



**OneChurch**  
Harrow

# **CIRCLES**

## **LEADER'S GUIDE**

**COVID-19 Edition**  
**April 2020**

# BEING A CIRCLE LEADER

We are delighted that you are considering being a Circle Leader.

**Being a Circle Leader means facilitating a group of 3 or 4 people in a spiritual process helping you all to grow together in the likeness of Jesus.**

Circle leaders are responsible for setting up their circle, making sure you meet, and keeping the sessions on track using the Circle tool.

There is lots of information about leading circles in this guide.

There will also be frequent training sessions for Circle leaders to offer you guidance and support as you lead your circle.




# GETTING STARTED

## How to Set Up A Circle


- 1. Prayerfully select 2 or 3 others** to invite into your Circle. They could be members of a ministry team or group you're already involved in, folk in your church community who you'd like to get to know better and encourage, or you could reach out to somebody new to or exploring the Christian faith. It may be helpful to consult with your vicar as you do this; they will be keen to help you find suitable people and may be able to make suggestions.
- 2. Invite people to consider joining your circle** for an initial commitment of 12 sessions together. Take the time to call them up to (rather than text or email) so you can explain what's involved. Ask if they have any questions. Give them a way out - and if they say no, don't take it personally.
- 3. Agree when and how you will meet** It may be helpful to make this consistent at a time to suit your circle members. The suggestion is to meet fortnightly for at least an hour. *(However, it's most important that you make it work for your circle: you could, for example, meet weekly for 30 minutes to cover sections 1,2,5 & 6 one week and 1,3,4 & 6 the next.)*

A shared video call is the ideal way to meet in current circumstances: skype, whatsapp, & facetime all offer free video calls for at least four people, so choose whatever is most familiar to your circle members. *If internet access is an issue, consider using zoom which allows multiple people to dial into a call alongside video conferencing. However note a free zoom account has a maximum call time of 40 mins.*



**4. Choose your Playlists** Each Playlist consists of 6 linked Bible readings, so you will be able to choose 2 during your 12 sessions. A growing selection of Playlists is available, each with a different emphasis or theme, suitable for people at different stages of the Christian journey. You may have a specific playlist in mind when choosing your circle members, or alternatively decide together which playlists to choose. *You may like to start with the 'Words of Hope' playlist written to help us walk through COVID-19.*

## Tips for successful circles



**TIMINGS** The suggested times for each section in this leaders's guide keep will keep a circle to an hour. You may feel you need more time, if so make sure that this is discussed as a circle. Whatever time you agree, try to stick to it to build consistency and honour people's time.

**CAPTURE** How can your group best capture what you learn and discover? Some circle members may find it helpful to keep a notebook to write discoveries, words and pictures as you meet. Could you set up a whatsapp or facebook group or send round a follow-up email for prayer requests (and answers) and action points? It's important that this process is encouraged to impact all of life.

**STAY IN TOUCH** During this season marked by social distancing and isolation, consider how you might touch base with your circle members through the week (some of the suggestions above are a good place to to start). If you have any concerns for members of your circle please follow the pastoral & safeguarding policies set out by your church.



## Stick or Twist?

Circles are designed to multiply over time, enabling more people to join circles and grow as disciple-makers. As your 12 sessions draw to a close, consider whether you are ready to multiply as a group. It would be good to discuss this during Sessions 10 and 11. You can decide together to:

**TWIST** Are there people you've been praying for or connecting with who might appreciate being invited to join a Circle? Is one of your group ready to lead their own circle? Go for it! You could twist into two (or more!) new circles. It could also be appropriate for a number of reasons for a member of your group to join a different circle for the next 12 sessions. *NB. If a group member moves away they may like to continue meeting as a circle during the transition period - but long term it is important they find ways to connect locally rather than staying in your circle.*

OR **STICK** If none of the above apply, can you commit to another 12 sessions with your current circle?

Please let your vicar know how you hope to proceed as your 12 sessions draw to a close.

It may take several sessions for a new circle to become familiar with one another and with the circle tool and format. Once you feel your circle is becoming established, consider whether you could train up one or more circle members to the point where they could lead their own circle in the future. As your sessions continue, try delegating parts of the session (and eventually whole sessions) for others to facilitate.

# LEADING YOUR CIRCLE SESSION



## 1. RECONNECT

*Aim to spend 5 mins on this, if you're meeting for an hour*

What are you grateful for since we last met?

This is an opportunity to catch-up that goes beyond 'how are you?' It encourages thankfulness and sets a positive tone for your Circle session. Are there answers to prayer from your last session?



