



Stepping Stones

Roy Dorey (First published in the 1990s; updated 2015)



Unlock style activities and Bible reflections for churches

Stepping Stones

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This material was originally developed by Roy Dorey in London in the 1990s. It was updated and redesigned in 2015 with support from Karoly Haasz.



Stepping Stones

Stepping Stones - Introduction

A programme for those who are associating themselves with the church, and who wish to identify, explore, extend and affirm basic beliefs and practice.

For a group of not less than six, and not more than eighteen, meeting in a room big enough to take the group, plus a flipchart and one or two trainers.

The assumption is that all present will listen and respond to each other, and that the trainers will help this to happen. If that is not a reasonable assumption for the group you want to work with you may want to use some other Unlock materials with them first, see

www.unlock-urban.org.uk/resources.php

POSSIBLE THEMES

God, Jesus, The Holy Spirit, The Church, Prayer, Worship.

The 'Stepping Stones' approach can also be used with more abstract ideas once a group has got used to this way of working. These could include:

Justice, Love, Forgiveness, Suffering, Hope, Death.



Stepping Stones

Stepping Stones is more an approach to facilitating learning than a course. The content can be varied, and included in the notes on Page 3 are twelve suggestions which cover a range of themes. You can add your own, and adapt the material.



As a method it depends upon the group being willing to work on what are seen at first as 'churchy' issues, but which develop into 'how we live'. What is not required is a wish for abstract thinking, or a lot of formal churchy knowledge.

The basis of the method is to *start with the material that the group provides in **Step One***. It then moves on to work out with them where those beliefs come from (**Step Two**). Both of these steps take seriously what people already bring to the group in understanding and experience, and should be worked through in a way that affirms them. It is important to draw in everyone and encourage them to take part.



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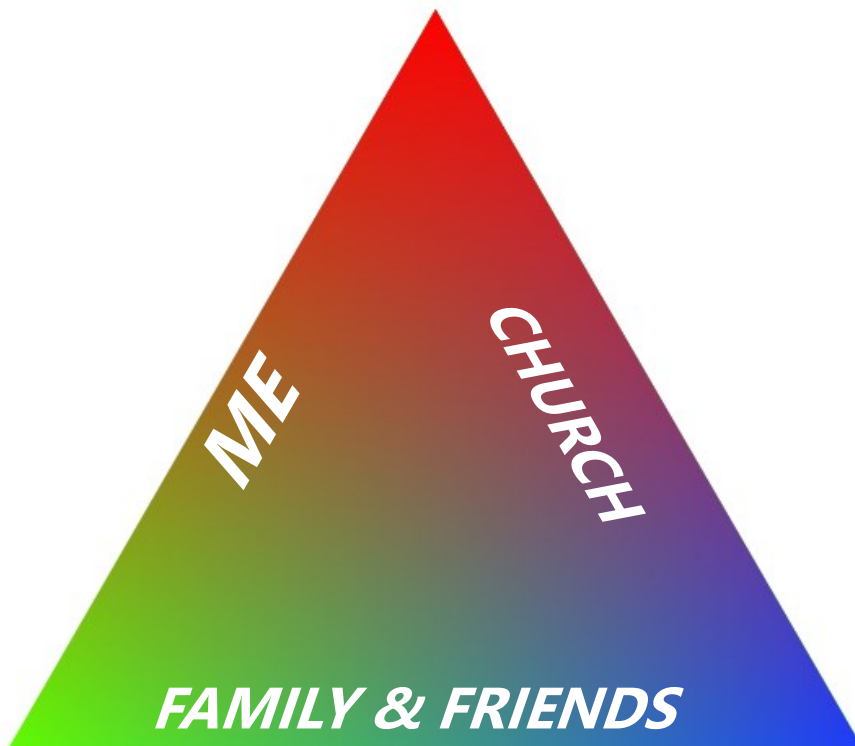
Stepping Stones - Method

Step Three gets them *to think about one of the stories of Jesus or about Jesus*. It is for the facilitator to choose the passage that is likely to be most useful to the group. Do not use any of the teaching passages in the Letters. A story from the Acts or from one of the Prophets occasionally may be useful as supplementary material. As a facilitator you are not wanting to teach them the whole of the Bible. You are wanting them to make sense of, and learn from the words and life of Jesus.

Step Four makes *the link between what we believe, in an abstract way, and how we let that work out in our lives*. The three aspects of this, displayed on the triangle, are not separate, and overlap so much that although they work on them separately the material produced will often be similar. Encourage practical responses, not abstract ones.

Step Five takes the previous work done in Step Four seriously, and is the beginning of *an agenda to work towards*. It must be a varied gender and not the trainer's. Although in the outline it is the shortest section, it is the continuing part of the training programme.

The time taken for each step is not easy to predict. It should be possible to work through all the steps in three weeks, but it may take a little longer. *The process* of the course is more important than the outcome, although *the outcome* should provide an 'action plan' for the immediate future.



