

A
*B*asic
*C*ourse in
*D*isciplineship

By G.E. Mullings

Edited by Stephen Russell
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introduction

“Follow-up”, a word borrowed from the world of commerce, is an unfortunate term. The very sound of the word suggests: “afterthought”. Nothing could be further from the true value of taking time to consolidate one’s Christian commitment and to build up the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills which are vital for successful Christian living.

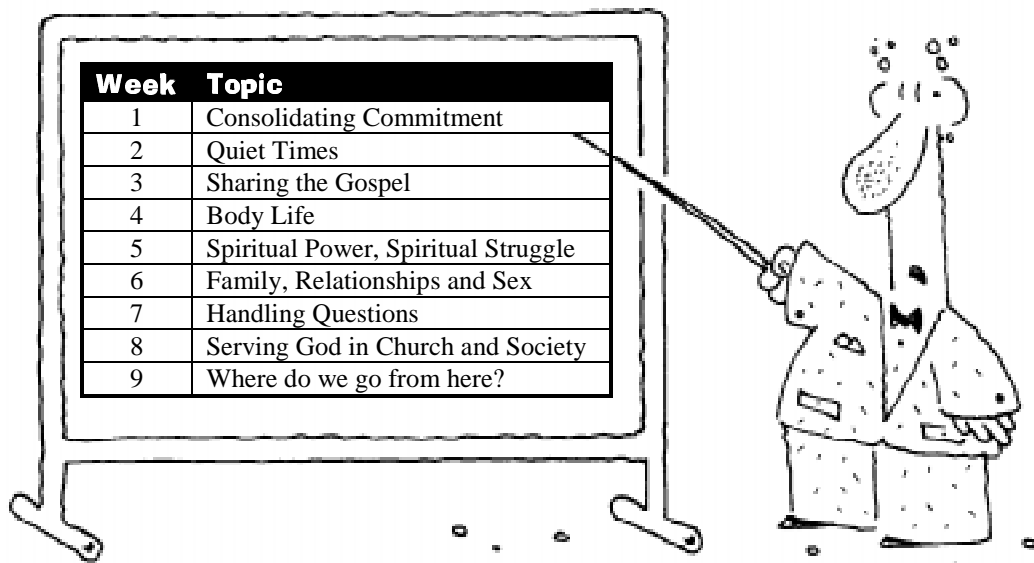
It is in this context that ABCD has been developed, primarily for use in small groups. We suggest that you do the first session together, then agree on a schedule for working through the rest of the course. There are nine scheduled sessions in this course which have been selected to give a solid overview of Christian Discipleship. Don’t be afraid to go slower than suggested if you need the time.

May our Lord and Saviour bless and prosper you as you seek to serve him.

Gordon Mullings
January 1990.

Suggested Schedule

For each of the following meetings we suggest that you open with prayer and sharing. This should take about fifteen minutes. Then spend the next half an hour on the topic for the meeting. Finally take a few minutes to reflect, share, and pray. (The first meeting will be somewhat exceptional to this pattern.)



A letter to the group leader

Dear Fellow-worker,

Jesus has given us a clear, powerful mandate: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)

Clearly no higher authority exists. Equally clearly, we are to work so that men will commit themselves to Christ, be nurtured in obedience to him, and will in turn go out as fellow workers with him in the world.

In this course, our focus is on the process of consolidating commitment, and upon nurture. But we must keep in mind the objective: the world. Equally, we must bear in our hearts Jesus' reminder that discipleship largely works by example: the blind can lead the blind - about as far as the nearest ditch (see Luke 6:39, 40)

As we go, therefore, let us all work together so that we can grow together as disciples of Christ.

God bless and keep you,

Gordon.

January 1990

A letter to the new disciple

Dear fellow disciple,

Perhaps this greeting catches you by surprise. If so, it is to emphasize a point: we are all disciples - followers, apprentices, students - of one Lord and master, Jesus the Christ. Even Paul of Tarsus could only say to those who looked to him for spiritual leadership, "follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1)

The example is Jesus. Your group leader or any other spiritual leader, at best, is simply a more advanced student. As such we urge you to learn from our mistakes as much as from our successes. Above all, look to Christ, the perfect example.

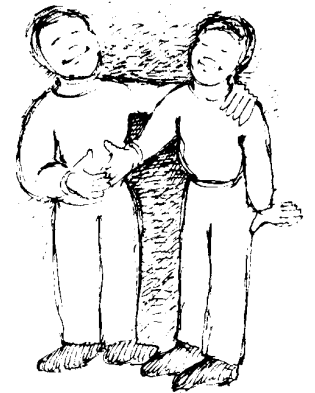
In this course, our aim is mutual nurture, or building up. "Since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus ... and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience ... let us consider how we may spur one another on to love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching..." (Hebrews 10:19-25)

Amen,

Gordon.

