

REQUIRES
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VIDEO MATERIAL

SIX STEPS TO

LOVING YOUR CHURCH

FROM THE MINISTRY
OF THE FEW TO THE
MINISTRY OF THE PEW



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Six Steps to Loving Your Church

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INTRODUCTION

Some of us really love our churches, some of us aren't so positive, and for many of us that feeling can change from week to week.

This six-session program is about how to love your church whether you're feeling enthusiastic about it or not. It's about the mindset we take with us as we go to church each week, and how that mindset is expressed in a multitude of ways, big and small. In particular, it's about the part that we all play as God's people in loving, serving and building each other up, Sunday by Sunday. We all have a ministry—the ministry of the pew.¹

Over the six sessions of the course we will cover subjects such as:

- our current attitudes towards church, and how they are expressed
- what the Bible says about the meaning and purpose of church
- what it means to love our church and the people who go there
- how we can be active encouraging servants before, during and after church, rather than just consumers or spectators.

Each session contains a mix of discussion, Bible study, video input and prayer, along with simple exercises to help you put the ideas into practice on Sunday.

Our prayer is that the fairly simple and practical ideas in this training program will change the way you think and act at church, and bear fruit in the lives of those around for years to come.

Colin Marshall and Tony Payne
August 2013

1. This phrase goes back to a widely read article that Colin wrote in 1994 for *The Briefing*. You can read it here: matthiasmedia.com.au/briefing/library/1855

WALKING INTO CHURCH

Getting started



Video: How do you walk into church?

Notes on video



Discuss: Your church

1. What sort of things do you normally think about as you walk into church?
2. What do you really love about church at the moment?
3. What do you find hard (if anything) about church at the moment?

4. When the New Testament Christians walked into church, they weren't walking into a purpose-built religious-looking building. Mostly they were walking into someone's home. How do you think this would have affected the way they thought about walking into church?
5. What do you think *God* is thinking about as you walk into church?
6. Read Ephesians 5:25-27 and 1 Corinthians 3:10-17. What do these passages teach about God's attitude towards the church?



Video: What is God thinking?

Notes on video



 **Discuss: A different walk**

1. What struck you most from the video about God and the church?

2. What difference would it make, do you think, if you were to pray as you walked into church?

3. Think about the people at your church:
 - Who is new in the past 12 months? Do you know why they came to your church?

 - What do new people tend to do at the end of your church service?

 - Have any of the regulars been absent recently? Do you know why?

4. Think about your own habits at church:

- Where do you normally sit? Why there?
- Who do you normally speak with?
- What do you tend to do after the meeting finishes?



Prayer

Close the session with a brief time of prayer, giving thanks for your church and for God's great love for us.



Assignment

This coming Sunday, don't sit in your 'normal' seat (if you have one). Pray about where to sit, and sit next to someone different.

BUILDING IN LOVE



Discuss

Did you remember to pray and to sit somewhere different? How did it go?



Video: Building or spectating?

Notes on video



Bible study: Building in love

1. If you had just one sentence to explain why you go to church, what would you say?

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-7.

2. The famous chapter on love is part of Paul's teaching on using one's gifts in church. Why do you think he describes love as the "more excellent way" (1 Cor 12:31)?

3. Look at the different ways in which love is described in verses 4-7. How would these attitudes apply to our behaviour in church?

Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-12, 26-33.

4. What is it about prophecy that makes it better than speaking in tongues in church?

5. How do you think this relates to love in chapter 13?

6. What guidelines are given as to who should speak in the gathering, and how?

Now read Hebrews 10:19-25.

7. How do we gain access to God, according to this passage (vv. 19-22)?

8. Why then do we gather together (vv. 23-25)?



Video: What church is about

Notes on video



Discuss: Are you a builder?

1. Look back at your one-sentence summary of why you go to church (question 1 on page 14). How would you change your sentence in light of what we've seen from the Bible?
2. What might be the symptoms of a consumer or spectator attitude to church?
3. What might be the fruits of a servant attitude to church?
4. Do you think it might be possible to 'love' your church without actually 'loving' your church? How?

5. Optional: if you have time, look up one or more of the following passages. What motivates us to serve one another at church and beyond?

- Mark 10:41-45
- John 13:12-17
- 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1
- Ephesians 5:1-2
- Philippians 2:1-11



Prayer

- Give thanks for God's great gift of fellowship—that we have been saved into a family, with brothers and sisters for mutual help and encouragement.
- Pray for your attitude towards church. Pray that God would give you a loving, other-person-centred heart.



Assignment

This Sunday, in the first few minutes after the service, look for a way to practically serve another person (e.g. get a coffee for someone, take a new person to the welcome table, help with packing up, and so on).