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Step 3.

Explain that the stories of Jesus are always important to us.

- Read aloud The story of the man born blind on pages 8-11. You can give out copies to those who would like them.
- Divide the larger group into two. Each group works for 15 min on:
Group 1. What the Pharisees thought about God.
Group 2. What the healed person thought about God.

They then return prepared to tell their findings to the others.

- Allow time for them to tell the others what they have got from the story, with the facilitator stimulating discussion across the groups as necessary. Affirm the lessons learned.
- Change direction in the discussion, asking them to work now in the



large group on what the story tells them about Jesus. Write this up on the flipchart.

- Reflect on the different kinds of beliefs about God they have contributed.



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John 9:1-41 - Jesus Heals a Man Born Blind

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been born blind. His disciples asked him, "Teacher, whose sin caused him to be born blind? Was it his own or his parents' sin?"

Jesus answered, "His blindness has nothing to do with his sins or his parents' sins. He is blind so that God's power might be seen at work in him. As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me; night is coming when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light for the world."

After he said this, Jesus spat on the ground and made some mud with the spittle; he rubbed the mud on the man's eyes and told him, "Go and wash your face in the Pool of Siloam." (This name means "Sent.") So the man went, washed his face, and came back seeing.

His neighbours, then, and the people who had seen him begging before this, asked, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?"

Some said, "He is the one," but others said, "No he isn't; he just looks like him."

So the man himself said, "I am the man."

"How is it that you can now see?" they asked him.

He answered, "The man called Jesus made some mud, rubbed it on my eyes, and told me to go to Siloam and wash my face. So I went, and as soon as I washed, I could see."

"Where is he?" they asked.

"I don't know," he answered.

The Pharisees Investigate the Healing

Then they took to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. The day that Jesus made the mud and cured him of his blindness was a Sabbath. The Pharisees, then, asked the man again how he had received his sight. He told them, "He put some mud on my eyes; I washed my face, and now I can see."





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Some of the Pharisees said, "The man who did this cannot be from God, for he does not obey the Sabbath law."

Others, however, said, "How could a man who is a sinner perform such miracles as these?" And there was a division among them.

So the Pharisees asked the man once more, "You say he cured you of your blindness—well, what do you say about him?"

"He is a prophet," the man answered.

The Jewish authorities, however, were not willing to believe that he had been blind and could now see, until they called his parents and asked them, "Is this your son? You say that he was born blind; how is it, then, that he can now see?"

His parents answered, "We know that he is our son, and we know that he was born blind. But we do not know how it is that he is now able to see, nor do we know who cured him of his blindness. Ask him; he is old enough, and he can answer for himself!" His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities, who had already agreed that anyone who said he believed that Jesus was the Messiah would be expelled from the synagogue. That is why his parents said, "He is old enough; ask him!"

A second time they called back the man who had been born blind, and said to him, "Promise before God that you will tell the truth! We know that this man who cured you is a sinner."

"I do not know if he is a sinner or not," the man replied. "One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I see."

"What did he do to you?" they asked. "How did he cure you of your blindness?"

"I have already told you," he answered, "and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Maybe you, too, would like to be his disciples?"

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Stepping Stones - Bible



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They insulted him and said, "You are that fellow's disciple; but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses; as for that fellow, however, we do not even know where he comes from!"

The man answered, "What a strange thing that is! You do not know where he comes from, but he cured me of my blindness! We know that God does not listen to sinners; he does listen to people who respect him and do what he wants them to do. Since the beginning of the world nobody has ever heard of anyone giving sight to a person born blind. Unless this man came from God, he would not be able to do a thing."

They answered, "You were born and brought up in sin—and you are trying to teach us?" And they expelled him from the synagogue.

Spiritual Blindness

When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man and asked him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

The man answered, "Tell me who he is, sir, so that I can believe in him!"

Jesus said to him, "You have already seen him, and he is the one who is talking with you now."

"I believe, Lord!" the man said, and knelt down before Jesus.

Jesus said, "I came to this world to judge, so that the blind should see and those who see should become blind."

Some Pharisees who were there with him heard him say this and asked him, "Surely you don't mean that we are blind, too?"

Jesus answered, "If you were blind, then you would not be guilty; but since you claim that you can see, this means that you are still guilty."



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Stepping Stones - Conclusions

Step 4.

If we believe in ... then ... it should make a difference to how we live.

- a. Demonstrate 'not believing in gravity' by tying something to the table, in case it floats off. A book is easiest.
- b. Put up the sheet for [1.b.] and ask if they would want to change anything.