January 1990

Consolidating Commitment



Today, we will...

- Get to know each other a bit better
- Take a quick look at ABCD
- Decide how to work through ABCD
- Focus on how we can be sure that God has really really really accepted us

As we begin...

- Pray: “As we come together, please give us guidance and wisdom, Lord. Help us to draw close to you and to one another in your Church. Especially help us as we embark on this course.”
- Chat a little: get to know each other a little more and relax a bit.

Focus...

- Read the two letters – the one to the group leader and the one to the new disciple.
- What do you think about what was read?
- What are the important points? Do they make sense?
- Do you want to work through ABCD together?
- How can you go about it?

Issue...

- Can we ever be sure that God has accepted us?
- Read John 3:14-18. Jesus was talking with a leader of the Jews. He compared himself with what had happened when the Israelites were attacked by poisonous snakes in the desert. God told Moses to put a bronze snake on a pole and everyone who looked at it was saved from the poison (Numbers 21:4-9).
How was Jesus “lifted up”? Why?
How are we to “look up” to him? (v 15-16)
What does it mean to “believe in” Jesus? (See Romans 4:4-8; 5:1-2. Focus on “trusts God”)
What does God promise to “whoever believes in” Jesus? What does “eternal life” mean? (See John 17:3. Note the difference between “knowing about” and “knowing” a person – relationship.)
Have you believed in Jesus? What do you have, then? Why can you be sure?

During this week...

- Reflect on God’s promise – read the passage in John’s gospel again and again.
- Thank God, in prayer for his love and his gift.
- Share about God’s love and gift with a friend.

Quiet Times



Today, we will...

- Reflect on what we have learned and done
- Learn how to spend quiet times with God in prayer and Bible study

As we begin...

- Pray: “Lord, help us to appreciate the gift of eternal life. Guide us as we learn how to spend quiet times with you. Help us to develop this practice in our lives as disciples.
- Chat a little: How was the past week? How did it go when you shared with a friend about God’s love and gift?

Focus...

- Read Joshua 1:1-9. Moses had died, and Joshua had to take over, just when major battles were ahead. God took him aside and had a talk with him.
Note the promises God makes. Why is it vital for God to be “with you wherever you go”?
What did God expect Joshua to do every day? Why?
If Joshua did as God instructed what would happen?
How can we apply this to our lives today? (Examine 2 Timothy 3:14-17)
How does prayer (talking with God) fit in? (Skim Psalm 63)

Having a quiet time...

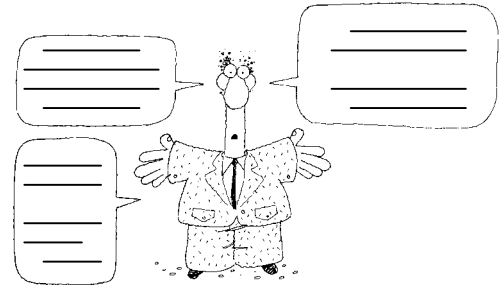
The Scripture Union has rather neatly summed this up:

- **Pray**
Ask God to help you understand the main point of what you read.
- **Read and think**
What is the main point of the passage?
What does it teach you about God?
Is there a promise, example, warning or command you should note?
What insights into yourself, your situation and your relationships do you receive?
- **Pray**
With your discoveries in mind, praise God for who he is and what he has done, confess your shortcomings and receive his forgiveness, ask him to act in your life and in our world.
- **Act**
Decide and work on practical steps for living what you have learned.

During the week...

- Develop a daily quiet time habit.

Sharing the Gospel



Today, we will...

- Reflect on progress so far
- Take another look at the Gospel
- Learn how to share the gospel with others (or at least make a start)

As we begin...

- Pray: “Lord, help us to understand and value your Good News. Give us the courage and wisdom to share it with others so that they too might come to know you.”
- Chat a little: How was the week? How have your quiet times been? What have you learned and done?

Focus...

- Read John 4:1-30, 39-42. (It’s a story.) On his way to Galilee, Jesus stopped by a well at noon and waited. At noon, an outcast woman (only such a person would draw water in the heat of the day) came by. Jesus asked her for a drink. She didn’t expect that. Why? How did it get a conversation going? Soon Jesus was talking about two kinds of water. When the woman asked for his magic water he said, “Go, call your husband ...” Why did this trigger a confrontation? How did Jesus handle the confrontation? What was the result? Summing up, what was his strategy?
- Today we too seek to share the gospel. Imagine that you are talking with a friend. How could you bring the gospel into the conversation? When the Gospel bites home many people lash out or try to avoid its teeth. How could you respond? What key steps are needed to inform about the Gospel and lead one who responds to Christ?

