In the footsteps of Jesus

A course on discipleship
The course is divided into SIX sections, and there are TWO studies for each section, making a total of TWELVE studies for the twelve weeks.

Sunday sermons and talks will also follow the themes and be recorded, so that you can catch up on them if you can’t be in church.

Bible readings are set for each day while the course is on. You can find these on a separate card.

How can the course be used?

You can simply use it on your own. Read the reading for the day, and think and pray about how this relates to you as a disciple of Jesus Christ. Use the study material provided.

OR

Follow the course in the homegroup you belong to, or in one of the groups especially set up for this purpose. As these groups will usually meet every fortnight they will have six sessions relating to the six sections of the course, choosing one of the two studies provided for each section. Of course they could meet more regularly if they wanted to and use the other material, or group members could use it in the intervening weeks.

The themes are limited to PERSONAL aspects of what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ, but the implications and outworkings of our personal discipleship will flow into how we operate as church together, and how we reach out into our community and world in loving action and with a message of good news. This is about the individual foundation of a life committed to Jesus Christ, where there is a desire to understand more about what that commitment means.

Our prayer is that the combination of sermons, talks, readings, prayer and sharing in groups will take us on further in our individual experience of being a disciple, which will in turn affect positively our church and our mission in the world.
The call to discipleship (1)

Read together Matthew 4: 18-22

What does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus Christ?
In Jesus’ day there were rabbis who interpreted God’s law for people from the Old Testament. They explained what it meant to follow God’s way. Different rabbis had different styles, emphases and varying interpretations, and they attracted followers who chose to follow one as opposed to another. So a good rabbi was expected to have disciples who followed him around absorbing his teaching.

By contrast Jesus called the disciples to follow him. Becoming a rabbi’s disciple in those days meant learning the Old Testament, applying to become one and then being grilled by the rabbi to see if you were good enough. This was very challenging, and not very many were up to the mark. But Jesus opened up discipleship to simple fishermen and others who, by human standards, were not good enough. He takes the initiative, he calls people, he invites those who would not seem up to it. In God’s kingdom all are invited to become disciples.

- Discuss the passage and what it means.
- Talk together in the group, or in twos, about how you first heard Jesus calling you, and how you responded. Was it a one-off, a process; were there different key moments?
- Although the first disciples left their nets to follow Jesus it seems clear from elsewhere that they did not dispose of home and property, or sever family ties. What does it mean for us today to “leave our nets and follow him”?
There are four aspects to being a disciple of Jesus;

1. A disciple is a follower, who is willing to leave things behind and give him undivided allegiance. Jesus spells out the challenge of discipleship in Luke 9: 57-62.

2. A disciple is keen to learn what his leader is teaching. This requires time, an openness to learn and a teachable spirit. In Matthew 11 v1 Jesus spends time “instructing his twelve disciples”; in Mark 9 v 31 he “did not want anyone to know where they were because he was teaching his disciples”. Like Mary, sitting at his feet to listen, they focus on his teaching, ask him what he means (e.g. about the meaning of parables in Mark 4 v10) and ask him to teach them more (e.g. “teach us to pray as John taught his disciples).

3. But Jesus calls us not just to follow him, but to become like him. “Discipleship is more than getting to know what the teacher knows. It is getting to be what he is”. (J C Ortiz) Romans 8 v 29 reminds us that God want us to be like Jesus, and John 15 vs 4-8 shows us how.

4. He calls us not just to be like him, but also to do the things he did. Look at the amazing promise in John 14:12. In Matthew 28:19 it is disciples who have been discipled who make further disciples.

So, a genuine disciple, having given Jesus priority in their lives, will listen, learn, watch, obey, and then do it, just as any good apprentice would.

• Discuss one or more of these four aspects of discipleship, looking up the passages where needed.
• Which part of being a disciple have you found the hardest, and what has helped you along the way?
• Share, and pray for each other about the challenges you experience in following Jesus.
The call to discipleship  (2)

Being a disciple means stepping out of your comfort zone.

