

# Session 3:

## Becoming Whole Life and Through-Life Disciples

### (The 'When & Where' of Discipleship)

Head

Heart



**ENVISIONED**

*"Christians grow when we have a clear vision of God, ourselves, and everyday faith that has spiritual growth as an obvious and desirable consequence".*

**SUBMITTED**

*"Christians grow as we continue to choose to lay down our will for the sake of God's."*

**ACTIVATED**

*"Christians grow when they put into practice new ideas and teaching they gain, often from the invitation of others."*

### The Point of the Session

- Part of a full, rounded and balanced vision of discipleship is recognising that discipleship is...
  - Whole-Life (i.e., seven days a week, in our families, friendships, workplaces, neighbourhoods, life as citizens, etc., not just what we do in church on Sunday mornings)
  - Through-Life (i.e., Christian discipleship, learning and growth is lifelong, through the seasons and stages of life, not just something we do at Sunday School and then 'graduate')
- We explore some ideas and practices which can help us and others become through-life and whole-life disciples, including...
  - Learning to hold our past, present and future together before God
  - Reflecting on four different 'fields' of our Christian life (inward and outward, individually and together with other Christians)

### Main Session Content 1:

#### Through-Life Discipleship

- Discipleship as a 'whole-life, through-life' journey: 7 days a week, through all the seasons and stages of life.
- When and where do we follow Jesus? Everywhere, all the Time!

### Questions and Space for Notes...

What do you think of the idea that learning and growing as a Christian is a lifelong journey?

## Whole-Life Discipleship

- LICC's concept of our 'frontline' – i.e., the places where we spent the majority of our time.
- **Tool 1** LICC's 6M's as one popular and helpful place to start thinking about what fruitfulness on our 'frontlines' looks like in practice.
  - Model Godly Character
  - Make Good Work
  - Minister Grace and Love
  - Mould Culture
  - Mouthpiece for Truth and Justice
  - Messenger of the Gospel
- **Tool 2** (see page 3): 'Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the Ends of the Earth' (Matt 28) – many people have used this symbolically to reflect on the widening spheres of life in which we belong/different groups we relate to.
- **Tool 3** (see pp.4-5): Four 'Fields' of Discipleship.
  - **Field 1** (our individual, inward life) - your personal, private relationship with God and rhythm of spiritual life (e.g., Matt 6.6)
  - **Field 2** (shared, inward life) - where we gather as church to worship, study, support and minister to one another (e.g., Acts 2.42-47)
  - **Field 3** (individual, outward life) - where we live out faith on our 'frontlines' beyond church (e.g., Col. 3.23)
  - **Field 4** (shared, outward life) - where we and other Christians work together to be 'good news' in word and deed in our society or community (e.g., Luke 10, Paul's missionary journeys)

