

# **LOVE YOUR GOD WITH ALL OUR MIND**

J.P. Moreland

## **LEADER'S GUIDE**

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# INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

LOVE YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR MIND | J.P. MORELAND

*Love Your God With All Your Mind* is a powerful plea by J.P. Moreland to Christians that we would recapture intellectual thought within the Church. He addresses the issue of intellectualism within the Christian community and how deeper thinking leads us to becoming better disciples and evangelists for Christ.

Divided into 10 sessions, it's our goal that every student in your group would read the corresponding chapter for that week's discussion ahead of time. A separate "Participant's Guide" has been provided to you by your coach at Grad Resources. This can be emailed off to your group members and contains highlights from each chapter along with key discussion questions. **Remember to begin each meeting by giving an overview of the chapter, in case others haven't read it. Likewise, overcommunicate the fact that they can still attend, even if they haven't read the chapter.**

This guide is a supplement to what you will send out to your group members. We have outlined every chapter for you, giving you a deeper look at the key content. Use this as an extra source of preparation to help you lead the meeting more effectively.

Included in the back of this guide, you'll find two appendix articles. The first, "Preparing For Your Meeting" is a suggested outline for how to conduct your meeting, along with a guide to formulating effective questions for the discussion. The second article, "Leading an Effective Discussion" offers some tips to breaking the ice and bringing others together for a more enriching time.

If you need any help or advice in leading your group, feel free to call your Grad Resources coach at (972) 867-0188. We would be happy to offer suggestions and clarity. You and your group will both enjoy this powerful book and the discussions that result.

# WEEK ONE

LOVE YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR MIND | J.P. MORELAND

## A SUMMARY

In chapter one, Moreland sets up his case for the rest of the book by arguing that the church has abdicated its intellectual authority and tragically disengaged from honest scholarly pursuits. He demonstrates the historical downslide of Christian intellectualism and its devastating effects on the Church and American culture.

## OPENING QUOTES

*We live in what may be the most anti-intellectual period in the history of Western civilization.... We must have passion – indeed hearts on fire for the things of God. But that passion must resist with intensity the anti-intellectual spirit of the world. – R.C. Sproul*

*We are having a revival of feelings but not of the knowledge of God. The church today is more guided by feelings than by convictions. We value enthusiasm more than informed commitment. – 1980 Gallup Poll on Religion*

*The God of the Jews was to exist in the Word and through the Word, an unprecedented conception requiring the highest order of abstract thinking. – Neil Postman*

## GENERAL OUTLINE & IMPORTANT COMMENTS

### **The Loss of the Christian Mind in American Christianity**

#### 1. The emergence of anti-intellectualism.

“...anti-intellectualism was a feature of American revivalism...” – Georga Marsden

What was a problem, however, was the intellectually shallow, theologically illiterate form of Christianity that became a part of the populist Christian religion that emerged.

#### 2. Evangelical withdrawal began.

Around the turn of the nineteenth century, fundamentalists withdrew from the broader intellectual culture and from the war with liberals that emerged in most mainline denominations at the time. Fundamentalists started their own Bible institutes and concentrated their efforts on lay-oriented Bible and prophesy conferences. This withdrawal from the broader, intellectual culture and public discourse contributed to the isolation of the church, the marginalization of Christian ideas from the public arena, and the shallowness and trivialization of Christian living, thought, and activism. In short, the culture became saltless.

If our lives and ministries are expressions of what we actually believe, and if what we believe is off center and yet so pervasive that it is seldom even brought to conscious discussion, much less debated, then this explains why our impact on this world is so paltry compared to our numbers. I cannot overemphasize the fact that this modern understanding of Christianity is neither biblical nor consistent with the bulk of church history.

### **Anti-Intellectualism’s Impact on the Church**

#### 1. A misunderstanding of faith’s relationship to reason.

...faith is now understood as a blind act of will, a decision to believe something that is either independent of reason or that is a simple choice to believe while ignoring the paltry lack of evidence for what is believed.

...biblically, faith is a power or skill to act in accordance with the nature of the kingdom of God, a trust in what we have reason to believe is true.

For many, religion is identified with subjective feelings, sincere motives, personal piety, and blind faith.

## 2. The separation of the secular and the sacred.

There has emerged a secular/sacred separation in our understanding of the Christian life with the result that Christian teaching and practice are privatized and placed in a separate compartment from the public or so-called secular activities of life.

When was the last time your church had Sunday school classes that were divided up by vocations – classes for thinking Christianly as a lawyer, businessman, health care professional, educator, and so forth?

What is important for our children is that they stay pure in college and, perhaps, witness, have a quiet time, and pray regularly. Obviously, these are important. But for a disciple, the purpose of college is not just to get a job. Rather, it is to discover a vocation, to identify a field of study in an through which I can serve Christ as my Lord.

As former president of the United Nations General Assembly, Charles Malik has said, “I must be frank with you: the greatest danger confronting American evangelical Christianity is the danger of anti-intellectualism. The mind in its greatest and deepest reaches is not cared for enough.”

## 3. Weakened world missions.

## 4. Anti-intellectualism has spawned an irrelevant gospel.

Today, we share the gospel primarily as a means of addressing felt needs.

## 5. A loss of boldness in confronting the idea structures in our culture with effective Christian witness.

### **Culture is Secular**

Three of the major centers of influence in our culture – the university, the media, and the government- are largely devoid of serious religious discussion. In fact, it is not unfair to say that university, media, and government leaders are often illiterate about how Christians see the world and why.

### **Secularism is Primarily a View About Knowledge**

We often hear it said that “if your religious beliefs work for you, that’s great, but don’t impose them on others.” However, no one would say that a scientist is imposing anything on anyone when he says that water is H<sub>2</sub>O or that 2+2=4. Nor would these claims be viewed as private opinions whose sole value was their usefulness for those who believe them. Why? Because only science supposedly deals with facts, truth, and reason, but religion and ethics allegedly deal with private, subjective opinions.

What I do reject is the idea that science and science alone can claim to give us knowledge.

As G.K. Chesterton once bemoaned, once people stop believing in God, the problem is not that they will believe nothing; rather, the problem is that they will believe anything.

### **Secular Views of Knowledge are Responsible for Unfortunate Social Trends**

1. In our scientifically oriented culture, traditional understandings of morality and related notions are considered passé.
2. The traditional view is neither scientifically testable nor easily compatible with evolution.
3. Secular ideas have replaced the traditional view.

