



Session 1

The Learning Circle –Teaching Outline

INTRODUCTION

WORKBOOK PG. 1

Jesus called followers, and he called his followers ‘disciples’. Disciple means learner, so how does this work? Jesus also said that to be a disciple meant constant change, laying down your life daily to obey him.

How do you know when God is at work in your life? How can you process all the events and issues of your life? How does God guide you? And how should you respond?

This session is about: *how to process what God is saying to you as you live day to day, and provides a framework for a response that enables us to be changed to be more like Christ.*

- The Learning Circle represents the process that helps us to identify the events in our lives which affect our actions and emotions that present an opportunity for learning, growing and becoming spiritually mature.

In this session on the Learning Circle, we will look at:

1. What it means to be a disciple of Christ and take on a lifestyle of learning
2. How to recognize important events as opportunities for growth
3. How to process those events

SCRIPTURAL BASIS

*After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The **time** has come,” he said. “The **kingdom** of God is near. **Repent and believe the good news!**”*
Mark 1: 14-15

- Jesus’ mission statement
- Jesus’ foundational teaching everywhere
- The parallel passage in Matthew emphasizes that this proclamation was the foundation for Jesus’ teaching (Matthew 4:17)

Key Point

There is a great opportunity available to you. God’s Kingdom is within reach but you need to go through a process to actually enter into that Kingdom. If you want to get hold of the kingdom, take advantage of the opportunity God is providing and it will take you through a process of repentance and belief.

TIME

There are at least two words for ‘time’ in Greek

Chronos, which means _____ (Fill in the blank in the workbook) 

- The sequential passing of time; chronological time.
- It’s about dates and clock time.

Kairos, which means _____ 

- An event or great moment or a crisis when time can seem to ‘stand still’.
- It is a period of ‘time’ when *chronos* time is of no importance.
- It could mark a significant shift in your life.



You may want to draw this on a flipchart and begin to build the full picture.

The dotted line represents the passing of chronological time (like tick tock) and the cross is the intervention of a *kairos* event.

Positive *kairos* events – (Invite the participants to give some examples) 

- Wedding day, a success at work, an answered prayer, birth of a baby...

Negative or crisis *kairos* events – (Invite the participants to give some examples) 

- Losing a job, missing the plane, bereavement, oversleeping, crossing a red light!

Other examples

- Church services: a good time or a dull time
- Saying...“I had a good time last night.”

Key Point:

Kairos events are never neutral because by their very nature, they make an impression on you. They are opportunities for God to fashion and change our hearts!



Share personal examples of *kairos* events in your own life and perhaps suggest some from recent current events.

Key Point

The word Jesus used in the Mark passage is *kairos*. He was essentially saying: “The moment you’ve been waiting for is here. Recognize the times that you are in. See that God is bringing together all the lines of history to create an event that could change your lives forever.”

Exercise

WORKBOOK PG. 2

- 🕒 3 mins Think of a *kairos* event you have recently experienced.
- 🕒 5 mins Discuss this event with one other person

This short exercise will help people to grasp the difference between *kairos* and *chronos* time as far as their own personal experience is concerned.

Invite a few people to share a recent *kairos* event with the larger group. For those who are more naturally extrovert processors, this exercise will be easier. Also, note that the Learning Circle incorporates both personal reflection and discussion/accountability with others, so there is something for both extrovert processors and introvert processors.

WORKBOOK PG. 2

REPENT & BELIEVE – Basic Components of Learning

If we take the two words **repent** and **believe** as the basic components of learning, we will discover how to learn and grow from the events that take place in our lives.

‘repent’ in Greek is *metanoia*



- Which means to change one’s mind. A complete change of heart, mind, inner person.
- Repentance is a process; a change or transformation which takes place below the surface and within the person.
- True repentance changes the way you see the world and relate to it. It changes the way you function as a person.
- Being a Christian and being a disciple means change. Change is here to stay!

(Note that to some people, the word “repent” may offend as the result of negative church experiences in the past and they may immediately throw up barriers to receiving the teaching. If this happens, reiterate that the word simply means to change.)

‘believe’ in Greek is *pistis*



- Which means an active trust. The application of an inner conviction.
- A trust based on something you’ve been persuaded about; a continuing process of belief and action; a life-transforming trust.
- *Pistis* can be translated either as ‘faith’ or ‘belief’. Belief means that the truth that we have accepted inwardly, we apply outwardly.
- Use analogy of sitting on a chair and trusting it to hold your weight
- Faith begins in the heart but is revealed in our outer life. We live it – others see it.

