Key ingredients of Sycamore

This section will help you and your team reflect on whether Sycamore is the right course for your community to run. Please make sure you have looked at these sections first: (a) “[Why start a group](https://www.sycamore.fm/about-sycamore/why-start-a-group/)”; (b) “[What to expect from a Sycamore session](https://www.sycamore.fm/participants/what-to-expect-from-your-sycamore-session/)”; and (c) “[Pathways](https://www.sycamore.fm/leaders/pathways/)”



**Sycamore is first of all a stand-alone enquiry course and a tool for “primary evangelisation”.**

It seeks to share what is at the heart of the Christian faith with those who have not heard it before or with those whose understanding of Christianity is very limited. It creates a space for honest and open discussion about faith and about life in general. It helps people, if they wish, to respond to what they have heard by taking the first steps of faith.

**But Sycamore can also form part of a wider programme of faith formation, catechesis or sacramental preparation.**

Series 1 (available now) explores the basics of Christian faith. Series 2 (in development) will go deeper into the Creed, the Church, Christian living, prayer, and the sacraments. There are supplementary materials and alternative session outlines for those who are using the films as part of a teaching or catechetical programme.

**The key to a successful Sycamore group is hospitality**, **welcome, genuine friendship – and good food**! Yes, the input and the learning are important. But far more important is the experience of being welcomed into a loving environment, where the participants can relax and be themselves, where they can get to know other ordinary people (who happen to have a deep Christian faith), where they can ask questions and share opinions without the fear of being judged, where they can enjoy meeting people for the sake of the individual friendships and the experience of community. And where they can have a delicious meal together!

**The video input is very short.** Each film is only 20 to 25 minutes long. And each film is broken down into shorter sections of about 6 minutes each. There are three moments in each film where a set of discussion questions is put on screen, and the film is paused for a few minutes for group discussion. So a session can last between 45 and 90 minutes depending on all the variables.

**The main presentation** in each section is by Fr Stephen Wang, using a mixture of stories, anecdotes, Christian history and Christian teaching. This is not a comprehensive catechesis about each topic, but enough to stimulate thought and discussion, and to communicate the very core of Christian thinking about each topic, from a Catholic Christian perspective.

The films also include

* **Discussion questions. These ar**e designed so that anyone can enter into discussion, even if they have no background knowledge of Christianity. The aim is to allow open discussion, and not to make people feel awkward by seeming to test their knowledge. The first question in each session is always a simple icebreaker. The following questions try to go a bit deeper. There is always one main question and three supplementary questions to help people go deeper or in case the conversation runs out!
* **“Vox pop” street interviews** with random people answering the same discussion questions after the group discussion has taken place. In pilot groups we have found that people enjoy hearing the vox pop responses after they have had the discussion, so their own discussion gets broadened out, and so there are some different voices on screen as a transition into the next piece of input from Fr Stephen
* **Testimonies/reflections from other Christians**. At the end of each film there is a very short reflection (2-3 minutes) on the main theme by a committed Christian. This rounds off the session and communicates the central messages through personal experience. It gives a gentle Christian witness to guests who may not have heard ordinary people speaking about their faith before.
* **Follow-up resources.**The final slide on the film encourages participants to look for the online follow-up resources for that session on the Sycamore website.