

Omega – Individuals' follow-up resource

The end is just the beginning

You've finished the "Omega" course, but your journey with Christmas is just beginning again... this resource will help you take more time to follow up on the themes and issues raised so far, consciously observe how you celebrate Christmas this year, and get you started on thinking about any changes you might like to make in the future.

There are five stages – and depending on when you start how you space them might be different. The first three should be completed during Advent, the fourth during the Christmas period itself, and the fifth when you have taken down the decorations and packed up for the year.

We suggest you make notes, and that you then keep them all together so you have a record of your journey that you can store in an accessible place to refer to as you go, and to come back to before Advent starts next year.

During Advent

1. Spending money

- Begin a log for all your Christmas spending. Don't forget to include food, drink, wrapping, decorations, party outfits, social occasions, travel to friends and family and any charitable giving – as well as presents.
- How does what you actually spend match up to what you estimated you spent last year in Session 1 of the *Omega* course?
- How do you feel about how much you're spending on different areas?
- How do you feel about the proportion of your Christmas expenditure that goes on charitable giving? Could you increase it, perhaps by buying smaller gifts and donating what you save; or by taking stock of your festive spending beforehand and donating a sum at the outset?
- Pray that God would help you to put your treasure where your heart wants to be – in his kingdom – and that he would help you with how to do this in specific practical ways. (You could consider praying before making particular purchases, or before making shopping lists.)
- Set a new budget for next year and keep it somewhere safe.

2. Spending time

- Look at your diary for the festive season. How do you feel about how much time you're spending with different groups of people?
- How do you feel about the proportion of your Christmas time that goes towards people who are in need?
- Pray that God would help you use your time how he wants to – balancing time with him, time to rest, and time with close friends and family with ensuring you are reaching out and helping those in need as he leads.
- Spend some time consciously preparing for the Christmas week by praying for each close family member and friend, and asking God to help you see when you can spend quality time with them, and how you can be a blessing and encouragement to them.



- Pray particularly for anyone you are seeing over the Christmas period who is struggling financially, emotionally, mentally or physically. Ask God to keep you open to how you might be able to demonstrate his love, and what it's ok to sacrifice in order to do this.
- Make some notes for what you might like to do differently next year and keep them somewhere safe.

3. *Taking stock*

- Ask yourself honestly how helpful you have found this Advent so far in bringing you closer to Christ. Can you pinpoint anything in particular that might be getting in the way?
- How might you be able to improve your preparations next year to make more space for preparing for Christ as well as Christmas itself?
- Think through the coming days and decide now how, when and where you will carve out some special extra time to meet with God and celebrate Christ's coming. What will you do with this time? Listen to a new devotional or some worship music; paint a picture; write some poetry or prayers; go walking...?
- Also consider how you might be able to invest some of your cultural Christmas activity with more spiritual meaning by incorporating prayer, worship, giving or practical care into existing things. E.g. you could pray for the people you're giving presents to as you wrap them; have worship music on while you're cooking or baking; or take a neighbour with mobility issues shopping with you...
- Pray for peace and patience in any difficult relationships with people you will be seeing over the Christmas period, particularly if you are feeling anxious about them. Ask God to give you his heart for each of these people and to show you how to encourage them and spend quality time together.

During the Christmas period

4. *What am I celebrating?*

- In the extra time you have made to spend with God this week, particularly focus on praying about, and waiting on God for the answer to, the question – what do my activities this week reveal I am truly celebrating?
- Ask for a fresh revelation of Christ as the coming king, and pray that you might build his kingdom of love, justice and peace. What specifically might God be leading you to do?

Around the 6th January

5. *When it's all over...*

- Make some time to look back through the notes you made during the *Omega* course, and as a result of using this sheet during Advent and Christmas this year.
- Choose one or two things that have struck you more than anything else and spend some time thinking further about, and praying into, these.
- Decide on one thing you really want to prioritise doing differently next year and think now what this will mean. Implement any actions or diary reminders necessary.
- Spend some time in prayer thanking God for the journey you have been on with Christmas this year, asking for his help in future years, and committing to staying open to his leading in building his kingdom throughout the year.
- Keep all your notes safe somewhere so you can come back to them next November.
- And remember, it's not all over! God is with us and it's only just beginning...