🔑 Key Point:

When we respond to the *kairos* event and allow it to change us from the inside out, that change produces a faith and trust and we enter more fully into the reality of the kingdom. The tense used in both these verbs is ‘present continuous’. This is not a one-off act, but a constant recurring practice that could be translated, ‘keep on changing your mind and living out your faith.’

KINGDOM

WORKBOOK PG. 2

‘Kingdom’ in Greek is *basileia*



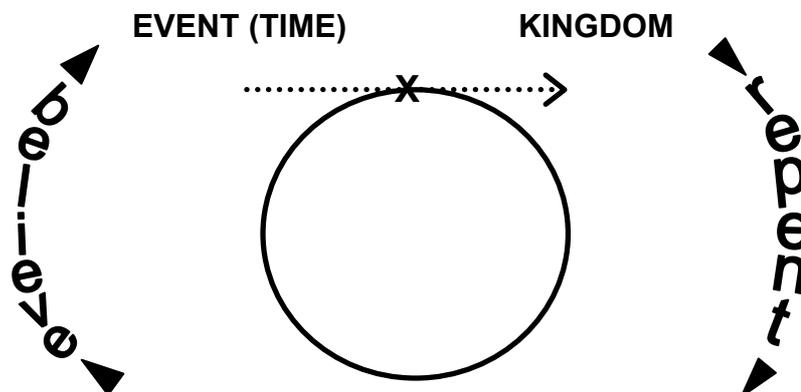
- Which means God’s rule or reign in our lives; his kingship
- Not necessarily referring to a geographical location
- It refers to his effective, powerful, and overarching presence and influence in our lives.

🔑 To Summarize

- Take advantage of any *kairos* event
- Allow it to change us from the inside
- So that trust will grow within us and be manifest outwardly in our life.
- When this happens, we enter the Kingdom.

The basic components of learning, **repent** and **believe**, allow us to enter more fully into the reality of God’s presence in our lives...the Kingdom!

If we were to diagram this passage, it might look something like this:



It might be useful to draw this on a flip chart, building on the first part from page 2.

Exercise

WORKBOOK PG. 3

-  **5 mins** Take a *kairos* event in your life that has revealed an area needing change, and discuss with one other person how this caused you to repent and believe. These events could be conversations with someone, listening to a sermon, a difficult situation at work, a scripture recently read, etc.

 Share a personal experience to illustrate

LEARNING AS A LIFESTYLE

WORKBOOK PG. 3

*“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 28:19-20

‘disciple’ in Greek is *mathetes*



- Which means learner or student.
- We are to take on the *lifestyle* of a learner.
- **Repent** and **believe**, as a lifestyle, will bring us back to the foundations of the faith: the cross and resurrection of Christ.

Key Point

Repentance and belief follow each other in the process of our discipleship. Unfortunately, many disciples remain fixed in the ‘repentance’ side of the Learning Circle: they feel sorry, but never change.

LEARNING HAPPENS BY EVENT & PROCESS

Kairos is an “event” word. **Repent and believe** are “process” words.



- *Kairos* events allow us to enter a process of *metanoia* or repentance.
- **Repent** and **believe** once for Salvation
- **Repent** and **believe** as a life-long process for disciples of Jesus.
- We are to take on a lifestyle of repentance and a lifestyle of active trust.

Key Point

The way through the door of the kingdom is through a process that continues long after you have said “the sinner’s prayer.” Taking on the character of Jesus does not happen overnight. It’s a process.

TRIALS LEAD TO LEARNING AND CHANGE

WORKBOOK PG. 3

“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance...perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” **James 1:2-4**

- Trials are opportunities to learn and grow and mature
- ♥ You may want to explain how trials test our motives, character and actions, perhaps sharing personal testimony

WORKBOOK PG. 4

kairos ➔ *metanoia* ➔ *pistis* = Application to become a Lifelong Learner

WHAT DO YOU DO WITH YOUR KAIROS EVENTS? FILE THEM OR USE THEM? GET WITH THE PROCESS!

Key Points

- Jesus wants us to enter a lifestyle of repentance and faith so that we can live within the kingdom.
- This lifestyle is what we call Christian discipleship which, if understood correctly, means a lifetime dedicated to learning from Jesus and applying the lessons.
- Therefore, we need to be committed to be learners, and learning is a process which is triggered through the *kairos* event.
- The result is seeing God’s kingdom rule in our life.



