Leaders Guide

(Intro through p. 10; week-to-week assistance starts on p. 11)

Thoroughly Equipped: A Disciple-Making Curriculum (DC) for Students

(Last updated: January 2015)

An Overview of the Material—*Thoroughly Equipped: A Disciple-Making Curriculum (DC) for Students* is…

-a 36-week program of Bible study, Bible reading, and Bible memorization

-a *guided self-study* through material designed to enhance one's walk with Christ and empower one to be a more effective leader within the kingdom of God

-a systematic walk through a set of topics—to transform how you see God and how others see Christ in you, rather than simply a set of good lessons or a good Bible course

-what Kurt and I would teach and do with a group of students who are ready to be discipled as (more thoroughly) equipped as disciple-makers—and down the road, toward effective lay-leadership (The only pre-requisites for DC are a hunger to walk with Christ; an availability to attend weekly meetings; and a willingness and ability to do about 1.5 – 2 hours of "homework" per week.)

Things to Do/Decide Before the First Meeting

1.) Type of group: You can do a group for young men, young women, or co-ed. The latter is different, rather than better or worse. (In the case of the latter, you might divide into smaller groups for some conversations.) How much variation do you want in age/grade?

2.) Size of the group: We would recommend an ideal size of 10-12. Fewer people can work but would lose some richness in the discussion. (For example, I'd rather run a co-ed group of 10, than two single-gender groups of 5 each.) More than 12 is difficult—both with respect to facilitating a group of that size and building relationships within the group. Of course, group size will also affect group dynamics—for example, to encourage more talkative people to be quiet and to encourage quieter people to speak up.

3.) Time: Determine the optimal day and time for your weekly meetings. Decide on meeting length—optimal discussion time is 60-90 minutes (depending on age and group size), with potential time before/after for socializing.

4.) The invitation:

a.) If casting a wider net, an email should include an overview of the material.

b.) Generally, you'll want to invite some or all of the prospective DC'ers prayerfully and personally.

c.) Obvious candidates include those who have already completed a book or Bible study that required them to prepare to some extent.

d.) *Make sure to communicate appropriate expectations—in particular, the work load involved, the type of study this is, and the attendance expected.*

d.) Recruiting pairs or existing small groups may be wise; the flip side is that if they are not satisfied, you may have greater attrition!

f.) Be careful not to push the invitation too strongly. Inappropriate motives for getting into the group may well cause more harm than good.

g.) You might choose a shorter length of time for an initial commitment. Full-fledged DC is 21 months but we only ask for an initial 10-week commitment. Here, for example, you might ask them to commit to the first 15 weeks. If they're enjoying the experience, they can re-up for the remainder.

5.) The list: Compile the names, phone numbers, email addresses of your DC'ers. ***Study their names***—and learn them before (or at) the first meeting if possible. During the first meeting, we strongly urge you to put together a ***picture directory*** with biographical info. You can go a step further and produce some sort of roster for your DC'ers.

6.) The prep: Tell them that no preparation is required for the first meeting—only their presence and some prayer.

7.) The room: You'll probably want chairs and tables in a rectangle so they can face each other and write stuff down. Moreover, think about where you're (not) going to sit—so you can see everyone well. If you're using co-leaders, you'll be able to see a lot more if the co-leaders sit apart.

8.) You may want to three-hole punch your book and put it in a binder—which could also hold additional notes, articles, and so on.

9.) The leaders should have a preliminary discussion of what the leaders will do—both inside and outside of the meeting time, and in their role as primary or secondary leaders from week-to-week.

10.) Consider a pre-DC meeting as a combination of "orientation" and "getting to know you". We have resources from our orientations at ThoroughlyEquipped.org if that would help.

Some Considerations for the Bible Memorization

1.) The new memory verse will relate to the Bible study topic for that week.

2.) ***Everyone*** should recite the new memory verse ***with its location***. (Knowing the location of a verse is also important.) ***Rotate the review verses*** among DC'ers, having each DC'er do one each.

3.) We encourage the ***co-leaders to say at least the new verse(s)***. Whether or not you recite the verses, make sure you and your co-leader know them!

4.) ***Work in some creativity*** with different methods: the whole group saying it aloud; say it one word at a time going around in a circle; timed writing of the verse; have DC'ers model their favorite method for learning the verse; and so on.

5.) ***Rotate who goes first***, but those with an ***atypical translation*** should go last. (We're using NIV84 for now, but there's no problem using other translations.)

6.) ***Hold DC'ers accountable without putting them on-the-spot too much—often, a delicate balance.*** Note also that ***the default should be that they will know it***, so assume that they have the knowledge and deal with it as tactfully as possible if they do not. It is a gray area to decide when/how to intervene if a memory verse is not relayed perfectly. You don't want to encourage error, but you don't want to be so legalistic that the focus turns from the larger purpose to nit-picking. Keep in mind their personality and previous performance (softer/tougher on those who would benefit from a given approach) and the extent of the error. Be tactful and use ***some humor***.

7.) Consider that you are ***developing a "culture"*** in communicating your expectations—both with respect to memory verses and in general. And in getting started, it is usually easier to ***start stronger/stricter*** and relax a bit later.

8.) Choose review verses strategically—in particular, picking easier verses for those who struggle, to build their confidence.

9.) ***Larger mistakes*** can also be "***teachable/memorable moments***"—for example, the omission of "and Savior" from II Peter 3:18, which can be used to talk about why both phrases are included in the verse.

10.) Typically, you'll want some ***(brief/tight) discussion of the memory verse***—either something you have in mind (e.g., "Why did Peter say Lord and Savior? What's the difference between the two?") or broad questions (e.g., "Why is this verse in here?") or opening it up for general comments from the group. You can do this ***after the memory verse or within the lesson***. On occasion, you may also find it helpful to provide context—either for the book, chapter, or surrounding verses.

Some Considerations for the Bible Reading

1.) You might consider providing a brief introduction to each book.

2.) In week 1, you'll discuss the ***distinction between Bible reading and Bible study***, but you may need to reiterate it. If a DC'er tends to make relatively technical comments, re-direct them by asking for a personal application.

3.) You'll want to develop ***a "presence"***, especially in the Bible reading section of DC. You don't need to comment on every comment they make. But often, it's useful to add a word of encouragement ("good stuff"), a reflection back to an earlier comment (connecting it to the person who gave it), a comment of yours on the verse, a segue to another verse you find interesting, or just move it along with "[any] other comments?". Part of having a presence is a greater ability to intervene to (more) tactfully cut off people's comments. In contrast, if you haven't said much, then intervention will probably be more awkward—already among the most difficult tasks for a facilitator.

4.) Pace yourself during the Bible reading. (On average, you'll have to "cover" two chapters every four to six minutes.) Your choice of covering one, two, or three chapters at a time will greatly influence the pace. Lay out a schedule for the amount of time you expect to spend on each chunk of the reading.

5.) A small thing that may help with ***time management***: Your DC'ers are looking to you for leadership, not knowing how much time you would like to allocate to each part of the study. ***If you leave things open-ended, they are more likely to fill the gap. If you send signals that you'd like to move on***, they will typically sense your urgency and move along or restrict their comments to those they perceive to be relatively important. For example, you can explicitly mention that the comments are good, but we need to move on—or instead of asking "what else…?", you can ask "anything else…?". Or use something more explicit to close the loop: "ok, 30 seconds…" or "one more comment". In any case, *if you don't lead, someone else will*!

6.) This is the ***easiest place within DC to establish a culture for having everyone speak***—e.g., with an open-ended invitation to a quieter DC'er to comment on a few chapters from the reading. In many groups, only a few people talk; we want everyone to participate (more or less equally). ***We're more interested in developing leaders than in imparting knowledge. And they won't "find their voice" unless they speak.***

7.) As the leader, don't feel like you have to be able answer every question. You'll find it helpful to use the phrase, ***"I don't know"***. Beyond that, ***don't feel the need to answer*** any given question in the meeting. You may decide that it is not worth pursuing a tangent in the meeting—or that you'd like to answer it, but will need to do some research and get back with the group.

Some Considerations for the Bible Reading (cont'd)

8.) Your ability to contribute to discussions about the Bible reading is directly proportional (or exponential) to your understanding of Scripture. Especially for those less familiar with Scripture, resources like the NIV Study Bible, Halley's *Bible Handbook*, *A Newcomer's Guide to the Bible* by Michael Armour, or other general resources may be very helpful. That said, remember that the discussion of the Bible reading is not meant to be particularly detailed. Although you may be concerned about having/imparting knowledge, shepherding your DC'ers and running the meeting well are more important.

9.) It is common, especially in the Bible reading, to run into topics that are thorny. (We cover those in detail in the ***400-level*** of full-fledged DC. Generally, you'll want to avoid these within meetings or give tight summaries of the debate on those topics. If you're prepared, you may be able to give a quick synopsis by saying "Some would say…while others would say…" or "There are X schools of thought on that…" In any case, you want to make clear that your intent is to put off the question rather than to blow it off.

