

# NEW LOVE NEW COURAGE

Real encouragement to talk the walk again

## TOPICS

1. The Diamond in Me
2. Keeping your faith  
ALIVE
3. Invest
4. MMMotivations
5. Gospel in One Hand



# 1. The Diamond in Me

by John Mallison and Ian Robinson

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## GOAL

To frame a simple version of my journey in Christ so that I am more clear about what I offer.

## STARTING ACTIVITY

We are going exploring. We are going to look for the 'treasure in the jars of clay'. We begin with the map of a journey. Look at the map of middle earth. You may or may not know the stories from LORD OF THE RINGS, but for this exercise please put that out of your mind. In this exercise it is a map of life's journey. Draw on the map a road, decide for yourself where it starts, put some forks in the road, some high points, see where it crosses a difficult ridge and reaches a watershed moment, see some low points, see where it wades a river or two and where it is heading. You will come back to this map.

## MY FAITH STORY

### Q: Individual Work:

Make some brief notes based on the following:

(You will not be expected to share all of the notes you make.)

### How did I become a Christian?

OR if that question does not fit

### Why am I still a Christian?

- How it happened and what hindered it from happening earlier
- What or who helped me
- How I felt about it.
- Times of doubt or stumbling
- What is making a difference for me now

### Highlights of My Particular Journey

Joys, Miracles, Challenges, Trials

God's faithfulness

Growth in

assurance of God's acceptance / love

understanding God

welcoming and loving others  
feeling comfortable with myself  
ability to help others

### Failures

- dealing with rejection and inadequacy
- experiences of rebellion, repentance / forgiveness
- Growing appreciation of Jesus (relationship to)
- who He is
- what He has done/is doing for me
- some early ideas that have changed now
- Changes in me as a person

### Looking back on it now

- Look over your notes and underline a few points which stand out as high points. These are your diamonds. It may not be dramatic, it may be quite ordinary.
- On the map of the road, next to any aspect which corresponds to your journey with Christ write a couple of words which describe your experience.
- Try to imagine that you are seeking to share your faith with a not-yet-Christian in say, two minutes. Describe how you find your diamonds. What of the above would you briefly cover?

Write it out in no more than a half of a page.

### GROUP WORK:

1. Ground rules are stated: We are 'here to hear' - to give the gift of listening carefully to each other and to help each other come to clarity. It is not the time to fix up someone else's theology.
2. In not more than three minutes, let each group member share their faith story. Do not organize it. Each one must bring themselves forward when ready. Long waits don't hurt.
3. *(If someone is not ready on this day to do this, then acknowledge that, thank them for their presence for others, offer to support them in this task on another occasion when they are ready, and leave it at that. Don't probe or signal disapproval, you don't know what it is.)*
4. Have someone in the group time each person's input.
5. After each one has shared, thank them by name and all applaud them for telling it.
6. Avoid discussion until all have shared.
7. Anyone may ask to clarify any thing that you did not understand. Affirm what you have heard. Only discuss what could have been said more clearly to give voice to the person's own story.
8. Ask at the end how it is has felt for them to do this process. What they have gained or learned?
9. Finish the time by praying for each other, each in turn prays for the person next to them. Pray specifically and differently for each one, in terms of what each has shared.
10. Refer everyone to the 'when you are alone' part of the exercise, below

## **FURTHER THINKING - WHEN YOU ARE ALONE**

As you look back on your faith journey, and on the exercise of sharing that story in just a few minutes, how has it made you feel? Maybe you re-discovered something of your first love that you had forgotten? Maybe you feel strangely distant from it all. Or Thankful? Maybe you feel a longing for more of God? Maybe you feel lots of different things?

