There is always the danger that you offer what you can't deliver. Don't allow the person to become solely and overly dependent on you.
 - Give assurances of confidentiality, but make sure they understand that some things may need to be taken further.
 - Do I (realistically) have the time to do more than simply be a friend and support?
 - Can your Small Group do anything to help? But be sure you have permission before you share anything with others!
 - Should they be referred to a member of the ministry team or even professional help? There are people with specific professional expertise around who can help. Roger will guide you in this.

If you think that it is right for you to be the main person:

- Don't knee-jerk into a response. Quite often someone just listening well is all that is required.
- Find out what they have done to help themselves.
- Be sure to bring Biblical insight into what you are advising.
- If something is a matter of inappropriate lifestyle issues, never be judgemental but be clear on what the Bible does say. Ask Cedric or Helen or Pastor Roger for advice.
- Always remember that it took courage to speak to you in the first place.



What Next?

Don't allow things to be left hanging in mid-air. Consider what action you should take to follow-up. If you refer them on to someone else, it is wise to check that they have taken that step. If you haven't referred them on, what follow-up would be appropriate? Make sure you are not drawn into a prolonged series of meetings. That would be a strong indication that the person needs more expert support. This is obviously the briefest of introductions to this area of ministry. Do read around various subjects. Many have found Peter Hicks 'What could I say?' (IVP) particularly helpful.

14. SUPPORTING MISSION PARTNERS

Tabernacle has many Mission Partners around the world; some well known to us—others only known to us through the organisations we support such as Tearfund or BMS World Mission. Our desire is that each small group should 'adopt' one missionary, overseas worker of organisation for regular prayer, contact and support. Your group may already have a mission partner, but if you don't, contact Jeanette Minns who will be delighted to put you in touch with someone! Your group might also like to consider sponsoring a child overseas through an agency such as Compassion UK. This is a long term financial commitment, but would be a very small monthly amount if most of the members of a small group joined in.

The Mission Partner Link

Appoint one member to be the Mission Partner link person (to co-ordinate communications and support). Perhaps this person could be the one you are grooming to take over the group one day! The Mission Partner link will be responsible for:

- Receiving regular newsletters and sharing news and 2 or 3 prayer requests at each Small Group.
- Writing to the Mission Partner as regularly as they can manage.
- Ensuring that every six months or so, your group focuses more time on hearing about and praying for your Mission Partner.
- Obviously if they are visiting or live near Penarth, invite them to attend! Arrange a Sunday lunch or another get-together, if they cannot make your regular meeting time.

Please remember:

Be aware of sensitivities

When you communicate with your Mission Partner you may need to edit out specifically Christian words or phrases if they would place the partner in danger. If in doubt, consult Jeanette Minns

Respect Confidentiality

Your partner may not want the whole church to know what they ask your small group to pray for, so check first!

Supporting Your Mission Partner

Communicate!

- Write letters or e-mails: either individually or as a group (perhaps you could even pass an airmail letter round during the meeting). Even a postcard is very much appreciated!
- Record a CD/mp3 of messages from the group.
- Occasional Skype/phone calls: these mean more than we can say. Beware time differences!
- Send news of what is going on in the UK, Tabernacle, the group, your own life. The church newsheet, newspapers, photos all keep them connected to you and UK life.

Pray!

- Pray for your Mission Partner each time you meet, just as you would for every member even when they are absent.
- Pray for practical things (e.g. adapting to local culture, finances, language, building relationships, health and safety), but also for their spiritual strength and growth (e.g. spiritual vitality, loneliness, gospel confidence, facing opposition).

Serve!

- Send an occasional parcel (e.g. newspapers and magazines, books, chocolate, sermon CDs). But check first what is appropriate (especially if food or explicitly Christian materials).
- Think of ways to show care to the Mission Partner's family left behind. How about a Christmas card? Or a note just after the Mission Partner leaves?
- A personal visit from someone in your group may be appropriate and helpful. However, remember this may need to be sensitively suggested and co-ordinated with the Mission Partner. Check with Jeanette first.
- Whilst we give some financial help to our Mission Partners from church funds there may be ways the Small Group could help with a specific item or project.

On their return to the UK:

- Take the initiative to meet with them when they return, to listen to their experiences and to give them an opportunity to share appropriately with the group.
- Be aware of the issues they may face culturally, emotionally and spiritually as they return.
- Practical support: Do they need to be met at the airport? To borrow a car for a few weeks? Accommodation? Financial costs incurred as they return?

Supporting Mission Partners based in the UK:

Obviously if your Mission Partner is UK-based some of this will not apply! However, never underestimate the need for a place for fellowship and prayer outside of their work situation. Remember too that you have more opportunities to help practically: one Small Group, for example, undertook to re-decorate the Mission Partner's flat.



15. GETTING AWAY FROM IT ALL

Why Run A Group Weekend Away?

