



**Session 1: Free from the past, hope for the future 1-6 JAN**

**ICEBREAKER**

What are your hopes for the New Year? Did you make any resolutions?

**KEY THOUGHT**

As we enter a new year of changing times and storms of uncertainty, we need to hold on to the unchanging truths of Scripture and stand firm on our God the Rock.

**KEY VERSE**

'... Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.'  
Philippians 3:13-14

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

1. What is your favourite hymn or chorus, and why?
2. What do we mean by the phrase, 'the unchanging nature of spiritual truth'?

3. How should we view our past?
4. Discuss one person's testimony: 'I carry a history of the past, but no baggage from it.'
5. Why may people hold on to guilt about a sin that God has forgiven?
6. Why may people hold on to an attitude of 'unforgiveness'?

**THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS**

'Jesus said, "Father, forgive them ..."' Luke 23:34

**PRAYER POINTERS**

- Pray for God to do new things in and through you in this new year.
- Repent of any resentment of others and pray God's blessing on them.

**Session 2: Contend for the faith 7-16 JAN**

7-16 JAN

**ICEBREAKER**

Recite a declaration of faith together – eg the Apostles Creed or 1 Corinthians 15:3-7.

**KEY THOUGHT**

In these uncertain times, we need to be prepared to be in the minority and stand up for our faith.

**KEY VERSE**

'... I ... urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.' Jude 3

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

1. How should Christians interact with people of other faiths?
2. With what have we been entrusted?
3. Practise sharing the gospel in 90 seconds.
4. What allies do we have when sharing the gospel?
5. Is your view of hell the same as that in the Bible?

6. Are you a crowd pleaser or a God pleaser?
7. What causes people to adopt a herd instinct?
8. Where do you experience a sense of belonging?
9. How can we be inoculated against the world's contagion?
10. How can being a slave of Jesus bring freedom? (See Romans 1:1; 6:1-23.)

**THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS**

'... Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession ...'  
1 Timothy 6:13

**PRAYER POINTERS**

- Pray for wisdom as you interact with people of other faiths or none.
- Pray for courage to stand up for your faith when you encounter opposition.



**Session 3:** Let go and don't worry

17-25 JAN

**ICEBREAKER**

Give an example of when you tried something new – eg ice skating, a new food, a visit to another country etc.

**KEY THOUGHT**

We must not allow ourselves to cling to our old, comfortable ways but be prepared to launch out without fear or worry to experience more of God.

**KEY VERSE**

'Do not be afraid ... declares the LORD, for I am with you ...' Jeremiah 42:11

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

1. What big challenges do you face?
2. How could you be more confident when confronted by difficulties?
3. Are there areas where it would be beneficial to widen your Christian experience?
4. As believers, is it always wrong to be negative?

5. Is worry a form of unbelief and sin?
6. How can worry incapacitate us physically, mentally and spiritually?
7. What is the difference between a concern and a worry?
8. Why is it important to face and feel our troubles?
9. Go over the five steps to combat worry. Which is most important?

**THE EXAMPLES OF JESUS AND PETER**

'... he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch." Simon answered, "... I will ..."' Luke 5:4-5

**PRAYER POINTERS**

- Pray for boldness to deepen your spiritual life and work so you may become an 'ocean-minded' Christian.
- Cast your cares, worries and anxieties on the Lord.

**Session 4:** Following the Christian way

26 JAN - 4 FEB

**ICEBREAKERS**

- Describe an interesting incident when following a guide or using a map or sat-nav.
- Give people some small balls to see how many they can juggle.

**KEY THOUGHT**

The Christian way is the only way we have been designed to live and is based on following Christ without becoming entangled in too many activities, however good they may appear.

**KEY VERSE**

'But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand.' Matthew 7:26

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

1. How is Christ's character stamped into the universe?
2. Consider the lyrics of Sinatra's song 'My Way'.
3. Why is evil an illusion?
4. Why are lie detector tests so reliable?

5. What Christian ways should we incorporate in our lives?
6. Are you over-involved in spiritual commitments?
7. Why did God give us freewill to disobey Him?
8. How can we combine spiritual activity with inner peace?
9. What may happen if we care for someone 'too much'?
10. How do we balance minding our own business with care for others?

**THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS**

'To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.' 1 Peter 2:21  
'Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did.' 1 John 2:6

**PRAYER POINTERS**

- Pray that you will have a deep conviction about the Christian way and not just an opinion.
- Ask God for wisdom to prevent over-involvement that could sap your physical and spiritual strength.



**Session 5: Free from stain**

5-9 FEB

**ICEBREAKER**

Create an icebreaker based on the theme of a stain and its removal, perhaps comparing the effectiveness of a proprietary cleaning agent and plain water in removing a tough stain.

