

A few thoughts on How to Handle the Intro Week of a Short-term Study...

(In the following studies, the first week would be “week 0” if you want an introductory week to be separate from the reading schedules listed below.)

- Tighten up your roster and collect any administrative fees.
- Ice-breakers: brief bio; and perhaps another one that is creative/interesting
- Go over the schedule—and if you have multiple groups, discuss options if they miss yours.
- Discuss expectations: Group members read the assignment for each week—and then, at each meeting, a facilitator will lead discussion over that reading.
- Suggest accountability partners to help get through the reading.

Four things to say:

- 1.) If you are unable to complete the reading, still attend! Why compound the loss by missing the discussion and diminishing the group chemistry?
- 2.) Note that some of the reading is relatively difficult. One of the advantages of a group setting is that we can work through difficult concepts together.
- 3.) If reading a book, know that these writers are fallible human beings. Thus, read critically and feel free to question their reasoning and their conclusions.
- 4.) Fourth, consider how to mark your Bible/book in a way that will make it easy for you to point to passages that were provocative for you.

An Intro to (The Why and How of) Spiritual Disciplines (an 11-week course)

Texts:

- 1.) Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*
 - 2.) Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*
 - 3.) John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted, 2nd ed.*
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“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10b)

“Working hard to think clearly is the beginning of moral conduct.” (Blaise Pascal)

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2)

“Run in such a way as to win the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave...” (I Corinthians 9:24b-27a)

“There is a difference between doing some particular just or temperate action and being a just or temperate man...a man who perseveres in doing just actions gets in the end a certain quality of character. Now it is that quality rather than the particular actions which we mean when we talk of a virtue.” (C.S. Lewis)

“...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.” (Philippians 2:12b-13a)

“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.” (II Timothy 1:7)

C.S. Lewis: “Teachers will tell you that the laziest boy in the class is the one who works the hardest in the end...when they are preparing for an exam, the lazy boy is doing hours and hours of miserable drudgery over things the other boy understands, and positively enjoys, in a few minutes. Laziness means more work in the long run.”

intro remarks (if you have a “week 0”)

- define disciple; importance of discipleship, although often undersold
 - see: Mt 28:19-20's baptize and teach; converts vs. disciples
 - connect discipline and disciples (see: Gal 5:22-23, Titus 2:6's import of self-control, Pr 25:28, II Pet 1:3-7 → 1:8)
 - define (spiritual) discipline, including...
 - focus, dedication/commitment
 - regular/repetition/pattern
 - depth of learning, reflection
 - faith in the process and the one discipling
 - internal change bearing external fruit—from head to heart/limbs, training/ed
→ see also: investment's B&C's—difficult but worth it given the goal
 - note: the difference between disciplines and spiritual disciplines is smaller than we might think
 - often in the mind, and ironically, in the body
 - goal: not about intellect only (I Cor 8:1b's “Knowledge puffs up but love builds up.”) or spiritual disciplines per se (Mt 23:23b-24's Pharisees)-- but to love God/others better
 - both intellectual and experiential: try something new as we go thru the hows
- potential ice-breaker: background in terms of desire for discipleship, expectations of this course

Key Verses by Week

1. Titus 2:11-12
2. I Tim 4:7b-8, I Pet 4:7
3. Gal 5:22-23, I Pet 1:13
4. II Pet 1:3-9
5. Ps 119:15,27,97,148; Mt 6:5-13, 7:7-11, 26:41, Eph 6:18, Phil 4:6-7, I Thess 5:17, Jas 1:5-8
6. Dt 6:6-9, Josh 1:8, Ps 1:1-3, Acts 17:11; Mt 6:16-18, Is 58:1-10
7. Eccl 4:5-8, 5:10-12,18-20, Mt 6:25-34, I Thess 4:11, I Pet 3:4
8. Mt 26:39, Rom 12:1-2, II Cor 12:7-10, Heb 5:7-9
9. II Chron 7:14, Ps 32, 51, I Jn 1:9; Eph 4:29, II Tim 4:2, Heb 10:24
10. Rom 5:3-4, 8:28, Heb 5:8-9, Jas 1:2-4, I Pet 1:6-7, 4:1-2,12-13; I Tim 6:10,17-18
11. Ps 16:11, 27:4, 28:7, 48:9, 98:4-9, 103:1-12, 104:33-34, 119:45; Hab 3:17-19, I Thess 5:16,18