### **What should I do to live for Christ in this hour of crisis?**

As disciples of Jesus Christ, we must ask how we can become the kind of people we need to bring honor to Christ, to help turn the culture toward Him, and to be lights in the midst of darkness for our families, friends, churches, and communities.

We must rededicate ourselves to being deeply spiritual people of whom it can truly be said that “Christ is formed in you” (Galatians 4:19).

If we are going to be wise, spiritual people prepared to meet the crises of our age, we must be a studying, learning community that values the life of the mind.

# WEEK TWO

LOVE YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR MIND | J.P. MORELAND

## A SUMMARY

In this chapter, Moreland lays out a biblical and historical case against the anti-intellectual mindset pervading the evangelical church today. Throughout his argument, he demonstrates that a desire for knowledge and wisdom is a hallmark trait of the Christian life. He also shows the deep academic heritage of Christian Europe in previous centuries.

## OPENING QUOTES

*The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind... Despite dynamic success at a popular level, modern American evangelicals have failed notably in sustaining serious intellectual life. They have nourished millions of believers in the simple verities of the gospel but have largely abandoned the universities, the arts, and other realms of "high" culture.... The historical situation is... curious. Modern evangelicals are the spiritual descendants of leaders and movements distinguished by probing, creative, fruitful attention to the mind. – Mark Noll*

*Unreasonable and absurd ways of life... are truly an offense to God. – William Law*

*Your great learning is driving you mad. – Festus to the Apostle Paul, Acts 26:24 (NASB)*

## GENERAL OUTLINE & IMPORTANT COMMENTS

Unfortunately, sincerity is not enough for powerful Christian ministry. We must also have an accurate biblical understanding of what we are to be about... According to the Bible, developing a Christian mind is part of the very essence of discipleship unto the Lord Jesus.

By "reason" I mean all our faculties relevant to gaining knowledge and justifying our beliefs about different things.

### **A Biblical Sketch of the Value of Reason**

#### The Nature of the God of the Bible

The Son of God became incarnate as the Logos (Greek: "the word"), which some take to represent and emphasize this reasoned, omniscient aspect of God's character, that is, the divine reason or wisdom that is made manifest and understandable in the God-man Jesus Christ.

His church – *not the university* – is the pillar and support of the truth. (I Timothy 3:15)

He demands of His evangelists that they give rational justification to questioners who ask them why they believe as they do (I Peter 3:15).

Is it any wonder that we Christians started the first universities and have planted schools and colleges everywhere our missionaries have gone? Is it any wonder that science began in Christian Europe because of the

belief that the same rational God who made the human mind also created the world so the mind would be suited to discern the world's rational structure placed there by God? God is certainly not a cultural elitist, and he does not love intellectuals more than anyone else. But it needs to be said in the same breath that ignorance is not a Christian virtue if those virtues mirror the perfection of God's own character.

### How the Bible as Revelation Points Us to a Christian Mind

1. *Revelation is truth...* When we affirm that the Bible is a revelation from God, we do not simply assert that God as a person is known in and through it. We also mean that God has revealed understandable, objectively true propositions.
2. *How does the Holy Spirit help us understand the Bible?...* Unfortunately, many today apparently think that hard intellectual work is not needed to understand God's propositional revelation to us. Instead, they believe that the Holy Spirit will simply make known the meaning of a text if implored to do so. Tragically, this represents a misunderstanding of the Spirit's role in understanding the Scriptures. In my view, the Spirit does not help the believer understand the meaning of Scripture. Rather, He speaks to the believer's soul, convicting, comforting, opening up applications for His truth through His promptings.

When cultists come to my door, I often point out that they take passages out of context. To prove my charge I ask them to state the historical setting, main theme, and basic structure of just *one* of the sixty-six books of the Bible. It would be unfair to expect someone to do this for all the books, but if someone is in the habit of studying Scripture properly and with an eye on context, then over the years that person should have a growing ability to do this. I have never once had a cultist answer this question.

As Gallup poll after Gallup poll has shown, the result of our inaccurate emphasis on the Spirit, along with our intellectual laziness, is that modern Christians are largely illiterate about the content of their own religion and feel inadequate because of it. We need local churches dedicated to the task of training believers to think theologically and biblically.

### Three Important Texts

1. Romans 12:1-2 – this brings the mind to the spiritual stage, front and center!
2. Matthew 22:37-39
3. I Peter 3:15

According to Plato, if you know something, what you know must at least be true and you must believe it.

In Acts 4:13 we read that certain Jewish elders and rulers noted that Peter and John were uneducated and unlearned. Some have taken this to have anti-intellectual implications for Christian life and witness. However, the Jewish leaders did not mean that Peter and John were irrational or intellectually unskilled. Rather, they meant that Peter and John had not undergone formal rabbinic training. There are no implications whatever from this verse about the value of education per se. Moreover, this was said of Peter at the beginning of his ministry. When he wrote his first epistle some thirty years later, he had changed. Many liberals deny that Peter could have written I Peter because it is written in a highly educated, intellectual Greek style unlikely to be within the purview of a simple fisherman. However, it is more likely that Peter took his own advice (see I Peter 3:15) and, from the time of Acts 4:13 to the time he wrote his epistle, devoted himself to intellectual cultivation as a part of his discipleship unto the Lord Jesus.



## Scripture on the Value of Extrabiblical Knowledge

### 1. *The Scriptures show us the value of extrabiblical knowledge of a life of wisdom.*

As Christians have known throughout our history, common sense, logic, and mathematics – along with the arts, humanities, sciences, and other areas of study – contain important truths relevant to life in general and to the development of a careful, life-related Christian worldview. According to the Bible, wisdom comes from studying ants as well as learning Scripture (Proverbs 6)

In fact, it is safe to say that throughout much of church history, Scripture and right reason were considered twin allies to be prized and used by disciples of Jesus.

Repeatedly, Scripture acknowledges the wisdom of cultures outside Israel; for example, Egypt (Isaiah 19:11-13), the Edomites (Jeremiah 49:7), the Phoenicians (Zechariah 9:2), and many, many others.

The wisdom of Solomon is compared to that of the “men of the east” and Egypt in order to show that it surpassed that of people with a longstanding, well-deserved reputation for wisdom (I Kings 4:29-34)

### 2. *Scripture teaches us the value of the natural moral law.*

Indeed, in my own view, the church is to work for a just state, not a Christian state or theocracy. We are not to place the state under Scripture. But if this is true, where is the source of moral guidance for the state to be just and to punish wrongdoers as Romans 13:1-7 teaches? The answer is the natural moral law.