Begin the session by talking in twos.
Take time to think of an important journey you went on to a place you had never been before. How did it feel? What was good, what was bad? Was it worth it, and did the experience change you in any way?

A disciple is on a journey to places with God they have never been before. It can be daunting, threatening, but also very exciting The person who follows in the footsteps of Jesus will move out of their personal comfort zone, but in so doing will find out so much more about God, themselves and how God can do more in their lives than they had ever thought possible.

But on this journey we have to live with uncertainty and a personal sense of vulnerability.

Moses encountered God in the desert. A bush was burning, but not going out. Going to investigate, he found God calling to him from within the bush, and giving him a job to do. The job was to lead God’s people out of slavery in Egypt; they had been there for years, suffering under oppressive taskmasters, but calling out to God in their need. Moses is the answer to their prayers! Understandably he recoils from this massive task, which seems impossible given the great power of the Egyptian regime.
He gives five answers to God, when God asks him to do this. This is definitely moving out of his comfort zone, and Moses reacts against it; we often do the same when God calls us to do things for him which we don’t like or don’t think we can do.

Read about these five responses in Exodus 3:11 – 4:14
Now here’s the hard work. Look into what these five reactions are, and what they reveal about how Moses sees himself, God and other people. Either on your own, or in twos, or in the whole group come up with an agreed answer which is eventually committed to a big paper sheet with four columns on it:
Column 1: what did Moses say, and what did he reveal about himself in saying it – five points

Column 2: compare his reaction with ourselves; does his reaction remind us of what holds us back in our discipleship? put down the various things that emerge.

Now think about what God said. Talk together about God’s answer to each of Moses’ objections. Eventually commit it to paper:

Column 3: put down how God replied to each objection
Column 4: write down what this may mean for us, again in each section. What is God saying to us about the areas where we struggle to move out of our comfort zones, just as Moses did.

Whereas we don’t go looking for difficult challenges etc. we find that when God is calling us into something that stretches us we tend to grow as disciples, find skills we perhaps didn’t know we had, gain an increased sense of trust and dependence, and develop ministry which is based on helplessness rather than human skill. You might want to share experiences of how you (and others) have been helped when you moved out of your comfort zone with God.

Pray for one another in the light of what the evening has brought out, maybe using the four columns as a springboard for your prayers.

Prayer
Lord, you know me better than I know myself; you know best what I should do with my life. I offer back to you the life you have given me, to be used in your service, grow in discipleship, and be a blessing to others. Please show me what to do, and strengthen me in doing it, as I step out in faith with you.

And for us together as church “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generations for ever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:20)
Prayer (1)  Personal & Corporate

Prayer is communication with God and for a relationship to develop there needs to be good communication. We can pray on our own as encouraged to in Matthew 6:6 and with other people, eg. Acts 4:23-31.

What can prevent us from praying?

What are the benefits and disadvantages of praying...
   a) on your own, b) with other people?

Read Matthew 7: 7-12. This is part of the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ - Jesus’ discipleship course (Matthew 5-7).

Should we expect to receive answers to all our prayers?
If not, why not?

Have you ever had a prayer answered?

Share your story with the whole group or in 2s or 3s. Answered prayer is a testimony of what God has done in your life.

Prayer is more than asking God for things. Some people use mnemonics to help them pray...

Thanksgiving, Sorry, Please

or...

Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication
Have you ever found yourself in the presence of someone who seems to like the sound of their own voice? The conversation is one-sided with one person doing all the talking and the other doing all the listening. If prayer is communication with God then it needs to be a two-way conversation, yes we need to talk but we also need to listen. The art of listening to people is not easy, we easily get distracted or we assume we know what people are trying to say. Listening well takes time and practice, listening to God is something we must learn to do.

What lessons can we learn from **James 4:7-8** when listening to God?

What might stop us from hearing God’s voice?

God may speak in different ways- bringing to mind a passage of Scripture, through a picture in your mind’s eye, a word, an impression, or a gentle whisper. Recognising God’s voice can take time and practice but each time we hear him speak it becomes easier to recognise the next time.

