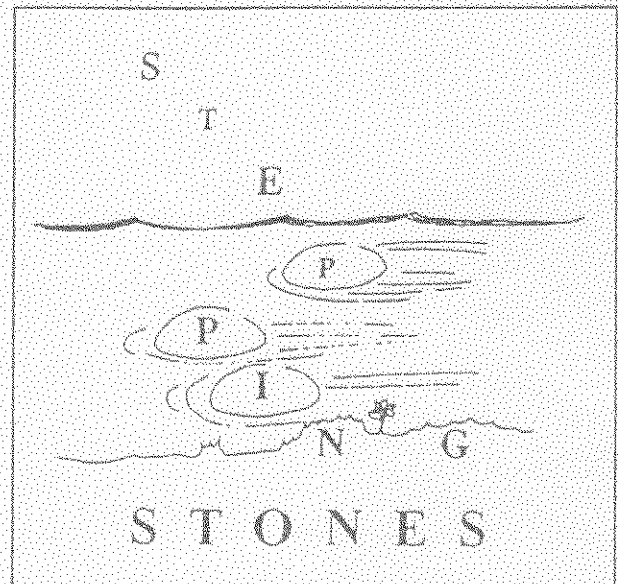
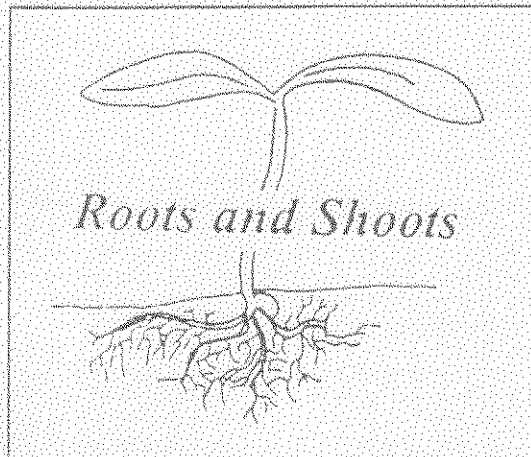
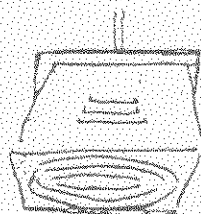


# PICK AND MIX



Spotlight  
on  
Choices



A pack of 3 different outlines

For you to create your own Bible studies  
with topics of interest to the group or church

by Roy Dorey



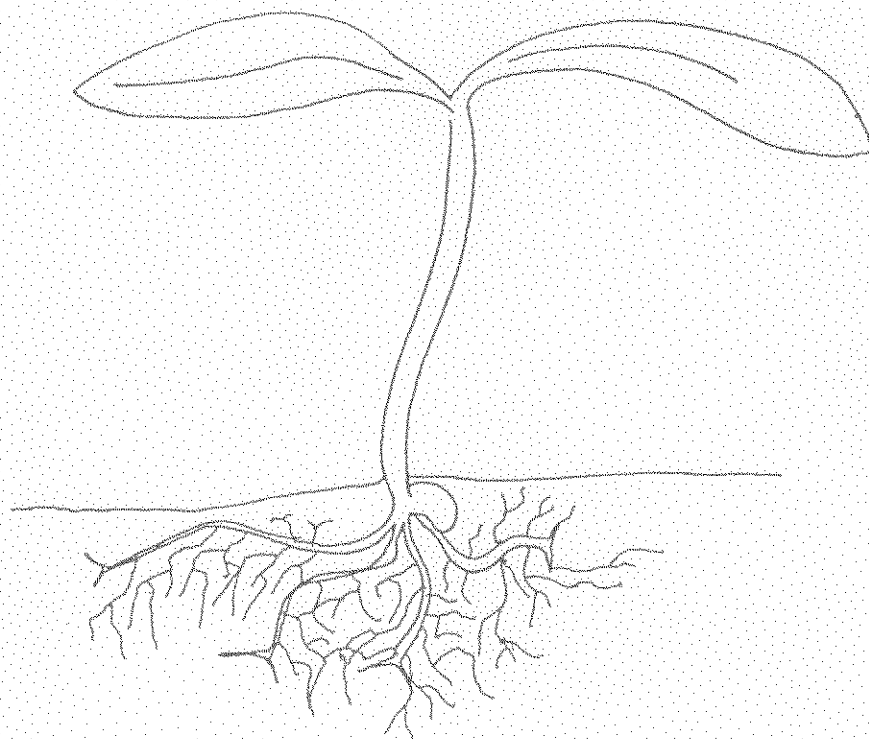
Unlock House,

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# *Roots and shoots*

*A day course in looking at what God wants  
to tell you about you and your community.*



