

METHOD 1

Small groups

A number of churches and individuals prefer using a small group approach to *Christianity Explained*. That is, people are invited to join a small group of enquirers to investigate Christianity over a six-week period.

This approach has certain advantages over the one-to-one method, particularly for shy people who may feel more secure in the larger group.

1. Advertising the group

If you are wanting to use a small -group approach, it is suggested that a simple advertising leaflet could be distributed – a sample of such a leaflet may be found on page 25 of this book. This sample leaflet may be copied and used if you so wish. (Fold it so that the word INVITATION appears on the front.)

For such a course, people could be recruited from the following sources:

- Church members may be encouraged to invite or bring along non-Christian friends and relatives.
- Church-goers, whom the minister or pastor feel do not understand the gospel clearly, could be encouraged to join.
- Referrals to the group may be gleaned from people who have done a previous course and have relatives or friends who would profit from *Christianity Explained*.
- The hosts (the Christian couple who provide the home for the series) may invite their friends and relatives.
- Word of mouth.

2. Advertising in the church

If you are going to advertise the group in church verbally, you need to present the idea in the right way. For instance, suppose you stood up in church and announced:

We are running this course for pagan non-Christians and you would be very welcome to come!

You can imagine the sort of response you would get! Nil! A better approach would be:

This course is designed to go over the fundamental building-blocks of the Christian faith. It will not be heavy or deep theology, but it is designed to allow you to check out the simple fundamentals of what Christians believe. You would be welcome to come, or you may know someone who would be interested. Let me assure you that you will not be required to answer questions, to pray or to read the Bible aloud. There will, however, be ample opportunity for discussion.

Such an approach is inoffensive, and has encouraged many to do the six week-course.

3. Group size

It has been suggested that each group be kept as small as possible. The larger the group, the more difficult it is to deal with people's individual needs. With increasing size, there is a law of diminishing returns that sets in!

About five or six enquirers should be the maximum. If the group goes over this number, then it is suggested that it be split.

4. A regular programme

Most churches approach evangelism as a series of stop-start, one-off evangelistic events: a mission; an evangelistic service; a Holiday Bible Club; a coffee morning, and so on. These are good, but...

We wish to encourage churches to set up regular and systematic programmes of evangelism so that outreach is continuous and not spasmodic.

A simple programme can be set up following the school term timetable. The year is divided into four terms of 10 weeks each. A *Christianity Explained* group, or groups can be run in each term.

This would ensure that at least three times a year people have an opportunity to be introduced to the gospel.

5. Christians out of groups

Try to keep known believers out of the group as far as possible, except for those involved. Some well-meaning Christians can't help answering all the questions, while the guests go more and more into their shells.

The only exception to this principle should be when believers wish to bring along an enquiring friend. In such a case, when the enquirer may not be prepared to come alone, an exception should be made in these circumstances, but in no other. You should tell the Christian to take a low profile in the group, and not to say too much!

6. Follow-up

At the end of the course, all members of the group should complete the Course Assessment Sheet (page 59), and be invited to do the follow-up course.

From experience, about one-half to two-thirds of those who have finished the *Christianity Explained* course have expressed a desire to do the follow-up course, including many who have not yet become believers. Some have come to genuine faith in the second course!