Topic	Reading
<i>I. The Why of Spiritual Disciplines</i>	
1. The Goals of the SD's	Willard: Preface, App. II; Foster: ch. 1; Ortberg: ch. 1-2
2. Why the SD's Matter	W: 1-4
3. Fulfilling the Spiritual Life	W: 5, 6, 8
4. An Intro to Doing the SD's	W: 7, 9 (p. 156-160, 175-176, 190-191), and the Epilogue; Ortberg: 3
<i>II. The How of Spiritual Disciplines</i>	
5. Meditation, Prayer	F: 2-3; O: 6, 9; W: 9 (p. 184-186)
6. Fasting, Study/Read	F: 4-5; O: 11; W: (p. 166-168, 176-177)
7. Simplicity, Solitude	O: 5, 10 (168-173); F: 6-7; W: (p. 168-170, 160-165)
8. Submission, Service (Sacrifice, Chastity)	F: 8-9; O: 7, 10; W: (p. 170-175, 182-184, 189-190)
9. Confession, Guidance	O: 8; F: 10, 12; W: (p. 186-189)
10. Impacting the World	W: 10, 11 (220-223, 246-254 optional)
11. Worship, Celebration	F: 11, 13; O: 4; W: (p. 177-181)

Optional/Supplemental Chapters from C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters* by week:

- 1-4. #15
- 5. #4
- 7. #17
- 8. #14, 21
- 10. #26
- 11. #2, 11

The Life You've Always Wanted:
An Intro to Spiritual Disciplines (a four-week course)

Overview of Delivery

- preferably 75 minutes per class
- facilitator-led discussion, trying to avoid huge groups—as Socratic as possible
- 201-level material with 201-401-level homework/preparation of your choice
- homework: reflection on verses; optional reading from various books on the spiritual disciplines; and applications/exercises of various disciplines
- booklet for note-taking during class and reflections on verses and exercises outside of class
- make Ortberg's *The Life You've Always Wanted* easily available; mention/reference Foster's *Celebration of the Disciplines* and Willard's *The Spirit of the Disciplines*

Topics

- Week 1: Icebreakers and an Overview of the Disciplines
- Week 2: Disciplines of Omission— Fasting, Simplicity, and Solitude
- Week 3: Disciplines of Commission I (Internal)—Read/Study/Memorize and Prayer/Confession
- Week 4: Disciplines of Commission II (External)—Worship and Service

→ email me for the entire study—the notes and the booklet/workbook...

Short-term Study on Bible Reading through the NT

Given...

- a.) the power of immersing oneself in the Word (especially the gospels)
- b.) the value of spiritual disciplines and accountability

Class Format

- intro week with standard overview and icebreakers
- reading schedule from 9-13 weeks (details below)
- Matthew thru Acts in Fall (117 chs.); Romans thru Revelation in Spring (143 chs.)
- meeting length of 1:00
- little prep for leaders: harness those who are unable to make larger time commitment
- little prep for readers: 201-level study; promote with 101'ers to encourage deepening

Ground Rules

- emphasis on read not study (although study is fine for those who want to do so)
 - focus on prayer, meditation, and personal insight
 - no Greek; no questions; few cross-references; only short stories/testimonies
- group members and God and group vs. individuals and teacher
 - leader strives for good time management, modest class participation
 - light/flexible accountability:
- underline in Bible—or better yet, journal key verses and thoughts

Schedule

-dividing by books:

- 9 weeks: 2 weeks in Mt; 1 in Mk; 2 in Lk; 2 in Jn; 2 in Acts
- 11 weeks: 3 weeks in Mt; 2 in Mk; 3 in Lk; 2 in Jn; 2 in Acts