This course helps people look at their own experience, and at the locality in which they live, and then to examine them with insights from a Bible passage.

It is designed to be used with a group which come from two churches, but can be adapted for use with a group from one or three churches. There does need to be about eight or more from each church present.

The size of the group dictates the way in which the course is run. It should not be less than eight [all from one church], but the course has been run with over fifty people taking part from two churches. It is planned to run for six hours, including breaks.

Different passages from the Bible can be used. One example is used in the outline of the course and a list of other possible passages is given at the end.

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## BEGINNING WORSHIP

*15 minutes.* Led by someone who is used to leading worship with the group. It should focus on God and His care for His people.

## EXPLANATION OF THE DAY

*10 minutes* The course leader explains:  
The difference between growing cress on a damp cloth on a saucer and how a tree grows.  
The first gives quick results, very visible, but has few roots. The second takes longer, but puts down deep roots that sustain it.  
Working for church growth always presents the dilemma of...

## GROWTH WITH ROOTS

## EXERCISE

*20 minutes* To look at our own roots.  
In groups of three, to include people from more than one church if it is a joint church event.  
Each person is given a piece of A4 paper and told to write down:  
Where I was born  
Where I live now  
Where I first started to understand about Jesus.  
E.g. Watford. Hackney. Through a friend at mother and toddlers.

The small groups then discuss together what they have written. The papers are then either put up on a wall or in a place where the groups can all look at them during the day.

## BIBLE STUDY

- 5 minutes* Introduction by the course leader.  
The Bible passage is [e.g.] John 13 vv. 2 - 17.
- 20 minutes* In groups of not more than eight, to include people from more than one church, if present.  
Look at the passage and work together to identify:  
The need Jesus was meeting.  
The action Jesus took.  
The words Jesus said.
- 40 minutes* Feedback from the total group about what the groups discovered, taking each of the three in turn and allowing ten minutes for each.  
Record on a flipchart a sheet of 'Needs', a sheet of 'Actions' and a sheet of 'Words'. Put the sheets up for everyone to see.  
As you go along get the small groups to talk to each other, and develop discussion.  
Point out things that are the same, and things that are different.  
If you do not understand a response ask them to explain it further.  
Affirm all the responses given.  
Use the last ten minutes to put the three together in a way that the group can affirm.

## PRAYER TOGETHER

- 15 minutes* To affirm our experiences and understanding so far.

## A BREAK FOR FOOD

- 45 minutes* During this time people can look at each other's 'Roots biographies'.

## OUR LOCALITY

'Locality' can mean the area the church is in, where people live, or whatever has meaning for the group.

*20 minutes* In groups of about eight, all from one church, work together on:

'What is good about our locality?

*20 minutes* The leader then tells them to change the direction of their discussion and work together on:

'What needs are there in our locality?'

Form new groups, and if more than one church is present put all the people from a particular church in one group, however big it is. Also if more than one church is present appoint as leader for each group someone from another church present. If only one church is present divide the group into two smaller groups.

*30 minutes* Work on producing a poster, preferably with drawings rather than a lot of words, which applies the 'Words' and 'Actions' from the Bible study to the needs of the locality.

## BREAK FOR A COLD DRINK

*15 minutes* This is a time to look at each others posters.

## MAKING AN AGENDA

Have all the people in a total group.

*30 minutes* Work with them to put together a possible agenda for each church to consider. This means that they evaluate what they have done... Is it realistic, are others doing this, have we got it right. Also they prioritise what they have identified as needs... This is most important, this is very urgent, this is something we can do and get visible results from.

