

Being Lights for Christ: Introductory Sessions for Small Groups



These sessions follow the pattern of the '4Ws' (Welcome, Worship, Word and Wonder). For more information on this type of small group session, please visit: <https://sheffdio.org/small-groups>

Session 1	Jesus is THE Light
Session 2	We are lights too
Session 3	It's a team effort
Session 4	Finding a rhythm

Guidance for Leaders:

Being *Lights for Christ* is the language we use in the Diocese of Sheffield to describe being disciples of Jesus. We have chosen this language because it reflects Christ's own words to his disciples (Matthew 5:14-16) and because light features in our baptism and confirmation liturgy (see the 'Word' section of session 2 below). We hope that this will be a useful introductory resource for those who are new to faith and/or the idea of Christian discipleship. It may also help adults who are preparing for baptism and/or confirmation to explore the calling of all the baptised – to live as *Lights for Christ* in the world today.

This resource has been adapted from a series of all-age session plans designed to help families develop their own Family Rhythm of Life. If you would like to explore discipleship with children, young people and families, you may prefer to use the original version of this resource, which can be found at www.sheffdio.org/family-rhythm-of-life.

A next step for groups who have used this resource could be to explore our diocesan materials on developing a *Personal Rule of Life*. Please see the 'What next?' section on the final page of this document for more details.

Session 1: Jesus is THE Light

Section	Content suggestions
Welcome and fellowship – social time	This can be unstructured or include an icebreaker game/s. For a list of ten icebreaker ideas, see https://sheffdio.org/small-groups . Newly-formed small groups may want to spend more time on this section to begin with as people get to know each other. Some groups may like to start their meeting with refreshments or a shared meal.
Worship	<p>This section might include a prayer, quiet reflection and/or singing or listening to a worship song or piece of instrumental music.</p> <p>Suggestions:</p> <p>Listen to or sing 'My Lighthouse' - Rend Collective (Video Link)</p> <p>Light a candle and invite people to reflect individually on the following questions: <i>How am I feeling today? Am I ready to hear from God?</i></p> <p>Say the prayer for today (the collect), available here: https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer/todays-prayer</p>
What about me? – share experiences around a theme and/or share anything that has come to the surface since last week	<p>Have you ever been in a place where there is no light to see by? What did it feel like?</p> <p>Do you find darkness comforting or unsettling? Why?</p> <p>Have you ever spent time watching the sun rise?</p>
Word - reading the Bible together	Jesus said 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.' (John 8:12)

	<p>(Safely) Look at a lighter or match. What do we see just before the flame? A spark! The spark that starts a fire comes from an outside source (like lightning, heat from the Sun or the friction between two objects). It's the same for us in our lives, but for us, the outside source that provides the spark comes from Jesus. When we choose to receive a spark (like holding out our own candle), we allow this spark to ignite the light of life in us.</p> <p>Each of us will have people, places and activities that help us to feel close to God or feel that we can hear from God more easily and receive this 'light of life'. Finding the right people, places and activities are like having the right 'fuel' for the spark to become a flame.</p> <p>In our Diocese we call this 'receiving Christ's light'. It's the first step in being Lights for Christ in the world today.</p>
Wonder - What does this mean for me? Time for prayer and reflection	<p>What helps you to connect with God? Do you feel like you've got the right 'fuel' to be able to hear from God? Small group members might like to discuss what they find helpful/unhelpful.</p> <p>Pray for God's help to explore different ways to receive Jesus' Light of Life.</p>

Session 2: We are lights too

Section	Content suggestions
Welcome and fellowship – social time	This can be unstructured or include an icebreaker game/s. For a list of ten icebreaker ideas, see https://sheffdio.org/small-groups
Worship	<p>This section might include a prayer, quiet reflection and/or singing or listening to a worship song or piece of instrumental music.</p> <p>Song suggestion – ‘City on a Hill’ - Nick and Becky Drake (Video Link)</p> <p>Light a candle and invite people to reflect individually on the following questions: <i>How am I feeling today? Am I ready to hear from God?</i></p> <p>Say the prayer for today (the collect), available here: https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer/todays-prayer</p>
What about me? – share experiences around a theme and/or share anything that has come to the surface since last week	<p>How many kinds of light can you think of? The small group could split into teams and see who can list the most light sources.</p> <p>How is light useful? (<i>makes plants grow/supports life, helps us know which way to go, helps us to see dangers ahead, helps us to do activities, cheers us up, makes us feel cosy and comfortable, helps entertain us, communicates to others</i>)</p> <p><i>Prompts: The sun, car headlights, fire exit sign, a lighthouse, a torch, house lights, a campfire, a fireplace, concert lights, theatre lights, beacons, fireflies</i></p>
Word – reading the Bible together	<p>Recap Jesus as the light of the world. The Spark!</p> <p>So what happens once we've received that spark? What happens to the candle? With the</p>

