

# Session 3:

## Becoming Whole Life and Through- Life Disciples

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

Head

Heart

**Hands**

#### **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."*

### Session Overview

- 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)

### Key Bible Passages

- Deuteronomy 6.1-3
- Lamentations 1
- Acts 2.42-47
- Psalm 136
- Matthew 6
- 2 Corinthians 4.16-18
- Ecclesiastes 3
- Luke 10
- Colossians 3

## Discipleship Story

The Yad Vashem holocaust memorial museum in Israel remembers many individuals who helped Jewish people escape the horrors of Nazi persecution. Amongst these ‘righteous non-Jews’, two whole village communities are commemorated. One of these is the small southern French community of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon. While the Vichy French government disgracefully collaborated with the Nazis in rounding up Jews, the villagers of Le Chambon hid thousands of persecuted Jewish children and adults from the authorities, and helped smuggle many more to safety. The rescuers were a religiously and politically diverse bunch. But some of the earliest and most influential to respond were the area’s Protestant pastors. Their response teaches us much about both the ‘timeless’ and ‘timely’ nature of Christian discipleship.

As a Protestant area in a largely Catholic country, local people had long been conscious of being a marginalised minority. Local people ‘knew their Bible intimately... [and] likened themselves to the persecuted people of Israel’, says the writer Caroline Moorhead. Local pastor Andre Trocmé, a key figure in the resistance effort, would regularly preach: ‘you will love the stranger, because you have been strangers in Israel.’<sup>1</sup> Seeing themselves as part of God’s ‘big story’ gave local people a basic background story to help them understand how they should respond in the present day. By itself, this would probably not have been enough, but Protestant leaders also helped people connect this ‘big story’ to everyday Christian action. The rescue efforts didn’t start with a top-down decision by a few leaders, but a series of small everyday choices. One refugee was welcomed, then another, and another. One villager later remembered: ‘we are morally conscious people. Our families did not think of themselves as doing good. They did what they already had done’.<sup>2</sup> They obeyed the timeless command of Jesus to love their neighbour – whoever they were.

The timeless commands of the Gospel, and the shape of the overarching Biblical story, came together in a more ‘timely’ response. As France fell to the Nazis, the area’s Protestant pastors issued a joint sermon, arguing: ‘the duty of Christians is to use the weapons of the Spirit to resist the violence that will be brought to bear’. This was a message ‘for such a time as this’, as the Book of Esther puts it. This was not simply a matter of everyday kindness – it became an urgent and timely calling for a generation. This in turn led to a set of increasingly sophisticated plans and systems designed to hide refugees, alert villager to snap inspections, and smuggle children out to Switzerland. Not everything went to plan. Several villagers were arrested and killed. But it’s estimated that at least 800 Jewish children and adults were hidden in the Le Chambon area during the war, and at least 2000 more were helped to freedom. In this inspiring story, I see the villagers of Le Chambon paying attention to several different dimensions of how we live as Christians within time and history. They pay attention to past history, to present calling and to building the future. Their understanding of God’s big story, Jesus’ everyday commands, and a strong sense of generational calling to resist evil helped them triangulate what God was calling them to do in the present. One important dimension of being disciples today is how we learn to live in time and history in a similarly faithful way, paying attention to God’s timeless and timely calls to us - and responding faithfully.

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<sup>1</sup> Caroline Moorhead, *Village of Secrets: Defying the Nazis in Vichy France* (2015), 105, 127.

<sup>2</sup> Moorhead, *Village of Secrets*, 339.

**Note to Enablers:** You can explore these different ways of thinking about Christian living in time and history further in the optional **Go Deeper: Following Jesus in Challenging Times** activity.

## Main Session Content (1) – Through-Life Discipleship

### A Lifelong Journey of Discipleship

Not many generations ago, a majority of UK children attended Sunday School. The numbers were large by today's standards, but a significant percentage finished their churchgoing in their teens. Confirmation was often seen as a sort of religious 'passing out parade' (much to the frustration of many vicars). With some exceptions, learning and growing in Christian faith was seen as something for children. In many churches, apart from very committed adults, only a minority of church members would take part more than very occasionally in any discipleship development beyond teenage.

Today, however, there's increasing recognition that Christian discipleship is 'through-life' as well as 'whole-life'. Being a 'through-life' disciple means paying attention to the fact that as disciples, we exist in time. We recognise that our discipleship is a life-long journey, but also one with different seasons, stages and turning points. Being a 'through-life disciple' means learning to pay attention and respond faithfully to God within the passing of time. There's so much more we could say about this here (some more ideas are offered in **Go Deeper: Using Time Faithfully**, and we'll look some more at what seems to help foster fruitful lifelong faith commitment in a future session). But perhaps the starting point is to recognise that we have a past, a present and a future. How we link our past, our present and our future together really matters for the shape of our discipleship.