Leave the agenda fluid, not trying to tie people down too much. It is for the church to follow through its own agenda. The aim is to get them to commit themselves to working out the agenda before God.

## RESOURCES FOR ACTION

Keep the same total group.

*30 minutes* Work with them to look at what is needed to take action, and where the resources can be found. Help them to think in terms of 'resource driven' 'need driven' and 'ideas driven' approaches. Nothing will be concluded, but again the aim is to get them to commit themselves to being realistic and perhaps radical about resources.

## TIME FOR PRAYER

*20 minutes* Open prayer from the group, being responsive to the day and each other, and sensitive to the things God is trying to say to the church.

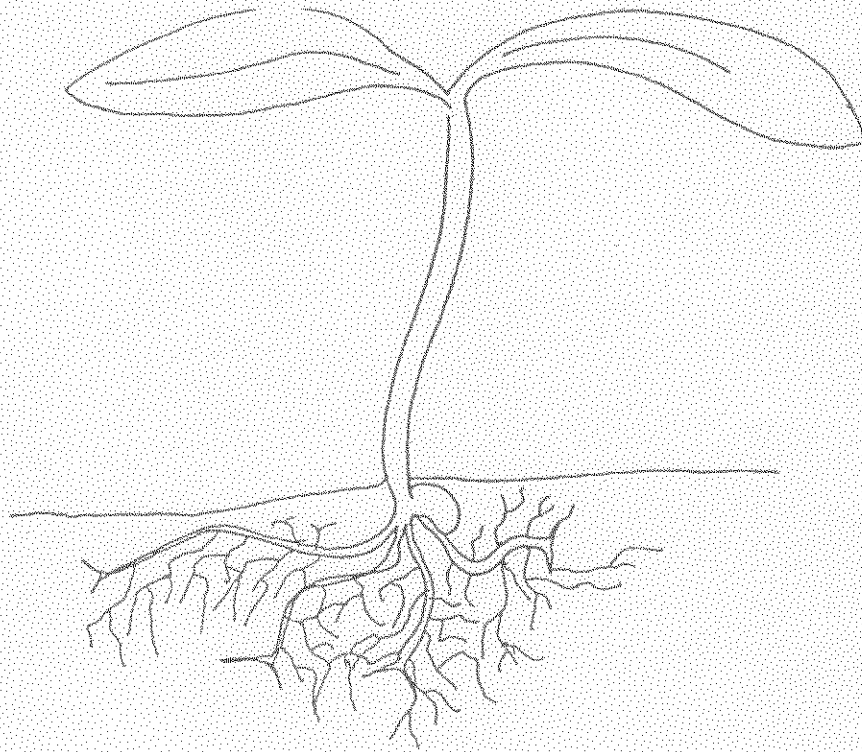
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## SUGGESTED BIBLE PASSAGES

John 2 13 - 25	Clearing out the temple.
John 3 1 - 21	Nicodemus visits Jesus.
John 4 4 - 26	The Samaritan woman.
John 5 1 - 15	The man at Bethesda Pool.
John 8 1 - 11	The woman taken in adultery.
John 9 1 - 16	The man born blind.
John 11 32 - 44	Lazarus is brought back from the dead.
John 13 2 - 17	Jesus washes the disciples feet.

# *Roots and shoots*

*A course in three sessions looking at what God wants to tell you about you and your community*



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This course helps people look at their own experience, and at the locality in which they live, and to examine them with insights from a Bible passage.

It is designed to be used with a small group who are prepared to participate by sharing their experiences. Each of the three sessions lasts between one and one-and-a-half hours, depending on the way the leader guides it. Approximate times are given.

Different passages from the Bible can be used. One example is used in the outline of the course and a list of other possible passages is given at the end. Sessions two and three can be repeated with different Bible passages.

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## *Session One*

### EXPLANATION

*10 minutes*     *The course leader explains:*  
The difference between growing cress on a damp cloth on a saucer and how a tree grows.  
The first gives quick results, very visible, but has few roots. The second takes longer, but puts down deep roots that sustain it.  
Christian growth must always work towards genuine growth with roots in the life of the community.