## 2. STORY

*Aim for 15 minutes. Pray, then read the Bible passage.*

Model a simple prayer asking the Lord to speak to you through his Word, and for hearts ready to receive it. If your Circle members are just learning to pray out loud this might be a simple prayer to delegate as the sessions go on.

It's a good habit to read the passage out loud (rather than silently), so that you begin the process of speaking the Word to one another. If you or other members of the group are not native English speakers it may be helpful to have a copy of the Bible in your own language to refer to as well as reading together in English.

**The simple questions in the Story section are designed to open up discussion and provide a way in to listening to God through the Scriptures. You don't have to answer them in order, but by covering them you will cover the important bible study elements of observation, interpretation and application.**

You don't need to know all the answers to the questions about your passage in order to facilitate this conversation. However, the newer to the Bible the members of the other members of the group are, the more you may need to give some pointers. The vision is for mutual discovery and exploration led by the Holy Spirit!

## UNDERSTANDING THE STORY: QUESTIONS

### Where does this fit in Bible's story?

This helps you locate the context for the passage. Both the immediate context (the chapters before and after) and the wider context (which book of the Bible) can hugely shape how the text should be understood, interpreted and then applied. It may also be useful to explore what genre this part of the story is in (narrative, law, history, poetry, prophecy, wisdom, Gospel, apocalyptic, epistle, etc), which may also help you understand the passage's original intent.

Asking this question each time also helps disciples to get familiar with how the whole Bible fits together, as one big story.

### What does it say?

This is an observation question. The 'facts' of the passage may be brand new to some; to others there will always be new depths and insights. You could also ask 'What do we discover here about God? Humanity? And/or the life of faith?'

Have a go at summarising the main message of your passage, in one sentence if possible. This helps us to clarify our understanding and challenges us to identify the most important theme.

### What does it mean?

This is an interpretation question. Follow up questions could include: 'Why is this passage in Scripture? What is the significance of the passage?' 'How does this challenge current understandings or attitudes?'

Further application of the passage will continue to be worked out as you continue the Circle session.





## 3. PRESENCE

*Aim for 8 minutes if meeting for an hour.*

There are two elements to this part of the Circle session. Both require everyone to stop talking!

1. **What is God saying to you?** Pause, giving everyone time to silently meditate on how God has speaking individually through the Bible passage. What is the Spirit impressing upon you personally? There may be fresh convictions, revelations of God, or prompts to action.

2. **Ask Him for words and pictures for others in your group** After a couple of minutes of quiet, you may wish to pray for the Spirit to reveal himself further through any prophetic words or pictures for one another. Pause again to listen further (before moving to share what you've heard). *Listening to God in this way may be new or unfamiliar to Circle members. But don't skip this! Encourage members to be aware of their senses and notice any intuitive images or thoughts that come to them, however silly they may seem. This could be the Holy Spirit speaking.*

**Allow a few minutes to share what God has revealed**



## 4. FAMILY

*Aim for 15 minutes (4-5 minutes each) if meeting for an hour.*

Take it in turns to answer this question:

**What difference could this make to your relationships?**

It's time to help each other apply what God has been saying into your lives; feel free to draw from other things you are receiving/learning from God as well. Take what God has been saying to each of you, and consider how this could change your interactions with others.

Although we are more accustomed to reflecting on what is God is saying to as an individual, Jesus (and the writers of Scripture) always



encourages us to reflect ourselves as part of a community, hence this question focuses on relationships. If you have been focusing on character, witness, calling or identity - how will these impact on those around you? We are to expect God to be changing and challenging us as we receive from his love and grace.

Talk through any encouragements and challenges you face in this. Look out for ways you might be able to practically and prayerfully help each other.



## 5. JUSTICE

*Aim for 7 minutes (2-3 minutes each) if meeting for an hour.*

The Kingdom of God is spread through both word & deed; transforming individuals and societies. This week:

**How could you share your faith?**

**How could you show God's love?**

Talk through the opportunities each person might have in the coming week(s) to witness to God's truth and love (to whom? where? when?). Ask what the next step could be, how it might be followed up, and how Circle members could support them.

*These questions are designed to open up possibilities and encourage boldness; do your best to ensure they're not a fortnightly guilt trip!*



## 6. PRAY

*Stop 10mins before the end to pray*

Finish by turning anything from your session into prayers. Model and encourage prayers of adoration, thanksgiving, confession, petition or intercession as appropriate.

Don't forget to capture any significant points, requests or actions in a way that will help remind you at a later date, and confirm when and where you're next going to meet.