Have a conversation with someone after church. Ask them how their week has been, and ask what you could pray for them.

GET READY TO BUILD



Discuss

1. How did you go in finding a practical way to serve or help someone after the service?
2. Did you manage to ask someone in conversation what you could pray for them? What effect did it have on the conversation?



Video: Preparing to build

Notes on video



Discuss: Be prepared

If your goal is to build and encourage people at church, what could you do beforehand to prepare? See how many ideas you can come up with.



Video: How to build during the meeting

Notes on video



Discuss: Better building

1. What's your facial 'screen saver' during the sermon?

2. What other practical ideas can you come up with for being a better builder during church?

3. What one or two things could you work on to be more of a 'builder' during the church meeting?



Prayer

- Pray for one another, that God would help you to put love into action this Sunday.
- Pray for the people you spoke with last Sunday (and for any of their prayer points).



Assignment

1. Choose at least one new thing you could do *before* church to prepare to build, and put it into practice this week.

2. Choose at least one new thing you could do *during* church to encourage and help others, and put it into practice this Sunday.

LOVE OVER COFFEE



Discuss

1. Report back on your efforts to prepare to build *before* church. What did you try?
2. How did you go being an active builder *during* church?



Video: When does church finish?

Notes on video



Discuss: 'After' church

1. At your church, what tends to happen in the time after the formal part of church is over? What's good and not so good?
2. Who do you normally talk to, and what do you talk about?
3. Do you find it difficult to talk about spiritual matters? If so, why is that, do you think?
4. If you do happen to talk to a newcomer, how do you find it?



Video: How to build over coffee

Notes on video



Discuss: Speaking God's word to each other

1. Look up some (or all) of the following Bible verses. What do they teach about the 'everyday Word ministry' we can have to one another?

- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

- Hebrews 3:12-14

- Colossians 3:14-17

- Ephesians 4:11-16

2. Think about the sermon from last Sunday. What comment or question could you have used to begin a conversation centred on God's word?

3. What sorts of things stop us from ministering to others informally at church?

4. What does all this mean for what time we leave church?



Prayer

Close in prayer together, giving thanks for the progress made so far, and asking for God's Spirit to help us keep going.



Assignment

Try to initiate at least one of the following this Sunday:

- a conversation about some specific point in the sermon
- praying with someone
- swapping stories of conversion with someone.

LOVING THE OUTSIDER



Discuss

The practical exercise for this past week was to try to initiate:

- a conversation about some specific point in the sermon
- praying with someone
- swapping stories of conversion with someone.

How did it go? Pray together for any issues that arose out of your conversations.



Video: Is church just for Christians?

Notes on video



Discuss

1. Why do you think people are sometimes reluctant to bring friends or family with them to church?
2. What experiences have you had in bringing non-Christians to church?
3. Who in your group or in your church was converted through an invitation to church?
4. What stops you from inviting unbelievers to church?

5. What would you change about your church meeting and environment to make it more accessible and friendly for outsiders?

6. Who could you talk with about these changes in a helpful way (without grumbling and complaining)?

7. Read Colossians 4:3-6. What are some wise ways of inviting people to church?



Video: Why we don't

Notes on video



Prayer

- Give thanks to God for his great love in reaching out to us and saving us through his Son. Pray for a heart like God's—that longs to see those around us saved.
- Pray for people you know who don't know Christ.



Assignment

Think of two or three people you could invite to church. Start praying and thinking about when and how you might invite them. Come to the next session ready to share your plans.

LOVING YOUR CHURCH



Discuss

Share the names of people you'd like to invite to church, and how you plan to go about it. Pray for these people and for each other.

Review

See if you can complete these sentences as a way of revising what we've talked about so far in this course.

1. The best way to walk into church is...
2. We go to church *not* as _____ or _____
but as _____ and _____.

3. The strongest and highest motive for all that we do at church is...
4. We gather together in church in order to...
5. Building the church is the job of...
6. I could prepare to build at church by...
7. I could build and encourage those around me during the meeting by...
8. I could encourage other people in the informal time by...
9. We should invite our non-Christian friends to church because...



Video: Obstacles to loving your church

Notes on video



Discuss

1. What will stop us serving from the pew?
2. As a result of this course, how will you think differently about church?
3. What have you learned or discovered in the assignments that you'd like to continue and develop?
4. How would the principles of this course apply to your attitude and approach to other aspects of life—for example, your Bible study group? Is it any different?
5. What do you plan to do differently as a result of this course?

Concluding video

Notes on video



Prayer

- Give thanks for specific things you have learned over the past six sessions, and for conversations and encouragement you have been able to give to others at church.
- Pray for people you have ministered to.
- Pray that God would help you to continue to have a servant's heart, and to grow in love for those around you at church.