### 'Nowhen' Christianity vs 'Keeping Time with the Spirit'

In his beautiful book *How to Inhabit Time*, the American theologian Jamie Smith talks about the need for Christian disciples to know 'what it means to be the sorts of creatures who... swim in the river of history'. 'A faithful Christian life', says Smith, 'is a matter of keeping time with the Spirit'. "'What do we do now?'" Smith says, 'is one of the fundamental questions of discipleship'.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, if we don't know where we've come from, or how our pasts have influenced us, we'll find it harder to 'read' the opportunities and challenges of the present moment clearly. And if so, we will struggle to face the future with hope, falling instead into despair or alternatively into wild conspiracy theories about the 'end times'. This sort of inability to read time Smith calls 'nowhen Christianity'. 'Nowhen' Christianity, says Smith, 'lacks the pastoral subtlety and nuance to minister to people in different seasons of life'.<sup>4</sup>

### How Jesus Lived in Time

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<sup>3</sup> J.K.A. Smith, *How to Inhabit Time: Understanding the Past, Present and Future, Living Faithfully Now* (2022), xiii, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, *How to Inhabit Time*, 8, 5, 7.

The good news for us is that our Father in Heaven has experience of living within time, when he sent his Son Jesus into the world. We can learn much from Jesus about how he held the past, the present and the future together in a healthy, balanced way.

- **The Past:** Jesus learned deeply about the Jewish religion in which he was rooted. So much so that, as a twelve year old, he could sit listening and asking questions with the teachers in the Temple, who were amazed by his understanding (Luke 2.41-52). Jesus' ministry was also evidently marked by gratitude. Jesus thanks the Father that what has been hidden from the wise has been revealed to little children (Matthew 11.25). Jesus thanks the Father for hearing him before the raising of Lazarus (John 11.41). Jesus gave thanks at the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 6.41), and at his last Passover meal with friends (Luke 24.30).
- **The Present:** The Gospels paint Jesus as someone who was fully present. On one hand, there's a strong sense of urgency and purposefulness in his ministry – he doesn't sit back passively and let life wash over him. Early on, he determines to preach around the towns of Galilee (Mark 1.36-28); at another point he firmly sets his face towards Jerusalem (Luke 9.51). However, urgency and purpose does not equal rush or hurry. Jesus is also highly **interruptible** – think about his response to the man lowered through the roof by friends (Mark 2.1-12), or the woman who touched his cloak (Mark 5.22-43). He was also **attentive** - open to hearing God's voice, noticing the people others overlooked, urged his hearers to pay attention to the signs of the times (Matthew 16.3).
- **The Future:** Jesus' ministry was **shaped by what he knew was to come:** his death and resurrection, but also God's bigger plan that the Son of Man would once again come, to judge the living and the dead at the inauguration of a new heaven and new earth. He was frank that **his disciples would face many uncertainties**, not knowing the full picture (Matthew 24.6). Only God knew the days and hours that future events would happen (Mark 13.32). Yet he also gave his disciples **enough of a vision** of the future for them to be encouraged (think of his teaching that 'in my Father's house there are many mansions and I am going to prepare a place for you' John 14.2-3). And enough of a vision that they would be prepared, urging his followers to be vigilant, and to keep watch (Matthew 25.1-13).

### Connecting our Past, Present and Future

**Note to Enablers:** this sub-section may be very interesting to a group who love to think and discuss, and are interested in ideas. However, if you think this material could be boring or confusing to your group, you can simply leave it out, or choose just one example to share.

What has just been said here about the importance of engaging with past, present and future is backed up in a lot of contemporary thinking. Here's one example from the world of education, and another from psychology.

- The Brazilian Catholic and activist **Paolo Freire** (1921-1997) was one of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century's most influential educators. He argued that the purpose of education was not primarily to learn facts or knowledge, but to liberate people (especially the poor) from what binds and oppresses them. Many Christians have found Freire's work helpful because we also believe in freedom -

freedom from the law of sin and death (Romans 8.1-2), and freedom from the ‘principalities and powers’ of this world and the spiritual realm (Ephesians 6.12). Paolo Freire says that one way in which the forces of injustice and oppression maintain their power is to seek to control our understanding of the past and future. Dictatorships, for example, use large propaganda machines to convince people that their current situation is all there is: there’s no alternative (or, all the alternatives are worse); things are the way they’ve always been, and will always be; nothing will change, so it’s pointless to struggle against the powers that be. But there is a way out. Freire encourages people to become curious about the past: why have things turned out the way they have done? If we become conscious about the ‘powers’ that have shaped our lives and our world, we recognise that our present situation is not inevitable, but open to change. If things have changed before, they can change again. This gives us hope for the future, and a sense of empowerment that we can bring about change.