right fuel, the spark becomes a flame and shines.

Read:

You are the light that gives light to the world. A city that is built on a hill cannot be hidden. And people don't hide a light under a bowl. They put the light on a lampstand. Then the light shines for all the people in the house. In the same way, you should be a light for other people. Live so that they will see the good things you do. Live so that they will praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-16)

Link to baptismal/confirmation promises:

When someone is baptised and/or confirmed in the Church of England, they are given a lighted candle to symbolise them having received Christ's light. As they are given the candle, the priest or bishop says to them,

'You have received the light of Christ;
walk in this light all the days of your life.'

The congregation continues:

**'Shine as a light in the world,
to the glory of God the Father.'**

This is the task (or 'commission') that all Christian believers are given: to shine as a light in the world to the glory of God the Father. In the last session, we talked about how Jesus is THE light. In Matthew's gospel, he invites his followers to join him in being the light of the world. We promise to do this when we are baptised or confirmed.

What does it mean to shine? In the reading, 'shining in the world' means living according to the teachings of Jesus and having a positive influence on those around you. In practice, it might mean loving your friends and family, serving others in your community, or helping

	<p>the environment. It might mean telling others about Jesus or speaking out when something is wrong. We shouldn't be burdened by the prospect of doing good things (Matthew 11:28-30). Some actions might seem small but they are still significant to God.</p> <p>It's important to remember that it isn't our own light that we are shining, but Jesus' light. We are like mirrors, reflecting his light to the world. The good things we do are for his glory and not our own.</p> <p>Optional: watch this 6-minute video about how humans are made in God's image and are called to do his work in the world.</p>
<p>Wonder - What does this mean for me? Time for prayer and reflection</p>	<p>Have you ever felt like you were hiding your light? Have you ever felt like you were a good example for someone else or you stopped something wrong from happening? Why do you think good deeds make people praise God?</p> <p>Ask for God to challenge you in a new way and show you how you can be a light in your world.</p>

Session 3: It's a team effort	
Section	Content suggestions
Welcome and fellowship – social time	This can be unstructured or include an icebreaker game/s. For a list of ten icebreaker ideas, see https://sheffdio.org/small-groups
Worship	<p>This section might include a prayer, quiet reflection and/or singing or listening to a worship song or piece of instrumental music.</p> <p>Song suggestion – ‘Jesus, your light’ – Taizé Community (Video Link)</p> <p>Lyrics:</p> <p><i>Jesus, your light is shining within us. Let not my doubts and my darkness speak to me. Jesus, your light is shining within us. Let my heart always welcome your love.</i></p> <p>Light a candle and invite people to reflect individually on the following questions: <i>How am I feeling today? Am I ready to hear from God?</i></p> <p>Say the prayer for today (the collect), available here: https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer/todays-prayer</p>
What about me? – share experiences around a theme and/or share anything that has come to the surface since last week	Do you have an unusual skill or talent? What is something you're good at that people wouldn't expect?
Word – reading the Bible together	We live in lots of different communities: our family or chosen family, our friends, our workplace, our church, our local area. But living and working alongside others can cause

disagreements; often people have differences of opinions, skills, abilities, interests and beliefs.

God delights in our good relationships with others, including with those who are different to us. Psalm 133 says:

**'How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity!...
For there the LORD bestows his blessing...'**

Being in community with others is an important part of our Christian life. Meeting together in a small group to study God's Word and pray together is one example of this. When we meet regularly with other Christians we can encourage each other in our faith and grow in Christian character – it is easier to practice being patient, kind and humble when there are people around to be patient with, kind to and humble towards!

