

Having problems running a nurture course?

What are the obstacles to overcome if you are running an Emmaus Nurture course? Experience shows these are the most common:

1. **Lack of boldness** – lots of churches *think* of having a course...but somehow or other, never get round to doing anything about it!

2. **Rushing things**. Nurture courses need to have firm foundations, and the following matters have to be seen to:

a) make sure the leadership of the church know the course and are enthusiastic about it (well, most of them anyway)

b) who might be invited on the course? The four week course for church leaders in the 'Contact' booklet is meant precisely to help churches to think about this question.

c) what would be the best venue for the sort of people who are to be invited?

d) who is going to lead the course and do they need any training?

e) how can the whole congregation be involved in this – by praying....helping with practical things....inviting their neighbours.....attending the course themselves?

3. **Courses change as they are repeated**. A common pattern is:

Course 1. Mainly churchgoers come. Numbers good. A lot of enthusiasm.

Course 2. Fewer churchgoers and one or two 'fringe' people. Numbers less. Less excitement.

Course 3. Still fewer churchgoers but a few more newcomers. Numbers fairly low. A few people begin to find God for the first time.

Persevere. It can happen that a church stops nurture groups after the second or third sessions because these are less obviously exciting than the first course and numbers are fewer. BUT research shows that it is only after the third or fourth course that outsiders are touched and numbers in the church start to increase.

4. **Leaders need the right gifts**. The ideal is:

Teacher – who can teach adults

Evangelist – who can lead them to Christ

Administrator – who can get them there in the first place

Pastor – who can care for them.

It is doubtful if any church has one individual with all those gifts – so more than one leader is helpful if at all possible.

5. **What happens next?** To lead a group of people through a nurture course where they discover Christ together, make friends and learn to trust each other – and then to say 'That's that', is pastorally criminal. There has to be follow up. It has been

found that it is usually best to keep a group together and not to split the members around existing groups. The Emmaus growth material was produced for precisely such a group and a selection of suitable material can be selected from it: often it is best if the members of the group have a say in the choice of the material.

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