### 3. *Scripture shows the value of being qualified to minister from a position of influence.*

According to various studies, increasing numbers of college freshmen, on the advice of parents, say their primary goal in going to college is to get a good job and ensure a secure financial future for themselves. This parallels a trend in the same students toward valuing a good job more than developing a meaningful philosophy of life.

## Biblical Resistance to the Intellectual Life

### 1. *The distortion of I Corinthians 1-2.*

In I Corinthians 1 and 2, Paul argues against the wisdom of the world and reminds his readers that he did not visit them with persuasive words of wisdom. Some conclude from this that human reasoning and argument are futile, especially when applied to evangelism.

### 2. *The distortion of Colossians 2:8.*

Some take this to be a command to avoid secular studies, especially philosophy. However, upon closer inspection of the structure of the verse, it becomes clear that philosophy in general was not the focus. Rather, it is a certain sort of philosophy – hollow and deceptive philosophy.

3. *The doctrine of depravity doesn't mean reason is irrelevant.*
4. *Distorting the nature of faith as a matter of the heart, not the head.*

...faith is relying on what you have reason to believe is true and trustworthy. Faith involves the readiness to act as if something were so.

5. *A grotesque distortion: Our response to God's way should be ignorance.* Finally, I sometimes hear two claims that express the idea that it is futile to use your reason or to emphasize its importance when it comes to the Christian way: God's ways and thoughts are higher than ours (Isaiah 55:9) and knowledge puffs people up and makes them arrogant (I Corinthians 8:1). It should be clear what is wrong with these claims. The fact that God's thoughts are higher than ours means that we will never be able to fully grasp God's motives, purposes, or providential guidance in the world.

...Paul's statement is not against knowledge per se, but against a certain attitude toward it. The proper response to his warning is *humility*, not ignorance! Second, for every knowledgeable person who is arrogant, there is an unknowledgable person who is defensive and proud as a cover-up for his or her lack of knowledge.

# WEEK THREE

LOVE YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR MIND | J.P. MORELAND

## A SUMMARY

In this chapter, Moreland discusses the nature of the soul and the anatomy of our beliefs and actions. In particular, he demonstrates how the life of the mind is so important to the development of one's soul.

## OPENING QUOTES

*God usually exerts that power in connection with certain prior conditions of the human mind, and it should be ours to create, so far as we can, with the help of God, those favourable conditions for the reception of the gospel. False ideas are the greatest obstacles to the reception of the gospel. We may preach with all the fervor of a reformer and yet succeed only in winning a straggler here and there, if we permit the whole collective thought of a nation or of the world to be controlled by ideas which, be the resistless force of logic, prevent Christianity from being regarded as anything more than a harmless delusion. – J. Gresham Machen*

## GENERAL OUTLINE & IMPORTANT COMMENTS

### **New Testament Transformation and Old Testament Wisdom**

We are so familiar with [Romans 12:1-2] that some of its oddness or peculiarity is lost on us. But to see how truly peculiar this teaching is, think of what Paul could have said but did not. He could have said, “Be transformed by developing close feelings toward God,” or “by exercising your will in obeying biblical commands,” or “by intensifying your desire for the right things,” or “by fellowship and worship,” and so on. ...Yet Paul chose to mention none of them in his most important précis of the spiritual life. (pg. 65)

Anyone who has struggled with bad habits knows that you don't just become transformed by just willing the old habits to go away. This is why preaching that centers too much on exhortation without instruction is ineffective. (pg. 66)

A wise life of virtue and knowledge comes to those who, with humility of heart and reverence for God, work hard at using their minds to study, to seek understanding, to capture truth. (pg. 67)

*The mind is the soul's primary vehicle for making contact with God, and it plays a fundamental role in the process of human maturation and change, including spiritual transformation. In thought, the mind's structure conforms to the order of the object of thought. Since this is so, and since truth dwells in the mind, truth itself is powerful and rationality is valuable as a means of obtaining truth and avoiding error. Therefore, God desires a life of intellectual growth and study for His children. (pg. 67)*

### **The Structure of the Soul**

The Soul and the Body

What Am I?

### What's Inside My Soul?

The soul is a substantial, unified reality that informs its body. The soul is to the body what God is to space – it is fully “present” at each point within the body. (pg. 69)

### The Five States of the Soul

A *sensation* is a state of awareness or sentience, a mode of consciousness, for example, a conscious awareness of sound, color, or pain. (pg. 70)

A *thought* is a mental content that can be expressed in an entire sentence and that only exists while it is being thought. (pg. 70)

A *belief* is a person's view, accepted to varying degrees of strength, and of how things really are. (pg. 70)

A *desire* is a certain felt inclination to do, have, or experience certain things. (pg. 70)

An *act of will* is a volition or choice, an exercise of power, an endeavoring to do a certain thing. (pg. 70)

### The Faculties of the Soul Include the Mind and Spirit

Now, capacities come in hierarchies. There are first-order capacities, second-order capacities to have these first-order capacities, and so on, until ultimate capacities are reached. (pg. 71)

In general, *a faculty is a compartment of the soul that contains a natural family of related capacities.* (pg. 71)

Two additional faculties of the soul are of crucial importance. The *mind* is that faculty of the soul that contains thoughts and beliefs along with the relevant abilities to have such things. It is with my mind that I think, and my mind contains my beliefs. The *spirit* is that faculty of the soul through which the person relates to God. (pg. 72)

Just as a seed grows in maturity, so the new spiritual life implanted in the soul can grow in its capacities. When this happens, the strengthened, maturing spirit can exert an influence on other aspects of the self. Similarly, a problem in a different faculty of the soul may need therapeutic counsel before a spiritual capacity can be developed. (pg. 73)

### **The Mind's Role in Transformation**

#### Beliefs, Behavior, and Character

Beliefs are the rails upon which our lives run. We almost always act according to what we really believe. It doesn't matter much what we say we believe or what we want others to think we believe. When the rubber meets the road, we act out our actual beliefs most of the time. (pg. 73)

#### 1. *The content of a belief.*

Today, people are inclined to think that the sincerity and fervency of one's beliefs are more important than the content. As long as we believe something honestly and strongly, we are told, then that is all that matters. Nothing could be further from the truth. Reality is basically indifferent to how sincerely we believe something. (pg. 74)

#### 2. *The strength of a belief.*

A belief's strength is the degree to which you are convinced the belief is true. As you gain evidence and

support for a belief, its strength grows for you. (pg. 74)

3. *The centrality of a belief.*

The centrality of a belief is the degree of importance the belief plays in your entire set of beliefs, that is, in your worldview. (pg. 74)