It is easy to compare ourselves to other Christians. Sometimes we might feel jealous of their gifts and skills. But we need all kinds of people in God's kingdom. The Apostle Paul said:

'For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully. (Romans 12: 4-8)

We are all called to shine as lights in the world but we each do this in a different way. When light is refracted through a prism, it shines in a spectrum of colour; in the same way, when

	<p>we share Christ's light, it is refracted through the prism of our own particular personality and gifts.</p>
Wonder - What does this mean for me? Time for prayer and reflection	<p>What gifts or skills do you have that you can use to serve God? Where do you find Christian community? How can you make this part of your regular routine?</p> <p>Pray for God's help to live peacefully in community with others. Ask him to show you how you can use your gifts for his glory.</p>

Session 4: Finding a rhythm

Section	Content suggestions
Welcome and fellowship – social time	This can be unstructured or include an icebreaker game/s. For a list of ten icebreaker ideas, see https://sheffdio.org/small-groups
Worship	<p>This section might include a prayer, quiet reflection and/or singing or listening to a worship song or piece of instrumental music.</p> <p>Song suggestion – ‘Christ, Be Our Light’ – Bernadette Farrell (Video Link)</p> <p>Light a candle and invite people to reflect individually on the following questions: <i>How am I feeling today? Am I ready to hear from God?</i></p> <p>Say the prayer for today (the collect), available here: https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer/todays-prayer</p>
What about me? – share experiences around a theme and/or share anything that has come to the surface since last week	What does your morning or evening routine look like? Are there certain things you have to do every day (like brushing your teeth, making breakfast and taking the dog out etc.)? Why do you do these things?
Word – reading the Bible together	In this session, we'll be thinking about patterns and rhythms in our Christian life. There are things we do annually (like celebrating Christmas and Easter), monthly (such as certain services and church events), weekly and daily that help us to live out our faith.

Being intentional about our habits and practices can help us to grow in our relationship with Jesus.

Have the following verses on slips of paper:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. (Matthew 6:9-11)

And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:17)

What are these verses telling us? Are there any common themes?

Possible answers: God wants to be part of every part of our lives. It's important to spend time with God and ask God for help regularly. We need help from God every day.

It's important to find a balance between doing things that help us connect with God and things that help us to shine as lights in the world. We have to receive Christ's light before we can reflect it to others. We're like solar-powered torches – we can't shine unless we have 'charged' in God's presence!

Wonder - What does this mean for me?

Time for prayer and reflection

What is the current 'rhythm' of my Christian faith? What do I do daily/weekly/monthly/yearly that helps me to follow Jesus?
What is one new thing that I could do to help me grow in faith?
Group members might like to share their ideas.

Ask God to show us what the next step in our faith journey might be. Pray for perseverance as we seek to become more like Jesus and share his light with the world.

If appropriate, invite small group members to future session(s) exploring the diocesan Personal Rule of life materials (see below for more info).

What's next?

Church leaders might like to use this resource to launch a small group that continues to meet regularly. In session 2 we considered the importance of meeting with other Christians for discipleship and fellowship – small groups/home groups are a great way to make this part of the life of your church.

The 4Ws model used in this resource can easily be adapted for weekly use in small groups. Members can take it in turns to lead different sections with very little preparation. The 'Word' section can be based on last Sunday's readings, using the same three questions each week for reflection:

- From this passage what do we learn about God?
- From this passage what do we learn about humanity?
- How will what we have found in this passage make a difference to our lives and the lives of those around us?

For more information about using the 4Ws model in a weekly small group, visit <https://sheffdio.org/small-groups>

Personal Rule of Life

An ideal next step for groups who have worked through this resource together is to explore developing a Personal Rule of Life. This is a simple set of habits and practices that help us to structure our journey of discipleship and become more Christ-like. You can find out more information and download resources on this topic at <http://www.sheffdio.org/ruleoflife>

The diocesan Resourcing Mission and Ministry team are available to advise church leaders on all aspects of discipleship, including setting up/running small groups and helping people to explore a Personal Rule of Life. To get in touch, please send an email to lightsforchrist@sheffield.anglican.org .