**Challenge**

*If you have never prayed out loud before, have a go. It’s okay to plan what you want to say first. Remember, you are talking to God not the other people present so it doesn’t matter if it comes out awkwardly, God knows what we mean.

*Spend time in prayerful worship before bringing your requests to God, thank him for who he is and for all he has done. Be aware of his presence and ask him to speak to you.
Prayer (2) Intercession

Travelling on the London Underground can be a scary place, crowds of people squashed into every space possible. As a child I would dread hearing the words ‘Mind the gap’ as the doors opened. The fear of not being able to make it safely onto the platform and falling onto the tracks was made worse by the deep repeating voice across the speaker, ‘Mind the gap’. Intercessors have been described as people who choose through prayer to stand ‘in the gap’ between God and the world. To intercede is to ‘interpose or plead on behalf of another’ (Concise Oxford Dictionary).

Throughout the Bible and church history, people have interceded or pleaded with God for the sake of others. The prayer of intercession focuses outwards on the needs of the world, people groups or individuals.

Read Genesis 18:16-33

What is the difference between prayer and intercessions?

Is it really possible for people to change God’s mind and intentions?

We all can and should pray for the needs of the world but some people are called to a life of intercession. Intercessors dare to ask God how he feels about different situations, are willing to feel the way God feels and then turn passion and compassion into prayer.

‘There are three things to be seen in an intercessor, which are not necessarily found in ordinary prayer: identification, agony and authority.’ (N. Grubb, ‘Rees Howells: Intercessor’)

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Read Ezekiel 22:29-31

Why might it have been hard to find intercessors?

How ‘costly’ is intercessory prayer?

How might intercession link to action?

What are the current needs of a) the world?

b) the local community?

c) individuals around you?

WARNING: ‘Standing in the gap’ or interceding for others is not an easy or comfortable place to be.

**Challenge**
*Read a newspaper or be attentive to the news on television or radio. Pray about what you have heard. If there is something which grabs your attention ask God to show you how he feels about that situation. Turn that news story into intercessory prayer.*

*Think about the three qualities of an intercessor: ‘identification, agony, authority’ and consider how they affect both the intercessor and the prayers offered to God.*
New life in Christ (1)  Sin and holiness

Start with some worship, according to what will work in your group - one of the “Holy, holy, holy” type hymns or songs, or something that helps people to sense God’s presence. This could lead into silence or words of praise focusing on the different attributes of God.

Read Isaiah 6: 1-8

Isaiah went into the temple one day and got a shock. God was there. It was an unbelievably holy moment, which he tries to describe in these verses; but any genuine meeting with God is beyond our words. The effect it has upon to him is to make him realize his unworthiness, uncleanness and sin.
Often we need something to happen before we realize quite how bad we are. We’re good at fooling ourselves that we’re OK.

Discuss the passage together.

Even though we may not have had visions like this, have we had particular moments when we have felt really bad about who we are because of something which has happened to make us stop and think?

Jesus accepts us just as we are; in his presence we know we are welcomed and deeply loved; but there is something about his presence that makes us very aware of our failure and sin.

Strangely, in one of the early encounters Peter has with Jesus (Luke 5:8) he tells Jesus to “Go away, Lord, I am a sinful man.” After a hard night fishing and catching nothing they are told by Jesus where to put their nets and they haul in a large number of fish. But encountering Jesus in this way makes Peter aware of his unworthiness in the presence of something so amazing.

Knowing God through Christ is about experiencing love, but at the same time we become more aware of what is wrong in our lives. A key aspect of discipleship is the ability to confront the truth about ourselves and confess our sins to God. Receiving forgiveness can mean freedom from the crippling feelings of guilt and condemnation which may prevent us from being what we can be, and doing what we should do for God.
Confront
In our “blame culture” we are tempted to point the finger elsewhere rather than take responsibility for our own actions, words and thoughts. In the presence of God we face the truth about ourselves and we are forced to confront our own failures and sin. The conviction we feel should also remind us that God loves us so much that he doesn’t want us to stay as we are. We are worth working on!