-or dividing by number of verses per week:

- 9 weeks (532 verses): ending with Mt 15, Mt 28, Mk 12, Lk 7, Lk 19, Jn 6, Jn 19, A 12, A 28
- 10 weeks (479 verses): ending with Mt 14, Mt 26, Mk 9, Lk 3, Lk 13, Lk 24, Jn 10, A 2, A 14, A 28
- 11 weeks (435 verses): ending with Mt 13, Mt 24, Mk 6, Mk 16, Lk 8, Lk 18, Jn 3, Jn 11, A 3, A 15, A 28
- 12 weeks (399 verses): ending with Mt 12, Mt 22, Mk 3, Mk 12, Lk 4, Lk 12, Lk 22, Jn 6, Jn 15, A 6, A 16, A 28
- 13 weeks (368 verses): ending with Mt 11, Mt 20, Mt 28, Mk 9, Lk 1, Lk 9, Lk 17, Lk 24, Jn 8, Jn 18, A 7, A 17, A 28

An Intro to the Writings of C.S. Lewis

Texts:

- 1.) *Mere Christianity*
- 2.) *Screwtape Letters*
- 3.) *A Grief Observed*
- 4.) *The Great Divorce*

‘For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.’ (Ephesians 6:12)

‘When I tried to understand all this, it was oppressive to me till I entered the sanctuary of God...’ (Psalm 73:16-17a)

Reading Schedule:

1. *Mere Christianity*: Book 1
2. *MC*: Book 2
3. *MC*: Book 3, Chs. 1-6
4. *MC*: Book 3, Chs. 7-12
5. *MC*: Book 4, Chs. 1-6
6. *MC*: Book 4, Chs. 7-11
7. *Screwtape Letters*: Preface; Letters 1-6
8. *SL*: 7-13
9. *SL*: 14-19
10. *SL*: 20-25
11. *SL*: 26-31
12. *A Grief Observed*: all (afterword optional)
13. *The Great Divorce*: all

Defending Your Faith (An Intro Course in Apologetics)

Texts:

- 1.) Lee Strobel, *The Case for Faith*
- 2.) Norm Geisler, *When Skeptics Ask: A Handbook on Christian Evidences*
- 3.) C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (or *The Case for Christianity*—the first third of *MC*)

Goals: 1.) knowledge, but connect between theology and practice; and 2.) strengthening own and others' faith; 3.) defending the faith, refuting bad arguments; 4.) developing empathy and ability to articulate

“But in your hearts, set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do so with gentleness and respect...” (I Peter 3:15)

“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” (Romans 12:2a)

“I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.” (I Corinthians 9:22b; see also: Paul’s versatility in sharing the gospel in Acts)

“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24)

“He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.” (Titus 1:9)

“Against the Jews, we are able to argue by means of the Old Testament, while against the heretics, we are able to argue by means of the New Testament. But the Moslems and the pagans accept neither the one nor the other...We must, therefore, have recourse to the natural reason, to which all men are forced to give their ascent.” –Thomas Aquinas

	Reading	Topic
1.	Strobel: Intro, Ch. 8; Geisler: 1	Faith, Doubt, and Reason
2.	Lewis: Book 1	An Absolute Standard
3.	Lewis: Book 2	Meeting the Standard
4.	Geisler: 2, 3, 13	God
5.	Strobel: 5, Appendix; Geisler: 6	Christ
6.	Geisler: 5; Strobel: 2	Miracles
7.	Geisler: 10; Strobel: 3	Evolution/Creation
8.	Geisler: 7-8; Strobel: 4	The Bible
9.	Geisler: 9; Strobel: 7	Archeology, Church History
10.	Geisler: 11; Strobel: 6	The Afterlife (esp. Hell)
11.	Geisler: 4; Strobel: 1, Conclusion	Evil and Suffering

The Divine Conspiracy by Dallas Willard

Week 0 / Intro (in addition to ice-breakers, etc.)