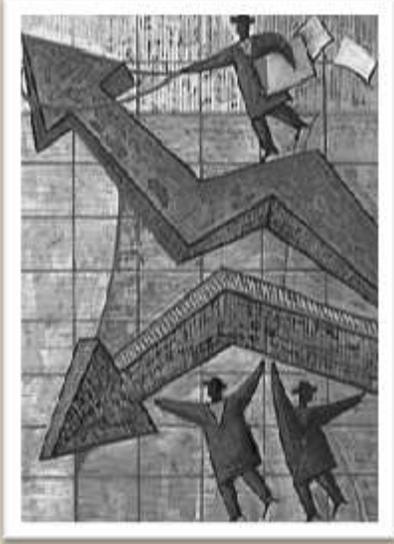
Speak to God honestly about it and quietly listen for what he says to you.

Who would you be able to talk this over with?

*Use this page for your thoughts*







## 2. Keeping your Faith ALIVE

### GOAL

To highlight the ways that our faith can keep its vitality.

Faith goes through times of stale and refreshment, like any relationship. It is during times of refreshment that we are most infectious.

A faith that is **ALIVE** is...

**Authentic** – comes from the heart

**Liberating** – brings freedom and hope

**Infectious** - can be shared with others

**Vital** - keeps alive and growing, not in a rut

**Enthusiastic** – as though Jesus really is the best

### 1. PERSONAL REFRESHMENT

#### Key Question

#### 1 How has your faith changed over the years?

For example:

- in the practices you keep,
- in the values you think that are most important,
- in the beliefs you may think are of less importance than you once felt?

*Leader begins by sharing their own examples.*

NOW REFLECT...

Are all the changes you named a change for the better?

Are there trends that have emerged that seem to go with a person's life stage?

What changes have been brought about by changes around you in the social trends?

#### Key Question2

#### Tell of a time when you felt that your faith was being refreshed?

For example:

- someone you met,
- something you read,
- an experience,
- sacraments,
- Bible reading,
- A group you belonged to.

*Leader tells one of their own examples.*

*List the ways that people have received refreshment.*

Ask the group to look at the list of refreshment.

- What was it that actually 'refreshed' ?
- With all these avenues of refreshment available to us, is there something here that you can do to refresh your faith again? How can you begin?
- What baggage might weigh you down? Keep Your Faith Alive

## **2. COMMUNITY REFRESHMENT**

Meditation: **HERE AND NOW**

We can be more fully with God in the here and now .

Many of us carry in our head the feelings and the picture of another time, another preacher, another music, another place and other people. It sits in the head-space called "what a church should be".

Can you recall one such story in yourself? Bring it to mind. It was probably both good and bad. Yes?

Again **now** it is both good and bad. Good because it could be a source of life and thanks to God. Bad because you are here now! It may be constraining your ability to love the ones you are with or to be present in what God is doing with you in the here and now.

For example, do you keep looking elsewhere for better leaders? For more books? For better music leader? For a youth leader? OR is it a style preference - for more enthusiasm or more quiet or more sophistication or more simplicity?

Bring one of those things to mind now. Picture yourself taking this up in your hand. Feel how precious it is to you. Feel in your hand the heavy weight of goodness that it has been to you.

Now lay it down, and turn around. Standing there with your back to it, recall how it has been good to you, it has been transforming, it is within you.

So now you can go forward without it.

You can be more fully with God in the here and now.

DISCUSSION – how did you feel during that meditation? What did you gain?

PRAY and give thanks for your church — go for it! How can we be sources of vitality for each other? How can we grow our own people into leadership?

## **CONCLUSION**

An exciting future awaits us as we grow and go in God.

As we welcome that new life, let us share our enthusiasm for life with others.  
 As we cross the hard places of that journey, let us welcome the discomfort,  
 listen and learn from it as well, and share our openness with others.

**Prayer:**

Lord God we are journeying with too much baggage. We want to take  
 only you into the delightful discomforts and challenges of the future.  
 Help us to live in your vitality, and escape the traps of religion.  
 In Jesus name, Amen

**FURTHER THINKING: STUDY THIS DIAGRAM**

**How does an Australian church nurture ongoing vitality?**

From long term research by the *National Church Life Survey*



- Ask yourself for each one of the twelve factors in the diagram, is that us? Who else would agree with us/disagree with us.
- Notice the four sectors/colours of the box. What percentage (roughly) of our time and energy and money goes to furthering each of these four sectors? Are we happy with that going forward?
- *NOTE: NCLS has questionnaires you could use to become more secure in your answers.*
- How could we use this diagram (informed by website information) as a basis of our forward planning?

