



LEADER'S GUIDE

Why Prism?

A prism is a clear glass shape which you may remember from your physics class at school. When white light is shone through the prism, the phenomenon of refraction causes it to separate into an array of different colours all emerging at different angles.



Not your normal bible study

Prism offers the right name for this resource which is part biblical reflection, part framework for discussion, part practical response and part encouragement to take fresh faith in God. The content is intentionally more open and flexible than other familiar patterns of

Bible study material. It has to be because it will take many years for the complex lessons God wants to teach us through the coronavirus experience to fully unfold from what we can only imagine will be a once in a lifetime global event. Superficial answers swiftly arrived at may only expose our simplistic questions and shallow reflection.

Every participant's individual experience of living through the period of the pandemic will also be different. Some will have done so as a family unit. Others will have experienced lockdown on their own. Some will be excited by the possibilities of new technology. Others will have felt digitally excluded, or feel digitally fatigued. Some may be sorrowful at having lost a loved one. Others may be grateful for having survived a period of infection. Some may continue to live with serious financial consequences.

Prism aims to gather all these perspectives allowing participants to pastorally process where they are and to make different contributions to enrich the lessons learned together. So after beginning with a Bible passage, greater space is intentionally left for less structured discussion to see what emerges. In allowing this to happen we will gain wide perspective on what God is saying to his church and begin to discern his ways for us in the future.

Facilitating a prism session

There are lots of ways your congregation might use Prism. There are nine sessions in total. After an introductory session, four sessions focus on coming together again in church life. Four sessions have a more individual focus, helping participants gather together their reflections on life and what they have learned from the period of the pandemic. However, your congregation may decide to use all the sessions, only one set of four sessions, or just one or two in a standalone way.

After introducing the theme with written material and a general discussion starter, each session unfolds in four sections with instructions provided in italics to help the group navigate the flow of reading, reflecting and responding. This rhythm will become more natural as sessions are used week by week.

1. PARALLELS AND PATTERNS

This section provides an invitation to look back at recent events and forward into God's future for his church through the prism of Scripture

Participants are invited to line up a particular Bible passage alongside their recent experience of living through the coronavirus pandemic, to explore what parallels they see and patterns for living as followers of Jesus they draw from the text.

PARALLELS

The **Parallels** angle seeks to help participants identify connections between the Bible passage and their recent, or present, experience of living through the pandemic. It should get participants thinking, 'Oh yes, I can see that what happens in this part of the Bible is similar to what we are going through'.

PATTERNS

The **Patterns** angle encourages participants to identify some patterns for living well as a follower of Jesus that emerge in the passage. It should draw the attention of participants to 'examples I could follow in my life of faith'.

Tips for facilitating this section

Short summaries of the Bible passage are provided to recap and reinforce what has been read. Some prompts for discussion (marked Q) are offered. Leaders shouldn't feel all these need to be asked and discussed. The conversation may warm up without them, or maybe only one is needed to spark discussion. You might want to allow around 40% of the time available for this section.

2. POSSIBILITIES AND PERSPECTIVES

This section aims to open up a kaleidoscope of conversation, creating space for the Spirit to speak in and through his people

Participants are encouraged to further explore the possibilities of what God might be saying that arise by looking at recent events through the lens of Scripture, then share those perspectives to stimulate group conversation and deepen discussion.

POSSIBILITIES

The **Possibilities** angle intentionally tries to slow things down, inviting personal processing of what God seems to be saying through the discussion of the Bible passage. This can be done individually in silence, or in pairs. It offers a way of engaging quieter members of the group and is a stepping stone towards the sharing of ideas. It should encourage participants to hear 'what God might be saying to me'.

PERSPECTIVES

The **Perspectives** angle offers the opportunity to share individual reflections on the impression God's Word is making on the minds and hearts of participants. Expect these to be different. Look for common themes, but don't dismiss the wisdom that may come from what at first might seem like an unusual contribution. In this section the group should be taking note of 'God's lessons for us'.

Tips for facilitating this section

There are instructions for participants, but no prompts for discussion in this section. Don't be afraid of silence that offers thinking time. You might need to draw conversation out by inviting individual contributions or building on those that are first to emerge. You might want to allow around 30% of the time available for this section.

3. PATHWAYS TO PURSUE

This section identifies refractions emerging from the discussion that offer practical changes of course in our congregational life and our lives as individual followers of Jesus

Participants are helped to think through the significance of what they have talked about for their church and personal lives and to pray together for strength to follow through on what God has taught them.

The **Thinking** angle encourages participants to reflect on how they have been caused to think again about some aspect of life as a follower of Jesus by engaging in the session - 'this has really caused me to see something in a different light'.

The **Living** angle invites the identification of a concrete change in life that participants can act upon - 'here's how I need to live differently'.

The **Praying** angle introduces prayer that the group might follow through on what God has said - 'God we need your strength to think and live differently from now on'.

Tips for facilitating this section

A short question for each angle stimulates response in this section. Allow some people to offer a thinking angle, others a living angle, and still others to lead in prayer. You might need to draw conversation out by inviting individual contributions or building on those that are first to emerge. You might want to allow around 20% of the time available for this section.

4. PROMISE AND PRAYER

This section casts shards of God's light to illuminate the way ahead

Each session ends with a promise of Scripture and a short prayer drawn from it assuring participants of God's presence.

PROMISE The **Promise** angle finishes the group's time together by returning to what God says in his Word.

PRAYER The **Prayer** angle provides a closing prayerful reflection on the theme of the session.

Tips for facilitating this section

There are instructions for participants, but no prompts for discussion in this section. Don't be afraid of silence that offers thinking time. You might need to draw conversation out by inviting individual contributions or building on those that are first to emerge. You might want to allow around 30% of the time available for this section.