Some Considerations for the Bible Study

1.) In your DC book, write down each verse location and its key ideas/phrases/words—so you can ***keep the references straight***.

2.) Do the study on your own and ***then check the leader's guide on a weekly basis*** for our attempts at communicating value-added to you and clarifying questions.

3.) The ***warm-up questions and more open-ended questions*** (e.g., "Anything on question #2?" rather than "Anything on question #2b?") are useful to get quieter DC'ers involved.

4.) The articles are meant to supplement the study. Some weeks, you'll spend a lot of time on them; other weeks, little time. As you see fit, cover them before or during the study. Ask them for general comments about the article—or get more specific, asking about key phrases or sentences.

5.) Again, ***pace yourself***. Pick your spots, focusing on where you or others can bring value-added. ***Don't feel like you must cover every question.*** (You may want to place a mark by questions you'd like to cover in the meeting.) In particular, be careful not to spend too much time on the articles and the warm-up questions. Have a ***"Plan B"*** in hand in case you need to change your time management plans mid-stream.

6.) Again, where possible, tie one person's comment to another person's earlier comment.

Some Considerations on Format and Prayer/Praise:

1.) Get to each meeting early; be (among) the first to arrive. Start and end your meeting on time. Every minute is precious. Encourage/exhort them to be on-time as necessary.

2.) ***Open the meeting with a brief prayer.*** You may want to do this the first few weeks, but quickly, this should be ***farmed out*** to DC'ers. (It's a good op for them to work on that skill.) The first few weeks, make sure to choose someone for whom this will not be a big stretch; for those who haven't done it and are quieter, this can be nerve-wracking!

3.) ***At minimum, use a brief closing prayer*** at the end of the meeting—***more likely, by you (at least early-on)***, so you can control the extent to which it wraps up the meeting, reiterates key points, model prayer for your DC'ers, etc.

4.) More substantive prayer should be natural with the topics in the 2nd half of DC.

5.) When possible, ***use the week's topic to frame*** the direction of the day's prayer. For example, after discussing "the tongue", ask for particular requests that connect to prayer or praise with respect to the tongue.

6.) Do ***NOT*** do ten minutes of "go-around-the-room-for-everyone-to-think-up-something-laundry-list" of prayer requests. You want people to feel the ***freedom to share larger concerns, but*** not to use a lot of (valuable) time with more mundane requests. Have a frank discussion of this with your group.

7.) One angle is to convert prayers about X to prayers about how your DC'er can handle X. For example, a neighbor has cancer. In addition to praying for healing, pray about how the DC'er can reach out to the neighbor within his trial.

8.) Make sure that ***confidentiality*** is preserved appropriately. Internally, the group should foster transparency and a "safe place" for prayer and sharing. Externally, confidentiality should be preserved in an appropriate manner. If someone shares something inappropriately, you will need to explain how to do this properly.

9.) Be vulnerable/transparent with your own requests.

10.) Follow up as appropriate on prayer requests.

11.) ***Try not to get into a rut*** in whatever you do with prayer. Mix up your approach and get creative: sit vs. stand vs. on knees vs. prostrate; as a group vs. small groups vs. pairs vs. silent; directed prayers by co-leaders on a topic vs. prayer requests; "popcorn" vs. paragraphs; practice silence and listening; and so on. ***Be clear in providing direction***.

12.) Lay hands on people as appropriate (Jas 5:16)—after the meeting or immediately.

13.) Encourage them to write others' prayer requests on *next week's* MV or reading pages—to remind them more easily.

In leading discussion...

1.) Remember that you are ***more facilitator than teacher***; they should be talking (far) more than you. Since your DC'ers have completed their work, you should only need to introduce material, redirect some comments and questions by allowing others to follow-up (this may also allow you to stall for additional time!), respond to some comments yourself (as necessary), ask provocative questions (especially if answers are vague or aren't digging deep enough), articulate a few key points they don't make, and wrap-up with a summary. Note that you don't always have to provide a response to everything anybody says. It's often ok to say something like "good point" and simply move on. Finally, make sure to maintain good eye contact as people speak.

2.) That said, you're ***still a teacher/leader***. There will be times for you to make value-added comments. But you will "control" the discussion by asking questions more than making comments. There will be times for you to actively promote a vision of lay-leadership. There will be times when you'll lay hands on someone in prayer, exhort them to step up their effort, help them think strategically about getting something done, encourage them to be more patient with their children, etc.

3.) At the margin, consider refraining from critical comments, particularly when responding to quieter people. We don't want to tolerate heresy or error, but minor corrections might undermine confidence, at least in some people.

4.) When asking questions of your DC'ers, avoid questions that will result in yes/no or other short answers—or follow up by asking why.

5.) ***Keep track of the number of comments*** each person gives, especially early-on. (Watch for patterns between comments on reading, article, and study.) An easy way to do this is to construct a diagram of your table set-up with each person's name written in the proper space—and then make marks next to their names.

6.) If some DC'ers are answering too often (relative to others in the meeting), find artful ways to encourage others to talk instead. When seeking comments, avoid eye contact with your big talkers. If some DC'ers are "too quiet", try to encourage them to speak up—especially by asking them the more open-ended questions (e.g., "What do you have on the warm-up questions?"). In our groups, we want everyone to participate. At minimum, even with 10-12 DC'ers, your goal should be for everyone to say something significant a handful of times in each meeting. Whether you're that specific or not, communicate the expectation that everyone will actively participate in discussions.

In leading discussion... (cont'd)

7.) ***Big talkers will talk less if*** you're active here—especially, if you're ***getting quieter DC'ers to talk*** moreso. (There will be less room for them to speak!) On occasion, you may find it necessary to talk with big talkers or quieter members ***outside of the meeting*** to communicate our expectations here.

8.) Set time goals—for example, that you expect to be at question #3 by 7:00. At least early-on, lay out the amounts of time they expect to spend on memory (and administrative details), reading, article, study questions, preview of next week's material, and closing prayer.

9.) In general, discuss the objective of the lesson, cover the lesson, and then ask "so what?" Try to move beyond information and knowledge to wisdom.

10.) Try to use their names in responding to them—especially in tying a later comment to a previous comment (e.g., "that takes us back to what Tom said…"). This is especially important to encourage quieter DC'ers.

11.) ***Keep an eye on their books***—to make sure that they're prepared for the meeting, taking notes on the ***reading***, underlining stuff in the ***articles***, writing down additional answers for the study, and so on.

On using co-leaders…

When possible, in most cases, we'd recommend using pairs (or even trios; vs. an individual) to lead a DC group. As per Luke 10:1, there are many good reasons for it:

1.) One or both leaders may have scheduling constraints—where weekly attendance would be difficult or impossible.

2.) Although both leaders would still need to prepare for the meeting, the two individuals could switch off "top" leadership responsibility for each week, lessening the prep time a bit. Or leaders can split responsibility within each week, alternating between leading different parts of the week's agenda.

3.) The two leaders combined will have a greater pool of knowledge and wisdom. In any given week, one will be primarily responsible as the leader, but the other co-leader should "chime in" as appropriate.

4.) Note that leaders may have ***different styles*** and goals, but should ***not*** have widely ***disparate standards***. Discuss this at some length before starting into DC and discuss along the way as needed. For example, you don't want to establish a culture where co-leader A is lax on memory verses while co-leader B is much more stringent.

On using co-leaders… (cont'd)

5.) A relatively strong or experienced leader would have an opportunity to mentor a relatively weak or inexperienced leader.

6.) Beyond piping in with the occasional comment, you may decide to have the ***"secondary" co-leader play other vital roles*** during the meeting—taking charge of ***time management*** (moving it along as he sees fit) &/or "***class participation"*** (aggressively bringing in the quieter DC'ers). In "running" a group, there are many things to juggle, and it may be beneficial to give discrete tasks to your partner. In any case, the secondary co-leader also plays an important role outside of the meeting in terms of providing ***candid feedback and accountability***.

7.) DC can tend to be too informational and not relational enough. As such, two or three leaders are in a better position to divide the group and form deeper relationships with those in their group. ***Each leader can "take" a subset of your DC'ers***, meeting them or individuals for breakfast, coffee or lunch on occasion, meeting during the semester breaks, having couples over for dinner, etc. As per our training session, shepherding is a vastly under-rated part of leadership.

8.) Consider ***where the two co-leaders should sit***. Put yourself in a corner or in the middle of the short side of a rectangle—so you can see everyone well. Sitting apart generally allows you to see a lot more.

Along the way…

1.) ***Pray*** on a regular basis outside of the meeting—in general terms ***for the group as a whole*** (e.g., for their physical health, moral purity, spiritual zeal, etc.) and in specific terms ***for individual DC'ers***. See them as individuals within a group. Consider using Biblical prayers as a format for your prayers (e.g., Eph 1:17-19a, 3:14-21, Phil 1:9-11, Col 1:9-12, 4:2-6).