- If they do, then add in the changes. Do not remove anything, but put it in brackets if people are saying they want to change it.
- c. Put up a sheet with a three-sided triangle. One side is marked 'Me', another is marked 'Church', and the third is marked 'Family and Friends'.
 - d. Divide into three groups and each group takes one of the three as their work to do. They work for 20 min on 'If I believe XXX about God then it affects [Me, the Church, my Family and Friends] in this way.
 - e. When they come back they are asked to tell the others what they have decided. (Encourage them to write it up alongside their side of the triangle.)
 - f. Agree one target for each side of the triangle.

Step 5.

What kind of help does the group need to make this happen?

- a. How can the group help itself?
- b. What can the church do to help?
- c. Pray together for the help and courage to put this into practice.

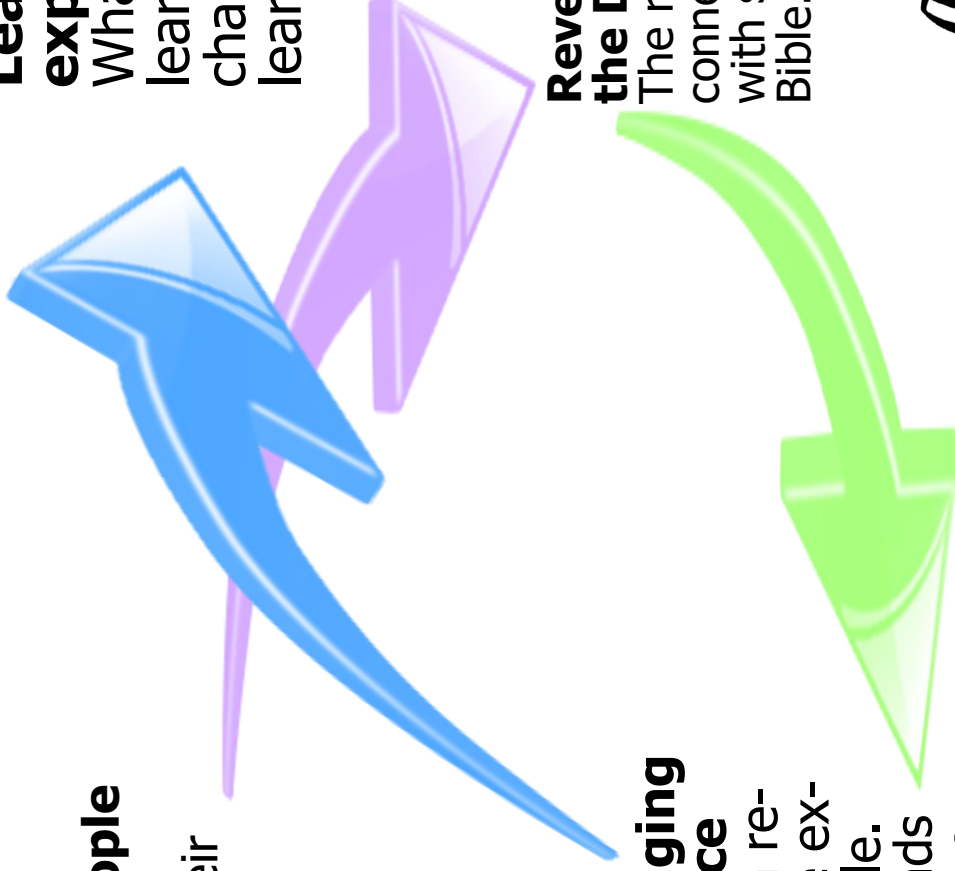


The Unlock Learning Cycle

Unlocking real life stories of urban people
Start with the group telling stories from their real life experience.

Leading to more experience

What we learn now is learnt for life and changes us. We also learn to keep reflecting!



Releasing life changing skills and confidence
Change happens as a result of linking real life experience with the Bible. This change often leads to action among others.

Revealing Good News of the Down to Earth Christ
The real life stories are connected to and compared with similar situations in the Bible.



Unlock uses an approach to engaging with the Bible that is different to traditional Bible studies (see page 13). Unlock's approach starts from the stories and experiences of group members, whereas a more traditional approach starts from the Biblical text. Unlock's approach has been found to work well with small groups of urban, oral learners from outside of the church. There are many free resources on the Unlock website designed for use with such groups. However, because each of these resources was designed for a particular group in a particular time and place they are unlikely be a perfect fit for your group as they stand. They are offered more as inspiration to you to design your own materials along the same lines, rather than as ready to use packages.

Unlock usually works with people outside of church who may be interested in finding out a bit more about faith but perhaps are not attracted to the formal methods of learning often associated with church. Our work is based on a reflective learning cycle and is a tried and tested way of introducing people to the Bible in a non-threatening way. Many churches have activities that draw in members of their surrounding community but then struggle with how to move on from those relationships into exploring faith, especially in urban environments where anything formal might be treated with suspicion.

This resource was Developed by Roy Dorey, originally for use in London, and was updated and reissued by the Unlock Office in 2015.

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