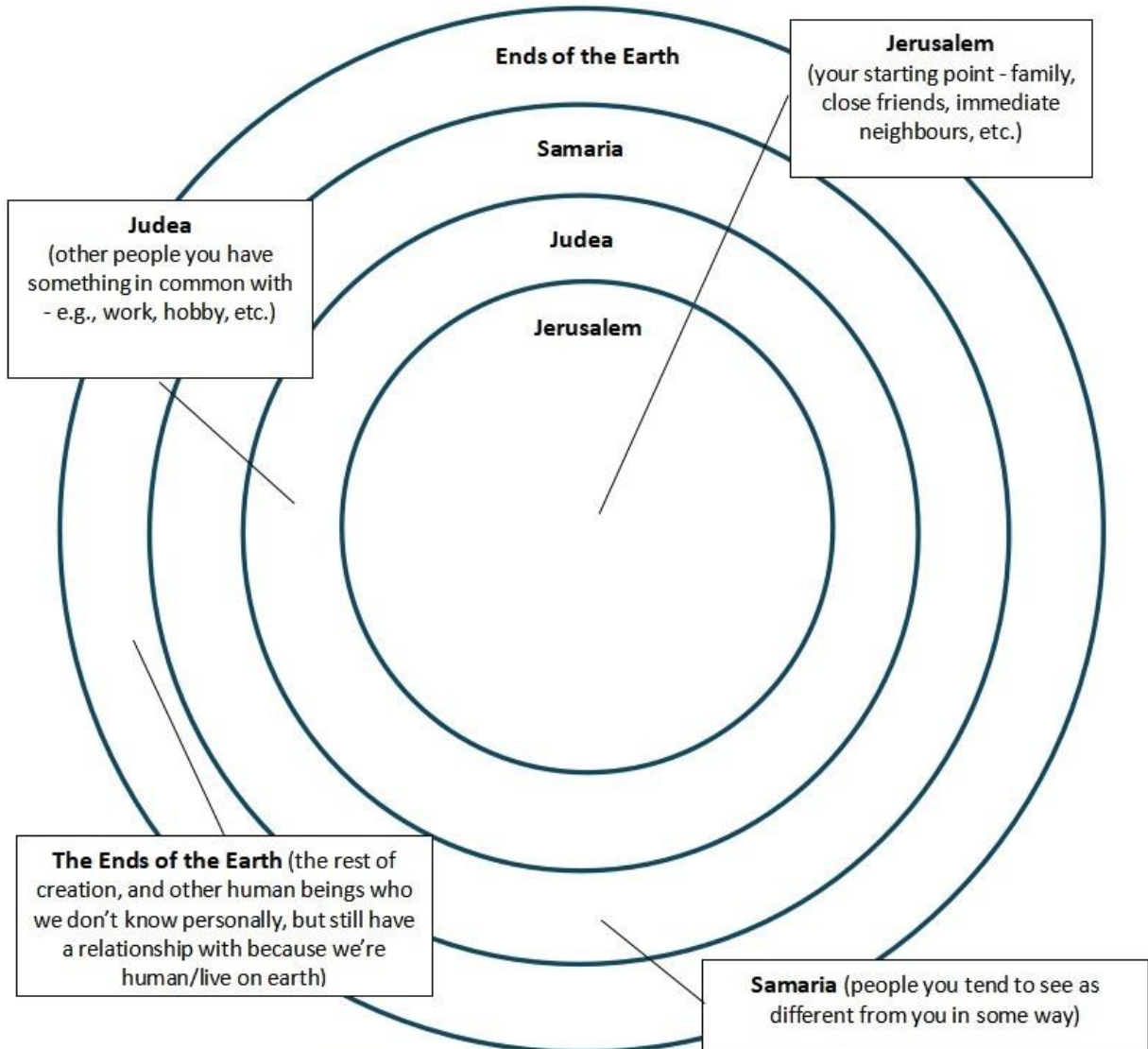
What do you think of the idea that our everyday lives are our 'frontlines' as Christians?

Which of LICC's 6M's do you most strongly relate to? Which one feels most challenging?

What different 'circles' do you belong to?

How helpful do you find this idea of four 'fields' of discipleship?