2.) ***Send emails/texts, make phone calls***, pray for them on the phone, offer a word before/after the meeting, follow up on prayer requests, and find other forms of ***encouragement and exhortation*** for those in your group. Make clear that they can talk with you, ask for prayer, etc.

3.) If you have more than one group doing DC, consider sitting in on each other's groups. This can promote consistency and give each person ideas on how to be more effective.

Along the way… (cont'd)

4.) As time passes and relationships develop, you may find DC'ers who have serious issues that require more attention from you, another church leader, a counselor, etc. Take care to handle such problems with grace and truth, bringing in other leaders and resources as appropriate.

5.) ***Keep track of their attendance.*** If you don't, you're likely to end up in the uncomfortable position of sensing that one's attendance has not been adequate, but not knowing for sure. Since the beginning of DC, we've wrestled with whether to have an attendance "policy"—but have always decided not to do it. Advantages include sending a stronger signal about the commitment involved and making it easier to deal with those who have been too sporadic; disadvantages include inflexibility in dealing with special cases and ***a tendency toward Pharisaism***. In any case, attendance should be seen as just short of mandatory. ***One rule of thumb:*** if they are well enough (or the roads are good enough) to go to work, they should get to their DC group.

6.) Even though your DC'ers will have signed a covenant, there will likely be ***awkward moments*** with those whose attendance, timeliness, or preparation is less than what they've committed. You'll need to figure out ***"what would Jesus do" with apprentices who*** miss a few meetings, are often late, or come lightly prepared. (If you don't, the problems will rarely go away on their own!) Encourage DC'ers to alert you ahead of time if they plan to be late, absent, or need to leave early. For unexpected absences, contact them ASAP. Finally, consider also having other DC'ers check on those who miss the meeting.

7.) ***Find service opportunities*** to include sometime within the curriculum. In addition to helping others, these projects build community within the group, inform discussions of stewardship, and through your example, promote the Christian model of servant-leadership. A variety of service projects could be useful—from everyone working on one large project to people pairing up and doing smaller projects. Ideally, these are generated within your group—e.g., X serves on the Board of Directors for a non-profit that needs something; or Y has an elderly neighbor who needs housework, painting, or raking leaves to be done.

Week 1. Introduction: An Intro to Each Other and to DC

1.) Roster/Introductions

-Distribute name tags to be written on with Sharpies/markers. (Pens are not easily visible across a room).

-Make sure you have appropriate contact info for your roster. Collect info on family and career as well—to know them better, inform your prayers about them, and make them more comfortable within the group. Consider getting birthdays. Put together a pictorial directory with biographical and contact info—for you and your DC'ers. Work to study faces and put them with names—and encourage them to do the same. You may also find an email list-serve effective (e.g., Google Groups) or a Facebook group.

-During the first week, we recommend at least two ice-breakers—one with brief biographical info and another of your choice (perhaps their expectations of the group).

-We have numbered each lesson. Please have your members put the appropriate dates in their books.

2.) The Covenant…

-***Read the covenant out loud and discuss it*** as appropriate, emphasizing the ten-week commitment. ***Tell them not to sign it until they're ready.*** If their signature is illegible, ask to write their name as well. Collect the covenants of those willing to sign today and keep for your records.

-Resolve and then publicly commit to letting them out of the meeting on time.

-On "Be Accepting", make clear that different people will get different things out of this study, depending on where they are in their walk with Christ and much investment they make. All will get a solid Bible study, some accountability (encourage this but set reasonable expectations), some experiences, and the opportunity to form deep friendships with like-minded Christians—in a small group setting.

3.) On DC as a program of Bible memory, Bible reading and Bible study:

a.) ***Look at the Table of Contents***—to note the three components of DC—***and then at weeks 2 and 3***, as an example of what each pair of weeks will look like. (Among other reductions and edits, DC for Students splits a standard week of DC into two weeks—with Bible Reading and Review Memory Verses in one week and Bible Study and New Memory Verses in the next week.)

3b.) Then lead them through a discussion (not a lecture!) of the three components of the program…

I. What will we study?

-Look at the list of topics in the Table of Contents—an overview of the topics we will cover over the 36 weeks—a broader program vs. an intense focus on a single topic or a book of the Bible. Discuss the value of each approach.

-When there is a supplemental article, encourage them not to get bogged down and to underline highlights in the articles.

II. Why Bible memory?

-Look at the list of memory verses in the Table of Contents—and then week 2 (p. 14) as an example of the methods we lay out.

-Make sure to note the audio versions available at ThoroughlyEquipped.org. Other resources include MemorizeNow.com, http://quizlet.com/2559510/dc-101-flash-cards/ (for each semester), files.me.com/b.ratt/2a6wqg (MV's as screensavers), and phone apps such as Bible Memory by Mobilize Faith.

-David Jeremiah notes that the brain is an amazing creation—with "unfathomable circuitry and unimaginable complexity"—and "with a brain like that, you can memorize Scripture". In popular culture terms, if you can measure all of those lyrics or sports statistics, you can memorize Scripture.

-You might want to read week 2's memory verse as "open book"—and joke that "it'll be closed book" next week.

→ Why do it? 1.) Jesus did it (Mt 4)! 2.) It allows one to reflect on those verses more deeply; it will inform your prayer with God and counsel to others (Col 3:16). 3.) Knowing more and more verses—and where they come from—will help one connect the dots within their Scripture reading/understanding.

III. Why Bible reading?

-Again, look at the Table of Contents. Ideally, those in DC for Students will read the entire NT over the 36 weeks. To do so, they'll need to complete the optional reading as well. Unfortunately, few people, including Christians, have done this.

-Since the goal is reading the NT, note that the reading will only intersect with study topic on occasion.

-Show them where they will write their reflections on the Bible reading (e.g., p. 19-20).

III. Why Bible reading? (cont'd)

-Discuss the differences between reading and studying. Some people have developed a tendency to do studying exclusively, rather than reading also. DC'ers will do both.

-Reiterate that the Bible reading is mostly about what struck each person—rather than trying to figure out every detail and asking a lot of questions about the reading. We often tell people to read their Bibles, but we want to teach DC'ers how to read the Bible devotionally, in a way that will help with day-to-day living and to grow in their faith.

→ Why do it? 1.) To gain "bullet" insights; and 2.) to see the forest rather than the trees. (See: Psalm 119's promises.)

-The acronym SPECS may be useful here: encourage them to look for **S**ubstance about God; **P**romises of God; **E**xamples to follow; **C**ommands to Obey; **S**in to forsake. It is common for even avid Bible readers to do only a few of these as they read.

-If they have already read through the NT, ask them to consider using an unfamiliar translation when reading. And encourage them to avoid a Study Bible—at least insofar as it might distract them from (mere) reading (vs. study) and tempt them to make more "technical" comments.

-Encourage daily reading, but even moreso, what works for them. For some of your DC'ers, it will be helpful to develop a daily reading discipline.

→ It may be helpful to note that all of us take the effectiveness of Bible study—and especially Bible memory and Bible reading—on faith to some extent.

On them, the group, and the material…

→ This is a ***guided self-study…***

-Encourage them to pray before and while they are answering the study questions.

-Talk through strategies—with respect to time and place—on how they might get "the work" done.

-***Give pointers on how to take notes outside of the meeting.*** For example, they might write down verses with key phrases from those verses. Mark up the articles as they read them. And so on.

→ Encourage them to start working on DC today if possible!

On them, the group, and the material… (cont'd)

→ This is a ***guided self-study*** in a small group setting with assistance from the facilitator and fellow group members.

> -***Make clear that you will not cover all the material in the meeting.*** (That said, make sure they feel free to raise other questions.)
>
> ***-Make sure to communicate the expectation that everyone will actively participate in class discussions.***

For the end of your meeting…

→ Ask them if they have any questions!

-If you have time…

> -Provide an overview of where DC fits within the programs/goals of your church.
>
> -You may want to consider a brief mention of broad table-setting topics such as: the importance of freedom/charity in gray issues and unity on black/white issues (we'll cover this explicitly with Liberty/Legalism in week 32); the need in the Christian life for intellect and experience; the connection between one's roots and fruits; the connections between belief and actions, theology and life. You may find I John 2:6, Proverbs 27:17, Romans 10:17, and I Thessalonians 2:8 useful.
>
> -Consider another (fun) ice-breaker.

-Don't close with a round-robin of "prayer requests". Break into prayers; do something creative; or just close with a prayer. (Remember our discussion about prayer in the Intro portion of the Leaders Guide!)

Week 2. Character Traits of a Follower of Jesus

Administrative Details

-Review names; you should definitely know all names and faces by the end of this meeting. Use name tags and continue to encourage them to learn each other's names.

-Revisit the covenant briefly and collect/keep any remaining covenants.

-Re-emphasize DC as a program of Bible memory, Bible reading and Bible study. Reiterate that you will not cover all material; DC as a guided self-study.