Trigger – kairos event

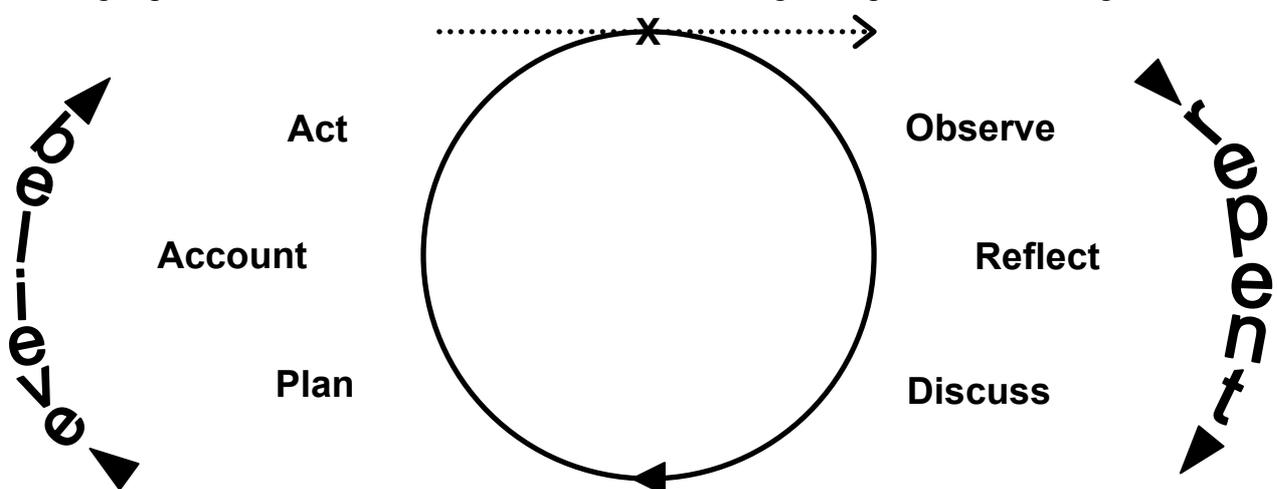
Response – the process of repenting and believing

Result – the kingdom of God!

THE PROCESS OF LEARNING – UNPACKING THE CIRCLE

WORKBOOK PG. 4

Having experienced a *kairos* event in our lives, we then begin the process of learning from it.



The Learning Circle – Teaching Outline



Repenting as a process can be broken down into three parts:

Observe: To change our lives we need to look at them.

- Be alert to the ways God would catch your attention. That was surprising! That was great! That wasn't good!
- Confronting Issues: change requires facing issues and observing them properly.
- Brutal Honesty: Honest observation is the first step in the process of internal transformation. See things as they are.
- We can either see facing issues honestly as something to avoid or as a challenge to accept. It's only by accepting that we can become the people God wants us to be.

Reflect: Once you've observed, then you reflect on it, think about it.

- Processing the 'facts' ... and my reaction to them.
- Assessing the event to find what triggered it or if it leads on to something else
- The easiest way to reflect is simply to ask yourself questions...Why? And again, why? For example: 'Why did that happen?' And again, 'Why did I react like that?' And then again, 'How might I have responded differently?'
- Again, honesty is necessary if we are to see change and progress in our lives.
- Carried out in prayer and in the light of Scripture

Note: Introverts will naturally find this stage in the Learning Circle easier than extroverts!

Discuss: invite other learners into the process; we are not called to be disciples alone.

- Discuss the issue with someone else to get objective viewpoint.
- Allow trusted individuals to speak into your life; to probe and to challenge.
- Weigh what has been discussed; seek God's guidance through Scripture and prayer.
- Confession of sin that has been revealed is appropriate. Sometimes, for repentance to really take hold, you've got to share it with someone else. *"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."* James 5:16

Believing as a process also has three parts:



Plan: Responding to the new understanding means developing a plan.

- On the basis of observation, reflection and discussion, begin to make a plan for responding to the issue the event raises. We may do this naturally.
- Planning is built around a vision. We make a plan to attain something.
- Learning to do this well and clearly is an important life skill and an important part of Christian discipleship.



Account: Effective planning requires at least one person to hold us accountable to it.

- Externalize what has been going on internally. Change doesn't happen in private.
- Fear of sharing will keep you from growing and changing. Jesus put disciples in pairs.
- Accountability is essential to the growth that brings about real life change.

Act: Faith always produces action. It cannot be contained within.

- You've planned, you're accountable, it is only natural to put it all into action.
- Going through this process of repentance and belief will lead to real action.
- Being fruitful means that we act on what we learn.
- Action will bring in the kingdom, more of the reign of God in your life.