4. *How do we change beliefs?*

If I want to change my beliefs about something, I can embark on a course of study in which I choose to think regularly about certain things, read certain pieces of evidence and argument, and try to find problems with evidence raised against the belief in question. More generally, by choosing to undertake a course of study, meditation, and reflection, I can put myself in a position to undergo a change in the content, strength, and centrality of my beliefs. (pg. 75)

5. *How beliefs form the plausibility structure of a culture.*

If a culture reaches the point where Christian claims are not even part of its plausibility structure, fewer and fewer people will be able to entertain the possibility that they might be true. Whatever stragglers do come to faith in such a context would do so on the basis of felt needs alone, and the genuineness of such conversions would be questionable to say the least. This is why apologetics is so crucial to evangelism. It seeks to create a plausibility structure in a person's mind, "favourable conditions" as Machen puts it, so the gospel can be entertained by a person. (pg. 76)

### The Mind's Role in Seeing, Willing, Feeling, and Desiring

1. *How three types of seeing feed our animals.*

First, there is *simple seeing*: having the dog directly present to you in your visual field and noticing the dog. (pg. 77)

Second, there is *seeing as*. Here I see an object as being something or other. I may see the dog as a dog. (pg. 77)

Third, there is *seeing that*. Here one judges with the mind that some perceptual belief is true. (pg. 78)

2. *How a developed mind helps us see.*

In fact, the more you know about extrabiblical matters, the more you will see in the Bible. Why? Because you will see distinctions in the Bible or connections between Scripture and an issue in another area of life that would not be possible without the concepts and categories placed in the mind's structure by gaining the relevant knowledge in those extrabiblical areas of thought. (pg. 79)

If we're honest with ourselves, we have to admit that we get into ruts in our thinking and develop habits of thought that can grow stale after a while. This is where renewing the mind comes in. A life of study can give us a constant source of new categories and beliefs that will lead to fresh new insights and stave off intellectual boredom. Many people become bored with the Bible precisely because their overall intellectual growth is stagnant. They cannot get new insights from Scripture because they bring the

same old categories to Bible study and look to validate their old habits of thought. (pg. 80)

3. *How the mind interact with other parts of the person.*

### The Mind, Truth, and Reality

1. *The intentionality of the mind.*
2. *The internal structure of the mind.*

This is why truth is so powerful. *It allows us to cooperate with reality, whether spiritual or physical, and tap into its power.* (pg. 81)

# WEEK FOUR

LOVE YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR MIND | J.P. MORELAND

## A SUMMARY

In this chapter, Moreland gives practical advice for overcoming intellectual emptiness in one's heart and mind. He encourages his readers to challenge themselves with a variety of literature, even those works which spark disagreement. In all, he underlines the importance of living an intellectually fulfilled life as a means to a more spiritual life.

## OPENING QUOTES

*The empty self is filled up with consumer goods, calories, experiences, politicians, romantic partners, and empathetic therapists... [The empty self] experiences a significant absence of community, tradition, and shared meaning,... a lack of personal conviction and worth, and it embodies the absences as a chronic, undifferentiated emotional hunger. – Philip Cushman*

*Neurosis is always a substitute for legitimate suffering. – Carl Jung*

*In their uncompromising determination to proclaim truth, Christians must avoid the intellectual flabbiness of the larger society. They must rally against the prevailing distrust of reason and the exaltation of the irrational. Emotional self-indulgence and irrationalities have always been the enemies of the gospel, and the apostles warned their followers against them. – Herbert Schlossberg*

## GENERAL OUTLINE & IMPORTANT COMMENTS

Many people today, including many Christians, simply do not read or think deeply at all. And when believers do read, they tend to browse self-help books or other literature that is not intellectually engaging. (pg. 87)

The mind is like a muscle. If it is not exercised regularly or strenuously, it loses some of its capacities and strength. We modern evangelicals often feel small and without influence in the public square. We must recapture our intellectual heritage if we are to present to our brothers and sisters, our children, and our post-Christian culture a version of Christianity rich and deep enough to challenge the dehumanizing structures and habits of thought of a society gone mad. (pg. 87)

### **The Empty Self as a Hobgoblin to the Life of the Mind**

#### Seven Traits of the Empty Self

1. *The empty self is inordinately individualistic.*

A healthy form of individualism is a good thing. Sadly, we have all known people who fail to draw appropriate boundaries and do not separate and individuate from others in a healthy way. Such people do not think or feel for themselves, they are easy to manipulate, and their well-being is far too dependent on what others think of them. A person with a healthy individualism learns to avoid these problems in order *mutually* to depend upon and relate to members of the body of Christ. This sort of

individualism produces strong selves who have the power to practice self-denial to enrich the broader groups (for example, family, church) of which they are a part. (pg. 88-89)

2. *The empty self is infantile.*

The infantile person is controlled by infantile cravings and constantly seeks to be filled up with and made whole by food, entertainment, and consumer goods. Such a person is preoccupied by sex, physical appearance, and body image and tends to live by feelings and experiences. For the infantile personality type, pain, endurance, hard work, and delayed gratification are anathema. Pleasure is all that matters, and it had better be immediate. Boredom is the greatest evil, amusement is the greatest good. (pg. 89)

3. *The empty self is narcissistic.*

Spiritually, the narcissist dethrones God and His purposes in history from the center of religious life and replaces them with his or her own personal fulfillment. (pg. 89)

4. *The empty self is passive.*

The passive individual is a self in search of pleasure and consumer goods provided by others. Such an individual increasingly becomes a shriveled self with less and less ability to be proactive and take control of life. (pg. 90)

Passive people do not have lives of their own, so they must live vicariously through the lives of others, and celebrities become the codependent enablers of a passive lifestyle. (pg. 91)

5. *The empty self is sensate.*

The widespread emergence of the sensate self has caused us to be shallow, small-souled people. (pg. 91)

6. *The empty self has lost the art of developing an interior life.*

7. *The empty self is hurried and busy.*

Because the empty self has a deep emotional emptiness and hunger, and because it has devised inadequate strategies to fill that emptiness, a frenzied pace of life emerges to keep the pain and emptiness suppressed. One must jump from one activity to another and not be exposed to quiet for very long or the emptiness will become apparent. (pg. 92)

## Empty Selves Are a Danger to Society and the Church

### Casting Out the Empty Self

1. *Admit the problem.*

2. *Choose to be different.*

Expose yourself to ideas with which you disagree and let yourself be motivated to excel intellectually by the exposure. Listen to talk shows, read the editorial page, and walk around a local university and look



at bulletin boards or read the student newspaper. Get into discussions with people at work with whom you differ. The point is to spend time around those who do not simply reinforce your own ways of looking at things. (pg. 94-95)