Here's what one leader had to say:

"Small Group night is one big rush. You rush to get there, and start on time. It comes to 8 o'clock, and you're hoping people will stop sharing so the study can start. The Bible study starts, and you get side-tracked...it's all very interesting, but you don't have time to cover the topic. The study goes on for longer than you expected and, so you rush the prayers. Someone raises a special prayer need, and you say to yourself, 'if only I had more time'."



The solution is get away! It can be very beneficial for:

- Growing community life – weekends give the chance to integrate new members and for everyone to get to know one another better.
- Biblical knowledge and faith – a weekend provides the time for 2 or 3 studies. You can cover a number of topics that have come up in your group or perhaps a short book of the Bible. You have much more flexibility and space to let discussions flow.
- Prayer support – an unhurried prayer time together is a real treat. As well as the obvious advantages from praying for one another, your sense of mutual dependence will have been deepened when you get home.

Suggestions For Planning A Weekend Away

- Get out of Penarth to give you a real break (but not too far or you'll waste time travelling). CCI UK have a helpful website for finding venues (www.cci.org.uk). Centreparks at Longleat is relatively close, and the prices compare well with some

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Christian retreat centres! (Don't forget the Humphreys' new retreat centre near Brecon).

- Book well in advance: both the date with your group AND the accommodation.
- Subsidise: Work out a reduced rate for students/unemployed etc.
- Getting there: Ensure all have transport and share phone numbers in case of problems.
- Timetable: Draw up a rough timetable for the weekend, so everyone knows your plans.
- Aim to have no more than 2 or 3 studies, plus time for extended prayer for one another.
- Build in free time together (e.g. a walk or a drive, a video).
- Don't try to do too much but allow some time for things to go on longer than planned.
- Food: Keep the cooking quick and simple (or you'll run out of time to do much else!) Consider going out for a cheap meal (although this may need sensitive handling if there are members in difficult financial circumstances).
- Delegation: Allocate jobs (e.g. buying food, cooking, washing up, cleaning) or devise a rota.
- Combine with another group to make up numbers and share costs and lifts
- Pray: For it to deepen the group's discipleship and sense of community, as well as for logistics.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The Bible: Our Living Word

New Bible Commentary
New Bible Dictionary
Dig Deeper
How To Read The Bible For All Its Worth
Understanding The Bible
Leading Better Bible Studies
God's Big Picture

Wenham, Motyer, Carson & France
Marshall, Millard, Wiseman & Packer
Beynon & Sach
Fee & Stuart
John Stott
K. & R. Morris
Vaughan Roberts

Truth: Renewing our minds

Know The Truth
Knowing God
The Cross Of Christ
At The Heart Of The Universe
Cross-Examined
Evangelical Truth

Bruce Milne
J. I. Packer
John Stott
Peter Jensen
Mark Meynell
John Stott

Holiness: our Christian Lives

The Pursuit Of The Holy
A Call To Spiritual Reformation
Ordering Your Private World
Holiness
The Pursuit Of Holiness
Transforming Grace
You Can Change
The Contemporary Christian
Issues Facing Christians Today

Simon Ponsonby
D. A. Carson
G. MacDonald
J. C. Ryle
Jerry Bridges
Jerry Bridges
Tim Chester
John Stott
John Stott

The Message : Reaching Out

The Universe Next Door
Know And Tell The Gospel
If You Could Ask God One Question
Can Man Live Without God?
Christianity Explored
The Reason For God
Turning Points

James Sire
John Chapman
Williams & Cooper
Ravi Zacharias
Tice & Cooper
Timothy Keller
Vaughan Roberts

Church: Our Community Life

God's New Community
The Living Church
Foreign To Familiar

Graham Beynon
John Stott
Sarah A. Lanier

Relationships:

The Single Issue
The 60 Minute Marriage
The 60 Minute Father
Married For God

Al Hsu
Rob Parsons
Rob Parsons
Christopher Ash

tabernacle : penarth

purpose : to reflect God's love in our church,
community and world

Love: Our Pastoral Care

Out Of The Storm
How Long O Lord?
I Had A Black Dog
A Thorn In The Flesh
Tracing The Rainbow
What Could I Say?
D Is For Depression
One-to-One: A Discipleship Handbook

Christopher Ash
D. A. Carson
Matthew Johnstone
Pablo Martinez
Pablo Martinez
Peter Hicks
Michael Lawson
Sophie de Witt

Service: Our Practical Help

Ministries Of Mercy:
Good News To The Poor
Good News About Injustice
Don't Waste Your Life

Tim Keller
Tim Chester
Gary Haugen
John Piper

Growing: Caring For Ourselves

The Contemplative Pastor
Surviving The Anointing
Second Chance
Celebration of Discipline
A radical Encounter With God

Eugene Peterson
Leonard Ravenhill
R. T. Kendall
Richard Foster
Greg Haslam