An overview of the book and highlights from the intro:

- 1.) a great book—on discipleship, lay-leadership (see: title); and a coherent approach to the Sermon on the Mount
- 2.) a great author (and a little outside our normal circles)
- 3.) reading as a group—accountability, to deal with any controversy and questions, learn from each other, get through difficult passages
- 4.) how to read: do the best you can but don't get stuck (esp. in ch. 1's table-setting), mark up your books (to ease participation in an open-ended facilitation)

Intro: read and briefly discuss these passages

-p. xiii: 2nd and 3rd P's

-p. xv: 4th P along with a quote from Erwin McManus that we believe what we think is true (knowledge) and follow who we trust (motives)

-p. xvii: 3rd P on his Spiritual Disciplines book and last half of 5th P

The author of this book, Dallas Willard, is a great contemporary Christian thinker who is passionate about laypeople doing discipleship—in line with his view of God's kingdom (what it calls us to and how it should expand) and what laypeople (vs. professionals) can accomplish. He focuses considerable attention on analyzing “The Sermon on the Mount” and applying it to the way we approach life in the Kingdom. It is relatively difficult reading, but excellent stuff. *Bottom line:* this offers a superb ending to DC and a great intro for those who continue on by co-leading their own groups. (The group will be open to a few non-DC'ers who might join us, but this will likely be a largely-DC group. Last summer, we had three non-DCers and seven or eight DC'ers.)

Two quotes from Willard's introduction:

“It is the failure to understand Jesus and his words as reality and vital information about life that explains why, today, we do not routinely teach those who profess allegiance to him how to do what he said was best. We lead them to profess allegiance to him, or we expect them to, and leave them there, devoting our remaining efforts to ‘attracting’ them to this or that.”

“The message of and about [Jesus] is specifically a gospel for our life now, not just for dying.”

***The Divine Conspiracy* by Dallas Willard**

Week	Suggested Reading Schedule
1.	Intro, Chapters 1-2
2.	Chapters 3-4
3.	Chapter 5
4.	Chapters 6-7 (p. 239)
5.	Chapters 7-8 (p. 239-291)
6.	Chapters 8-9 (p. 291-346)
7.	Chapters 9-10 (p. 347-400)

Suggested break-points in the text/discussion for each class:

- 1.) intro; p. 1, 11, 21, 33; 42, 50, 55
-warn them that some people struggle with the thickness of 84-94 (skim or skip as necessary)
- 2.) p. 61, 66, 74, 84, 91, 95; 106, 114, 122
- 3.) p. 129, 139, 147, 158, 168, 173, 175, 182
-don't get bogged down too much in 129-147
- 4.) p. 187, 193, 202, 214; 227, 239
- 5.) p. 239, 244, 250, 253, 261, 269; 281, 291
- 6.) p. 291, 299, 310; 320, 323, 332, 341, 346
- 7.) p. 347, 352, 357, 364, 373; 382, 394, 400
-more weight up to p. 364 (about half?)

Reading Schedule for Francis Chan's *Multiply*

- Week 1: Part 1
- Week 2: Part 2
- Week 3: Part 3
- Week 4: chapters 1-3
- Week 5: Part 4, chapters 4-6
- Week 6: Part 4, chapters 7-9
- Week 7: Part 5, chapters 1-3
- Week 8: Part 5, chapters 4-6

Reading Schedule for Kristen Sauder's *God Seeker*

- Week 1: chapter 1
- Week 2: chapter 2
- Week 3: chapter 3
- Week 4: chapter 4
- Week 5: chapter 5
- Week 6: chapter 6

Reading Schedule for Dann Spader's *Knowing Him*

- Week 1: Days 1-5
- Week 2: Days 6-10
- Week 3: Days 11-15
- Week 4: Days 16-20
- Week 5: Days 21-25
- Week 6: Days 26-30
- Week 7: Days 31-35
- Week 8: Days 36-40
- Week 9: Days 41-45
- Week 10: Days 46-50