- Psychologists **Philip Zimbardo** (1933-2024) and John Boyd spent years researching our attitudes to time. They suggest that there are six main ways of viewing our past, our present and our future. Each of us hold all of these in some combination or other. But the way we hold them together can significantly affect how we cope with new situations or life decisions. Although Zimbardo and Boyd aren’t Christians, to my knowledge, you can see each of these six time perspectives represented somewhere in the Bible:<sup>5</sup>

Time Perspective	Description	Biblical Example
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>

We are going to hold all of these time perspectives in one way or another. It’s not the case that some of them are ‘right’ and others are ‘wrong’. But Zimbardo and Boyd’s research

<sup>5</sup> Adapted from the Through-Life Discipleship course; original table and links to Bible passages by Ben Baker.

suggest that certain combinations of these ‘time perspectives’ seem particularly important for mental health, and strengthen us to be resilient for the changes and challenges of life:

- **Past-Positive:** People who cultivated a habit of gratitude, and sought to learn from the past, were generally more resilient than those who felt mired in regret. This isn’t to deny the impact of traumatic experience, or pretend bad things never happened. Sometimes past experience can need a great deal of careful and gentle untangling, with professional help. As psychologists, Zimbardo and Boyd recognise this only too well. But they also note that drawing positively on the past helps anchor us in the present, bringing us a degree of freedom and hope.<sup>6</sup>
- **(Moderately) Present-Hedonistic:** Zimbardo and Boyd also noticed that those who are open to the possibilities of the present moment, who treat it as a gift and an opportunity rather than a strait-jacket, have a greater sense of well-being than those who are fatalistic about the present and feel they have no control over their lives. They also had a greater sense of well-being than those who simply lived in the moment without any thought for the consequences of their actions.<sup>7</sup>
- **(Moderately) Future-Oriented:** Zimbardo and Boyd’s research also highlighted the potential value of positive life goals and future hope – including hope in a divine plan. However, a future focus can also become problematic if it leads us to become obsessed with micro-planning, and end up in despair if our goals don’t work out. It can also be problematic if we become so fixated on the future that we forget to appreciate the present - or if we believe that the future is something we just have to wait passively for it to appear.<sup>8</sup>

## Discipleship Questions

- 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?

## Practice/Tool to Try

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<sup>6</sup> Philip Zimbardo and John Boyd, *The Time Paradox: The New Psychology of Time* (2008), 86-98.

<sup>7</sup> Zimbardo and Boyd, *The Time Paradox*, 105-111.

<sup>8</sup> Zimbardo and Boyd, *The Time Paradox*, 149-60.

## 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 those listed in the **Resources** section.

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

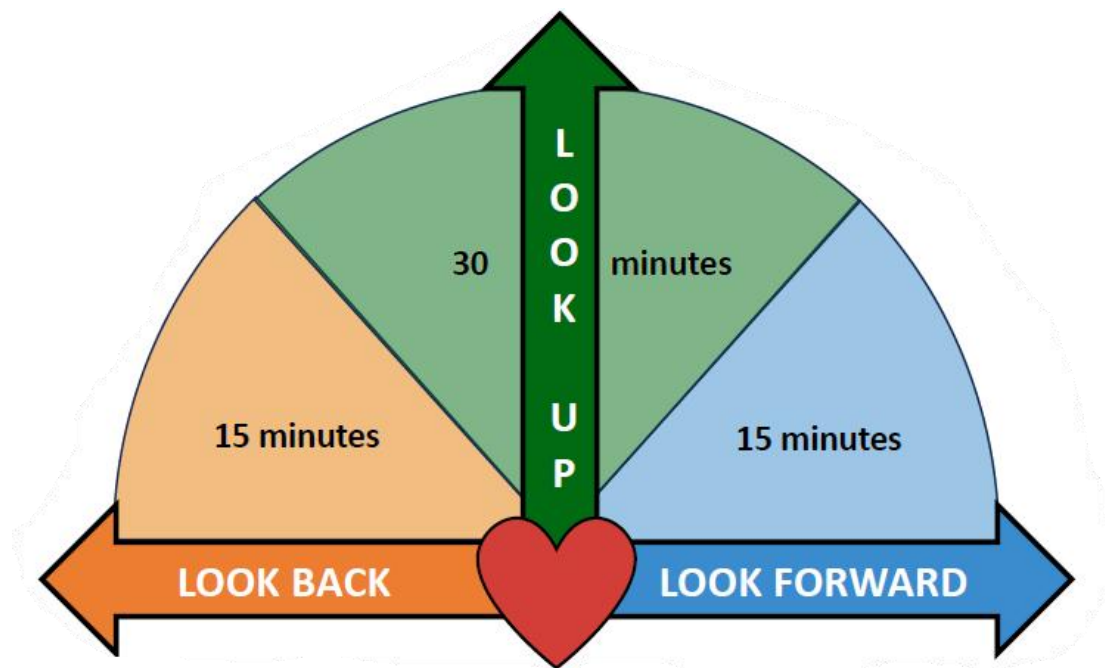
If the examen is most helpful as a *personal* practice, it's also possible to structure a discipleship *group* meeting so that we pay attention to what God is doing in our past, present and future. Various Christian organisations use a model of meeting similar to the one on the next page,<sup>9</sup> 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. See this session's **Resources** section for some variations of this model available online.