<http://www.ncls.org.au/>



## 3. Invest

### Goal

To explore some ways to invest in ongoing communication.

Where do we begin to do the things that help us to share our faith? How can we keep going long enough? It is a form of investment.

These five 'invest' exercises explore those feelings and provide many ideas that may help you long term.

### True Vitality

- Enthusiasm is infectious. Name anything you are actually enthusiastic about (*list in column one*) It doesn't much matter what it is.
- Tell of a time when you shared it with someone else, eg. You showed someone else how to prune a fruit tree? Think about how shared your enthusiasm. What did you do that helped? What hindered?

*Leader will go first with their own example. List everyone's responses on the board in three columns – Enthuse-helps-hinders. Go until nearly everyone has shared.*

### Next step

- If I rub out the first column, what words on the remaining lists describe our church/community?
- What qualities of community do people like to be around?
- Who do you think contributes these qualities to your faith community?

*Try to encourage insight here, 'black and white' will not be helpful.*

### Cross a barrier today

From your own worlds and not from this group, tell a story of a group or family where there has been an unspoken agreement not to cross a racial boundary, a hierarchical distance in authority, a difference in religion, or an old argument. It is usually seen when doing things in such a way that certain persons cannot feel part of it. Alternatively look for where certain persons 'opt out' or are 'never there' and you will have it.

Q: What are some other ways that we create or maintain these barriers?

*Write them on the board.*

NOW

Q: Think of an act of hospitality or of beauty that will reach across that barrier, either an icebreaker or an ongoing relational forum.

*Leader will go first with their own example.  
List these on a second column on the board.*

NOW

Q: Looking at the two lists from other parts of our lives, which sorts of hospitality, icebreakers, ongoing forum or 'distance/boundary making are evident in your church community? Any more ideas of what can be done?

## Communicate Again

Why don't people listen? People don't listen because they have a lot going on in their life and in their head. Everything simply has to be filtered. Saying it to them once or in only one way will never work. They cannot possibly give you all their attention.

Let's go back and name again the thing you are already enthusiastic about doing (in question A). Here is an exercise in restating what we think with a changing emphasis each time in these four different ways:

**Information** — through facts and main points of principle.

**Imagination** — through word-pictures or a story.

**Inspiration** — through sharing feelings and meaning.

**Invitation** — to act, to decide, choose, change.

Q1: write a sentence about the thing you are enthusiastic about.

*Leader will go first with their own example.*

Now, write only the information, leaving out all emotion or anything else.

Now, write it now with imagination, use pictures or word pictures so that someone else can see themselves doing it.

Now, write it as inspiration, share your feelings in doing it, what it might mean for them to do it with you.

Finally, write it as invitation, asking them to change, decide or act in a next step way.

Q2: Write a sentence about your faith, answering this question: "Why am I still a Christian?" (from 'My Spiritual Autobiography' in this booklet? Now do the same exercise as Q1 with this sentence.

## DISCUSSION

What have you gained from this exercise?

## Talk Their Language

This part of the *Invest* exercise will help you to speak in imaginative and fresh ways to communicate the story of Jesus. We need to speak in the language of our listener. We forget how religious language can be strange. We can get stuck in our own religious bubble.

We need fresh ways to express the faith, to translate it, as it were, into other thought-forms.

Try these as an exercise to brainstorm together:

### Q1. CHANGE THE FRAME

Describe your faith in a one minute sentence, not in terms of 'salvation' or 'spirituality' but in terms of : 'spiritually **healthy**', or 'the **art** of living', or 'an honest **truth**'.