-Have detailed plans to deal with time management and class participation. Prepare a tentative schedule (e.g., Ephesians 4-6 from 6:15-6:25) and a plan to get quieter members in the mix (e.g., if I haven't heard from everybody by the time we get to Titus, then I'm going to ask those individuals for their thoughts on those chapters).

-You have a lot to do this week, but if time at the end, use a short ice-breaker.

Discussion

-Encourage/exhort them if they struggle with the memory verse. If they really struggle, consider calling them this week and providing some assistance and accountability. Other ideas: work on it in the shower or in the car; make the verses "more memorable" by doing them as if you were an actor/actress.

-It's often useful to discuss the memory verse—either what you or they found interesting. This week: II Peter 3:18 describes our goals for the course—to grow in both grace and knowledge. Beyond that, you might talk about how it ties into a disciple's broad goals with respect to family, work, church, and neighbors.

-Question #1a: Jesus avoided sins of omission and commission; balanced grace and truth; his intentionality in building others up through relationship and apprenticeship (ultimately fulfilled in the coming of the Holy Spirit). The priorities of Jesus imply the trade-offs between the choices of the good and the best.

-#1d can be a nice opportunity for early transparency within your group—and/or a big use of time. Think about how you want to set this up—asking most DC'ers to say something or just trying to stick to more significant stories.

-#4a: Faith and obedience largely run hand-in-hand. Note the importance of believing that God always wants the best for us—so that our faith and trust lead to following God and his commands.

-As you wrap up, encourage them to think through how they've written in their books this week—and make adjustments for how they'll prepare in weeks to come.

Week 3

-*Intro to Ephesians:* A letter from Paul to the church he founded in Ephesus. A classic book on the Christian walk, emphasizing our resources and identity in Christ (chapters 1-3), before turning to our responsibilities and opportunities in Christ (chapters 4-6) with the pivotal "then" in 4:1. (Watchman Nee's *Sit, Walk, Stand* develops these themes, focusing on the three key terms in each of the three sections of Ephesians.) The latter includes key passages on unity, marriage, children, work, and the "armor of God". (Read/recommend Revelation 2:1-7 to read the sobering account of how the church fared a generation later.) Note also that the division in Ephesians parallels the division of material in DC101 vs. DC201-202—a good reason for us to start with that book.

-Ephesians 2:2-3 lists our three enemies—the devil, the flesh, and the world.

-*Intro to Titus:* One of Paul's "pastoral letters"—written to encourage and instruct the leader of the church at Crete.

-*Intro to Philippians:* A "thank-you" letter from Paul, commending this church for its financial and prayerful support. Often called the "letter of joy", it underlines many of the features necessary for living the "abundant Christian life"—both individually and in community. A terrific letter with many memorable passages, it is often memorized in its entirety.

-*Intro to Proverbs:* Note that Proverbs should be read as general principles rather than universal truths or commands. (Refer to a proverb or two to illustrate this—e.g., 15:25,30.) This is a recurring theme in DC101—the need to recognize literary type when interpreting Scripture.

-Suggested ice-breaker:

Week 4. God, the Father

Administrative Details

-You may have more trouble balancing the level of comments from your group members in the weeks to come. Some of your more talkative members might have "found their legs" after the first few weeks.

Discussion:

-Exhort them if they struggle with the memory verse again (maybe they didn't know what to expect last week, but now they should know!)—and talk with them outside of your meeting about how they're trying to do it. Consider calling them this week and providing some assistance and accountability.

-On the Memory verse: It's inspiring that God has prepared these works "in advance", anticipating our arrival—as opposed to merely coming up with something for us to do when we happen to show up in the Kingdom. Note also: the context of Ephesians 2:8-9.

-As you intro to the Bible study, note C.S. Lewis' point that we are all theologians. The question is whether we're good or bad theologians!

-1b: See: Chesterton on God as "young"). One person suggested Xenophilic for X. If you have time, it's fun to go around the room and have each person take one letter.

-2: Note that all of these pictures point to a personal God who is interested in relationship (vs. God as a mystical power or an impersonal deistic god). Ezekiel 16 is lengthy but highly recommended for those less familiar with this picture of God.

-3a: History involves God's work with Israel and other nations in the OT, the life and ministry of Christ, miracles (esp. the Resurrection), and our personal history.

-3b: This refers to "nature", but more broadly, to all forms of God's creation.

-3b and 3c: Note the implications for evangelism.

-3c: You may want to note that this is the pretext for C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity*.

-4b: Categories of sin include sins of omission (failing to do something good) vs. commission (doing something bad); carnal vs. spiritual sins; sins of word, deed, motive, thoughts, timing, and strength (Rom 14:23). All this can be contrasted with the false notion that one is a "good person". (What is "good" in God's economy?)

-4c: This will be illustrated more directly using a word study in week 6. God saves us from our sin, ourselves, a profitless life, eternal death/separation from Him in death, and tough circumstances (sometimes).

Week 5.

-This is your first opportunity to cover review verses. Have everybody do it—or pick two or three people *at random*.

-*Intro to John:* Not one of the three "synoptic" gospels (from Gr. "syn" meaning together and "optic" meaning "seeing"); i.e., Mt, Mk and Lk were prominently based on the same sources. A profound book, focusing more on theology and philosophy than the other gospels, while still relaying the historical events of Christ's ministry.

-On John, you may find it more difficult to deal with tangents. Given the material, there will be a tendency to move away from applications to discussions of difficult doctrine and trivia/knowledge.

Week 6. God, the Son

Administrative Details

-Take stock of how well you're running the group. Are people taking the memory verse seriously but not quaking in their boots? Are people completing their reading and study? Is everyone participating at a reasonable level? How is your time management? If you're not satisfied with any of the above, what's the plan?

Discussion

-Remind them to mark up their books as they read the articles!

-The deity or the humanity of Jesus can be difficult for people to apprehend/comprehend.

-1a: Among other things, note both what Christ did and did not do (no sins of commission or omission).

-1b: Christ's empathy, His example, God's staggering condescension, a picture of unity and partnership in ministry (see: us as dust *and* the breath of God; Eph 2:10), His dependence on God through Holy Spirit, as the perfect high priest *and* perfect sacrifice (as in Hebrews)

-2b: Note the implications of Christ's claim to forgive sins.

-2c: Why didn't Christ just come here for a week—merely to get crucified & resurrected.

-3a: Justification as "just as if I'd never sinned"—in terms of relation to God.

-3b: He fulfilled it; He didn't abolish it. He praised obedience. He emphasized the letter vs. spirit of the law. He freed us from the law but "holds us" to even higher standards.

-3c: Note Romans 5:10 as the key verse in Thomas' *The Saving Life of Christ*.

-4: Rev 19's horse vs. 1st coming's donkey; whose blood is shed next time; Lord's Supper of invitation vs. Christ's Supper of judgment; baby vs. warrior; Isaiah's picture of the Suffering Servant vs. Conquering King; Peter's sword vs. Christ's; largely, serve/love vs. (final) judgment

Week 8. God, the Holy Spirit

Administrative Details

-As your group members get more comfortable, patterns may begin to emerge—for example, that they begin to see the reading as more technical than we would like, or certain individuals start to talk a lot more than they did in the first few weeks. Continue to reflect on what's happening in your group.

Discussion

-Memory Verse: Ian Thomas makes the point that we often think that (and live as if) the verse is reversed—that we must not gratify the sinful nature in order to live by the Spirit—confusing means and ends.

-1: In DC, we ask the trick question: "If you had to get rid of one member of the Trinity, who would it be?" Many people answer the Holy Spirit, not understanding Him and His crucial role in our lives. For one thing, (the) Holy Spirit is a He not an It. Note the difficulty of trying to define the Trinity (as three persons but one essence) and resorting to (limited) analogies like water/ice/steam. References to the "Holy Ghost" may be baggage in this regard for some people. Note the irony that the One we've experienced most directly (the Spirit) is the One that most have trouble conceptualizing.

-2: Review "justification" (from last week)—being declared righteous, a point-in-time when one becomes a Christian. Sanctification can refer to the same thing, but is more often used to describe the process of being made righteous in trying to live the Christian life.

-3a: God's provision and our participation are not 50/50, but 100/100. See: pictures of throwing logs on a fire, turning up a dimmer switch, and a leaf "making itself available" to the wind (vs. in a corner or so wet that it can't move). See also: ability vs. availability, Schaeffer's term "active passivity", and "try easier" (a saying in baseball).

-4a-b: It's interesting that Israel, early-on, had God's presence—and the disciples had Jesus—but both struggled mightily. Note also that Jesus was not omni-present.

-4c: You may want to have your DC'ers throw out "popcorn" answers to this question—brief insights they had on the Romans 8 passage.

-5: The metaphors here lend themselves to seeing the Holy Spirit as an "it" (quench) and a "He" (grieve). See also: pollutants in a gas tank, static on a phone line.

Week 9.

-*Intro to I, II, III John:* John's epistles dealing with a Gnostic heresy (elevating the role of knowledge and arguing that material things were evil and separate from spiritual things), and providing hospitality with discernment. His primary positive focus is the importance of maintaining a deep and abiding relationship with God.