Read 1 John 1: 5-9
What does this passage tell us about sin and its importance?
What is the significance of the image of light and darkness?

Confess
The word means “say the same as”. When we tell God the truth about ourselves we are agreeing with him. We are accepting his standards and conforming to them, rather than deciding for ourselves what is right.
We come to see ourselves as God sees us: special, greatly loved, worth dying for. But, at the same time, capable of all kinds of thoughts, words and deeds which are simply wrong. We acknowledge his correct view of our behaviour, thinking and speaking.

How and when do you tell God you’re sorry for things?
What’s the value of doing it in our church services?

Receive
Just as some of us have problems admitting we’re wrong, so others find it very hard to know they’re really forgiven, and live with niggling doubts all the time. We need to consciously receive forgiveness, not hope for it.

In this passage what does it say about how we can receive forgiveness?
What is it based on? What is the result?
How do you deal with the problem of guilt?

If you have time look at Romans 6: 1-7, and discuss its encouraging message about the new possibilities open to us because “we have died with Christ” to the old way of life.
New life in Christ (2) New identity

Image and identity are key features of our society today. People go to enormous lengths to get the right image. But what is the reality underneath?

Part of being human is a desire for a unique identity as a person; but at the same time we feel the need to fit in, be well thought of and conform to an image which may well not be us. So the question is, ”Who am I?”

Through Christ we become the unique person God created us to be, but who we could not be because of the way sin has damaged us. We find our identity in him.

What are the factors which rob people of a positive sense of self worth and personal identity?

What has helped you to discover more of your identity in Christ?

Read together the story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19: 1-10 and then talk about who Zacchaeus was before his encounter with Jesus, and who he becomes as a result of it.

What is it about what Jesus says and does that makes the difference?

Our new identity comes from relationship with the Father, who adopts us into his family and thereby gives us a new status.

It comes from Christ who died for us to set us free to become who God intended us to be, but who we could not be because we were trapped by our sin and selfishness; he also gives us the gift of a new resurrection life brought into being in our lives by the power of God

And it becomes real in the Spirit, as the Spirit assures us deep within of who we are now becoming. It is a definite healing of the past, which will affect our self-image. As Augustine once said: “I’m not what I was; I’m not what I will be; but by the grace of God I am what I am!”
Read together *Galatians 3: 26 – 4:7*

*Talk together about how Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together to produce our new identity.*

In *2 Corinthians 3: 17-18* Paul talks about the new freedom of the person who has turned to God through Christ.
We are being “transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory.” The more we contemplate God through Christ, the more we ourselves are being changed into our new identity. To look is to be transformed. Being a Christian is about becoming the new person God has destined us to be, and is equipping us to be through the work of Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit. In our experience the new identity develops.

*We end the session with prayer that somehow makes it possible for us to step forward more and more into the new person we have become through Christ.*

It’s up to the group how to do this, with the leader having made careful preparation beforehand. This session could represent an important move forward into knowing who we now are in Christ.

Let’s also remember that getting rid of past negativity and bad self-image needs both our willingness and the working of the Holy Spirit. Because of God’s love we are enabled to face the past damage in our lives and surrender it to God for healing and transformation. But sometimes it’s helpful to pray this through with someone else – perhaps a trusted Christian friend who can come alongside and be supportive.
Generosity (1)  Time & Talents

Having time and space to be quiet, reflect and pray can seem a luxury, but before people are ordained, they go on retreat to do just that. Above my desk I have a card given to me by the Bishop, which reminds me that I must make ‘time for God, family and friends, rest and relaxation and to develop gifts’, often easier said than done.

For some people it’s very easy to get caught up in being busy, filling the diary, rushing from one place to the next but occasionally it is important to STOP, be still, re-evaluate and discuss our plans with God. Other people are used to being still but is the way we use our time honouring to God?

What does it mean to be generous with our time and talents?

Is being busy a sign of generosity? Explain your answer.

Read Psalm 90

What does this psalm say about the time we have on earth?

We know that time is limited on earth, though no-one knows how much time he/she has, so how should this knowledge affect the way we use our time?