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<sup>9</sup> Semi-circle graphic by Matt Bodinham, used with permission.



### 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

## Main Session Content (2): Whole-Life Discipleship

So far in this session we've explored the 'when' of discipleship; i.e., how we follow Jesus moment by moment, day by day, week by week and throughout all the changes and transitions of life. Now we are turning to the 'where' of discipleship: where do we follow Jesus? In what places?

Perhaps sometimes in church we've been guilty of focusing much of our attention on what goes on inside the church building, on Sunday mornings. That's important of course. But for Christians, the WHOLE of life matters to God. We don't separate out the 'religious' and 'secular' bits of life into different boxes. In Jesus, God and Human Being, the spiritual and the material were brought together in one body. John says: 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth' (John 1.14). If God brought these things together, who are we to separate them?

As a result, we expect to see God present and active throughout all of life, not just in church. As Christ-followers, we pay attention to this, and respond in the same way, d grace. I love Eugene Peterson's contemporary language version of Romans 12.1: 'So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering' (*The Message*). Where are we disciples? The answer is: everywhere! But what does that look like in practice - for ourselves, and for others?

The London Institute of Contemporary Christianity (LICC) have produced many helpful resources to support Christians living out their faith in everyday life. Assuming an average of 120 waking hours every week, even busy church folk don't generally spend more than 10 of these hours in organised church activity. Most of our time is spent with families, friends, work, neighbours, shopping, online, etc. These places are our 'frontlines'.<sup>10</sup> So how can we be fruitful for the Kingdom of God on these 'frontlines'? LICC's have suggested six 'Ms' which can help us understand what this looks like in practice (see [Resources](#) list for more on these):

- **Model Godly Character** (how are we displaying the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, humility, self-control?)
- **Make Good Work** (how does our work reflect God's work - order, joy, beauty, creativity, etc.?)
- **Minister Grace and Love** (how do we go the 'extra mile' for the people we meet?)
- **Mould Culture** (how do we strengthen what is good, and minimise what is toxic?)
- **Mouthpiece for Truth and Justice** (how do we act fairly, wisely and courageously to tackle what is unjust?)
- **Messenger of the Gospel** (how do we appropriately share the hope that we have in Jesus?)<sup>11</sup>

As LICC's Six M's are already quite well-known and easy to find online, here are TWO further tools that might help us think about our Christian commitment throughout all the spheres of our lives.

**Note to Enablers:** Depending on time available, you can explore both, or just focus on one. The 'Four Fields' tool is (as far as we're aware) unique to Discipleship Enablers, so we'd be particularly interested to know if you found it useful!