3. *Change your routine.*
4. *Develop patience and endurance.*
5. *Develop a good vocabulary.*
6. *Set some intellectual goals.*

### **Two Thieves of the Christian Mind**

#### **Thief 1: The Odd Bedfellows of Inferiority and Pride**

1. *Inviting these bedfellows to be guests.*

I have spoken in hundreds of churches and have regularly observed Sunday school classes which divide into small groups to reflect on a passage or discuss an idea. Later, when the groups recombine to share their observations with the entire class, group feedback is almost always affirming no matter how inaccurate or poorly reasoned a point is. (pg. 97)

It also keeps adults from learning how to receive criticism for their ideas in the interest of truth and stifles growth in the ability to respond nondefensively. (pg. 97)

If we don't work on this in the safety of the company of our own brothers and sisters, we will come off as small, reactionary, and inarticulate in the public square. (pg. 97)

2. *Asking them to leave.*

#### **Thief 2: Keeping a Sense of Control**

1. *The fear of losing control.*
2. *Commitment to truth and reason.*
3. *Consequences of abandoning a commitment to truth and reason.*

### **Conclusion**

# WEEK FIVE

LOVE YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR MIND | J.P. MORELAND

## A SUMMARY

In this chapter, Moreland deals with the habits and virtues that shape an intellectually-fervent lifestyle. He defines and lists several important virtues, discusses the spiritual discipline of study, and then gives an important lesson in basic logic and thinking skills. **For the purposes of this week's discussion, the guide primarily deals with the first half of the chapter and focuses less on the logic section. However, we encourage you to discuss the section with your group if discussion permits.**

## ASSESSING THE TEXT

***"You cannot learn to use your mind well for Christ's sake by just reading a logic book or taking more adult education courses. You must order your general lifestyle in such a way that a maturing intellect emerges as part of that lifestyle."* (pg. 105)**

Why is it so hard to make Christian intellectualism a personal lifestyle rather than an interest or admired concept?

***"If one came to believe that Christianity or some doctrinal belief were false, then one ought to give up the belief in question. By way of application, we should learn to listen to what our critics say about us even if we don't like the way they express their views."* (pg. 106)**

Do you agree or disagree with Moreland? Why?

Why have so many Christians neglected to hear their opponent's viewpoints in today's "culture war"?

Moreland includes a lengthy list of virtues important to becoming a Christian intellectual. What would you add to the list or take away from it?

***"By way of application, it is important to read books from time to time as a form of spiritual discipline an intellectual exercise, even if the topic of the book does not address one of your immediate, felt needs."* (pg. 112)**

What is the lasting impact of this habit on a person's life?

## CONNECTIONS WITH TODAY'S CULTURE

***"Ought not a Minister to have, First, a good understanding, a clear apprehension, a sound judgment, and a capacity of reasoning with some closeness?"* – John Wesley**

Do you think this accurately describes ministers today? In your opinion, which of these is most often lacking in the repertoire of modern-day clergy?

***“God is not honored when His people use bad arguments for what may actually be correct conclusions.” (pg. 107)***

Where have you seen Christians do this in our culture today? Can you give a specific example?

***“The purpose of intellectual humility, open-mindedness, and so forth is not to create a skeptical mind that never lands on a position about anything, preferring to remain suspended in midair. Rather, the purpose is for you to do anything you can to remove your unhelpful biases and get at the truth in a reasoned way. A proper development of this group of virtues can aid in that quest.” (pg. 109)***

What often keep academics from finally “landing” on a position or belief?

## BRINGING IT HOME

***“A person with a well-developed lawyer-type mind will have a distinctive way of being present in the world. This is also true of a person who is cultivating a careful Christian mind. That person will be present to the world in a distinctively Christian intellectual way.” (pg. 105)***

How are you uniquely present in your world as a result of your area of study? As a result of your faith?

***“To develop a Christian mind skillfully, you must want to be a certain sort of person badly enough that you are willing to pay the price of ordering your lifestyle appropriately.” (pg. 105)***

What habits are you attempting to develop to cultivate your Christian mind?

***“It is unproductive to try to believe something beyond your grounds for believing it and dishonest to act as if you believe something more strongly than you do. Overbelief is not a virtue.” (pg. 107)***

What are some symptoms of overbelief? How can they be lovingly challenged by others in the Church?

***“One must have peace and serenity of mind in order to develop a life of understanding, reflection, and meditation. An anxious, depressed, distracted soul is not conducive to intellectual growth. We Christians trust and hope that truth is good and worth having because we are confident in the God of truth.” (pg. 108)***

What often keeps you from the peace and serenity of mind required for developing a life of study and meditation?

Which of the logical fallacies mentioned tend to annoy you the most? Which of them are you most guilty of?

## TAKE ACTION

In response to this chapter, how can you take action towards becoming a fully Integrated Grad Disciple this week?

As you pray this week, ask for discernment to better understand how you can grow in your Christian faith as a busy graduate student.

# WEEK SIX

LOVE YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR MIND | J.P. MORELAND

## A SUMMARY

In chapter six, Moreland explores the relationship between apologetics and evangelism, highlighting the importance of being able to compassionately persuade others with intellectual arguments.

## OPENING QUOTES

*Western civilization is for the first time in its history in danger of dying. The reason is spiritual. It is losing its life, its soul; that soul was the Christian faith....We do apologetics not to save the church but to save the world. – Peter Kreeft and Ron Tacelli*

*So [the apostle Paul] was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present. – Acts 17:17 (NASB)*

## GENERAL OUTLINE & IMPORTANT COMMENTS

Because of the mindlessness of our culture, people do not persuade others of their views (religious or otherwise) on the basis of argument and reason, but rather, by expressing emotional rhetoric and politically correct buzzwords. Reason has given way to rhetoric, evidence to emotion, substance to slogan, the speech writer to the makeup man, and rational authority... to social power... (pg. 128)

Rhetoric without reason, persuasion without argument is manipulation. (pg. 128)

As British sociologist and theologian Os Guinness has argued, the Devil will allow short-term success in evangelism and church growth if the means used to achieve it ultimately contribute to the marginalization of the church and her message. In this case, the church becomes her own gravedigger. By eschewing the role of reason in evangelism, and substituting in its place an overemphasis on a simple gospel appeal directed at felt needs, short-term gains are to be expected in a culture of empty selves. (pg. 130)

