

# A Month in the Kingdom of Fools

Discussion material to accompany the book, *Kingdom of Fools*

*Kingdom of Fools* is an historical look at the Early Church. The book follows the New Testament of Acts and the letters of Paul – but also takes a lot of information from extra-biblical sources out what the church was like, who was in it, and we should learn about it.

This document contains four sessions for homegroups/churches/Bible study groups/small secret meetings of cult members.\* Each session explores different aspects of life in the early church using some of the material in the book. Each topic is accompanied by a video, a Bible passage, discussion questions and a prayer taken from the writings of the early church.

With the help of my publishers, Hodder Faith, these resources are ABSOLUTELY FREE. But I – and they – would really like it if you bought the book!

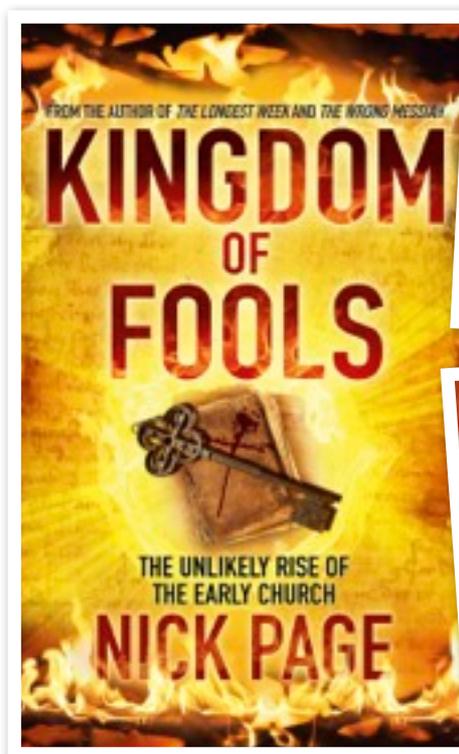
## How it works

There are four sessions, each of which has an accompanying video which can be accessed from my website: [www.nickpage.co.uk](http://www.nickpage.co.uk) or viewed on my vimeo channel: [www.vimeo.com/channels/kingdomoffools](http://www.vimeo.com/channels/kingdomoffools)

Each session, all you have to do is...

1. Show the video
2. Read the Bible
3. Look in the book
4. Have a coffee
5. Chat about it using the discussion questions.
6. Pray.
7. Take away something to think about and do during the following days.

That's all there is to it. And let's face it, you can do the coffee bit in any order.



To view videos, go to [www.nickpage.co.uk](http://www.nickpage.co.uk)

\* delete that which does not apply

Kingdom of Fools 1  
**DONKEY**

**WATCH** View the video Kingdom of Fools 1 DONKEY

**READ** Read 1 Corinthians 1.18–2.5

**TALK** *For the background on this, read Kingdom of Fools pp. 1–3 and 95–105*

The earliest depiction of Christ on a cross comes not from a Christian source, but from an opponent. It's known as the Alexamenos graffito and it was scrawled on a schoolroom in Rome sometime in the second century AD.

The pagan world viewed the Christians with disdain. Christianity was, if not illegal, then illicit, suspicious. Weird. The description of Christians as fools comes from Celsus, writing in the second century.

Despite the low view of Christians, the faith spread, particularly in the cities. In the book I argue that this was because of Christianity's inclusiveness, its care for the marginalised, and counter-cultural way of life.

**QUESTIONS**

1. Why do you think people considered 'the message of the cross' foolish? (see especially *Kingdom of Fools* pp. 100–105)
2. How does Paul answer that kind of accusation?
3. What kinds of Christian behaviour might have been thought foolish in Paul's day?
4. Do you think that people today think Christians to be foolish? If so, why?
5. In the video I suggest we need to 'rediscover the glorious foolishness of Christianity.' Do you agree?

**PRAY** We ask you, Master, to be our helper and protector.  
Save those among us who are in distress; have mercy on the humble;  
raise up the fallen; appear to those in need; heal the sick;  
restore those of your people who have wandered away;  
feed the hungry; ransom our prisoners;  
raise up the weak; comfort the discouraged.  
Show all the nations that you are the only God,  
That Jesus is your servant,  
And that we are your people and the sheep of your pasture.

*Based on 1 Clement 59.4, 1st Century*

**TAKE** Is there something divinely daft that you could do this week?

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Kingdom of Fools 2

# TENTMAKER

**WATCH** View the video Kingdom of Fools 2 TENTMAKER

**READ** Read Acts 18.1–4; Acts 20.1–12;

**TALK** *For the background on this, read Kingdom of Fools pp. 192–201 and 259–261*

The first churches did not have their own buildings. They met before dawn, on the first day of the week, in houses and shops, warehouses and apartments. (Justin Martyr, writing around 165 AD records how he taught Christians in a room above the baths.) For examples from Rome go to the Kingdom of Fools section on my website.