Note: This cycle is different from the secular equivalent of the Learning Circle because it includes the dimensions of discussion and accountability, whereas in the secular world of self-help manuals etc, the more individual approach of working through each stage of Observe, Reflect, Plan and Act alone, is presented.

Exercise
WORKBOOK PG. 5

 **10 mins**

In groups of four, discuss first with one other how the Learning Circle can be put into practice in your life. Then all together, share what issues, weaknesses and questions this raises. Pray for each other.

If time allows, have a short period for feedback with questions and answers.

Explain the Homework on the next page.

Close the session in prayer.

Taking this further... (otherwise known as Homework!)

WORKBOOK PG. 6

Application to Life

- ⊙ In what areas in your life could you put this framework into practice? e.g. accountability? Resolving conflict? Review times? What would help you at this time? Make a commitment to the Lord to put it into practice and then go and do it!!
- ⊙ Consider regularly meeting with an accountability partner (you may need to ask the Lord to show you someone suitable!) and begin to meet, using the Learning Circle as the background framework for your time together.
- ⊙ Identify what you consider to be your strongest and weakest point in the Learning Circle. How can you compensate for these emphases? How do you normally learn?

Further Reflection

- ⊙ Have another go at fully going through this process. Take a recent *kairos* event and go through the 6 stages of responding to this event. You will need to do this with one other person – at least the ‘discuss’ and ‘account’ stages!
- ⊙ If you journal, try responding to your life events by taking them through the Learning Circle as the background ‘framework’ to your reflection. If you don’t already journal, why not start now?

Further Bible Study

- ⊙ Read the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and focus on Matthew 6:25-7:29. Consider the *kairos* events to which Jesus is responding in the disciples’ lives. Can you identify the six stages of the Learning Circle in Jesus’ teaching in the text?

Event?

Observe?	
Reflect	
Discuss?	
Plan?	
Account?	
Act?	

- ⊙ List any other scriptures where you think you can see this process at work...



The Further Bible Study in the homework gives participants a chance to explore how Jesus used the elements/steps of the Learning Circle with his disciples. If time permits you may want to include it in the end of the session and so teaching notes are included here. They will help you anyway, when answering questions on the homework which may come up next session.

AN EXAMPLE FROM THE BIBLE

WORKBOOK PG. 6

Have the participants read the following passage: Matthew 6:25-7:29

The *Kairos* Event: Jesus' sermon on the Mount - Matthew 5, 6 and 7

- Jesus has outlined a radical lifestyle
- Created internal pressure (anxiety and worry) for his disciples.
- He addresses the situation: "Do not worry about your life"
- An event has taken place. It causes worry, anxiety, stress.
- The disciples need to learn from this event so Jesus begins with...

Observe: "Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them."

- Jesus starts to take them through the process which begins with observation.
- Observing birds leads to observing their own lives.
- "Look, the birds don't worry" Jesus says. This is a straightforward observation.
- Likewise, observing our *kairos* event means that we end up looking at ourselves.

Reflect: Reflection starts when Jesus asks, "Are you not much more valuable than they?"

- Jesus gets them processing the facts by asking a rhetorical question.
- Put things into perspective. Birds are valuable but we are more valuable.
- Reflection leads to conversation or...

Discuss: "Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"

- Discussion was a basic part of the learning experience in Jesus' time
- This teaching probably included discussion which Matthew chooses not to record.
- Discussion leads to clarity.

Plan: "But seek first His Kingdom..."

- Clearest statement of planning in the Bible
- Make the kingdom your vision, the kingdom will become the basis of your plans and all other things will be taken care of by God. There is no need to worry!
- That is what Jesus is saying. This is good news!



Account: Matthew 7:1-15 *“Do not judge, or you too will be judged.”*

- Although we are not to judge one another, we are to live accountable to each other for the way we live, speak and think.
- Hypocrites judge when they look for faults in others and miss their own faults.
- Jesus says, “First take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” This is where accountability begins.

Act: *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on a rock. The rain came down...”*

- Jesus talks about two kinds of people in this passage, the wise and the foolish.
- They both hear. The difference between the two is that one acts, the other doesn’t.
- Being fruitful means that we act on what we hear and learn.
- Going through this process of repentance and belief will lead to real action.
- Action will bring in the Kingdom, more of the reign of God in your life.
- Jesus teaches us to listen... and to act.

Other Examples: You can ask the group to think of other examples in the Bible, where the principles of the Learning Circle are illustrated. If people are unsure, you could make some suggestions – especially from the lives of Moses (i.e. the spies in Numbers 13/14) and Nehemiah (in Nehemiah 1, 2:11-20).