

Renovation of the Heart In Daily Practice

The class always begins with a discussion about the images we have of God. What informs how we see God and how God interacts with us; the personality we are to interact with. One of the questions I ask is from Dallas directly: "What kind of God do you want? Because you won't find something you don't want."

Then we have a discussion about belovedness – our ability to see ourselves as worthy of relationship.

Then we discuss where our lives are at the moment – what is working or not working.

At this point, the people who thought this was a "book club" are very nervous, because the intimacy level has shot through the roof.

With all these things in their minds and on their hearts, I introduce the idea that Jesus was the smartest person that ever lived and that he is the one we should learn from in all aspects of our lives. They should consider this deeply before entering into the text of the book, because everything rests on these precepts. At that point, the first night is over, and they are sent off to read the subsequent chapters and to follow Jan's instructions in the book, selecting a question or activity that appeals to them for the intervening week.

In our next meeting and all meetings following, I spend the first forty minutes expanding on and talking about the issues raised in the text and my experience with them. As a rule, I always teach my failures, and rarely my victories. This tends to loosen people up and prepare them for the rest of the class time. This period after the first forty minutes is when they talk about their experiences during the week, and how the text affected their lives. Once they take over talking, I speak very little. They find out about their own wisdom and shared life together and they become a family in this discussion. There has not been a single class where I have not had to push them out the door at the two-hour mark. They often continue to talk long after I am in my car headed home.

Since most of the time I am limited to a ten to twelve week teaching period, I organize their reading around the original texts breakdown, so they always read more than one chapter a week. This also provides them with numerous questions and activities to choose from. I never find a student who says they could not find anything that struck them or intrigued them. They have a menu of good and are excited to engage.

Most classes moan at the end about having to stop, and so, we always encourage the formation of a small group to reengage the book and work through it again. We always have at least one group form, and most of these are still going strong today.

Here's the weekly breakdown:

Week One: Discussion and Introduction

For Next Week Read: The Introduction Through Chapter 5 Pgs. 7-23

Do: Pick One Experiment and Practice it for the week

Week Two: Review the chapters and discuss

For Next Week Read: Chapters 6-12 Pgs. 24-42

Do: Write down what "feeling" most dominates your life right now and think deeply about if you really want to be released from it.

Week Three: Review the chapters and discuss

For Next Week Read: Chapters 13 – 20 Pgs. 43-65

Do: VISION: Write down what your vision for your life in the Kingdom might look like.

Week Four: Review the chapters and discuss

For next week Read: Chapters 21-30 Pgs 66-92

Do: The Experiment at the end of Chapter 29

This is the spot where class progress slows to a crawl. The "feelings" section meets with such resistance, it may take significant time to work through here. Pastoral discretion is advised.

Week Five: Review the chapters and discuss

For next week Read: Chapters 31-36 Pgs 93-109

Do: The Experiment at the end of Chapter 31

Week Six: For next week Read: Chapters 37-41 Pgs 110-121

Do: Pick any Experiment and try it out for the week

Week Seven: For next week Read: Chapters 42-45 Pgs 122-132

Do: The Experiment at the end of Chapter 44

Week Eight: For next week Read: Chapters 46-50 Pgs 133-147

Do: The Experiment at the end of Chapter 50

Week Nine: For next week Read: Chapters 51-55 Pgs 148-161

Do: Pick any Experiment and try it out for the week

Week Ten: Finish the book

Do: What does moving forward look like to you. Small groups and beyond.

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