Acts 20.1-12 is the only account we have of a church meeting from the time of the apostles. It took place in a third floor apartment and involved dialogue and discussion as well as eating together.

They were communities in close contact with the world around them. (See also Kingdom of Fools p. 301-302)

#### QUESTIONS

1. What do you think the worship services of the early church were like? (As well as the passages above, you might want to check out Col 3.12–17; 1 Cor 14.26–33; Jas 5.13–14)
2. Imagine Paul's meeting in Troas. What do you think it was like?
3. Look at the space around you. What would 'church' look like in this space? (If you are in a church, think of another space, e.g., a small local shop.)
4. Do you think it helps or hinders to have a church building? Do people find it easy to enter your church?
5. How could you be a church on your street?

**PRAY** Remember, Lord, your church,  
deliver it from all evil, make it perfect in your love;  
from the four corners of the earth, gather the church that has been sanctified  
into your kingdom which has been prepared for it;  
for yours is the power and the glory for ever and ever.

*From The Didache 10.5, 1st Century*

**TAKE** You could hold an early church service in your house. You might have to get up early, though...

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Kingdom of Fools 3  
**PURPLE**

**WATCH** View the video Kingdom of Fools 3 PURPLE

**READ** Read Acts 16.11–15; Jas 5.1–6; 1 Tim 6.6–10

**TALK** *For the background on this, read Kingdom of Fools pp. 165–177*

Lydia was a dealer in purple. This was a luxury item which could only be worn by people of a certain wealth and status.

Philippi was a Roman colony: essentially a little piece of Roman life and culture plonked down in another part of the empire.

The story of Cyprian shows a man who rejected the luxury and status of the Roman world to serve the kingdom of God.

**QUESTIONS**

1. What do you think the early church thought about wealth? What kind of attitude does the passage in James reflect?
2. 'The love of money is the root of all evil.' What does this mean? Do you agree?
3. What are the 'purple garments' in your life? What are those luxuries which always tempt you?
4. Do you think luxury like this is wrong?
5. Does our love of luxury affect others? If so, how do we get a balance between enjoying the good things in life and not being selfish?

**PRAY** Blessed are you, O Lord, who has nourished us from our youth, who gives food to all flesh. Fill our hearts with joy and gladness, that having always what is sufficient for us, we may abound to every good work, in Christ Jesus our Lord, through whom glory, honour, and power be to Thee for ever. Amen.

*From the Apostolic Constitutions, 7. 49. c. 215 AD*

**TAKE** Have a look at the luxuries in your life. Anything you feel you ought to give up? Anything you feel you ought to give away?

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Kingdom of Fools 4  
**SOLDIER**

**WATCH** View the video Kingdom of Fools 4 SOLDIER

**READ** Read Romans 12.14–13.10; Colossians 3.12–17

**TALK** *For the background on this, read Kingdom of Fools pp. 83–94*

The early church was entirely nonviolent. They rejected violence as a solution. In fact, for the first three centuries of the church, not a single church father writes in support of war.

Paul, writing in Romans, refers to Jesus' commands to forgive our enemies and love our neighbours as ourselves.

Christians refused to serve in the army or as a magistrate – both professions which involved killing people. But they also refused to attend or be involved in gladiator combat and the Roman games.

**QUESTIONS**

1. 'Love your enemies.' How do you think the early church interpreted this teaching? What kind of enemies did they have?
2. Soldiers and magistrates were not allowed to be Christians in the Early Church. Why not? Are there any professions which we ought to question today?
3. 'In the western world we are so comfortable with the idea of the military that we no longer question it.' Do you agree with this or disagree?
4. Later theologians came up with the idea of a just war. What makes a just war?
5. Jesus is the prince of peace. How can we act as his representatives in our world?

**PRAY** Lord, let your face shine upon us in peace for our good;  
shelter us by your mighty hand; deliver us from every sin by your uplifted arm;  
deliver us as well from those who hate us unjustly.  
Give harmony and peace to us and to all who live on the earth,  
Grant to those who rule us, O Lord, health, peace, harmony, and stability, that they  
may blamelessly administer the government which You have given them.

*From 1 Clement, 60.3–61.1. First century.*

**TAKE** Do something this week which leads to peace.

To view videos, go to [www.nickpage.co.uk](http://www.nickpage.co.uk)