### **Apologetics and Evangelism**

#### Evangelism and Apologetics

So understood, apologetics is a ministry designed to help unbelievers to overcome intellectual obstacles to conversion and believers to remove doubts that hinder spiritual growth. (pg. 131)

#### The General Value of Apologetics

I am not suggesting that the only thing in Scripture relevant to evangelism is rational argument and apologetics. However, I am suggesting that *apologetics is an absolutely essential ingredient to biblical evangelism.* (pg. 132)

If the truth of a message is important, apologetical reasoning will be a crucial part of evangelism because it places the emphasis where it should be – on the truth of the message. (pg. 133)

When religion is handed down among us by hereditary succession, it is not surprising to find youth of sense and spirit beginning to question the truth of the system in which they were brought up. And it is not surprising to see them abandon a position which they are unable to defend. – William Wilberforce (pg. 134-135)

# WEEK SEVEN

LOVE YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR MIND | J.P. MORELAND

## A SUMMARY

In chapter seven, Moreland lays out the intellectual frameworks most hostile towards Christianity and offers tips for refuting each of them. Stories from his personal experiences demonstrate how someone can integrate evangelism and apologetics compassionately and accurately.

## OPENING QUOTES

*The Christian affirmation is... that the Trinitarian structure which can be shown to exist in the mind of a man and in all his works is, in fact, the integral structure of the universe, and corresponds, not be pictorial imagery, but by necessary uniformity of substance, with the nature of God, in whom all that is exists. – Dorothy Sayers, in *The Mind of the Maker**

*To think secularly is to think within a frame of reference bounded by the limits of our life on earth: it is to keep one's calculations rooted in this-worldly criteria. To think Christianly is to accept all things with the mind as related, directly or indirectly, to man's eternal destiny as the redeemed and chosen by God. - Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind**

*It is important to see that apologetics is not an activity reserved for philosophers who also happen to be religious believers. Much that passes as philosophy of religion is really apologetics as practiced by individuals who reject tenets of religious beliefs. I do not say this to be critical of philosophers of religion who may also happen to be atheists. My point is that philosophers who reject the Christian religion do not suddenly become, by virtue of this fact alone, more objective or rational or open-minded than philosophers who are Christians or Jews. – Ronald H. Nash, *Faith and Reason**

## GENERAL OUTLINE & IMPORTANT COMMENTS

### **Answering the Skeptic**

#### What is Skepticism?

For our purposes, let us define the skeptic as someone who does not believe that people have knowledge or rationally justified beliefs. (pg. 138)

If we don't know how we know things, how can we know anything at all or draw limits to human knowledge? But if we don't know some things before we ask ourselves how we can have knowledge in the first place, on what basis will we answer that question? (pg. 139)

The skeptic claims, among other things, that no good solution to the problem exists and, thus, there is no knowledge. (pg. 139)

According to Methodism, one starts the enterprise of knowing with a criterion for what does and does not count as knowledge; that is, we start with an answer to question two and not question one. (pg. 139)

According to particularists, we start by knowing specific, clear items of knowledge: for example, that I had eggs for breakfast this morning; that there is a tree before me or, perhaps, that I seem to see a tree; that  $7 + 5 = 12$ ; that mercy is a virtue; and so on. I can know some things directly and simply without needing criteria for how I know them and without having to know *how* or even *that* I know them. (pg. 140)

### Rebutting the Skeptic

For the skeptic, the burden of proof is on the one who claims to know something. If it is logically possible that one might be mistaken, then knowledge is not present because knowledge requires complete, 100 percent certainty. (pg. 142)

To refute something is to show that it is wrong. The skeptic thinks avoiding error is better than gaining truth and thinks he must be shown wrong before anyone can claim to know anything. (pg. 142)

### One Skeptic's Story

#### **Answering Scientism**

##### Two Forms of Scientism

Scientism is the view that science is the only paradigm of truth and rationality. If something does not square with currently well-established scientific beliefs, if it is not within the domain of things appropriate for scientific investigation, or if it is not amenable to scientific methodology, then it is not true or rational. (pg. 144)

##### What is Wrong with Scientism?

Strong scientism is not itself a proposition of *science*, but a proposition of *philosophy about science* to the effect that only scientific propositions are true and/or rational. In other words, strong scientism is a philosophical claim, *not* a scientific one. (pg. 146)

### The Scientist's Story

#### **Answering Moral Relativism**

##### What is Moral Relativism?

This moral thesis holds that everyone ought to act in accordance with the agent's own society's code... (pg. 149)

Put differently, moral relativism implies that moral propositions are not simply true or false. Rather, the truth values (true or false) of moral principles themselves are relative to the beliefs of a given culture. (pg. 149)

##### Five Objections to Moral Relativism

If normative relativism is true, then it is logically impossible for a society to have a virtuous, moral reformer like Jesus Christ, Gandhi, or Martin Luther King Jr. Why? Moral reformers are members of a society who stand outside that society's code and pronounce a need for reform and change in that code. However, if an act is right if and only if it is in keeping with a given society's code, *then the moral reformer himself is by definition an immoral person*, for his views are at odds with those of his society. (pg. 150-151)

### The Moral Relativist's Dilemma – In Stereo

# WEEK EIGHT

LOVE YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR MIND | J.P. MORELAND

## A SUMMARY

In this chapter, Moreland lays out his thesis' implications on worship and fellowship within the local church. He challenges the reader to think creatively about the meaning of worship and how to more effectively approach him with our praise.

## OPENING QUOTES

*Lord and Savior, true and kind, be the master of my mind; Bless and guide and strengthen still all my powers of thought and will. While I ply the scholar's task, Jesus Christ be near, I ask; Help the memory, clear the brain, knowledge still to seek and gain.* – Bishop H.G.C. Moule – Church of England Bishop

*Take my intellect, and use Every Power as thou shalt choose.* – From the Hymn “Take My Life and Let It Be”

*If there is a religion in the world which exalts the office of teaching, it is safe to say that it is the religion of Jesus Christ... A religion divorced from earnest and lofty thought has always, down the whole history of the Church, tended to become weak, jejune and unwholesome, while the intellect, deprived of its rights within religion, has sought its satisfaction without, and developed into a godless rationalism.* –James Orr

## GENERAL OUTLINE & IMPORTANT COMMENTS

Note carefully that the California board of education regards religious, that is, Christian, beliefs as personal, private, subjective opinions to be contrasted with the true, public, objectively rational affirmations made by scientists. Where do secular people get this image of Christian doctrine? May I suggest that they get it from watching the Christians they meet, and more specifically, from watching the role that reason and truth play in the evangelical community. (pg. 156)