Activity...

- Try some role-playing. Take turns and see how typical situations can work out. Draw up an outline for sharing the Gospel and leading someone to Christ.

During the week...

- Share the Gospel with a few people.

Possible extra reading...

- “How to Give Away Your Faith”, Paul Little, IVP
- “Out of the Saltshaker”, Becky Manley-Pippert, IVP

Body Life



Today, we will...

- Review the last session
- Focus on fellowship

As we begin...

- Pray: “Lord, help us to appreciate your gift of fellowship. Let us never get into the habit of isolating ourselves from your people. Rather, Let us encourage and build one another up.”
- Chat a little: How has it been going? How are your quiet times progressing? How have people responded when you shared with them about Jesus?

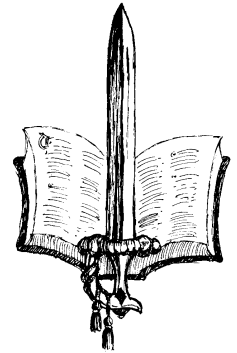
Focus...

- Read Acts 2:36-47. Startling events had happened – tongues of fire from heaven and rushing mighty winds. A crowd gathered and Peter preached. They now wanted to know what to do. What did Peter tell the people to do? Why? What did “those who accepted his message” go on to do? (Note v 42, 44-47) In the light of Hebrews 10:23-25 how should we follow their example?
- Second, examine Ephesians 4:11-13, 15-16. Why has God given leaders to the Church? Who are to do the works of Christian service so that the body may be built up? How does this relate to us today?
- Given the above how should we be involved in the life and service of a local church?

During the week...

- Make a list of possible areas of service you can render to Christ.
- Investigate how you can become a member of a vibrant local church.
- Investigate ways you can get involved in para-church ministries at school or work.

Spiritual Power, Spiritual Struggle



Today, we will...

- Review the last session
- Examine the nature of spiritual warfare
- Learn some secrets of victory

As we begin...

- Pray: “Lord, grant us the insight, power and courage to be victorious in our conflict with the powers of darkness, in our own lives, in our schools, in our Churches, in our nations and in the whole world.”
- Chat a little: How do your friends respond when you share with them about Jesus? What are some areas in which we can do works of service to Christ? Have you found a local church to become part of? Have you found out how to be involved in other ministries at school or work?

Focus...

- Read Ephesians 2:1-10.
What was our past condition?
What three enemies had us in their power? In what ways were we enslaved?
How did God rescue us? To what end?
Have our enemies given up? If not, how can we defeat them? (Examine Ephesians 6:10-18 and reflect on the value of our “weapons” – prayer (especially for one another), truth, righteousness, the Gospel, faith, salvation and the Word of God.)
- The Bible also stresses focussing our minds on the things of God (Romans 8:5-6; 12:1-2; Colossians 3:16) and being filled with – empowered and controlled by – the Spirit of God (Ephesians 5:18-21; Acts 1:4-8; 2:17-21,33,38-39).
What are some ways we can focus our minds on the things of God? (Read 2 Timothy 3:14-17 and recall Joshua 1:1-9.)
How can we be empowered and controlled by the Holy Spirit? (Note Romans 8:9-14 and Luke 11:9-13. Also note the individual and corporate stresses in Ephesians 5:18-21 – “Speak to one another”).

Some important points ...

- Sometimes Christians fall into sin. We need to confess it to God (1 John 1:9) and sometimes to other believers who can pray with us (James 5:16).
- Struggling to overcome sin is normal Christian experience. The apostle John, writing to Christians, states “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves ...” (Read 1 John 1:5 – 2:2 carefully.)
- On the other hand, the Christian experience should be one of growth in truth, faith, love, purity and power. If you find yourself to be stalled seek prayer, encouragement and counsel from mature believers. (Note the promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13)

During this week...

- Reflect on God’s promise to give us “everything we need for life and godliness”. (See 2 Peter 1:2-11.)
- Make a prayer list and pray for other believers - ask them what they would like you to pray for them about.
- Begin to note down, memorize and reflect on key passages from the Bible.
- Confess your sins to God and, where necessary, to other Christians who can counsel and pray with you.

Family, Relationships and Sex



Today, we will...

- Review progress to date
- Reflect on God's design for family, society and sex
- Probe how to handle some typical problems

As we begin...

- Pray: "Thank you Father for your precious gifts, especially family, friends and sexuality. Help us to use them well, building up ourselves and others."
- Chat a little: Do your friends still say you are "just going through a phase"? Are you visibly growing in love, faith, truth, purity and power?

Focus on the family...

- The Bible's account begins with the first human family. Thereafter it views that family as the normal context for sex, childbirth, growth, moral education and preparation for life. In short, the family is the centre and basis of society. Read Genesis 18:19 and compare it with Proverbs 1:1-9 to see the force of this point.