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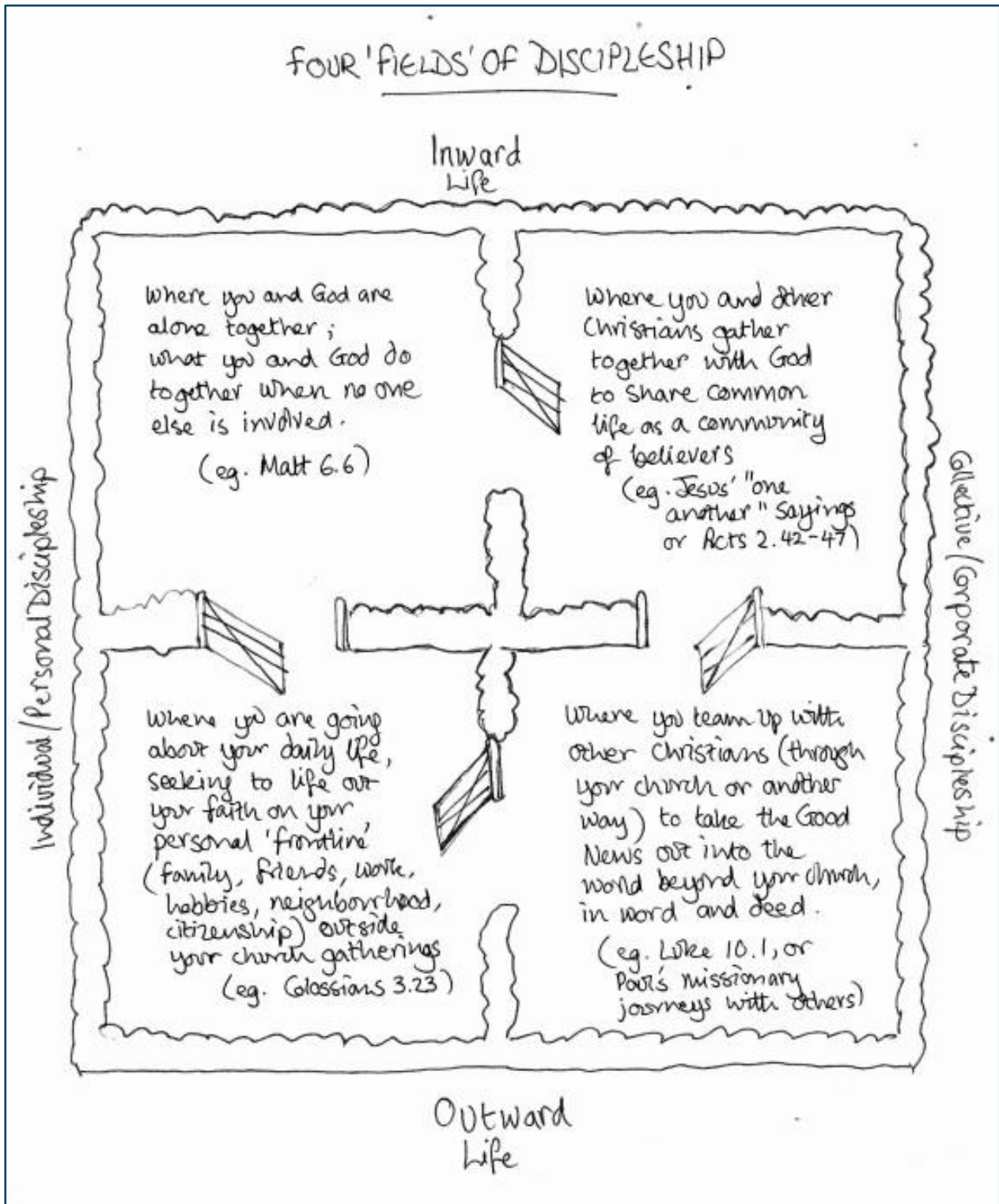
<sup>10</sup> Neil Hudson, *Imagine Church: Releasing Whole-Life Disciples* (IVP, 2012), 55-60.

<sup>11</sup> Summarised from <https://licc.org.uk/resources/6ms/>

## Tool/Practice to Try

### 1. Four 'Fields' of Discipleship

One way of approaching whole-life discipleship is to think in terms of following Jesus through four 'fields', which each of us move between in our everyday lives. (You could picture a farm divided up into four actual fields, with hedges and gates between each of them. Imagine yourself walking across the farm between these four fields). The point of this tool is to help you reflect on how you are following Christ in each of these 'fields'. The fields are:



Of course, if it helps, you can think about your life in more than four 'fields' - there's nothing magic about the number four here. But four is enough to reflect some of the different spheres we spend time in. Four is also a simple enough number of things to hold in our heads.

Our starting point here is with a couple of basic assumptions about the shape of discipleship:

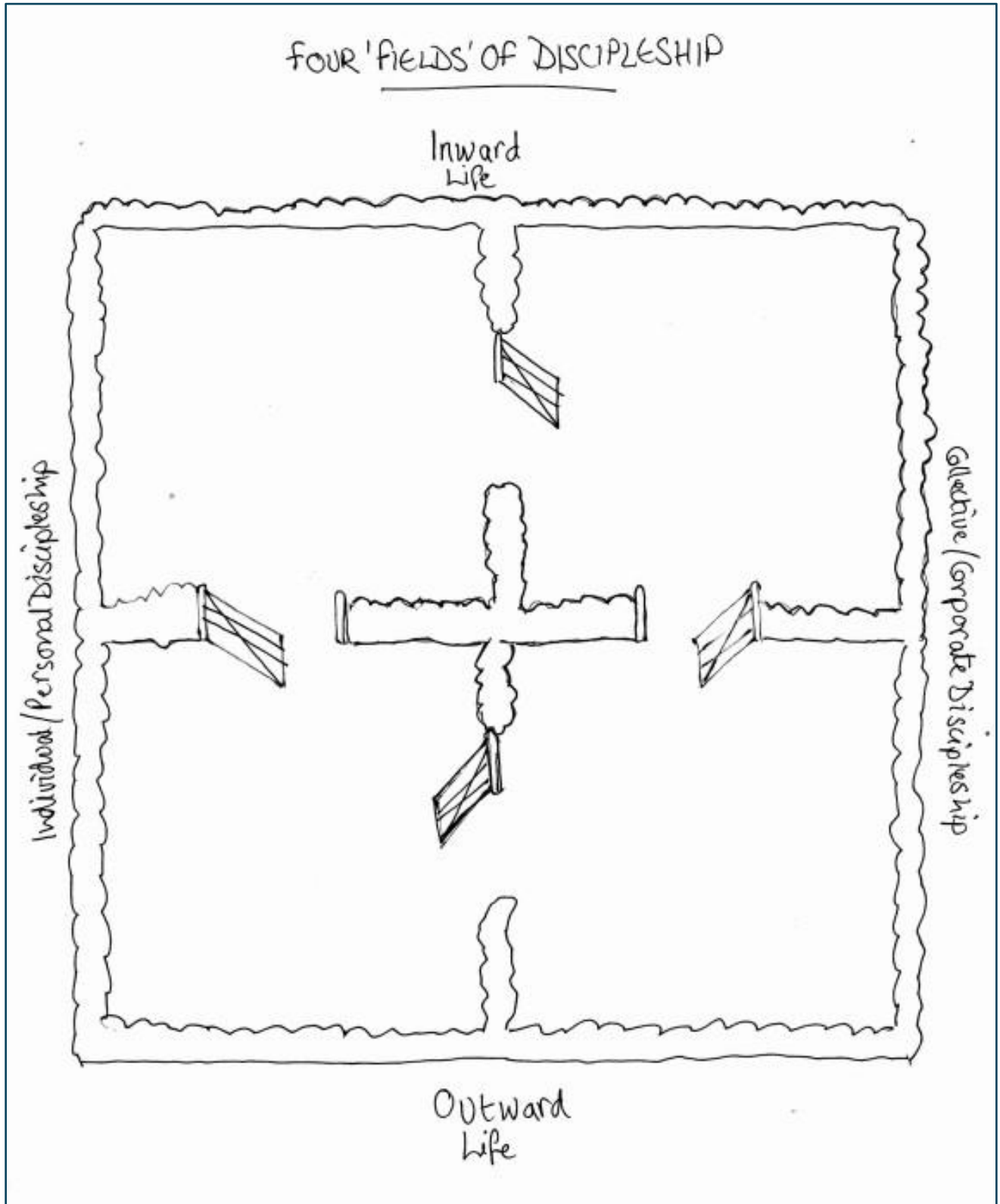
1. **Discipleship is both individual and collective:** following Jesus is always a personal choice; we can't simply delegate it to others. But equally there are no 'lone ranger Christians': being 'members together of the Body of Christ' is essential to authentic discipleship.
2. **Discipleship is both inward- and outward-facing:** John Wesley (founder of Methodism) often talked about Christian life in terms of both 'works of piety' (by which he meant practices which allow God's grace to flow into us and transform us) and 'works of mercy' (our outward acts of love in the world - for example, sharing the Gospel, showing practical compassion, working for justice, caring for creation).

The 'inward' and 'outward' parts of our Christian life can be lived both when we're acting alone, and when we're acting with others. This gives us four 'fields' or dimensions of life with God.

Let's look at each 'field' in a bit more detail, with an example Bible passage:

Field	Description	Example Bible Passage	In practice this might look like...
1: Individual, Inward	Where you and God are alone together; what you and God do together when no one else is watching or involved.	<i>'But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you' (Matt. 6.6).</i>	Developing a rhythm of personal, private prayer, study, meditation, retreat, etc.
2: Corporate, Inward	Where you and other Christians gather together with God to share common life as a community of believers.	<i>The 'one another' teachings of Jesus, and/or Acts 2: 42-47: 'They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to the breaking of bread and to prayer', etc.</i>	Corporate worship, Bible study groups, fellowship. Encouraging and building one another up in love. Discovering everyone's particular role, ministry or gifts to serve the congregation.
3: Individual, Outward	Where you are going about your daily life seeking to live out your faith within your family, friends, workplace, hobbies, neighbours, as an individual citizen of the UK, etc. outside your church community.	<i>'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord' (Col. 3.23)</i>	Sharing our faith as individuals, performing acts of love and service for others, choosing to 'act justly and love mercy'.  This is about being 'fruitful on our frontlines'. LICC's 6M's offer a good summary of the ways every individual Christian can live out their faith in daily life (see below).
4: Corporate, Outward	Where you team up with other Christians (through your church or another way) to take the Good News out into the world beyond your church in word and deed.	<i>'After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them out two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go' (Luke 10.1)</i>	Taking part in your church's (or other shared Christian) evangelistic initiatives, community projects, food banks, charity collections, passion plays, local church partnerships with a global church partner, etc.

Use this blank copy of the 'four fields' to reflect on your life currently, using the questions on the next page. You can do the activity EITHER individually, OR separately in a group and compare your responses, OR as a group activity to reflect on the life of your church or small group. You can use this grid in any of these three possible ways, but don't try to do all three at once on the same sheet - or it'll get very confusing!