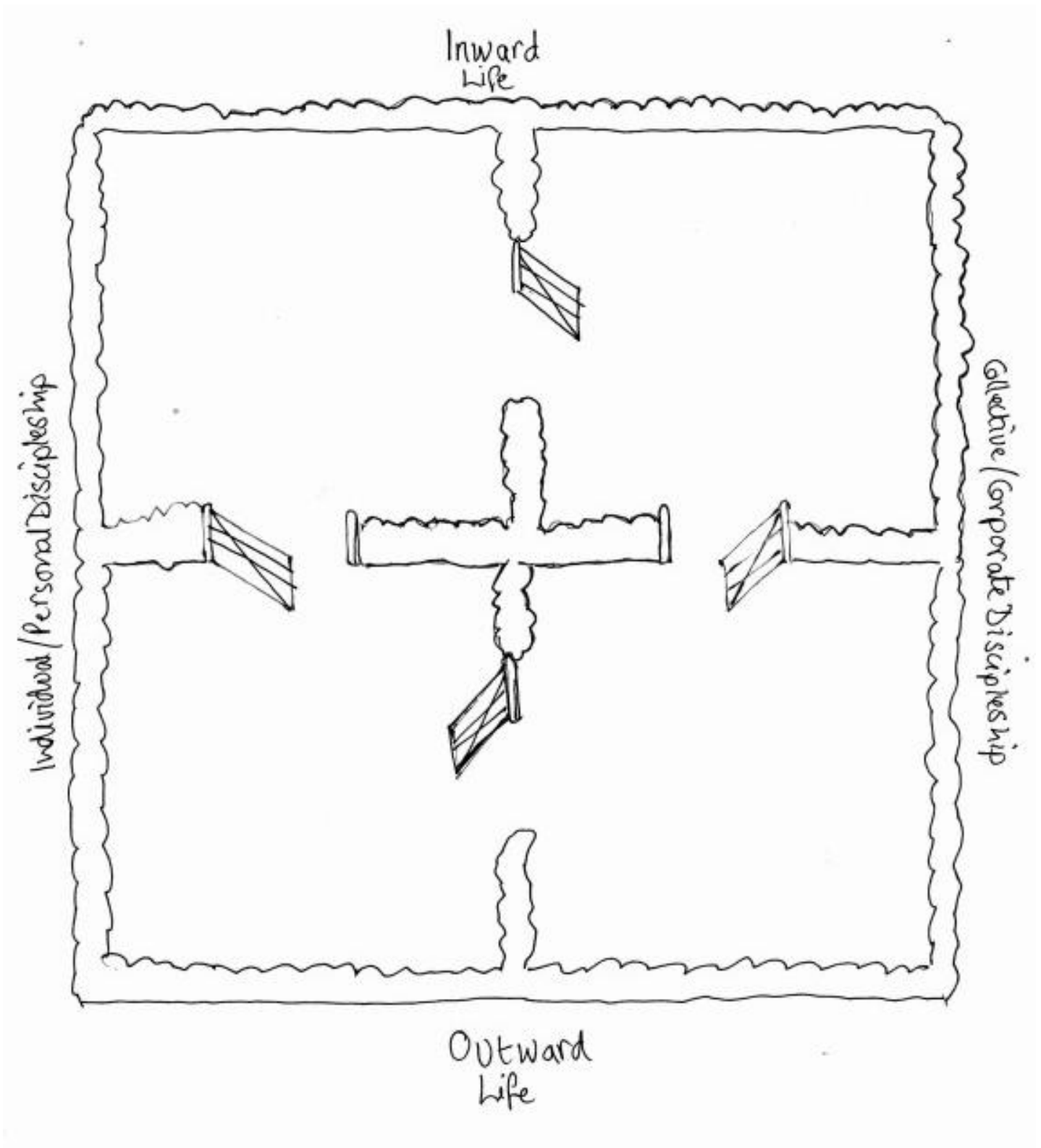
## Tool: Spheres of Christian Engagement



## Discipleship Questions - Circle

- Think about who goes in each ring of the circle, in your own life. Write them in.
- How could you pray regularly for the different groups you have written down here?
- How else do you seek to live out your faith in practical ways, in relation to each of these?
- Are any of the rings blank? How, in practice, could you engage in this sphere a little more?

## Tool: Four 'Fields of Discipleship'



Reflect on your life in relation to these four 'fields' - see questions overleaf.

## Discipleship Questions - Four Fields

### Three Ways of Using the 'Four Fields' Tool, and Reflective Questions for Each

1. To **map your understanding** of what Christian discipleship involves in practice.

- *If this grid reflects four important areas of Christian life, what sorts of things might we expect to see Christians doing in each of the areas?*

2. For **you as an individual (or as a small group)** to reflect on the balance of time and energy you are putting into each of the four areas.

- *Write into the grid the ways you are living out your faith in each of the four areas. Note whether these are regular or occasional.*
- *Which box looks busier? Where are you writing less? Does this surprise you?*
- *Does this reflect the current season of your life? Or do you think there's a gap to address here? Or an area where you feel God is nudging you to give more time or attention?*

3. For a **church leadership team**, you can use the four fields to evaluate how far you are equipping and supporting members of your congregation for discipleship across these four spheres.

- *Does your church's stated vision or mission talk about these four different aspects of discipleship? How far would you say these are known and owned by the congregation?*
  - *How far does your preaching and teaching address each of these four areas?*
  - *How far does your church's worship and prayer refer to each of these four areas?*
  - *How far are you intentionally equipping and supporting members of your congregation through formal or informal activity, for each of these four areas?*
  - *How far do your regular services and church activities give time and space to the two corporate areas? How far do they encourage/equip individuals for the two individual areas?*
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## Main Session Content 2: Through-Life Discipleship