*Leader will go first with their own example.*

### Q2. PASS THE PARTICIPLE

In this game, we pretend that biblical translation English and normal English are two different languages (well, I know, they often are). Take Mark chapter one, and pass it around the room. Instead of 'reading a verse' at a time as it goes around, each one has to translate one verse, but not use any of the phrases or biblical language. If you slip up, everyone else says 'Baaah'. All right, you can keep the name 'Jesus'. Keep it going until everyone has had at least two turns at translation.

## DISCUSS

What have you gained from this exercise?

## How are you really?

This simple powerful exercise will make you a person who cares and a better conversationalist. It has two parts.

### CARING ABOUT YOUR NEIGHBOUR

Instead of asking 'how are you?' or 'how was your weekend?' try

**'how are you really?'**

or

**'how are you today?'**

- What do you think will be the effect of asking in this way? *Discuss. We have found that people are so touched that you actually want to know. It is quite amazing.*
- Tips: Look and stand (eye and body-language) like you are ready to hear the answer.

- First look into your own heart – do you really want to care?

### **TAKING AN ONGOING INTEREST**

Some of us are naturally good at taking an interest in other people it and the rest of us have to work at it. How are we going to do that? Work at remembering some things that affect their lives, and ask about them specifically when next you meet. Here are two steps to help you do this:

**i.** notice the details of what the person says in the conversation.

Pray for them in terms of these details as soon as possible after the conversation or even, with permission, pray with them during the conversation. If you do this, you will be better able to remember what matters to them.

**ii.** When you are setting off to see them — go to work or to dinner — take a moment to recall : ‘what was happening to so-and-so, last time we met?’ What can I do to inform myself better of their context?

### **DISCUSS**

- Do you think it is fair and to go to someone and respectfully ask: have you thought any more about what we talked about last week? Can you apply this to faith-conversations too?
- What are your ideas for questions you can have in your pocket in order to be caring and interested in others?

### **FINAL REVIEW AND DISCUSSION TIME**

What did each of these aspects of communication add to your ability to hear?

To speak?

What have you learned about making a beginning?

What have you learned about investing in ongoing conversations and discovery?

### **CONCLUSION**

In these ‘Invest’ exercises we have seen many conversation starters and re-starters.



## 4. MMMotivations

### GOAL

To discover what motivates us to share our faith and get past being uncomfortable or afraid.

### KEY QUESTION 1

**Have you ever felt you made a mistake in sharing or withholding your**

**beliefs? How did it feel? Did you learn anything from it?**

### DISCUSS

Here is something you need to decide at the very outset of this course, and keep doing it. To remind you to keep doing it, here is **a symbol of faith sharing** that will pop up in your life quite often to remind you of this — every time you see the big “M” of McDonalds.

That big M with three legs, it reminds us to **“MAKE MORE MISTAKES”**.

If you and I are NOT making more mistakes, only one of two options can apply.

1. We are staying in our comfort zone, doing what we know to do, taking no risks, going nowhere, learning nothing.
2. We are uninterested in others, maybe arrogant or unaware of our mistakes, or insensitive to people, learning nothing.

Let’s go back to the opening question. When you made THAT mistake (above), what did you say/do next to the person(s) concerned that would set things right? What could you have said/ done? Would you like to do some exercise in that?

### IT IS EASY NOT TO BIBLE BASH

Simply get used to the idea that to make any progress in anything, we need to be able to say, “Sorry I made a mistake. Can we try that again please?”

**DISCUSS:** Do you agree with that? What does those words of humility actually convey about the gospel we are offering? How would you say such a thing in your own words?

Shall we repeat that together out loud now please, just to loosen up!

*Repeat it together: “Sorry I made a mistake. Can we try that again please?”*

OK, if we are all committed in the grace of God to making more mistakes, we can begin to learn.

## KEY QUESTION 2

**What is your motivation for sharing the faith?**

Can you write your motivation now in a 25 word prayer?

## KEY QUESTION 3

Here are some Bible verses.

**To what extent do you find them motivating?**

(not a sermon here, just a reminder).