Week 10. Intro/Overview of Scripture

-On the Memory Verse, note that teaching and training are similar, positive references—while rebuking and correcting are similar, negative references.

-In the intro, convey basic info (66 books; OT in Hebrew and NT in Greek—with a little bit in Aramaic; development of Bible over 1500 years through numerous authors and in three continents; organized by type vs. chronology [cover broad details as intro to following lessons on [law, history, etc.]; and so on).

-On the process of translation, it might be useful to imagine what it would be like for your group members to translate a Spanish story—and to see the variety that would result.

-2: Note the reliability of Scripture, incl. "inerrancy"—but only insofar as correctly translated, interpreted, and to the extent that it speaks. In addition, make brief references to the strength of Jewish oral tradition, impressive manuscript availability, internal consistency, fulfilled/detailed prophecy (see: Matthew), the changed lives of the disciples, confirmatory archaeological evidences, early church fathers quote virtually every verse, literature indicates that legend does not develop that quickly, corroboration of extra-Biblical sources, and subjective evidences. All that said, this ultimately remains a matter of faith (as all history). You may want to recommend Josh McDowell's *More than a Carpenter*—and Lee Strobel's books, *Case for Faith* and *Case for Christ*, on this and other basic issues in apologetics.

-2: This is one of many areas that we cover for DC'ers and those with whom they will come in contact (both Christian and non-Christian). We want DC'ers to have their faith strengthened and to be "thoroughly equipped" to minister and evangelize, in part, by having stronger answers to the legitimate questions they will face in sharing their faith.

-3c: Note Eph 6:17's sword as the only offensive weapon in the "armor of God"

-3d: Note how the OT points to Christ (Gen 22's substitutionary ram, Ex's Passover Lamb, Leviticus' sacrifices, Josh 20's cities of refuge, Ruth's kinsman-redeemer, Isaiah's suffering servant, etc.) See also: lyrics to "Name Above All Names". Note that Jesus viewed the OT as inspired and authoritative—and the OT was accepted "as is" pre-Christ. If it comes up, it may be useful to note that the 3rd C. church recognized (rather than established) the NT Scriptures through the Spirit and an eminently reasonable "selection" process.

-3e: legalism, pride, listen vs. do (Jas 1:22-25), knowledge vs. love (I Cor 8:1b)

-6: Note Mt 11:28-30's grace for non-believers (Eph 2:8-9) vs. Mt 16:24's discipleship for believers (Eph 2:10).

Week 11

-*Intro to Acts:* Luke's careful history of the early church and his defense of the Christian faith. He documents the triumph of Christianity despite bitter opposition, chronicles key moments in church history (e.g., Acts 15), and in the second half of the book, describes the ministry activity of Paul—as the Gospel spreads from the Jews in Jerusalem to the Gentiles and "the ends of the earth". The reading of Acts is meant to coincide with the two weeks on evangelism.

Week 12. Old Testament—Law, History, Poetry, Prophecy

Adminstration

-If you haven't done so already, think of service opportunities to include sometime within the curriculum. Beyond helping others, these projects build community within the group, inform discussions of stewardship, and promote the Christian model of servant-leadership. In addition, look to set up social opportunities, perhaps including families.

Discussion

-Discuss the two conditions in II Timothy 2:15 for being an effective workman—both integrity and doctrine.

-Although there is narrative and a bit of prophecy within the first five books of the Bible (the Pentateuch)—and there are "laws" elsewhere in the OT—"the books of the Law" are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. And although there is certainly history elsewhere in the OT, the "books of history" range from Joshua through Esther. The "wisdom literature" of the OT runs from Job through Song of Songs. The prophets start with Isaiah and run through the rest of the OT.

-1a and 2a: The Law provides many objective standards (Mt 22:36-40), convicts us (Rom 3:20b), and drives us to trust in Christ's sufficiency (Rom 6:23). Note the helpful (but not airtight) categories of ceremonial vs. civil and moral law.

-1b and 2b: Note the power of story in communicating truths (e.g., Nathan with David). As an aside, this is a strength of a "post-modern" (vs. "modern") approach.

-1c: Define prophecy as "truth-telling"—with "fore-telling" (as predicting future events) and "forth-telling" (talking about truth in the present). The distinction is important because most people focus on the predictive elements of prophecy, but most prophecy is simply forth-telling. (For example, God did a lot more reminding than revealing through the prophet Isaiah.)

-1d: The "wisdom literature" is timeless, translating well across time and to different sorts of people.

-2c: deliver God's word; reveal His will; revelation and reminder; wisdom and warnings; convict and convert, especially within the community; at times, a "hardening ministry" (Is 6:9-13)

Week 12. Old Testament—Law, History, Poetry, Prophecy (cont'd)

-3: On the study of "cities of refuge", note:

> -God's justice *and* mercy underlined here and elsewhere throughout OT—as opposed to the idea of the God of the OT vs. the NT
>
> -"avenger of blood" as another responsibility of Ruth 2:20's "kinsmen-redeemer" [see also: Dt 25:5-6, Lev 25:25,47-49]
>
> -cities of refuge were easily entered [Dt 19:3; tradition tells us that they were cleared every spring, the bridges were repaired, and the gates were always open], available to all [Josh 20:9's "*any*", I Tim 2:5-6's "gave himself as a ransom for *all* men", Mt 11:28's "come to me, *all* you who are weary..."] and more-than-adequately furnished with supplies [Ps 142:4-5, Is 40:28-31; Jn 6:51's J & 57's S, Phil 4:19]
>
> -Christ as the ultimate high priest foreshadowed by this passage
>
> -See: Chapter 16 out of Eric's book, *Inheriting the Promised Land.*

-4a: God is dead serious about sin and willing to do "anything" to reach His people.

-4b: Note the beauty/poignancy of 2:14 and 11:8-9.

-5: Ask them if they have any thoughts on the exercise &/or if they're willing to share what they've written.

Week 14. Apocrypha, Apocalyptic, NT Gospels/Acts, Epistles

-The Apocrypha is 14 books of "inspired religious writings" that are not included in the Canon of Scripture for a variety of reasons: a.) it was not accepted then or now within Judaism as inspired on par with the rest of the Torah; b.) it was never quoted by Jesus or the apostles [although alluded to twice, but not as authoritative]; and c.) no Hebrew versions of the books were available in Hebrew when Jerome translated the Bible into Latin around 450 AD. That said, the Apocrypha was widely available within the early Church and has been used by Christians through the ages (even though they agreed that it did not have the same authority as Scripture). It is good literature that fills in an important historical gap. And to understand Jesus more fully, it is useful to understand the "deutero-canonical" literature. See also: Maccabees and the historical events celebrated with Hanukkah. It is also the sole Biblical support for some Catholic and Mormon doctrines and practice.

-1a: "Because Dad/God said so" is a good first answer. Beyond that, the four gospels provide different angles on the same story, appeal to different audiences, and provide one more than the required "two or three witnesses"!

-1b: To generalize, for the past (to relate history—the ministry of Christ and the origins of the Early Church), present (to relate counsel to individuals and churches [see: I Corinthians vs. Galatians], and future (to reveal the person of Christ in His Second Coming and God's work through history and in final judgment).

-2a: For individuals, did one need to become Jewish in order to become Christian? For the Church, would it be a sect of Judaism or a free-standing religion? This has clear implications for the spread of the Gospel; the role of culture and traditions vs. Truth; and defining primary vs. secondary issues and justification in Christ vs. legalism (see: Galatians). Legalism is such an important topic that we'll use it to kick off DC401.

-2a: The regulations that remain do not compromise a gospel of grace but speak to the need to deal with a huge issue for the Gentiles (sexual immorality) and issues that make it difficult for Gentiles and Jews to be in community with each other (food/idols, blood/meat). The letter does not spell this out in detail, but we can presume that this was the subject of much discussion after Paul and Barnabas read the letter to the Gentiles.

-2b: All of the big church leaders, including Peter's credible role as a former skeptic.

Week 14. Apocrypha, Apocalyptic, NT Gospels/Acts, Epistles (cont'd)

-*Intro to Philemon:* Paul's letter to Philemon concerning the plight of his runaway slave—and recent convert, Onesimus. As we saw in DC101, this "postcard" is a fascinating study of Paul's approach to ministry. You may want to directly combine discussion of this book with Borthwick's article. Among other things, it's worth mentioning that, throughout our lives, we will have occasion to play the roles of all three characters.

-3d: See: the importance of style issues (tact, etc.); a picture of Paul's ministry and personality; a representation of Christ's ministry (us as O; Christ as Paul); the importance of making things right; response to slavery (etc.) as more about character than circumstance (I Cor 7-11); a story of an amazing life change (incl. possibility that this is the Onesimus who later become bishop!). In a word, Paul is trying to be as persuasive as possible (convinced that he is right and worried about the outcome) while still respecting the dignity and free will of Philemon. Imagine a similar situation with friends or children—where you're trying to convince/persuade them.