- We're creatures who exist in time - faithful discipleship is about learning to be 'creatures who swim in time' (Jamie Smith). Ignoring this leaves us with 'nowhen' Christianity.
- **Discipleship Story** of the village of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon, rescuing Jews in the face of Nazi persecution, in the light of their sense of place in God's 'big story' and in response to Jesus' commands to love. How can we also be faithful in our times, in the same way?
- Where to start with 'through-life discipleship'? By recognising that all of us have a past, a present and a future.
- As disciples we learn to hold these three things together before God.
  - **Past:** being rooted in the big Christian story; cultivating habits of thankfulness for what God has done; lamenting sadness and hurts, repenting of sin.
  - **Present:** accepting God's sovereignty (we cannot control everything), but also being open, attentive and interruptible by God and others; seeing every moment as a gift; learning to trust for our 'daily bread' rather than be consumed by worry.
  - **Future:** Trusting God for the future; accepting we can't know what's coming; being strengthened by God's future promises; working for bigger, eternal purposes which shape our

## Questions and Space for Notes...

What is the value for Christians of reflecting on our past, present and future, and on the seasons and stages of our lives? What are the consequences of not doing so?

What most inspired or challenged you about the story of Le Chambon sur Lignon?

Do you tend to spend more time thinking about the past, the present or the future?

What do you think is a healthy balance for Christians here?

What are the dangers of being too past (or present, or future) orientated to the exclusion of the other two?

life today.  
(see also table overleaf)

**Philip Zimbardo and John Boyd’s six ‘time perspectives’ with biblical examples**

<b>Time Perspective</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Biblical Example</b>
Past-Positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding nourishment from your ‘roots’</li> <li>• Cultivating thankfulness for what we’ve received</li> <li>• Seeking to learn from the past</li> </ul>	<i>Psalm 136: ‘Give thanks to the Lord for he is good. His love endures forever...’</i>
Past-Negative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lamenting for the past</li> <li>• Wishing things had been different/you had done things differently</li> </ul>	<i>Lamentations 1: ‘I am in torment within, and in my heart I am disturbed, for I have been most rebellious’</i>
Present-Hedonistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Living in the present moment</li> <li>• Not worrying about tomorrow</li> </ul>	<i>Matthew 6.25-33: ‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life...’</i>
Present-Fatalistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling that there are things in life outside our control, and/or that we tend to make the same mistakes again and again</li> </ul>	<i>Ecclesiastes 1.3-18: ‘I have seen all things done under the sun; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind’.</i>
Future Life-Goal Oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focusing on achieving your goals in life and may sacrifice pleasures in the present to achieve them</li> </ul>	<i>Deuteronomy 6.1-3: ‘Hear, Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you...’</i>
Future Transcendent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trusting in a future which is ultimately in the hands of God – inc. life after death, end times</li> </ul>	<i>2 Corinthians 4.16-18: ‘Therefore we do not lose heart... we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen’.</i>

(adapted from Through-Life Discipleship Course by Ben Baker and Ian Jones)

**Through-Life Discipleship Questions - contd**

- What has strengthened and ‘fed’ you for a lifelong journey of discipleship?
- Has this changed throughout different stages of your life?
- Do you take time regularly for thankfulness and reflection on the past? (What could help you build this more strongly into your everyday life?)
- How much are you open and attentive to hearing God’s voice in the present moment? (directly, through prayer and the Bible, through others, through the stuff of daily life?). What might help you pay attention?
- How does being a Christian help you set good goals or priorities in life? What helps you work towards these?
- What part do God’s promises for the future play in giving you hope and strength for today? Is there a promise which is particularly important to you?
- How do you build a past, present and future focus into your personal rhythm of following Jesus?

- How can your church or group get the right balance of attention to both past, present and future?

## Practice/Tool to Try

### Personal Practice: The Examen

If contemporary thinkers can teach us something about our past, present and future selves, it's also worth saying that Christians have known this for centuries! One very simple, helpful practice for holding together past, present and future before God is the **examen**. The examen is a pattern of prayer developing by St Ignatius and his Jesuit order 500 years ago. It has become widely influential since. Many people pray the examen at the end of the day. It focuses on:

- Looking back (thanking God for what has been good and asking him to show us any areas where we need forgiveness)
- Looking to the present (asking for the Spirit to show us where God has been at work today)
- Looking to the future (asking God for help and guidance in what is to come tomorrow).

There are many good, free resources on praying the examen online. For starters, try...