Dealing with issues...

- Reciprocal responsibilities: examine Ephesians 5:22-6:9.
What are the duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves?
How do they cut across our natural tendencies?
How can we fulfill them?
- Conflicts: Read Matthew 7:3-5 and 18:15-17. Compare the point of 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 with the force of James 3:13-4:3.
What attitudes should we cultivate?
What action steps should we take to resolve conflicts?
- Sex: Read Romans 1:18-32 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Note the force of Matthew 5:27-30 and 1 Timothy 5:1-2. Compare Genesis 2:18-24 with 1 Corinthians 6:15-20 to see how sexual immorality violates a life-uniting and family building act of love.
Does the Bible's view (the act of union being restricted to the context of union) make sense?
Is it true that attitudes and thoughts can be as sinful as physical acts?
How can we cultivate pure, healthy sexuality?
- Unequal yokes: Read 2 Corinthians 6:13-7:1
Are there any relationships in your life, romantic or otherwise, which are forcing you to compromise standards of truth and right?
What should you do? How? When?

During this week...

- Work on these four points.

Handling Questions

Today, we will...

- Review our progress
- Examine how we can handle doubts and challenges to the Christian faith

As we begin...

- Pray: “Give us wisdom to understand the relationship between faith and reason, Lord, and the courage to live by faith in you in an uncertain world.”
- Chat a bit: How was your week? How are your Christianity and your sexuality getting on?

Focus...

Discuss the following points:

- All men live by faith. To see this, take any proof and ask at each stage, “why should I accept this claim?” Sooner or later you will come to basic assumptions accepted without further proof. This is the point of faith. Even science and mathematics work in this way. In short, the question is not whether to believe, but what to believe and why.
- Many of the things Christians believe are hotly disputed or attacked. Sometimes, the very fact that we admit to working by faith is held against us. At other times, we are full of doubts or questions – a very normal experience in the Christian life. The big question, of course, is what to do about these things.
- Take some time to discuss questions you may have about the Christian faith.

What can we do...

- Clarify the basics of our faith. As 1 Peter 1:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 12-20 stress, our faith is founded on facts: Jesus, his death, burial and resurrection.
- Be honest about questions and doubts. They exist. And hard questions are hard because they don’t have easy answers. Every set of answers – every faith – has difficulties, not just the Christian message.
- Research. After two thousand years, chances are that someone else has asked and investigated the question you have in mind. See how others have dealt with it.
- Think, pray, discuss, seek the truth.
- Above all, trust God. If he is real and cares for you, he will help.

Useful books...

- “Mere Christianity”, C.S. Lewis
- “More than a Carpenter”, Josh McDowell
- “Evidence that Demands a Verdict”, Josh McDowell
- “World on the Run”, Michael Green
- “Miracles”, C.S. Lewis

During this week...

- Find a good introduction to Apologetics (the branch of theology dealing with this area) and read it.



Serving God in Church and Society

Today, we will...

- Review progress to date
- Explore the fact that we are God's stewards called to serve him in the Church and the community at large.



As we begin...

- Pray: "Lord, help us as we seek to rejoice with the Psalmist who sings, 'the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters,' (Psalm 24:1-2). And As we confess that we belong to you, help us to serve you well."
- Chat a bit: How have things been? How has your introduction to Apologetics been going?

Focus...

- As Psalm 24:1-2 emphasizes, we are God's people. As such he has called us to serve him in the world. Read Ephesians 4:9-16.
Why did Christ descend then ascend?
What "gifts" has he given to us? Why?
Why are God's people to be prepared "for works of service"?
What will happen as we serve Christ?
What are some ways that we can serve God in the Church? In the world?
How can we view our family life, studies, career and community involvement from this perspective?
- "Stewardship" includes the idea of being a servant, being given a trust and being held accountable for it. Read Luke 19:11-26 and 1 Corinthians 4:1-5. Reflect on the implications of being stewards of God in our world.

During this week...

- Think about the problems of our community – it's families, it's economic situation, the state of education and so on. What does God want you to do?

Where do we go from here?

Today, we will...

- Reflect on what our Lord has called us to be and do
- Put forward some ideas to help us as we go

As we begin...

- Pray: "Father, help us to serve you and our fellow man well."
- Chat a bit: How have you been?

Focus...

- We have covered a lot of ground, but this is just a beginning. There is much to learn and to do. A world of need beckons. There are vital books to be read, issues to be thought through, skills we need, attitudes to change or develop. But these must not be an end in themselves. Service implies action.
- Review what we have been through. How has it helped you? What more do you need? What can you do about it?
- How can you best serve Jesus in the Church and the world? What are you doing about it?

As you go...

- May you walk with God.

