



**inspire**

QUICK GUIDE

FORMING A FELLOWSHIP BAND

INTRODUCTION

The vision of Inspire is to promote discipleship as a 'way of life' that is essentially missionary in nature, or 'mission spirituality'. We want to form a growing movement of people who love God passionately and love their neighbour deeply and generously.

■ The 'way of life', which is at the heart of Inspire, consists of four elements:

seeking growth
life with God



using disciplines
life in action

sharing fellowship
life with others



engaging mission
life in the world

■ Christians committed to this way of life gather in small groups called 'fellowship bands', so that they can support one another in the way of mission spirituality.

■ A fellowship band is a group of 3 or 4 people who meet at least once a month for:

- **Mutual spiritual direction** - helping one another discern God's leading as they seek to know him better and follow his lead in everyday life.
- **Mutual accountability** - helping one another keep in step with the leading of the Holy Spirit.

STEPS 1-2

STEP 1 Understanding

The first step to forming a fellowship band is to become as familiar as you can with the Inspire vision for forming mission-shaped disciples. To do this you might use the contact details on the back page to:

- ❖ visit our website and explore the online resources.
- ❖ attend one of our Teaching-Retreat days.
- ❖ send for our Introductory leaflets / brochures.
- ❖ e-mail or call us to talk about your questions.

STEP 2 Sharing

The Inspire way of life requires you to walk with others on your journey of discipleship. Once you have understood the vision well enough to explain it to other people (obviously you won't have grasped it all yet), you can then try to share your own interest with them. People you might talk to could include:

- ❖ members of your church or small group
- ❖ close friends and spiritual soul-mates
- ❖ local colleagues in Christian ministry
- ❖ members of local ministers' meetings
- ❖ denominational networks

Feel free to ask us for literature to give to anyone who may be interested.

STEP 3

STEP 3 Inviting

Apart from identifying people with a commitment to grow as a mission-shaped disciple, other issues to consider when inviting people to form a band are:

-  **Friends or Strangers?** Is there an existing bond of some sort between people that would make starting a band together more easy? A band is only as strong as the level of trust that the members are able to share. This will grow over time, but if people are wary of one another then they may hold back from the degree of openness required for healthy sharing, accountability and support. *On the other hand*, some may find bands initially comprised of relative strangers to be a more attractive option, as they may feel more able to 'be themselves' in that context. There is no rule here but merely factors to consider as you prayerfully consider forming your band.
-  **Proximity.** Band members clearly need to be able to attend regular meetings and so geographical locations should be considered when forming the band.
-  **Same or Different?** Bands can work well when made up of people with the same gender, or who share a common ministry, because a greater understanding of one another's lives often deepens the ability to support and encourage. *On the other hand*, bands in which people are drawn from diverse backgrounds, ministries or traditions could release a richness of life which may be missing in less diverse groups.

STEP 4

STEP 4 Tasting

When you have a group of three or four friends who think being in a fellowship band would be a means of helping one another, the initial commitment is to just six meetings. We suggest you put all six dates in the diary and make a commitment to keep them a priority. These meetings could be spaced out anything from a week apart to a month apart, but for these introductory meetings probably fortnightly is about right. As a rule-of-thumb you will need to allow about an hour and half to two hours for your meetings.



-  **Meeting 1:** This is a general exploratory meeting to make sure you all understand what is involved in being in a band. Use the Inspire Resource '**Meeting as a Fellowship Band**' to help you. It can be downloaded from the Inspire website.

-  **Meetings 2-5:** Use the Inspire '**Way Into Inspire**' session outlines (again downloadable from the website). These four sessions introduce each element of the way of life, familiarise you with the 'rhythm of discipleship' and give hints about how to run your band meetings.

-  **Meeting 6:** This is the moment when you reflect on your experience of being in the band and decide whether you wish to commit to continuing together.

STEP 4 (CONT)

STEP 5 Committing

Following the six exploratory meetings, if you wish to continue as a band, you should agree to these four commitments:

-  **We commit to follow the way of life.** This is the heart of the Inspire vision. The bands are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. The end goal - and primary commitment - is a deepening walk with God and a desire to go deeper in sharing God's love in everyday life.
-  **We commit to the fellowship band as a priority.** Making band meetings a priority in the diary is vital, since infrequent attendance fails to get the best out of the band and is discouraging for others in the group.
-  **We commit to mutual accountability in the way of life.** Band meetings require members to give an account of how they are doing in the way of life and to encourage and pray for one another in the light of that account. Each member needs to be committed to give and receive spiritual wisdom in the context of the band sharing together.
-  **We commit to honouring one another as band members.** Band members serve one another by praying - and where appropriate offering support - between meetings, and by committing to keep in confidence what is shared in the band meetings.

STEPS 5-7

STEP 6 Registering

Once you have committed to continue as a band, don't forget to register your band with Inspire. For a small one-off fee this allows greater access to Inspire's resources and ensures that you are kept informed of helpful news and details of Inspire's programme of Teaching-Retreat days (see back page).

STEP 7 Sustaining

Once a band is meeting regularly the following questions will help you develop effective long-term life and health.

-  Is the Way of Life forming the core of our conversation and concerns as a band?
-  Are we avoiding sharing about any of the four elements of the Way of Life - or is any element taking too much time?
-  Are we closing our band meetings by declaring how we each wish to respond to God before we next meet?
-  Are we praying for one another between meetings?
-  Are we considering ways of meeting that could freshen our life together (e.g. taking a day retreat; meeting in a different venue; changing the frequency of meeting?)
-  Are we considering how to help others develop bands in our churches or networks?
-  Are we making use of the Inspire resources and training opportunities (see back page)?

School of Mission Spirituality

Inspire provides training opportunities for those in bands through its programme of Teaching-Retreats and Regional Discipleship Schools. Inspire training focuses on the four elements of the Way of Life, including the practice of being in a fellowship band. The full programme of events is published on the Inspire website.

You may also invite Inspire to run an event where you are. This can be an excellent way of introducing Inspire's vision to your church or locality. Contact us for details.

FURTHER DETAILS

Please contact us for further details about:

-  the way of life
-  participation in the network
-  training materials available from the school
-  seminars, workshops and retreats on mission spirituality

CONTACT US

 enquiries@inspiremovement.org

 www.inspiremovement.org