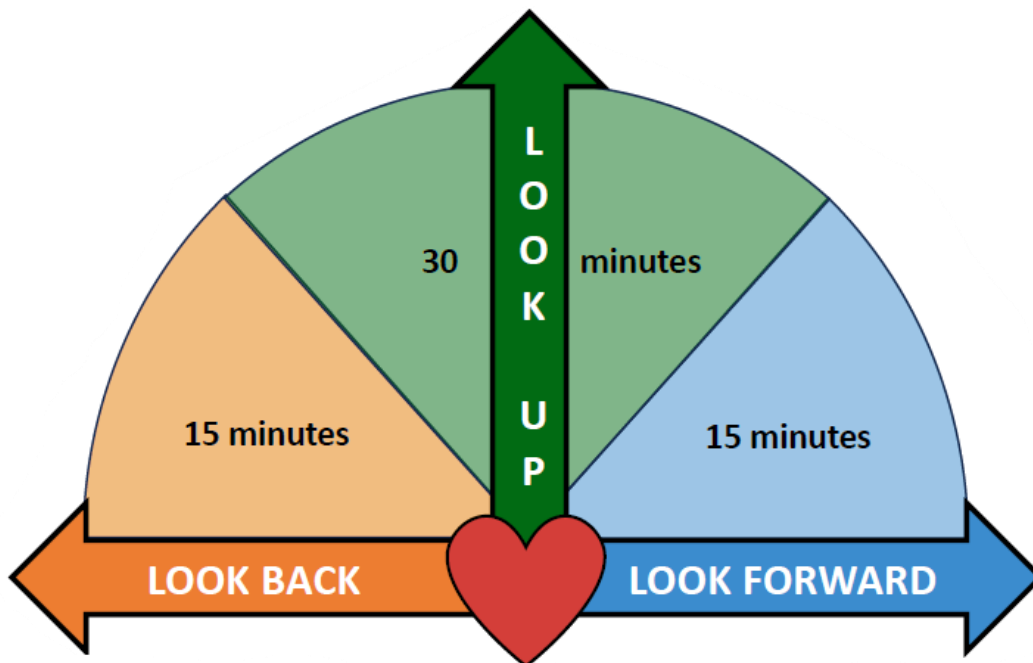
- Hallow: How to Pray the Ignatian Daily Examen (<https://hallow.com/blog/how-to-pray-the-examen/>)
- Jesuits in Britain: The Examen (<https://www.jesuit.org.uk/spirituality/examen>)
- Diocese of London fact sheet on Praying the Examen ([https://www.london.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Way-Of-Life\\_Individual\\_Examen.pdf](https://www.london.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Way-Of-Life_Individual_Examen.pdf))
- 24/7Prayer - How to Pray the Examen ([https://downloads.24-7prayer.com/prayer\\_course/2019/resources/pdfs/3%20How%20to%20Pray%20the%20Examen.pdf](https://downloads.24-7prayer.com/prayer_course/2019/resources/pdfs/3%20How%20to%20Pray%20the%20Examen.pdf))
- Fuller Seminary: Prayer of Examen [set of short films featuring a mother and baby, designed to accompany each stage of the examen] (<https://fullerstudio.fuller.edu/prayer-of-examen/>)

## Group practice: Look Back, Look Up, Look Forward

If the examen is most helpful as a *personal* practice, it's also possible to structure a discipleship *group* meeting so that we pay attention to what God is doing in our past, present and future. Various Christian organisations use a model of meeting similar to this one, in which the conversation is divided between...

- Time looking back (at the week or month just gone)
- Time looking up and around (in worship and learning, and noticing where God is at work)
- Time looking forward (praying, planning for what's to come, identifying areas where accountability might be helpful).

This shows timings for a one hour meeting, but you can extend each section for a longer meeting. You can also find various versions of this sort of meeting structure online.



### Looking Back

Could include...

- Pastoral check in: how have you been doing?
- What's been good, which we want to thank God for?
- What's been more challenging?
- Accountability check-in: how are you doing with goals/ issues you wanted to address at the end of last meeting?

### Looking Up and Around

Could include...

- Worship and opening the Bible and learning together
- Noticing where God is at work in our lives and in the world
- Noticing needs and opportunities (the world's and ours)
- Developing skills in discipleship

### Looking Forward

Could include...

- Pray about the week/period ahead
- Agreeing how to apply or practice what we're learning
- Identify specific individual or group plans, challenges or issues on which we'd each like some accountability for next time
- Any prep for next meeting

*Graphic created by Matt Bodinham, adapted and used with permission.*