-4a: You could read these as literal beasts—or beasts representing literal individuals—or beasts representing groups or power/ideology.

-4b: 13:1's horns/crowns and blasphemy—as political and religious power opposed to God—most likely, the power of the State allied with subtleties of false religion (given 11's lamb, 13's miracles and 14's deception)

-4c: The power and persecution of contemporary Rome vs. a general focus on the "end times" (i.e., tribulations/difficulties in the Church Age) vs. specific focus on a still-future End Times

Week 16: Biblical Fellowship, Unity, Managing Conflict

Adminstration

-In the second half of DC for Students, you should be more intentional about small group prayer. You've developed some group chemistry by now. And prayer is more easily applicable and appropriate given the topics we'll study.

-Mix up your approach to prayer and get creative: sit vs. stand vs. on knees vs. prostrate; as a group vs. small groups vs. pairs. Whatever method you use, center it around the week's topic to frame the direction of the day's prayer. For example, after discussing "the tongue", ask for particular requests that connect to prayer or praise with respect to the tongue. Also consider doing this as written prayer as if prayer journaling.

-You may also want to have members share a testimony of some sort—maybe one or a few every week. If so, make sure not to have overlap between these testimonies and what they share in DC202 when you'll talk about evangelism.

-The biggest challenges are typically time management and getting everyone to participate. *If you're continuing to struggle in one or both of these areas, make **explicit** plans to address the problems, set goals, re-address the issue in-class as useful, and so on.*

-Continue to pray for your group members on a regular basis—in general terms for their class as a whole and in specific terms for individual members.

-Reconsider contact with group members outside of class—whether emails, phone calls, words before/after class, follow up on prayer requests, meeting for meals, etc.

-Review the covenant again as useful.

-This week's topic is very important, so make sure to manage your time carefully. This is also a good week to emphasize the disciple-making and leadership development that come along with going through DC. "Managing conflict" well is a crucial characteristic for leaders and a difficult stretch for many people.

Discussion

-1b: Small talk has its purposes and limits. Often, people have little/no vision of what fellowship can be.

-1c: You may find it useful to allude to our coverage in legalism in DC401 and denominations in DC403.

-2a: Acts 2:42's list alludes to mind, spirit, body, and soul.

Week 16: Biblical Fellowship, Unity, Managing Conflict (cont'd)

-4a: The whole of Mt 7 implies the need to exercise "judgment"—i.e., discernment! Interestingly, one of the review verses speaks of the same thing; in the NKJV, Heb 4:12 talks about "discerning".

-4b: If you can avoid a lengthy discussion, it's interesting to think about the implications of this concept for Christian political pursuits.

-4c: The point of including Lk 7:34: it implies that "sinners" enjoyed the company of Christ, apparently modeling love without condoning sin.

-4d: Christ's sacrifice (and from Acts 15, the Church's willingness to compromise)

-5a: Prayer for self-control and insights; pick your battles and bide your time; separate the issue from the person (or not—depending on the context); active listening (seek first to understand and letting them know they've been heard); be willing to forgive; clean own table first; find common ground and compliment as possible; plan approach in advance; build relationships from which to offer comments; be specific; avoid old news; shift language from "you" to "I"

-5b: Mark Twain said that if you're going to swallow two frogs, you should swallow the biggest one first. In other words, if Gideon had the guts to do this—to stand against this god, his dad, and the community—then the rest would be a piece of cake (relatively speaking). Note also that once Gideon takes this stand, his father is finally convinced, converted, and courageous.

-On fellowship, generally: Ask them with whom they have this sort of fellowship. If X, Y, and Z happened to you, who would you call for prayer, counsel, support, etc.? Encourage your members to actually invest in true fellowship with one or two other group members.

-On unity, especially this week, you may find the term "cultural Christian" useful. Note the art and general importance of finding common ground without compromising essential standards.

-A terrific article from Christian History: http://www.ligonier.org/blog/oncontroversy/

-Make sure to close with at least five minutes of small group prayer.

Week 17

-*Intro to Colossians:* One of Paul's letters, written to deal with an unspecified heresy and to exhort the readers to live the Christian life. The book is described by Dallas Willard as "a model" of a discipleship curriculum. In many ways, it is similar to Ephesians—with which we have structured DC101 & DC201-202.

-*Intro to James:* A letter addressed to Jewish Christians, pointing to the need for a spoken faith that is matched by good works. Its emphasis on works is so strong that it has often been thought to propose a works-based salvation, but instead, the point is that a saving faith will yield fruit. James also provides considerable practical counsel.

Week 18. The Tongue

-Memory Verse: Note the importance of the last two phrases. "Their" implies the existence of a substantive relationship.

-Throughout this week's material—from the memory verse forward—the usual temptation is to focus on sins of commission. It may also be interesting to consider the role of one's profession in how this lesson is seen.

-1a: Encourage them to know the one with which they struggle more. It may be amusing/interesting to note the irony that more talkative people are likely to respond (verbally) to this question—probably pointing to sins of commission! Finally, an interesting bit of DC trivia: When we were tweaking DC to make it appropriate for women, we asked for edits. There were some examples of word-smithing. But the only question the women asked us to add: this week, on gossip.

-1b: pray; sit on it—for awhile or forever; put it in writing—first (to prepare) or instead; committing to apologize and ask for forgiveness when I've stumbled; shut up and work harder to listen and have empathy; watch when hungry/tired; consider/count the costs; remember key nasty/cool moments from those who have influenced you

-2a: Note the role of constructive criticism and confrontation vs. carping and complaining.

-3b: all speak to the incredible impact of "small things"—specifically, the bit as the power of a word to start or stop something; the rudder as the direction change that a word can provide to a charted course; and the spark as the one little word that can start a fire for good or for ill

-a nice article on small talk: http://www.sovereigngraceministries.org/blogs/cj-mahaney/post/Is-Small-Talk-Worthless.aspx

-Consider challenging your DC'ers to write one note of encouragement per week for the next X weeks.

Week 19

-*Intro to Romans:* The first half is Paul's classical apologetic on justification through the blood and cross of Christ and sanctification through the Holy Spirit. The second half contains a number of other practical teachings on Christian living. The book was probably written because Paul was unable to visit the church there and wanted to lay out these teachings on doctrine and practice in a systematic manner. Watchman Nee's *The Normal Christian Life* is awesome but optional.

-Note Paul's knowledge of OT (without Bible study tools!) in 3:10-18.

-On 5:20b-6:2a, Chuck Swindoll (in *Grace Awakening*) makes the point that Paul feels like he must deal with this question, given the extent to which he has preached God's grace. Swindoll challenges pastors that they should occasionally face the same dilemma—or they're probably not preaching grace strongly enough.

-Compared to the Sermon on the Mount, Romans 12:9-21 is a similar but less familiar (and probably "fresher") discussion of the high ethical calling within Christianity.

-Make sure to spend ample time within Romans on chapter 14—a great and important discussion topic. We will come back to this passage again with the first lesson in DC401 on liberty vs. legalism.

Week 20: Evangelism

-Discuss the memory verse this week—at least the distinction between salt and grace.

-1a: The study questions should accomplish this, but make sure your group members move beyond understanding eternal salvation merely as the exclusive component of "the good news".

-1c: A little bit of a trick question since these categories are not this clear.

-2b: A huge question, including find their stumbling blocks and identify them as real or imaginary; pick your battles (essential vs. non-essential); find common ground/interests; and so on.

-5: Our mission is to be faithful to God's calling; we are not responsible for others' response to the Gospel.

-6a-b: Go through their stories/testimonies as time permits. Make more time for this if you haven't done it along the way.

-Consider role-playing to practice evangelism.

-A nice article: http://www.equip.org/articles/why-apologetics-has-a-bad-name/

Week 22: Work

-Memory Verse: Ask them which phrase they enjoyed the most.

-1b: By nature, most people in your study will probably struggle with over-working. (If they struggled with under-working, they're less likely to be in a study like this!)

-2a-b: Huge points!

-3d: Answers can include the disadvantages of being (and being perceived as) a "professional Christian" and more empathy with those in the world.

-Note Daniel 6:4's "neither corrupt nor negligent" as avoiding sins of commission and omission.

Week 23

-*Intro to I & II Thessalonians:* Two of Paul's earliest letters, written to encourage new converts in the midst of their trials and to deal with their confusions about the 2nd coming of Christ.

-Be careful to anticipate and avoid getting stuck in largely-fruitless discussions of the end-times. Deflect to the 400-level and encourage them to find and report personal applications from the Scripture reading.

-*Intro to I & II Peter:* Peter's epistles touch on a number of themes in the Christian life and are meant to encourage his readers in the face of persecution and heresy.

Week 24. Personal Finance and Biblical Stewardship

-In 17 of his 37 parables, Christ deals with property and our responsibility for stewarding it wisely.