**Christ has come:** God's love judgement and truth have all been demonstrated, therefore we shed our light. (*Read John 3:16, 1 John 1:1-4*)

**Christ commands** us to be salt and light, therefore we must exercise influence toward others. (*Read Matthew 5:13-16, Matthew 28:20*)

**Christ calls us** to be like Him, therefore we carry on His ministry in His way. (*Read John 13:34-35, John 17:20-21, 15:1,2,16*)

**Christ's compassion:** The world cries out (Illustrate human sadness and lostness from recent headlines and news stories from public and private lives) (*Read Mark 1.29-2.9*)

**DISCUSS:** Are there other parts of scripture that speak straight to your heart about this? What are they? *Read them out.*

## Some other quotes...

**DISCUSS** : What do you think of them?

*It is not the church of God that has a mission in the world but the God of mission who has a church in the world*

Tim Dearborn *Beyond duty: a passion for Christ, a heart for mission*

*The gospel always comes to people in cultural robes. There is no such thing as a 'pure' gospel, isolated from culture.*

David J Bosch *Transforming Mission*

*Contextualisation represents the careful and refined use of a people's cultural forms in order that the truth of the gospel can be correctly expressed in their language through a judicious use of their own thought forms.*

Arthur F Glasser *Announcing the Kingdom*

## CONCLUSION

The joy of sharing our faith is not simply about "spirituality" in general. It's not about being good or being nice. It's not even about "believing in God". It's not about the depth of my spiritual experience. It's about participating in the LOVE of God. This love happens in particular ways in our everyday life.

This love is best modelled by Jesus and is now made present in you and me.

Jesus is the Source. Are you connecting?

# 5. The Gospel in one Hand

By Ian Robinson and John Mallison

## GOAL

To provide some portable simple tools for describing the gospel:

- The gospel for sinners - on the hand
- The gospel for sinners - in diagrams
- The gospel for the sinned against - on the hand

## INTRODUCTION

Many will argue or speak about “all the religions” and “what the church has done wrong”. They may not fully understand that it all starts from having a personal response and relationship with Jesus, knowing God in a personal intimate way.

There are many memory tools for explaining the gospel. Some of them make you cringe. Some of them might actually help.

E.g. <http://evangelismexplosion.org/ministries/share-your-faith/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ehnOv5svGHM>



## KEY QUESTION

Imagine you are talking to someone who you have recently met and, knowing you are a follower of Jesus Christ and hearing what it means to you personally, they ask you a further question: what does it mean to be “a Christian”. What will you say? Note that they are not asking for more about your personal story, but about a larger story - THE STORY.

*Discuss.*

**Here are some tools that will help you to say it briefly.**

- One is the gospel for sinners on your hand.
- One is the gospel for sinners in diagrams, created by John Mallison.
- One is the gospel for those who are sinned against

# TOOL ONE: THE GOSPEL FOR SINNERS

Five fingers, starting from littlest. Practise the hand until you can remember it.

## 1. LITTLE FINGER: CREATOR LOVE:

**God loves us and made us for a big relationship with himself and his world. God believes in you.**

God created us “in His image” (Genesis 1:26) which gives us status, ability and responsibility in the creation.

**His intention for us** is to live in close fellowship with Him in His kingdom and under His kingly rule to love our neighbours and enemies.

God did not create us as puppets. He gave us **responsibility and response-ability** so that we would freely love and serve Him, but we can also use that freedom to rebel against him.

**Every day**, this is proclaimed in the beautiful world that God made and provides for us. Other voices deny this and blind people’s eyes.

## 2. RING (HEART) FINGER: SPOILED HEART:

**We have not become what God intended. Why do we mess up?**

The original intimate relationship with God is **always being broken** from the beginning of the human race. Now, some part of our will has a habit to choose not to live God's way. We are trapped in this cycle, and the world is trapped in vicious circles.