## 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.

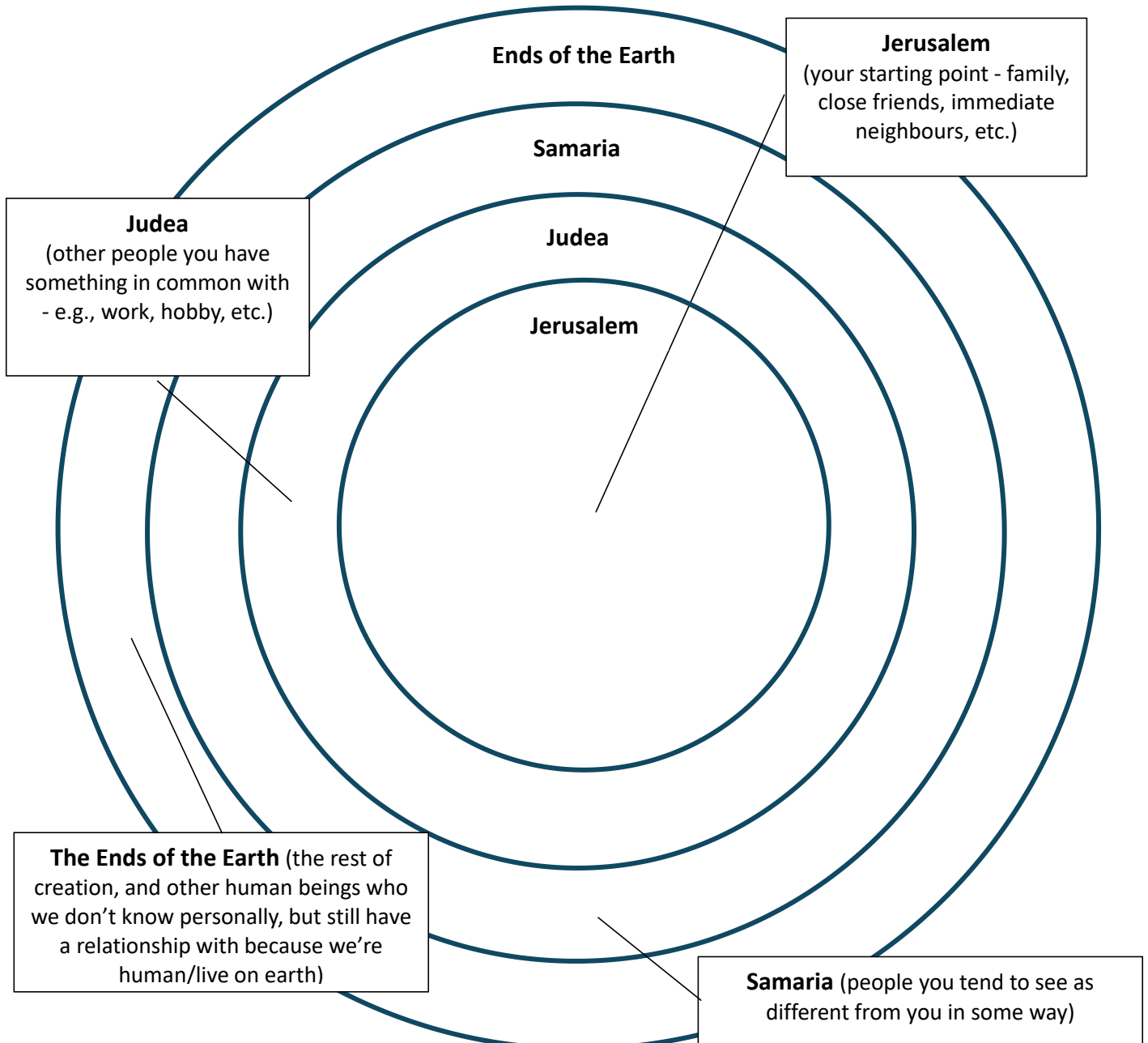
- *Write into the grid the ways you are living out your faith in each of the four areas. Note whether these are regular or occasional.*
- *Which box looks busier? Where are you writing less? Does this surprise you?*
- *Does this reflect the current season of your life? Or do you think there's a gap to 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?*

## 2. Circles of Belonging

Here's a different way of thinking about the different places in which we follow Christ. In Acts 1.8, just before Jesus ascends to heaven, he commissions his disciples to go and be his witnesses 'in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth'. Each of these sees the disciples move in wider and wider circles in the service of God. The verse has also been an inspiration for missionaries and writers on mission. They see in this a metaphor or picture of the different spheres of belonging we can move in as Christians. Various versions of this are available online, each labelled a bit differently, but is one possible version to play with:



### 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?

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## Enabling Tips

### Tips for using the 'Whole-Life Discipleship' activities:

- None of these activities are about assigning individual spiritual disciplines and practices exclusively to one box or another. For example, prayer should be a feature of the Christian's life in all four spheres. Instead, the aim is to offer a simple way of reflecting on the different dimensions of discipleship and the time, energy and attention you are giving to each (or equipping others to live out).
- None of the different boxes or spheres are more important than the others (although if you are not investing in your relationship with God and other Christians, you will become spiritually malnourished). However, there's no expectation here that we will be giving equal amounts of time and energy to all of these different dimensions, all of the time. There are times and seasons in both our individual lives and our shared life as a church/group. But if one or more areas are mostly/entirely blank, and have been for a while, that may suggest an imbalance to address.
- The amount of activity you note down under any heading doesn't necessarily say anything about the depth of your discipleship or how fruitful that activity is. More activity doesn't necessarily equal greater maturity! Nor is this about beating yourself up for what you're not doing. The point is simply to reflect on your current life, and invite God's guidance for the future.
- It's possible that not every single aspect of your Christian life will fit neatly under any of the headings. Don't sweat it - real life is messy, and that's OK.