-Suggest offering possessions as a "living sacrifice" (given that our possessions are an extension of our selves), routinely give away any extra, make your possessions available for others to use, and buy some/many things with the intent to share them. At some point, make the broader point that stewardship is more about attitude than a list of things to do—a lifestyle more than an event.

-1b: We're all stewards. The question is whether we're good or bad stewards. It's also interesting that a healthy view of stewardship leads to both greater responsibility (more at stake) but greater freedom (it's not my stuff). A recent memory verse, Col 3:23-24, connects to stewardship of time. It also may be useful to note that co-leaders and to a lesser extent group members are stewards of your 1.5 hours together each week.

-2c-d: Note that this is explicitly targeted to those who "want to get rich" and those who are "eager for money"—whether they have it or not! Among other things, note what "roots" typically do—spread and support, growing and providing nourishment and life.

-5a: Point out the irony that people focus on I Tim 6:10 without reading it in context.

Week 25

-*Intro to Luke:* The third of the four gospels we will read (trying to spread them out over DC101 and DC201-202) and the longest book in the NT. (Luke, a Gentile, pens the most words in the NT.) In combination with the book of Acts, it provides a "two-volume" look at the ministry of Christ and the origins of the early church. A few other points: 1.) Of the synoptic gospels, in contrast to Matthew, Luke is more focused on Gentiles and the inclusiveness of the Good News. 2) In contrast to Mark, Luke's account is more complete and relates how Jesus ministered to different individuals, especially those outside the community of faith. 3.) Among other things, Luke emphasizes the parables and the role of prayer. All of this will be more obvious in next week's readings in Luke. Peterson ties together these three themes in a wonderful book, *Tell It Slant*—from an Emily Dickinson poem, that oftentimes, people can't handle the truth "straight-up", so it should be "told slant".

Week 26: Temptation

-1a: Our sin nature is a platform for the other two.

-1b: It may be useful to draw an analogy used by Jim Bergen, comparing the devil to Saddam Hussein leaving Kuwait in 1991. (He was going to lose, but wanted to cause as much destruction and chaos as possible.)

-1c: Carnal is with the body. Spiritual is with the mind/heart/spirit. Obviously, there is overlap between the two.

-1: The "seven deadly sins" are lust, laziness (sloth), greed, gluttony, anger, envy (jealousy) and pride. Evagrius Ponticus (345-399 AD) and John Cassian (360-435 AD) produced similar lists of eight "evil thoughts" or "faults". Eventually, Pope Gregory I (540-604) modified and officially adopted the now-famous list.

-2a: This is an interesting question, but in a large sense, it doesn't matter in terms of how we *should* live our lives. Note also that "falling into sin" is over-rated; typically, there is a slippery slope that leads to "the fall". Beyond that, there is also a difference between "falling into sin" and scheduling sin on your calendar.

-2c: "Sin nature" is often translated as "the flesh". But "the flesh" (biblically) does not equal the body. Christianity is a religion that values and redeems both body and spirit. Make sure that trashing "the flesh" does not degenerate into trashing "the body".

-2d: "World" can be taken in the sense of creation, "worldly system", and all people.

-2e: The world is both mission field and mine field. Are we affecting the world moreso or vice versa?

-3b: Note the serpent's guile vs. the lion/dragon's power. See also: Satan as Beelzebub—the Lord of the Flies—and Rick Atchley's comment that if you put on garbage, you're going to attract the Devil.

-3d: It may be useful to talk about Christians in bondage to sin or the world as POW's—soldiers on the winning side, but little use in the battle against the enemy.

-4b,c: We can't always flee or have hedges (at least tactfully); we might miss the long-term—to be strong in the Lord, character development, etc.; these may turn into legalisms.

-4d: This is a huge point! Christianity calls us to plant flowers in addition to pulling weeds (and having flowers makes avoiding weeds easier). For David, note the irony that military battle was the safest place for him to be.

-4e: confidence in a battle already won

Week 26: Temptation (cont'd)

-5b: past tense (largely justification) vs. present/future tense (sanctification); defends vs. "any charge"; grace within justification; evident righteousness as ministry/evangelism

-5c: peace of mind within sanctification; peace thru trials with prayer; readiness to explain the hope we have within evangelism

-5c: On faith as a shield: it can protect self and others; and its thickness and size as a function of obedience, trust, and knowledge of God's word.

-5c: On "flaming arrows": arrows pick at you, can be devastating in certain places, and the flames can spread.

-5c: Note the difference between Christ wielding it in Mt 4 vs. Eve in Gen 3.

> -having the weapon, we may avoid a battle and (as with our shield) may be able to defend those close to us (vs. helmet which each individual must have)
>
> -see: fighting with a butter knife; bringing a knife to a gunfight

-Toward the end of the study, remind them that we're trying to be "thoroughly equipped" to be disciple-makers. One big application of this is having a vision—and having tools—to make a difference in others' lives with respect to temptation. Challenge your DC'ers to look around and prayerfully consider couples they might be able to help.

Week 28: Dating/Courtship, Sexual Morality, and Marriage

-1c, 2a: Given God's commands, it's crucial to understand that those come out of his knowledge and his love for us. If God doesn't know—or doesn't care—then he's the Cosmic Killjoy. If He knows and loves, then the commands are in our best interests.

-4a: See: Larry Crabb's "desires" vs. "demands"—or the Christian concept of "rights" (even if I have them, should I exercise them?)

-4c: See: David Blankenhorn's story about the woman who said her husband was the head and she was the neck "which turns the head in the direction it should go".

-4d: omission vs. commission; weak vs. a jerk

Week 30: Genesis 1-3

-1b: the "Big Bang" (but what was before that?); Chemical Soup (Miller/Urey experiments as deceptively performed, and even if so, controlled by an Intelligent Designer!); macro-evolution and natural selection (Could it be completely responsible for all of what we see today and able to evolve *repeatedly* through vital organs and reproductive organs? To what extent is macro-evolution a scientific "explanation" or a Creation-like story?)

-1c: from Crabb's *The Silence of Adam*, our call to move into chaos, mystery and darkness—in order to create light, beauty, and order

-2: In addition to the obvious varied uses, the NIV translates "in that *day*" as "when" in 2:4 and 2:17, masking two other uses of the Hebrew term "yom". The reference to 1:24-31 and 2:15-22 is meant to question whether Adam could have done all that—and felt a profound sense of loneliness—in 24 hours. The references to Hab 3:6 and II Pet 3:5 allude to the earth's antiquity. Some commentators find it odd that the earth would be considered so ancient (also, used as a picture of God's eternality) if it was merely 144 hours older than Adam.

-2: Of course, the debate has picked up considerable intensity since Darwin. But it's very interesting to note that the old/young earth debate precedes the scientific evidences for an old earth. Good theology and hermeneutics apparently allow for both. Given the weight of tradition—and popular interpretations of the Scripture &/or scientific evidences (at least in some circles)—some will find it quite difficult to wrestle faithfully with the Scripture, theology, science, etc. Especially for those who are struggling, make the point that being able to enunciate this position may be helpful in removing a stumbling block within evangelism or ministry. Others might say it doesn't matter to me; the response to them is that "it doesn't matter to me does not mean that it doesn't matter". As so many other difficult theological issues, one should be able to coherently make the case for more than one answer.

-3a: All people have value; we are created to be creative (1:2); we are granted a special ability to communicate and have fellowship; and so on. You might want to quip that we were made in God's image and we often return the favor.

-3d: Work does not complete us; relationships do. But marriage also follows our kingdom-work in terms of importance—or alternatively, is an important form of kingdom-work for many people.

-4a: Sets up Sabbath and the symbolism of the number 7; more effectively lays out cause and effect; each day and its details are special; implies order/process/rhythm; to consider it more carefully (vs. a picture of it "seems easy")

Week 30: Genesis 1-3 (cont'd)

-4c: dust and breath (as Christ's spit and mud), body and soul, material and spiritual

-5b: Satan injects doubt into God's word (vs. denying it) and questions God's love and goodness. Eve adds a legalism. Satan denies God's judgment and twists the truth.

-5f: various deaths: 7's psychological, 8's spiritual, 11-13's sociological (blame game), 17-19a's environmental/economic, 19b's physical

-5h: eternal life in this state?!

Week 31

-*Intro to Galatians:* Paul's letter to the churches in the region of Galatia. A crucial book on "legalism"—depending on one's own efforts with respect to justification or sanctification. In particular, Paul deals with the teachings of the Judaizers, who taught that one must observe the Law in order to be a Christian—that a Gentile had to become a Jew (including circumcision!) to become a Christian.

-In Galatians 1:4, it may be useful to point out the broad use of the term "rescue" as in "save"—our word study a few weeks ago.

-*Intro to I Corinthians:* Paul's letter to the church at Corinth. Where Galatians focuses on dismissing grace, the issue here is "libertine" or carnal behavior—accepting the grace of God but then taking it too lightly. I Corinthians includes important discussion of a variety of subjects, including the Christian response to immorality in the church, "the love chapter", spiritual gifts, and the resurrection of the saints. A prominent theme in the middle of the book is doing the best we can within the circumstances we find ourselves—rather than seeking to change those circumstances.