### **Worship**

#### What is Worship?

The essence of worship is the intentional ascription of worth, service, and reverence to the Lord. Worship can take place in public or private, in individual or corporate ways. In fact, for the integrated believer, in one way or another, everything in life can be understood as an act of worship. In this sense, worship is expressed in one's overall approach to life and in every area of life (Romans 12:1). Worship creates a home for the soul as it learns to rest in God. (pg. 157-158)

#### Worship and the Nature of God

Theologians describe God as a maximally perfect being. This means that God is not merely the greatest, most perfect being who happens to exist. *He is the greatest being that could possibly exist.* (pg. 158)

*God is worthy of the very best efforts we can give Him in offering our respect and service through the cultivation of our total personality, including our minds.* (pg. 159)



## Corporate Worship

### 1. *Insights from John 4:24*

Jesus meant that *the worship that really counts is not based on external conformance to custom.* Instead, it is to be rooted in the inner being; it should be sincere and earnest; and it ought to be in accordance with the true nature of God, His revelation, and His acts. (pg. 160)

*Worship is not under the control of human beings, nor is the form it takes up to their whims. Rather, worship is a response to a God who initiates toward His people, gives them life, and shows Himself active on their behalf.* (pg. 161)

### 2. *The parallel between marriage and worship.*

### 3. *Hymns and intellectual engagement in worship.*

### 4. *Supplication as persuasion.*

## Individual Worship

### 1. *Devotional reading.*

### 2. *Three tips for intellectual reading.*

## Excellence in Our Worship

If Disney can impart this sort of spirit of excellence to its bulb changers, we Christians can afford to do no less when it comes to worshipping the living God. We need to increase our expectations of excellence when it comes to corporate and private worship. And if we do, the proper cultivation of the mind will be a crucial dimension of our excellence in worship. (pg. 169)

We worship God with our minds when we struggle to read something so we can love and serve Him better, when we understand the contents of the hymns we sing, when we active our minds and make them ready to hear before given something to which to respond in the worship service. (pg. 169)

In a way, worship is an aspect of our fellowship with a personal God. So it should come as no surprise that if there is an intellectual component to our fellowship with God, there should be an intellectual dimension to our fellowship with others in the body of Christ. (pg. 169)

## **Fellowship**

### Aristotle on Friendship

According to Aristotle, there are three kinds of friendship: friendship based on usefulness and advantage, those based on pleasure, and those based on goodness and virtue. (pg. 170)

The third type of friendship is quite profound. Here friendships are formed around a common vision of virtue and the good life, and friendship serves to sustain, foster, and strengthen each friend in his or her commitment and progress in a life well lived. (pg. 170)

### Aristotle was Seeking *Koinonia*

*New Testament fellowship is a means for developing commitment to and advancing the spread of the kingdom of God and the gospel of Christ. (pg. 171)*

Fellowship and the Christian Mind

# WEEK NINE

LOVE YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR MIND | J.P. MORELAND

## A SUMMARY

As Moreland begins wrapping up the book, he turns the focus to the integration of faith and vocation. He explains the difference between a career and a vocation, then offers examples and tips for becoming an integrated Christian.

## OPENING QUOTES

*One may justly say that our Public School tradition has actively encouraged an attitude to life which makes a strong distinction between the theoretical and the practical, and which gives to ideas and ideals the status of leisure-time interests not to be taken too seriously and on no account to be related to practical affairs. – Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind**

*What we do when we weed a field is not quite different from what we do when we pray for a good harvest. – C.S. Lewis, *God in the Dock**

## GENERAL OUTLINE & IMPORTANT COMMENTS

### **Vocation and Discipleship**

With God's help, I seek to live as Jesus would if He were me. That is, how would Jesus live if He were a philosophy professor at Biola University married to Hope and father of Ashley and Allison? (pg. 174)

### Implications of the Nature of Discipleship

...the lordship of Christ is holistic. The religious life is not a special compartment in an otherwise secular life... To live Christianity is to allow Jesus Christ to be the Lord of every aspect of my life. There is no room for a secular/sacred separation in the life of Jesus' followers. (pg. 174)

Further, as a disciple of Jesus, I do not have a job, I have a vocation; and if I go to college, I go to find and become excellent in my vocation, not simply to find a job. A job is a means for supporting myself and those for whom I am responsible. For the Christian, a vocation (from the Latin *vocare*, "to call") is an overall calling from God. (pg. 174)

*An extrinsic issue* is one that is part of my general Christian vocation but has nothing specifically to do with my particular career. (pg. 175)

What we desperately need is a renewed commitment to training people about *intrinsic issues: learning to think and live Christianity regarding issues specific to what I do in my career.* (pg. 175-176)

### Developing an Integrated Christian Worldview

### Five Models of Integration

- A. Issues in theology and another discipline may involve two distinct, nonoverlapping areas of investigation. (pg. 177)
- B. The complementary view: Issues in theology and another discipline may involve two different, complementary, noninteracting perspectives about the same reality such that the whole truth is a combination of both perspectives. (pg. 178)
- C. Issues in theology and another discipline may directly interact in such a way that either area of study offers rational support for the other or raises rational difficulties for the other. (pg. 179)
- D. Theology tends to support the presuppositions of another discipline and vice versa. (pg. 180)
- E. Theology fills out and adds details to general principles in another discipline and vice versa, and theology helps one practically apply principles in another discipline and vice versa. (pg. 180)

### **Integration and Vocation**

*The more a field is composed of ideas about the nature of ultimate reality, what and how we know things, moral values and virtues, the nature and origin of human beings, and other issues central to mere Christianity, the more crucial it will be to think carefully about how a Christian should integrate his discipleship unto Jesus with the ideas and practices in that field. (pg. 181)*

#### Five Specific Areas

What are the ethical issues involved in my vocation and how do they relate to my ethical beliefs as a Christian? (pg. 181)

What does my field say about what is and is not real, about what is true and false, and how do I understand that as a Christian? (pg. 182)

What does my field say about the nature and limits of knowledge? (pg. 182)

What methodology for gathering data does my field require before someone is allowed to assert his or her views about something? (pg. 182)

Are there any specific virtues that seem to be especially relevant to your work? (pg. 182)

#### Specific Examples

### **Summary**

# WEEK TEN

LOVE YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR MIND | J.P. MORELAND

## A SUMMARY

As Moreland ends the book, he focuses on the importance of all Christians getting actively involved in ministry work. He also offers an engaging discussion on the importance of churches organizing themselves around this idea.