Discipleship affects every aspect of our lives, including the priorities we have in our lives...

Challenge

*Make a timetable of an average week, prayerfully assess how well you are using your time. Also assess how much time is spent with God, family & friends, work colleagues. Assess how much time is spent with Christians or non-Christians. Where can you make changes?
If you are in an established group who know each other well: On a piece of paper write your name as a heading then pass to the person on your left. Each person writes a word to identify the gifts/talents/skills of the person named at the top of the paper. Keep passing until each person receives his or her paper back.
or: Each person must come up with a list of at least 5 things they are good at. Share the list with 2/3 others or the whole group.

Read Ephesians 4:7-16

God gives us both natural and supernatural gifts with which to serve him and other people. We will be exploring supernatural gifts further on in the course.

Focussing on Eph. 4: 7,8,16, why is it important for all Christians to use their God-given gifts?

If we deny or belittle our talents, what effect may that have on: a) God?

b) the Church?

c) the local Community?

Practically, how can we use our talents within a spirit of generosity?

Read 1 Timothy 6:17-19

Challenge

*Which natural skills or talents have you taken for granted? Spend time in prayer thanking God for all his gifts.
*Do you have a talent which you could use for God within the church or local community? Make time to talk to someone about it.
*Having assessed your use of time, perhaps you have space to learn a new skill, or to help in other practical ways. Have a chat with the Church Wardens.
‘Yours Lord is the greatness, the power, the splendour and the majesty, for everything in heaven and on earth is yours. All things come from you and of your own do we give you.’ (Extract from Common Worship Communion service after the monetary giving has been collected.)

What is the relationship between God’s resources and our money?

How does this extract apply to you and what challenges does it create for how you view your money and possessions?

Read Luke 18:18-20

How does society view materialism and are the views of Christians similar or opposed to such a view?

Money and possessions can easily become our security instead of God. What do we own which we would struggle to let go of?

‘A clergyman gave a lift in his car to a friend who was catching a train. At the station his friend got out and before he could close the car door a total stranger jumped in and asked to be taken to a hotel. Saying nothing, the vicar did as requested and on arrival the passenger handed over a £5 note. When the vicar explained the situation the passenger immediately withdrew the £5 proffered for a taxi ride and instead offered a 50p piece for the church collection! That’s a tithe!’ (taken from Stewardship.org.uk)

Tithing is a Biblical principle where we give God the first 10% of our income. The Church of England encourages people to give 5% to church and 5% to charity. However, we are not to stop at tithing...
What does the word generosity mean to you?

Do you know anybody who you think of as a generous person? How are they generous and to whom?

**Read Luke 21:1-4** (also Mark 12:41-44)

How does this form of generosity differ from our view of generosity?

How does the widow’s generosity reflect God’s generosity to us?

*People often use phrases such as ‘Give and you will receive’. When we understand just how much we have already received from God, then we choose to give freely and unconditionally from a sense of joy and love rather than duty.*

*Giving is great, giving is good for you... Giving helps us grow*  
_Bishop Paul, Southwell & Nottingham, see video at:_  
[www.southwell.anglican.org/admin_funding.html](http://www.southwell.anglican.org/admin_funding.html)

Watch this short video and/or think about how ‘giving is good for you... and helps you grow’.

**Challenge**

*Take time to re-assess your financial tithing and giving to God.  
*Pray and think about who may need help and how you can show God’s abundant generosity to them.*
Testing and battles (1)

God is interested in quality control. No product goes on the market unless it has gone through rigorous tests to check it’s ready to go!

Today is all about testing and suffering. God doesn’t send problems, but he uses the trials we go through to refine us and shape us into the people he wants us to be.

We tend to think that difficulties which come along are just random events, but God can be at work through them. We experience daily frustrations, trying people and persistent niggles that really get to us.

And there are also the more significant times of major suffering which can be totally overwhelming.

A key verse to look at is Romans 8: 28

Discuss together how it is possible for all things – even the bad things – to work together for our good.

Share some of the difficult times you’ve been through. Did you feel deserted by God, or closer to him during these times.