**KEY THOUGHT**

We are called to be without stain or blemish. Christ does wash us clean but we are also called to live pure lives. (See Ephesians 4:17-5:27.)

**KEY VERSE**

'... let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God'  
2 Corinthians 7:1

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

1. How can we be more aware of our commission to purity?
2. How can we avoid harsh attitudes towards others?
3. Compare charity work and Christian work.
4. Could resentments or grudges be hampering your spiritual life?
5. Why may religious people become hypocrites?

**THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS**

'Such a high priest meets our need – one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.' Hebrews 7:26

**PRAYER POINTERS**

- Confess any wrong attitudes and actions and ask God to make you clean.
- Ask for God's help to remain pure and without hypocrisy.

**Session 6: Personal discipline**

10-14 FEB

**ICEBREAKER**

Describe how a period of personal discipline has benefited you – eg study for exam or driving test, following a diet to lose weight or training for a sport, fun run or career etc.

**KEY THOUGHT**

We can achieve little in life without a degree of personal discipline and sustained effort.

**KEY VERSE**

'Exercise daily in God – no spiritual flabbiness, please! Workouts in the gymnasium are useful, but a disciplined life in God is far more so, making you fit both today and forever.'  
1 Timothy 4:7-8, *The Message*

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

1. What is the balance of grace and discipline?
2. What godly training do you need to increase your spiritual effectiveness?

3. Why may God's discipline be like a surgeon's scalpel?
4. Can you sometimes be a 'yes-butter' and therefore have no salt? (See Matthew 5:13.)
5. Discuss the phrases 'primary attention', 'meekness of surrender to God' and 'power through discipline'. (See Hebrews 12:4-13.)

**THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS**

'But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.' Luke 5:16

**PRAYER POINTERS**

- Prayerfully decide on a programme to address a spiritual weakness – eg in prayer, in Bible knowledge, a lack of love etc.
- Ask God to help you become a more disciplined and therefore a more effective person.



**Session 7: Excel in loving**

15-19 FEB

**ICEBREAKER**

Which is your favourite romantic novel, song or film, and why?

**KEY THOUGHT**

It is said that 'love makes the world go round'. The Bible explains that without love, we 'gain nothing'. Therefore, we should aim to be people who revel in God's love and express it to others.

**KEY VERSE**

'May the Lord direct your hearts into [realizing and showing] the love of God ...'  
2 Thessalonians 3:5, *The Amplified Bible*

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

1. Why is love the greatest?
2. Does God love us because Jesus died for us or did Jesus die for us because God loves us?

3. Review the words of the hymn 'When I Survey the Wondrous Cross'.
4. Why may self-interest prevent us growing in love?
5. How does the quality of love follow the principle of sowing and reaping?

**THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS**

'But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.' Romans 5:8

**PRAYER POINTERS**

- Prayerfully meditate on John 3:16, Romans 5:6-8 and 1 John 4:21.
- Ask God to show you how you can practically show love to other people.

**Session 8: Holy Spirit & unshakeable kingdom** 20-28 FEB

**ICEBREAKERS**

- Which is your favourite symbol of the Holy Spirit – eg wind, water, dove, oil, fire etc?
- Play a game of Jenga or, if you are younger, Twister! Who is unshakeable (doesn't fall down)?

**KEY THOUGHT**

The Christian life is not about us trying to improve ourselves but about allowing the Holy Spirit to resource us to become more like Christ in attitude and action. With the Holy Spirit in our lives we may be unsettled but we will never collapse.

**KEY VERSES**

'But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you ...' Acts 1:8  
'... we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken ...' Hebrews 12:28

**DISCUSSION STARTERS**

1. How could you draw more on the resources of the Holy Spirit in your daily life?
2. To what extent do you agree with John Owen?
3. How does the Holy Spirit help us to please God?
4. Why may we need to repent to receive the Holy Spirit?

5. How do we practise continuous surrender?
6. Why are the kingdoms and systems of this world destined to decay and fall?
7. Are capitalism, socialism, communism, democracy and dictatorship equally antithetical to God?
8. How can we build wisely on our foundation?
9. In what sense is God's kingdom here now and yet still to come? (See Matthew 12:28; Hebrews 6:5.)
10. What has most impacted you from this issue and what do you need to do in order to adapt to changing times whilst standing on unchanging truths?

**THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS**

'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' Luke 4:18-19

**PRAYER POINTERS**

- Pray for a deeper experience of the Holy Spirit.
- Pray for one another, that we may both be flexible to new moves of God and stand firm on the faith entrusted to us.