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## Resources

### Through-Life

#### Websites/Web Resources

- **Vibrant Faith** is a US-based organisation which has done lots of research into what helps foster lifelong faith: <https://vibrantfaith.org/>
- The **Growing Faith Foundation** is the Church of England's own initiative sharing research and good practice in fostering lifelong faith amongst children and young people: <https://www.nse.org.uk/growing-faith-foundation>
- The C of E's **Church Support Hub** contains much research, good practice examples and how-to guides around a variety of aspects of mission and discipleship. Search for different life

events (e.g., baptisms, funerals) or seasons of the year (e.g., Christmas, Easter):

<https://churchsupporthub.org/>

- This session and **Session 2: God's Story and Ours** both touch on our own personal Christian journeys. In 2013-14 Ben Baker and Ian Jones (St Peter's Saltley Trust) created a four-session course called *Through-Life Discipleship*, week 1 of which featured a similar 'timeline' activity to the discipleship journey map offered here. You can download the whole course free here: <https://throughlifediscipleship.weebly.com/resources.html>

## Books

- Caroline Moorhead, *Village of Secrets: Defying the Nazis in Vichy France* (2015) [the story of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon]
- Sarah Brush, *The Way through the Trees: An Introduction to Faith Development* (2026) [or in 'how do people grow?']
- David Hilborn and Matt Bird, *God and the Generations: Youth, Age and the Church Today* (2002)
- J.K.A. Smith, *How to Inhabit Time: Understanding the Past, Present and Future, Living Faithfully Now* (2022)
- John Swinton, *Becoming Friends of Time: Disability, Timefulness and Gentle Discipleship* (2017)
- Philip Zimbardo and John Boyd, *The Time Paradox: The New Psychology of Time that will Change your Life* (2009) [not a Christian book, but draws some interesting conclusions about gratitude for the past, openness in the present and hope for the future].

## Resources on Praying the Examen (from a range of Christian traditions):

- 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 factsheet 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))
- 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/>)

## Resources on Structuring a Group Meeting using Look Back, Look Up, Look Forward:

- CRU: Three Thirds Discipleship Process: <https://campus.cru.org/my-campus/three-thirds-discipleship-process/>
- Disciplepair: Discipleship Meeting Agenda Template: <https://www.disciplepair.com/blog/discipleship-meeting-agenda-template>

## Whole-Life

It is very difficult to suggest a small selection of resources since whole-life discipleship is, by definition, about the whole of life! There are a number of organisations working with particular life stages, generations and transition points, some working with those in employment, others working with families. Here are some general resources. Please ask for suggestions on more particular topics!

### Books

- Neil Hudson, *Imagine Church: Releasing Whole-Life Disciples* (2012).

### Small Group Courses

- LICC's *Life on the Frontline*, *Fruitfulness on the Frontline* and *Growing on the Frontline*

### Resources

- Everyday Faith – Church of England resource hub of prayers, reflections, resources and stories: <https://www.churchofengland.org/faith-life/exploring-faith/everyday-faith>
- **Fruitfulness on the Frontline ‘The 6MOT’ Tool:** [https://licc.org.uk/app/uploads/2021/11/6MOT\\_updated\\_2112021.pdf](https://licc.org.uk/app/uploads/2021/11/6MOT_updated_2112021.pdf) [good free tool for thinking about what kind of ‘good fruit’ we are called to produce on our ‘frontlines’]
- [Whole-Life Worship Songs - playlist by LICC Ltd. | Spotify](#)
- **The Kingdom at Work Project Handbook:** <https://www.kingdomatworkproject.com/> [free, six-step guided journey to exploring the signs of God’s Kingdom in your workplace, and taking practical steps to reshaping your workplace around Kingdom values. Created by CHRISM (Christians in Secular Ministry), based on an idea by David Clark].

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## Go Deeper

Some more material for you to explore the ‘when’ and ‘where’ of discipleship further

- Following Jesus in Challenging Times (tool/practice)
- Christians and Time (15 minute read)
- More Ideas for Exploring the ‘When’ of Discipleship (10 minute read)
- Simple Strategies for ‘Reading the Signs of the Times’ (Tool/Practice) [still under development]