### EXERCISE

*20 minutes*     To look at our own roots.     In pairs.  
Each person is given a piece of A4 paper and told to write down:  
Where I was born.  
Where I live now.  
Where I first started to understand about Jesus.  
E.g.     Bermondsey.     Camberwell.     Sunday school, Bermondsey.

*15 minutes*     As a total group:  
The papers are put up where they can be seen by the whole group.  
The total group then discusses together what they have written.

*15 minutes*     *The leader explains:*  
Something must have attracted them to the Lord Jesus. Sometimes it was the freshness of how it was put across, or perhaps He seemed to meet a need at that time. Discussion is then developed.

### END OF THE MEETING

*5 minutes*     *Group leader says:*  
We have looked at some of the roots of our faith. There are some similarities. There are differences. Next time we will take it a step further.



## *Session Two*

### EXPLANATION

*10 Minutes.* The course leader explains:

We looked at the roots of our faith, and explained to each other the way in which Jesus began to become a real person to us. The guide book on Jesus is the Bible, especially the New Testament. We are going to look at one passage, concentrating on what Jesus did and said.

### BIBLE STUDY

*5 minutes* Introduced by the course leader:

The Bible passage is [e.g.] John 13 vv. 2 - 17.

*20 minutes* In 'threes', look at the passage and work together to identify:

- a. The need Jesus was meeting.
- b. The action Jesus took.
- c. The words Jesus said.

All the 'threes' look at a, b, and c.

*20 minutes* The total group explains what they discovered, taking each of the three topics in turn. Record on a big sheet of paper: 'Needs', 'Actions', and 'Words'. Put the sheet where everyone can see it. The group leader gets the group to talk to each other, and helps to develop discussion. S/he points out things that are the same, and things that are different, affirming all the responses given.

### PRAYER TOGETHER

*10 minutes* To affirm before God the understanding gained so far.

### END OF THE MEETING

*5 minutes* The group leader says:

Next week we are going to try to see how this fits into our kind of daily life. Are there any points we ought to be thinking about during the coming week?

## *Session Three*

### OUR LOCALITY

- 5 minutes*     *The group leader explains:*  
'Locality' can mean the area the church is in, where people live, or whatever has meaning for the group.
- 15 minutes*     In 'threes' work on:  
                      'What is good about our locality.'
- 15 minutes*     The group leader:  
                      Tells the 'threes' to change the direction of their discussion and work together on:  
                      'What needs are there in our locality?'
- 15 minutes*     Share together the discussion that has taken place in the 'threes'.
- 20 minutes*     Put up the sheet of 'Needs' 'Actions' and 'Words' from previous session.  
                      Work together on producing a poster for church next Sunday, relating the Needs, Actions, and Words, to our locality. Use drawings rather than a lot of words.