Everyone has sinned, everyone **falls short** of the beauty of God's plan.” (Romans 3:23 J.B. Phillips)

“Your iniquities have made a **separation** between you and your God” (Isaiah 59:2)

**Sin has spoilt our lives.** They are not as God intended them. We have been squeezed into the mould of a world that is rebellious against God. (Romans 12:2 J.B. Phillips)

**Every day**, most people know something is wrong with the world and with them. Often it is felt most acutely by the way they have been spoiled or hurt by being sinned against. We do not have to prove how wayward they are, just need to name the correct diagnosis.

## 3. TALLEST FINGER = TRUTH OVER ALL: BLOOD RANSOM:

**God did for us through Jesus Christ what we could never do for ourselves.**

Christ is the perfect likeness of God. “In him all the full nature of God chose to dwell.” (Colossians 1:15,19)

Because God loves us he made it possible for us to have our close relationship with him restored. “**In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself,**” (restoring our relationship). (2 Corinthians 5:19)

Through Jesus Christ, the Son, God **dealt with the problem** of sin which spoilt his image in us and our relationship with him. “God shows his love to us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for our sins”. (Romans 5:8) “Christ was innocent of sin, and yet for our sake God made him one with the sinfulness of human beings, so that in him we might be made one with the goodness of God himself”. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

**Every day**, it is so hard to make changes that really work. Parents and leaders already know that real life and real change involves **making a sacrifice**. The cross of Jesus show us how far we will go to avoid God and how far God will go to get us to change.

## 4. POINTER FINGER: TAKE THE ROAD OF FAITH:

**What God has done in Jesus Christ becomes real for us through faith.**

Faith involves...

- Believing that in Christ God forgives sin and breaks its power.

- Trusting God for forgiveness and new life, above all revenge or resentment or defeatism.
- Reaching out to receive God's love and help in Christ.

Faith is associated with...

- Repentance ... sorrow for past wrong-doing, turning **away** from evil, turning **towards** new life.
- Conversion ... making God king of all life.

This is often called "commitment to Christ".

### **Life has a new beginning. We are born anew**

John 3:3 We become a new person ... "If anyone is in Christ, he/she is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold the new has come." (2 Corinthians 5:17)

He is our LIFE. As followers of the risen Christ we have a new power within us. God the Holy Spirit gives us new spiritual resources which help us to live life as God intended.

"I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth....he dwells with you and shall be in you." (John 14:16,17) (See also Acts 2:38, Philippians 4:13, Romans 8:37).

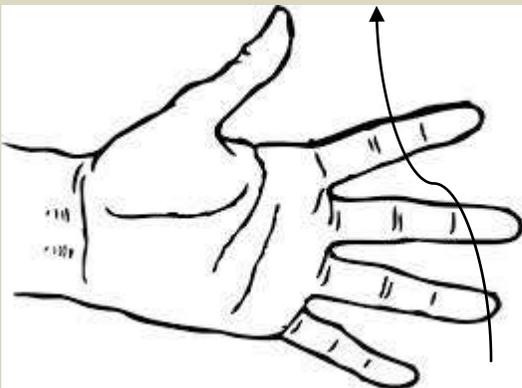
"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the - gift of God -- not because of works, lest any person should boast." (Ephesians 2:8, 9)

Jesus said: "I came that they might have life and have it abundantly." (John 10:10)

**Every day**, "faith" is simply the same as trust - "dependence, reliance, confidence, believe without proof".

Where else in everyday life do we exercise faith (apart from faith in God)? E.g. in eating food prepared for us, sitting on a chair, knowledge we cannot verify.



### **5. THUMBS UP FOR A GREAT LIFE - FAITH HOPE & LOVE: Significant changes then take place in two ways (there are two parts to the thumb)**

#### **1. We enter into a new relationship with God**

He becomes our FATHER in a special sense. "...we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God". (Romans 8:14-17)  
We make Him our Lord and King and seek to please Him, to live in obedience, Instead of being self-centred we become Christ-centred. "If you confess that Jesus is Lord and believe in your hearts that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved". (Romans 10:9)

#### **2. We enter into a new relationship with others**

We become part of the community of those who have faith in Jesus Christ (his family, in the Kingdom of God) with both privileges and responsibilities

Love should be the distinguishing mark of this community.