Week 32: Legalism and Liberty

-In DC, this is the first topic for the 400-level study because it is so important in itself—and because it sets up the principle that we want to be careful about how narrowly we define orthodox beliefs on many of the difficult doctrinal issues to follow. We strive to encourage unity on essentials, charity on non-essentials, and some earnest wrestling with what constitutes essentials and non-essentials. It may be helpful to note that "good (and very smart) people" have disagreed on these issues throughout Christian History.

-1: Probably early-on, you'll need/want to distinguish between judgmentalism (judging someone too harshly for something clearly wrong) and legalism (judging something or someone as wrong when it is not clearly so). And sometimes, the issue is that someone thinks something is major when someone else thinks it's minor.

-1: Note the irony that Scripture doesn't record Christ saying "grace" (but note Jn 1:14,17) and legalism is only used in Phil 3:6. Both are portrayed rather than defined.

-1a: Mercy is avoiding something bad that we deserve; grace is getting something good that we don't deserve. Grace is "unmerited favor"—God's Riches At Christ's Expense (II Cor 5:21)—whether salvation/justification or any other gift we receive from God within sanctification.

-1b: Note that "the flesh" tends to go in one of two directions: carnality (libertinism) or legalism. (Satan is happy either way!) A libertine sees Jesus as Savior, but not Lord; a legalist often sees Jesus as Lord, but not Savior. Finally, note that we are often relatively libertine with ourselves and legalistic with others.

-1: Borrowing from Jeff Foxworthy, you might be a legalist (or are struggling with legalism) if you...

> -focus on sins of commission at the expense of sins of omission, externals more than internals
>
> -equate Christianity with morality, reducing the Christian life to meeting a list
>
> -say "need to" much more often than "get to" (see: question #4a)
>
> -concerning self: failure --> discouragement, success --> pride (see: #4a)
>
> -find the Christian life "well-lived" to be condemning & joyless vs. alluring & joyful (see: 4b)
>
> -concerning others: typically seeks their approval, sees their failures (see: 4b)
>
> -emphasize behaviors over relationships (see: 4c)
>
> -universal solutions (in gray areas)—for example, raising kids; difficulty in allowing freedom to debate/disagree (see: 4c and food for thought)

Week 32: Legalism and Liberty (cont'd)

-2a: Charles Swindoll makes the point that when one isn't preaching grace strongly enough, then such questions won't come up—before exhorting preachers to make sure that they do preach a strong-enough version of grace.

-2b: Sin is never in our best interests (Jer 29:11).

-4c: Among other answers, note that this reduces candor and communication, especially over delicate and important issues.

-5c: Which son gets more attention within the Church? If you haven't already made the point, note that joy is a great barometer for the health of our walk with Christ, especially in this arena.

-6a: Make sure they understand who the "weaker brother" is. The irony here is that the weaker brother often views himself as the "stronger"!

-6b: Think of examples that illustrate the need for balance, such as swimsuits, gambling, alcohol, observing the Sabbath. A nice take-away for this question and the lesson overall is that asking the question is at least half of the answer. Another minor example: we recommend daily reading of Scripture throughout DC and the course book lists Days 1-6. Is that a good idea, a legalism or…? (In future editions, we will eliminate Days 1-6 for this week to help make the point.)

-6c: Think about the verse in context with I Thessalonians 5:21!

Week 33

-*Intro to II Corinthians:* Another of Paul's letters to the church at Corinth—meant to explain the reason for his change of plans (which his opponents had used to accuse him), to defend his ministry, to argue against his opponents, to applaud generosity, and to exhort them to avoid carnal living. Lawrence Richards says it "is the most personal and revealing of Paul's letters...and shows us how to minister."

Week 34: The Will of God

-Durham article: In addition to the practical and theological difficulties (although not impossibility) of using fleeces, myth #2 can lead to a nice discussion of the differences between God opening/closing doors and us putting out fleeces. Myths 1&3 tie into next week's topic.

-1a: God's "general will" can be defined as the moral commands already revealed in His word. God's "specific will" speaks to context-specific details and means to ends—to be discovered through God's word, prayer, wisdom, experience, and godly counsel (Q #1b). One's views on this tie into views on the topics last week and next week. An emphasis on the general will leads to the Biblical theme of a focus on character over circumstance. An over-emphasis on the specific will of God can lead to paralysis and legalism. Note also that if you're not in God's general will, you're probably not in his specific will either. And if you're recruiting co-leaders for next year, it may be useful to point to God's general will that they should be ministering, leading, and feeding in some capacity—but God's specific will for them may or may not include co-leading a DC group next year. Finally, I've also found it useful to ask whether God has a will about whether I choose fish or chicken for lunch today. If not (always), it may turn out that some decisions that seem much larger to us (e.g., where we work and live) are the equivalent of fish vs. chicken to God.

-2a: Among other things, Jesus modeled the process of putting God's will first—and lining up one's will with God's—through prayer and lifestyle. His use of "thy will be done" is a popular phrase within our own prayers, but often it amounts to a cop-out (if God doesn't answer affirmatively) rather than a submission to the unclear will of God.

-2d: Joshua 6's specific vs. Joshua 8's general with Joshua filling in the details.

-2f: Aside from the answers that emerge from the optional verses, you can include the prophets, lots and the Urim/Thummim, theophanies, visions, godly counsel, and historical events (as God intervened within Israel's history)

-At some point during the discussion, it may be useful to ask whether God's will extends to one's choice of (ham vs. turkey) sandwich at lunch.

-3: Saved, Spirit-filled, sanctified, submit, suffer, and say. You may want to suggest "serve" as well! The II Samuel passage is interesting here in that it models David's desires and Nathan's initial agreement, but then God's clarification. Note also that God does not rebuke David for his desire or Nathan for giving his consent. We can feel tremendous freedom here—that if we're listening for God's voice, He will let us know if we're not going in a good direction.

Week 35

-*Intro to I & II Timothy:* Paul's two other pastoral letters—written to his young friend, Timothy. Paul was a mentor to Timothy, as they initially ministered together, and later, as Paul encouraged and instructed Timothy as the leader of the local church. Given the goals of DC, it makes for a very nice ending to the reading in DC101.

Week 36: *Conclusion—An Intro to Leadership*

-Memory Verse: Among other things, note that this would be a terrific thing to have said about you!

-This is a big week for you to lead in terms of injecting vision about lay-leadership—that they are becoming "thoroughly-equipped" and can do great things in God's Kingdom.

-1a-b: There will be fears and sins of omission and commission here—depending on personality type, etc. Note that "can do" people—those who don't have as many fears or make as many excuses—may not have as much to say on these questions. Note also that there are different types and levels of leadership as well as different contexts in which leadership can be exercised (e.g., in the church, within the family, at work). It may also be helpful to think of leadership as an event and a lifestyle. And if you have an interesting testimony in this regard, it would be good to share any struggles you had in embracing this leadership op!

-2-3: Bring in points from Thomas early in the study as context allows.

-2a: Good news about Moses: passionately bothered by injustice (vs. apathy); takes risky/courageous action (trying to turn chaos into order vs. cowardice and "the silence of Adam"); wanted unity for his people; as royalty, cared for "the little people" and went to investigate their situation; and so on. In wrestling with how else he could have fallen short, consider the example of Jacob (sins of commission; passionately wanted the things of God, but often pursued them improperly) vs. Esau (sins of omission; no interest in the things of God).

-2a: Applications: somebody is always watching—integrity (or not) and ripple effects; intentions vs. effects (and do people want to be helped?); difficulty of exerting leadership without having relationship; and so on.

-3a: Wrestle with whether/how Moses is humble here. Note also that we would worry if Moses volunteered immediately, especially after having been "burned" previously. See also: G. Campbell Morgan on Moses' five excuses: inadequacy, ignorance, incredibility, inarticulate, insubordination; and Wilmington's "I have no ability (3:11; Phil 4:13), no message (3:13; I Cor 15:3); no authority (4:1; Mt 28:18-20), no eloquence (4:10; Lk 21:15), no inclination (4:13; I Cor 15:10)". In response, God encourages, provides info, empowers with resources, asks rhetorical questions (and gets edgy/sarcastic with him), shows anger and moves to plan B.

-3b: We would have liked to hear Moses say "Who is Pharoah (vs. God)?" or "Here I am" (revisited from 3:4b).

Week 36: *Conclusion—An Intro to Leadership*

Week 36: ***Conclusion—An Intro to Leadership (cont'd)***

-4a: This is aimed at a common lack of competence and/or confidence when people consider leadership positions and mentoring relationships. Of course, we hope that people are in much better shape on both counts after completing DC.

-4b: On I Tim 4:15's progress, note that it does not say "perfection". Moreover, progress implies improvement which implies past failure. Showing progress implies illustrating both past failure and current improvement/success.