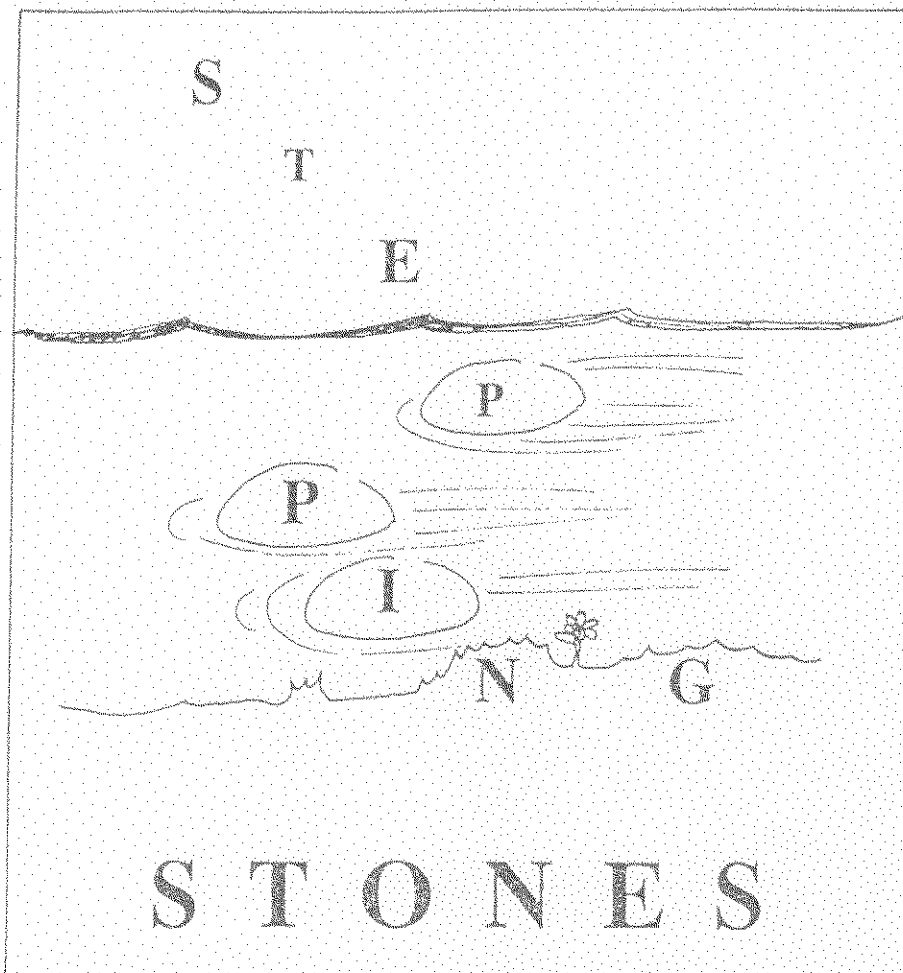
### END OF MEETING

- 10 minutes*     Pray together, affirming old and new insights and understanding.

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### SUGGESTED BIBLE PASSAGES

John 2	13 - 25	Clearing out the temple.
John 3	1 - 21	Nicodemus visits Jesus.
John 4	4 - 26	The Samaritan woman.
John 5	1 - 15	The man at Bethesda Pool.
John 8	1 - 11	The woman taken in adultery.
John 9	1 - 16	The man born blind.
John 11	32 - 44	Lazarus is brought back from the dead.
John 13	2 - 17	Jesus washes the disciples feet.



A course 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.

#### POSSIBLE THEMES

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

The 'Stepping Stones' method 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.

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**Stepping Stones** is more a method of teaching than a course. The content can be varied, and included in the course notes are twelve suggestions which cover a range of themes. You can add your own, and adapt the course 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. 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.

Step Three gets them to *think about one of the stories of Jesus or about Jesus*. It is for the trainer 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 trainer 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 their agenda and not the trainers. 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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## THE TEACHING METHOD

**Explain the way the course is run;** that it only works if people share and take part; and it works through the theme step by step. Tell them the topic for the next three weeks is... [for this example it is 'God'].

### **Step 1. Ask the group to tell you what they believe about ... [ God]**

- a. As they tell you make sure you are clear what they mean, ask them if in doubt.
- b. Write it up on the flipchart.
- c. Develop discussion between people, on similarities, differences, and contradictions.
- d. Affirm the contributions that people have made.

### **Step 2.. Ask the group how they came to believe these things ...**

- a. Listen but do not write up their replies; keep a note.
- b. Get people to respond to each other.
- c. When the response dries up write up on the flipchart your own framework on what they said.

e.g. From other people...	friends, family.
from 'official' people...	teachers, priests.
through an experience...	illness, crisis.
from reading...	Biography, Bible.
- d. Develop discussion about this, and other ways people come to believe in and about God.

### **Step 3. Explain that the stories of Jesus are always important to us.**

- a. With everybody having sight of a Bible read: The story of the man born blind. John's Gospel, chapter nine.
- b. Divide the larger group into two. Each group works for 15 minutes 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.