Looking back now can you see how God may have used the situations to help you as a person in some way – maybe something you couldn’t see at the time?

Take one or more of the following passages which convey something of the purpose of times of trial, and discuss how God can use these apparently negative experiences to produce positive change.

James 1: 2 – 4
1 Peter 1: 6 – 8
Hebrews 12: 4 – 13
2 Corinthians 12: 7b – 10
In 2 Corinthians 1: 3 – 11: Paul talks about his personal experience of a time of great difficulty. Not only does he find God’s help in his suffering but he also finds it is used to help other people. When we are really going through it other people can be a great source of support, which is greatly appreciated, and which leads to deeper, stronger relationships. But they can also be quite lacking in understanding, or even contribute to the problem with their unfeeling reaction to what we may be experiencing.

How does Paul find God uses his time of trial to help others: have we found anything similar in our own experience?

At this point you might want to share how the example of particular Christians have encouraged you when you’ve been going through it, or how the stories of saints and other Christians have been a source of inspiration.

The problem of suffering is always a massive one. In times of pain we may find God’s closeness in a very real way, but that doesn’t mean we understand why things are as they are.

This topic is usually the highest on the agenda when the question of faith is being discussed. “If there is a God, why does he allow suffering?”

What would you say to someone who asked you that question?

Does the experience of Jesus shed any light on the subject?

Pray for one another, particularly for those who are in times of trial and testing.

Pray for those you know who are not yet believers, and for whom this question may be a real problem, or a red-herring in discussions.
Testing and battles (2)

In our discipleship we have all sorts of pressures to contend with. There is the inward pull of temptation to resist. But it doesn’t stop there: two further enemies exist. One is the pressure to conform to the standards of those around us (the world). The other is the specific attack of a personal enemy whose goal is to destroy our faith and commitment (the devil). Today we think about how we cope with these two specific pressures, and encourage one another in these battles.

1 The world

“The world” is a bit of a technical phrase in Scripture. The word is used of the wonderful world of creation which God has made for us to enjoy, but also to describe humanity in its life together without reference to God. Where people get together and function together, but exclude God from their life – that is “the world”. It’s like a club where he is not welcome. People may not do this deliberately, but may just set up a way of living without thinking of including him. So when Christians say, “I don’t operate like that because God is in my life” there is bound to be conflict, particularly because that stance may well threaten the generally held view of society, or of the people we live with.

In Romans 12: 1-2 Paul urges Christians not to conform to the pattern of this world.

What does he mean; what other clues are there in these verses as to how to do it?

In John 17: 13-19 Jesus uses the word “world” a number of times. Have a look at how he uses the word. It is often said that believers are “in the world” but not “of the world”.

Where is “the world” active in our lives and how do we battle against its influence?
2 The devil

Jesus talked of an enemy of God – Satan, the Devil – who opposes
God and opposes Christians who belong to God. He is referred to by
Jesus as “the prince of this world” (John 14: 30).

In Ephesians 6:10-20 Paul talks of the
spiritual battle we are engaged in with the
power of evil, and uses the image of
Roman armour to describe the protection
we have in this battle, and also how to
use it for our good and the advancement
of God’s kingdom.

*Read the passage together and talk
about each item of equipment and its
significance.*

*How does putting each item on, or using it
help us in this battle?*

*Do you have particular weak points where you are especially
vulnerable?*

Some people have found it beneficial in times of difficulty to put on the
armour in prayer each day. It’s worth a try if you’ve never done it. Pray
each item on as you might an item of clothes.

You might want to do this each day until the next group session, and
then share what it was like.
Life in the Spirit (1)  Fruit

On your own:
Make a list of words to describe the character of Jesus... you only have 60 seconds to complete the task.

As a group:
Make a list of all the different words used.

‘The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.’
Galatians 5:22-23a

How does the group list of Jesus' character compare to the fruits of the Spirit?

One of the names given to the Holy Spirit in the Bible is the Spirit of Jesus. When we ask God to fill us with the Holy Spirit we are inviting the Spirit of Jesus into our lives.
Faith in God is believing and trusting in God the Trinity- Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The more open we are to God, the more his Spirit can work in us changing us into the likeness of Jesus, which is displayed in us through the fruits of the Spirit.