This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you". John 15:12, (See also John 13:34,35).

We share Christ's concern for others.

We imitate Christ's humility, courage, servanthood, respect and gentleness (Philippians 2;1 Peter 3.15)  
 We have a new purpose to live for, to serve him and the world for which he died.(Philippians 1.4)

6. **LASTLY : IN THE PALM OF HIS HAND** – place your finger in the middle of the palm of the other person and ask: are you ready to put yourself in God's hands?

## TOOL TWO – GOSPEL FOR SINNERS - IN DIAGRAMS

The preceding five paragraphs are extracts from a booklet "Becoming a Follower of Jesus Christ". This time we can demonstrate with the diagrams prepared by John Mallison. It is available, with diagrams, on John Mallison's Website:

Text only: <http://www.johnmallison.com/index.htm>

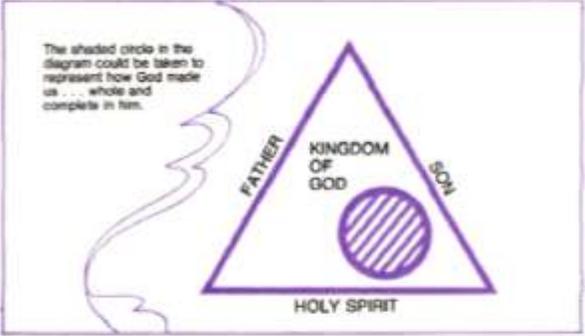
Diagrams included: <http://www.johnmallison.com/data/GOSTRACT.pdf>

*Download and go through this booklet and learn how to draw the diagrams. Sample page:*

**1 God loves us and made us for a close relationship with himself**

- ⊙ God created us "in his image" (Genesis 1:26) which gives us both status and responsibility in the creation.
- ⊙ His intention is for us to live in close fellowship with him within his Kingdom and under his kingly rule.
- ⊙ God did not create us as puppets. He made us free so that we would freely love and serve him, but we can also use that freedom to rebel against him and do evil.

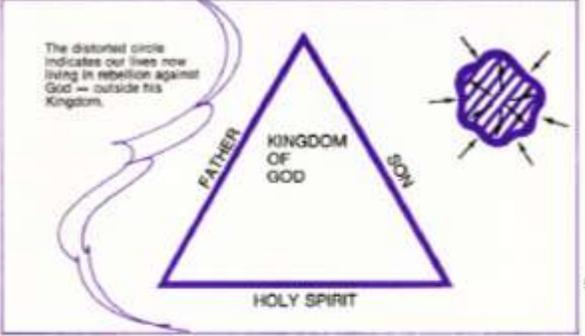
The shaded circle in the diagram could be taken to represent how God made us . . . whole and complete in him.



**2 We have not become what God intended**

- ☆ The original intimate relationship with God has been broken right from the beginning of the human race. Now we choose not to live God's way.
- ☆ "Everyone has sinned, everyone falls short of the beauty of God's plan." (Romans 3:23 (J.B. Phillips))
- ☆ "Your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God." (Isaiah 59:2)
- ☆ Sin has spoiled our lives they are not as God intended them. We have been squeezed into the mould of a world that is rebellious against God. (Romans 12:2 J.B. Phillips)

The distorted circle indicates our lives now living in rebellion against God = outside his Kingdom.



## TOOL THREE – GOSPEL FOR THE SINNED-AGAINST

This tool uses the hand again, this time in a zig-zag pattern. It starts from the point of someone who has been sinned against, not someone who has been the sinner. Yes, we are all both! But where is your friend at right now?

**THUMB** – It sticks out of the news like a sore thumb, a lot of people are hurting. Is that you?

**PALM** – We all need a hand from one another and it really makes a difference. In Christianity it is called “Love your neighbour as you love yourself”. Do you believe in that?