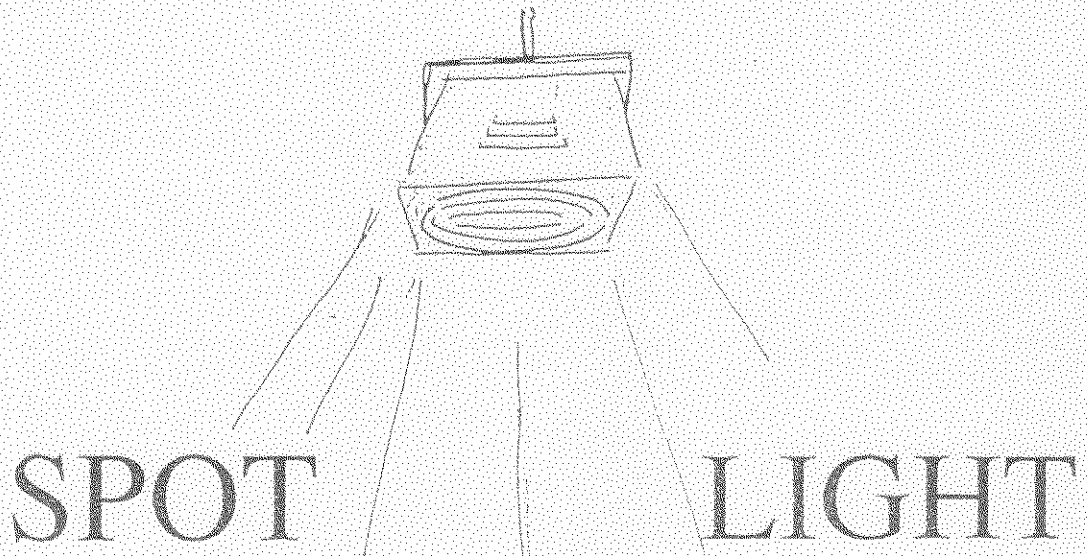
- c. Allow time for them to tell the others what they have got from the story, with the trainer(s) stimulating discussion across the groups. Affirm the lessons learned.
- d. Change direction in the teaching, asking them to work now in the large group on what the story tells them about Jesus. Write this up on the flipchart.
- e. Reflect on the different kinds of beliefs about God they have contributed.

**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 them into three groups and each group takes one of the three as their work to do. They work for 20 minutes 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 must 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.
-



SPOT

LIGHT

on

CHOICES



## CHOICES YOU COULD WORK ON

### About family relationships.

Caring for granny.      Going into care.      Marrying or not.  
Allowing the father access.      Walking out or staying on.

### In personal relationships.

To confront people.      To avoid violence.      To forgive someone.  
To keep quiet about something.      To stand up for yourself.

### About money.

Borrowing.      Lending to others.      Petty theft.  
Priorities in purchases.      No real choice through poverty.

### About illness.

Finding a good doctor.      Carrying on, or going to the doctor.  
Prescriptions or the chemist's advice.      Hospitals or home.  
To tell or not to tell bad news.

### Community choices.

Noisy neighbours.      Racial aggravation.      Park/play spaces.  
Special needs hostel nearby.      Late night licenses.

## THE METHOD OF TEACHING

Begin with the experience and dilemmas that people have. Share together what the real issues are for people, then get them to look at a gospel story that puts the choices in the spotlight.



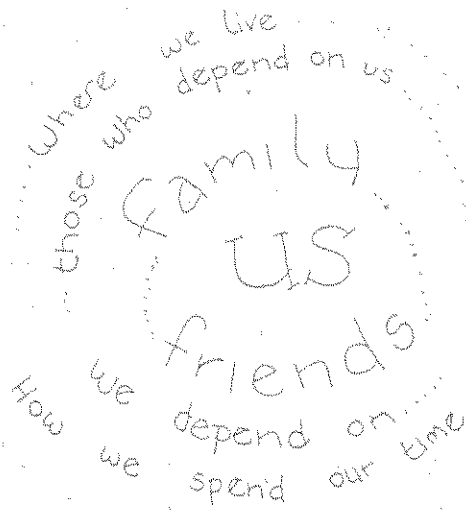
Explain that in any choice we make our heads, our hearts and our 'gut feelings' are all involved. This is because we are very complicated people. That is how God has made us. With our head we are rational, and think things through. With our heart we respond because of who we like or do not like. With our 'gut' our feelings direct us, and we respond out of despair or anger, or any other feelings.

Jesus takes seriously the way we are made, and knows the way we make choices.



There are lots of things we take into account when we make choices. The 'pebble in a pond' diagram below can be used to explain part of this.

