

CONVERSATIONS IN DISCIPLESHIP

What if life in all its fullness was reflected
in how we follow Jesus together?





'We offer this resource to those already seeking to follow Jesus as disciples and to all who are curious as to what this might mean.'

May these conversations be rich and fulfilling, and perhaps even challenging.'

Church of Scotland



CONVERSATIONS IN DISCIPLESHIP

Planning and preparing

The session should last around 90 minutes. There are six conversations with a question to begin each one. The leader(s) should invite people to share their stories in response to the questions.

Read out the question clearly, more than once, so people can fully consider what is being asked of them. Don't be overly concerned if there are periods of silence, as people may want time to reflect before speaking. Everyone should have a copy of the opening and closing prayers. It is best not to give people the questions in advance or for them to see as they converse, as they could become a distraction and divert attention away from the current conversation.

Depending on the number of participants, smaller groups of about three to five work well allowing enough time for everyone to share their stories. Choose how you will close each conversation. Some groups have found the following methods helpful:

- Lighting a candle
- Saying a short Psalm or part of a Psalm (ensure people have a copy of an agreed version that you will use)
- Singing a short song, chorus or Taizé-style chant (there are a number of short songs in CH4. If you are using a song to close each conversation, it is best to teach it before you open in prayer)

Welcome and introductions

As people are arriving, give them a short time to get some refreshments, settle and say hello to one another. While they are having refreshments, welcome them and invite them to have a brief conversation about this question:

When have you followed someone or something and ended up somewhere that surprised you?

The following paragraph may be a helpful way to explain the process to the participants:

'These conversations invite us to tell stories from our own life experience and reflect on them together, so there are no right or wrong answers. We will allow 10–15 minutes for each conversation. Share as openly as you choose and listen with respect to what others choose to share. After each time of sharing, we will [indicate how you will close each conversation from the list above]'

OPENING PRAYER

Invite everyone to join in an opening prayer.

We recommend that you print a copy for each participant.

Open with prayer

Leader: God of our past, present and future,
You journey with each of us,
through the heights and depths of our lives.

You are there in every moment.
There in our learning and our growing,
in our succeeding and our failing,
in our giving and receiving,
our questioning and our wondering,
following and guiding,
within the ebb and flow of our faith.

God who invites us to live life in all its fullness

**All: May we love You more
as we welcome each other.**

Leader: Jesus who calls us to follow

**All: May we hear Your voice
as we share with each other.**

Leader: Holy Spirit who dwells within

**All: May we know Your peace and strength
as we seek to shape our discipleship.**

Amen

CONVERSATIONS

Before discussing each question, give people an agreed length of time to share in their groups.

When it feels appropriate, use the chosen method to close each conversation.

Allow a brief silence before moving on to the next question.

- 1. Share a story about a time when your relationship with others shaped your journey of faith.**
- 2. Share a story about a time when you were taught or discovered something that changed the way you see God.**
- 3. Talk about something that Jesus said or did, which you find easy or natural to apply in your own life.**
- 4. Talk about something that Jesus said or did, which you find challenging to apply in your own life.**
- 5. How do you notice other people following Jesus in their everyday life?**
- 6. What have you found valuable from this time together that you will take with you in moving on from here?**

If you are in small groups, you may wish to bring everyone together for this final conversation.

You may want to use the same method to close your conversation or move straight on to the closing blessing.

CLOSING BLESSING

Invite everyone to join in a closing blessing.

We recommend that you print a copy for each participant.

Close with a blessing

Leader: God of faith

**All: Grant that we might walk humbly,
knowing You as we journey together.**

Leader: God of hope

**All: Grant that we would act justly,
seeking life in all its fullness for ourselves and others.**

Leader: God of love

**All: Grant us generosity of heart,
that we will love mercy and bless freely.**

Leader: God of the journey

All: Be our constant companion now and forever more.

Amen

WHAT NEXT?

What happens next will largely be guided by who took part and how the conversations unfolded, but there are a number of possibilities that may feel like the natural next steps.

It may be worth noting anything that has emerged from your conversations that could be followed up. For example, some people may reflect on what they are encouraged by, where they notice others following Jesus or what they find challenging in following Jesus' examples.

Are there other conversations that could help us explore discipleship together?

There may be other questions that help your group to articulate your hopes for your discipleship, how you have moved on in your faith journey or how you have seen, experienced or redefined following Jesus together.

You may find it helpful to host *Conversations in Discipleship* more than once. Perhaps one or two people from this conversation might like to lead, or co-lead. You could invite specific groups to take part – are there groups that already meet that would find this conversation helpful? Would this process allow them to get to know one another in a different way?

Consider running the conversations at different times – evening, lunch groups and prayer breakfasts – or as part of a training day or retreat.

Think creatively too – the conversations have had a profound effect on Kirk Sessions and Committee meetings, but they could also be used in more social gatherings such as house groups or prayer meetings.

This resource is for you to use in any way that you find helpful

We would be delighted to hear about the conversations you have been having, what has been valuable, how we can support you in your 'what next?' and what other conversations you would find valuable.

Email: mandd@churchofscotland.org.uk

A printable version of this booklet and copies of the prayers can be found on the Church of Scotland website: www.churchofscotland.org.uk

‘It has been a really helpful conversation and, in some cases, the best one I have had about faith and life for a long time.’

‘Everyone enjoyed the openness of the conversations. There was enough meat in each question to allow for diversity of opinions and a feeling that we wanted more of this.’

We all are invited to be disciples of Jesus and live life in all its fullness.

What are your own stories of responding to Jesus’ invitation, ‘Follow me’, and how have those affected and changed you and others?

Have you ever wondered how other followers of Jesus describe being disciples in their everyday lives and what has helped or hindered their journeys of faith?

What if there were a few good questions to enable us to share more openly and talk more deeply about God, discipleship and our journeys of faith?

What if our stories inspire and enthuse one another in creating and deepening our discipleship together?

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