Read 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

In what ways do the people you know at church ‘reflect the Lord’s glory’?

Read Galatians 5:13-21

What is the relationship between repentance and spiritual growth?
A man went to church and was telling the story of his journey with God. It was clear that he believed in God but something seemed to be lacking. An attentive observer said, ‘You never smile. In the last 20 years or so I’ve very rarely seen you smile.’ This man had faith in God but needed the Holy Spirit to give him the fruit of joy.

Read Galatians 5:22-23

Which ‘fruit of the Spirit’ do you naturally find the easiest?

Which of the ‘fruits’ do you struggle with?

The fruits of the Spirit can be seen as natural attributes but when the Holy Spirit lives in us, he enables us to grow those fruits to a greater extent. For example: he enables us to love people who we have previously struggled with; or he gives us an inner peace even when everything around us seems to be going wrong or in turmoil. We can try to change ourselves and over time it may well work but if our desire is to be like Jesus then we should ask for his help.

Warning

Spiritual growth often comes through testing. If you ask God to help you develop patience then you may well have to wait longer, if you ask for the fruit of love then you may be challenged to love those you previously would not have chosen to love. However, in the testing is an opportunity to grow closer to God.

Challenge

*Ask God which spiritual fruit he wants you to develop, rather than the one you would like, then be brave and ask for it.

*Take one of the fruits and through prayer and Bible Study look at how Jesus displayed that fruit to those around him.
What comes to mind when you hear the word ‘charismatic’?

*Charismatic comes from the Greek meaning gifts of grace. Charismatic relates to spiritual gifts rather than a particular style of worship.*

‘The gifts are given us to use for others. They are developed in a climate of risk-taking and a willingness to fail... The gifts do not come in an academic setting; they are not a cerebral exercise... The gifts are not trophies dispensed as prizes for faithful or long service... The gifts are the tools which enable the believer to effect the ministry required.’

David Pytches, *Come, Holy Spirit.*

People can be reluctant to learn about or use spiritual gifts, why do you think that might be?

**Read Luke 11:9-13**

What can stop us from asking God for spiritual gifts?

*In order to receive all that God has for us we need to identify and repent of any negative attitudes we may have towards the charismatic. Not long after I became a Christian I was told that if I didn’t speak in tongues then I wasn’t really a Christian. This immediately caused a barrier between me and the person who made the comment and also in my relationship with God. I decided that I never wanted the gift of tongues, even if that was the only gift God wanted to give me. As we begin to look at spiritual gifts ask God to show you if you have any pre-conceived prejudices or barriers and spend time in repentance.*

**Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-11**

The manifestations of the Spirit

How can the use of these gifts benefit the church?
Read Romans 12:6-8 Motivational gifts

What difference would it make to the church if these gifts were never exercised?

Read 1 Cor 12:27-30 & Ephesians 4:11-13 Ministerial gifts

What is the difference between the gifts mentioned in these readings to the previous listings of motivational gifts and manifestations?

God doesn’t limit gifts to one per person, we may be given different gifts at different times.

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**How do I know which gift God wants me to have?**

Look through the lists of gifts slowly and pray for God to show you which one to ask for. As you read you may find that one ‘leaps off the page’, or that your heart begins to beat faster as you think about a particular gift. If you are still unsure which gift to ask for, read through the list again and think about which gift you would like and why. If your motives seem pure then go ahead and ask for that particular gift. Talk to your church or group leaders about the gifts you are seeking.

**How do I know if God has given me the gift I’ve asked for?**

Spiritual gifts are developed through use. Perseverance is often the key to success- if nothing seems to happen the first time, don’t give up, keep seeking God and act in obedience under his guidance.

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As we exercise spiritual gifts let’s remember to give God the glory and not allow pride to creep in, after all it is God’s gift, not ours. So let’s keep our hands open to say ‘Yes’ to God and allow him to give and take away as he desires.