Everything we do influences other people. If we choose to do one thing we are likely to affect family and friends, and a lot of other people too. When we make choices we cannot be sure how it will work out. We need to have some guidelines to help us find our way through all this.



Having explored how choices are made, work with the group in looking at choices from the perspective that Jesus gives us.

**Skills needed:** An ability to start the evening not knowing where it will finish.  
Enabling skills, to encourage a small group to work together.  
Skills in listening and reflecting back what is said.  
An ability to include those that usually get left out.  
To be able to say 'I don't know' if you don't.'

**Knowledge needed:** Enough understanding of the particular gospel story and its background to answer any questions that may arise.

**Ways of starting a session.**

Story telling presentations.	Headlines from newspapers.
Photographs from newspapers or magazines.	Letters from the agony columns.
Clips from news programmes on videos.	Someone telling the story.

**How the Bible text is presented.**

Straight reading.	Alternate verse reading.	Dramatic reading.	Bold type on OHP.
A copy typed out boldly for everyone to have.	Wall poster with the story on.		
Good sized Bibles, for everyone to see.			

The following is a Lent Course in preparation for Holy Week and the Easter story. It uses the 'Spotlight on Choices' approach.

The five topics chosen together with Bible readings are as follows.

- SESSION ONE      When I look for recognition for myself.  
                         Luke 19. vv. 28 - 44. Jesus enters Jerusalem.
- SESSION TWO      When I confront people.  
                         Luke 19. vv. 45 - 46. Jesus clears out the temple.
- SESSION THREE    When I stick to what I am about.  
                         Luke 22 vv. 39 - 46. Jesus prays for help.
- SESSION FOUR     When I accept or reject people.  
                         Luke 22. vv. 1 - 6, 47 - 48. Judas betrays Jesus.
- SESSION FIVE     When I have to forgive others.  
                         Luke 23. vv. 33 - 34. Jesus is put to death.

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## INTRODUCING THE COURSE AT THE FIRST SESSION

- a. Explain that the course only works if everyone takes part, sharing their own experience and thinking. They are not expected to be experts. There are none.
- b. Set out the theme of the course, explaining that we all make choices, and sometimes we are not sure whether they are good choices or not. Ask the group about choices they have made in the past week. The course will help us look at what we take into account when choices are made.
- c. The Bible passage is not to give an easy answer to making choices. It shows us that Jesus had to make choices, and they were not easy. We are trying to work out what He took into account so that we can test it against our experience

## PLAN OF A SESSION

It is expected that a session will last about one and a half hours. Approximate times are given for guidance. In the first session take five minutes each off the 20 minute sections to allow for introducing the course and the way of working together.

- 5 minutes **Welcome everyone.** Explain that it is expected that they will take part and not just sit and listen. Say what is likely to happen during the session.
- 20 minutes **Ask people** (1st topic) about the times when they have stood up for themselves. Ask them why they did then and not at other times. Set out the newspaper cuttings, or whatever visual material you have prepared. **Promote the discussion**, getting different people to contribute.
- 5 minutes **Summarise** what has been said using the 'head-heart-guts' diagram to open up the different ways they made the choice to stand up for themselves.
- 20 minutes **Introduce the Bible passage**, in whatever way you have chosen. Either **pray** yourself or get someone to pray asking God to teach us from the Bible. Split the group **into threes** and get them to look at the Bible passage using the 'head-heart-guts' way of thinking about it.
- 20 minutes With the **total group** together, ask for **immediate comments** on the story. Get them to think about it from the perspective of Jesus and the other people in the story. It can be helpful to **use a flipchart** to put up what people are saying, as it values their contribution and reinforces the things they have learnt. **Develop the discussion** so that they can comment on how the choice made by Jesus affected other people.
- 15 minutes Get the group to return to the **threes** they were in before. Ask them to check out this choice made by Jesus against their own experience. Get them to work out **two guidelines** which would help them make choices.
- 5 minutes With the **total group** together explain what is going to happen next time. **Pray** together. Then break for refreshments.

### THE NEXT SESSION

Begin by summarising what took place last time. Welcome new people. Adapt the way of working to fit what happened the previous week. E.g. You might like to lengthen or shorten different parts of the session or provide different visual 'starters'.