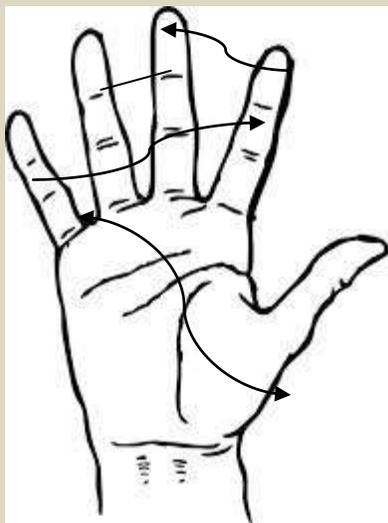
**THE LEAST LITTLE FINGER** – Jesus really means that command: He says in Matthew 25 that we will all be judged according to how we treated the “least of these” - the poor, the alienated and the broken. He said it is the test of a nation’s character whether we do that or not. Are you/we doing that? We have three options.

**POINTER FINGER** – First option is to point at others and say ‘someone should do something’. We can blame others or God for hurting us and hurting others. But aren’t we doing the same things as them? Letting it all go by to someone else is a way of staying in this zone. Blame changes nothing. Does this describe you?

**TALL FINGER** is option what people use to “give the bird” to another – to tell them to go away and not to bother them. That is one of our choices in life. All that is required for evil to flourish is for people to say nothing. Does this describe you?

**THE RING FINGER** option, where wedding rings are worn to seal our heart to another person. Our choice: We can live with the heart of Jesus to love a compassionate God and build our neighbour. Does this describe you?

Are you willing to choose?



### Q. Discuss the Following in Groups

Commence with one question assigned to your group. Appoint someone to listen who will soon be asked to summarise your discussion to us.

Imagine you are seeking to explain these questions below to a not-yet-Christian. Keep it simple and avoid preaching a sermon to them!

1. In what ways do humans "**fall short** of the beauty of God"?
2. How do we humans experience **separation from God** and the consequences?

3. How would you sensitively explain to someone who has been **hurt many times** in life, why should they put their trust in God?
4. How is the **beauty of the holiness** of God seen in the Gospel?
5. What is the difference between **believing that** God exists and **believing in** him?
6. With such an alive gospel, why is church sometimes boring?



# Why do this study?

Do you need a fresh injection of courage to share your faith? Are you working to make your worship attractive but they are not coming? Are you wondering what's wrong with you? These questions point to a need to plumb the depths of our own motivations and find them again. You don't get there just by thinking about it – you need to do something a little bit different.

Many exercises in the series of *Purple Cow Workshops* will help you with this in different ways, but this small group series in your hand is about shaping motivation.

- **The Diamond in Me** will help you frame a simple story about your faith journey.
- **Keeping your faith ALIVE** will raise your awareness of the things that actually refresh your faith, and which keep churches vital.
- **Invest** will ask you to review who you like to be around and what barriers you place in your communication, and how to engage simply.
- **MMMotivations** will help you to get past being uncomfortable or afraid and expand your sense of why you want to share your faith.
- **Gospel in One Hand** will provide you with simple tools for explaining the gospel, go anywhere

These are not just intellectual, 'find the right answer' small group studies. I hope your group likes to understand God and themselves at more depth.

## HOW to do this Study?

In your group, you don't have to do all to topics. You don't have to do them in this sequence. You can adjust the content so that it suits your language and particular emphasis.

Other topics in the PURPLE COW WORKSHOPS for Christian small groups and THE WONDER WORKSHOPS for secular groups, can be found on

<http://makesyouwonder.yolasite.com/small-group-exercises.php>

Feedback from other users of this material can be seen on

[Purplecowworkshops.wordpress.com](http://Purplecowworkshops.wordpress.com)

YOUR FEEDBACK from your experience will help others. Send it to [idtr@westnet.com.au](mailto:idtr@westnet.com.au)

Published 2013 by MACSIS 33 Evans Street, Shenton Park, Western Australia 6008  
ISBN