Feedback on this resource

We really appreciate getting feedback about our resources—not just suggestions for how to improve them, but also positive feedback and ways they can be used. We especially love to hear that the resources may have helped someone in their Christian growth.

You can send feedback to us via the 'Feedback' menu in our online store, or write to us at info@matthiasmedia.com.au.



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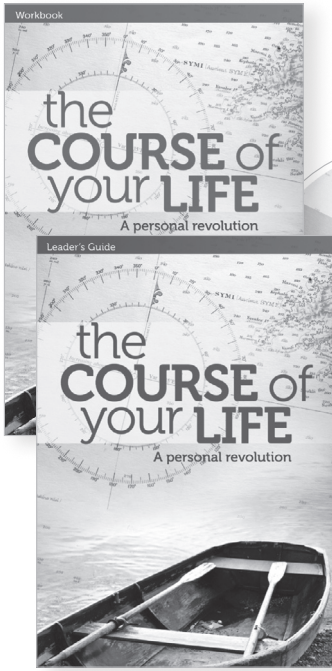
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Also by Tony Payne

The Course of Your Life



Do you ever stop and think about where your life is going?

Most people do this from time to time. We pause and take our bearings. Who am I? Is my life where I thought it would be now? Is there some sort of overriding purpose? Why did God put me here?

In *The Course of Your Life* you have the opportunity to discover in God's word that our lives do in fact have a profound and revolutionary purpose. God did make us for a reason, and it is all connected with the extraordinary work that he is doing in our lives and in his world.

Do you want to discover that purpose, and live the rest of your life pursuing it? That's what

The Course of Your Life is about. You'll do some in-depth study of what God's word says about the overriding purpose of your life, and spend time discussing the personal implications of it all for your everyday life. You'll also get some great input along the way—either on video from Tony Payne, or from your course leader.

For more information about the course and what it involves, visit our website: matthiasmedia.com/coyl

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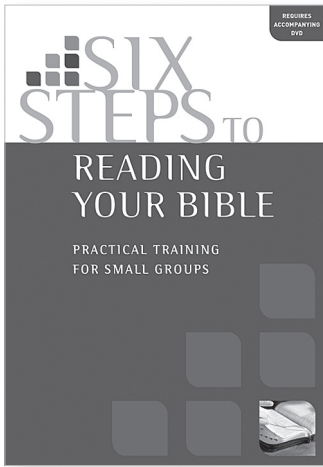
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Six Steps to Reading Your Bible



Whatever your current Bible reading habits (or lack of them), and whatever your level of knowledge and confidence, will help you make progress in getting into your Bible. The course is especially designed for use in small groups, and utilizes a mix of video instruction, fun skits, Bible study, discussion, practical exercises, prayer and home assignments that will help you on the road to establishing a new and more enjoyable Bible reading habit.

is a six-session course, best undertaken in a small group (of 6-10 people). To run the course you will need:

- a workbook for each person
- access to the video segments in the course (by streaming from **GoThereFor.com** or by purchasing the DVD).

The course includes leader's notes, which are available in the back of the printed workbook or to download from **GoThereFor.com**.

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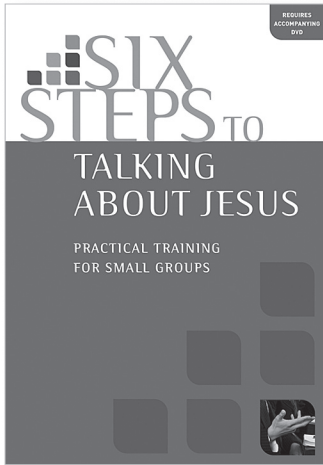
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Six Steps to Talking About Jesus



Think of the people around you: your family, your workmates, the man at the newsagency, your neighbours. Is there a single one of them who doesn't need to be following Jesus?

Yet like so many Christians, do you feel uneasy about reaching out to people? Perhaps you feel unsure about where to start and what to say?

Six Steps to Talking about Jesus is a short course that goes back to square one, and helps you make a start. Over six interactive sessions you'll look at:

- the core motivation for reaching out to others
- how to depend on God in prayer
- how to invite people to read a book or come to an event
- how to tell your own story of what God has done for you in Christ
- how to explain the gospel of Jesus in a simple way.

This is a course designed to be done in a small group context, and does not require an 'expert leader'. It is ideal preparation for a church mission.

Six Steps to Talking About Jesus is a six-session course, best undertaken in a small group (of 6-10 people). To run the course you will need:

- a workbook for each person
- access to the video segments in the course (by streaming from **GoThereFor.com** or by purchasing the DVD).

The course includes leader's notes, which are available in the back of the printed workbook or to download from **GoThereFor.com**.

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