## OPENING QUOTES

*When faced with a crisis situation, we evangelicals usually do one of two things. We either mount a public crusade, or we retreat into an inner pious sanctum.* – Mark Noll

*Generally speaking, the church does not seem to be doing very well in meeting the need at present. We have spoken earlier about its great expansion in numbers in recent decades. A great body of disciples is emerging in South America and Africa. It may be for them to show the way for humankind as they walk fully in the yoke with Jesus. But they will never do this or even solve the problems of their own peoples, if they take the spiritual attainments of the Western church as the heights of Christian possibility.* – Dallas Willard

*Evan a bad shot is dignified when he accepts a duel.* – G.K. Chesterton

## GENERAL OUTLINE & IMPORTANT COMMENTS

Saint Paul tells us that the Church – not the university, the media or the public schools – is the pillar and support of the truth (I Timothy 3:15). But you would never know it by actually examining our local church practices week by week or by observing the goals and objectives set by many parachurch ministries.

...how is it possible for a person to be an active member of an evangelical church for twenty or thirty years and still know next to nothing about the history and theology of the Christian religion, the methods and tools required for serious Bible study, and the skills and information necessary to preach and defend Christianity in a post-Christian, neopagan culture?

Many of the things we do in the local church are good and should remain a part of our philosophy of ministry. *But no business, movement, or group will survive and flourish if its resistance to relevant and important change is rooted in the idea that we should keep doing something simply because that's the way we've always done it.*

### Refurbishing the Local Church

#### Philosophy of Ministry

1. *No senior pastors:*
2. *What the pastoral staff and elders should be doing:*

Their job description is to equip others for ministry, not to do the ministry themselves and have others come and passively support them.

The senior pastor model tends to centralize ministry around the church building and the pastor himself. Where he is, is where the action is. We bring people to him to evangelize, to counsel, and so forth. On this view, there is little need actually to equip parishioners to develop their own gifts, talents, and ministries because their job is to support *the* minister.

3. *The distinction between forms and functions:*

Practical Suggestions

1. *Sermons:*
2. *The church library:*
3. *Sunday school and study centers:*
4. *Deepening the value of the intellectual life and raising the visibility of Christian intellectuals and intellectual work:*

Graduate students do not simply need the same sort of fellowship as everyone else in the church. They need intellectual support as well.

**Summary**

# PREPARING FOR YOUR MEETING

## A LEADER'S GUIDE

Assuming you have chosen the location and times for your weekly meetings, the next step is developing an agenda. Every meeting of your Fellowship should include three basic elements – fellowship, discussion, and prayer.

### **Fellowship (15 Minutes)**

If your meeting is scheduled for an hour, allow the first 15 minutes to be used for fellowship. As some people may show up late, this allows others the chance to spend time with one another. Relationships will develop and strengthen through this time. It will also create a more comfortable atmosphere before you dive into the main discussion.

### **Discussion (30 Minutes)**

This is where the actual discussion of the material takes place. Ask someone in the group to open the session in prayer, making sure it is someone who you know is comfortable with such a request. Before digging into the current week's material, take some time to summarize last week's discussion and the material this week will cover. At this point, you will ask questions and offer commentary that stimulates lively and active discussion. The idea is to get as many people talking as possible, each of them reflecting the message and application of the text.

### **Prayers (15 Minutes)**

Fifteen minutes prior to the end of the meeting, end the discussion to take prayer requests. Make sure you or someone else on the leadership team is taking notes. In the end, assign someone to pray over the requests, making sure it is someone comfortable with the task. This time will allow the group to bond over the more serious issues facing each of them.

## STEP ONE: READ THE TEXT

The first step in preparing for your discussion involves reading the book or curriculum your Fellowship is studying. It's important to have a strong grasp on the text so you can further explain it to others.

### **Highlight**

As you're reading, get out a highlighter or pen and begin marking down important quotes. Be mindful of the chapter's main idea and themes. For the average chapter, it would be important to have 7-10 highlighted portions in order to write good discussion questions.

You will also be looking for portions of the text that are potentially controversial. Could someone in your group possibly disagree with it? These passages make good discussion items and stimulate critical thinking.

## STEP TWO: CAPTURE THE MAIN IDEA AND IMPORTANT QUOTES

### **Write a Synopsis**

Use the space to the right to write a short synopsis of what you've read. In

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2-3 sentences, describe the author's main point and how it contributes to the themes of the book.

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**Capture Important Quotes**

The conversation should be driven by the text you are reading. In order to do this, you need to capture and distill some of the main quotes that drive the author's arguments. In the space below, write down these quotes. While you may not want to write them word-for-word, it is helpful to take note of page numbers or general ideas from the quote for you reference as you're teaching. As mentioned earlier, it's best to have 7-10 of these.

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### STEP THREE: FORMULATE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Now that you've taken notes on the main ideas and quotes, you can begin formulating questions that will drive the discussion during the meeting. For each of the quotes you captured above, write 1-2 questions.

Questions that generate good discussion should be open-ended. While you eventually want to dig into more personal issues, it's important to start with generalized questions at the beginning. These questions only

serve to kick off the conversation so remember to leave time for multiple answers and don't be afraid of silence. The best questions are ones that focus on personal application. If you're asking something personal, consider being the first to open up as an example for others. The more vulnerable you are, the more vulnerable they'll be with you.

**Examples of Good Conversation Starts**

- Do you agree with this idea or statement? Why or why not?
- How can we relate concept this to others?
- How have you seen this concept play out in your own life? In your church? In our society?
- How do you struggle with this in your own life?

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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Keeping the conversation going is often the difficult part. Just remember to allow room for multiple responses. Offer valid follow-up questions and don't be scared of silence. Often your own responses to the questions will help others feel open to speaking as well. Just be open, honest, and authentic.

# LEADING AN EFFECTIVE DISCUSSION

## A LEADER'S GUIDE

When you are standing in a burning building and you have only a matter of seconds to get across your message and you REALLY want to be heard and heeded, you pick your words carefully (like FIRE! Evacuate the building). That is how I feel sometimes when leading a small group Bible Study with graduate students. You are dealing with some restless people with a very limited amount of time on their hands, a desk full of urgent research material awaiting them at their office and yet they have an urgent need that you feel like you can address if you could only use the right communication.

### Barriers

Our culture is sending so many messages in such a variety of screaming styles (don't you just hate pop-ups?) that you wonder how you can compete for a person's attention when you have a biblical principle to share. Yet, I am convinced that for some believers it is a matter of life or death for them to connect to other believers, apply the Word to their lives, integrate their faith and discipline and know how to connect with their secular peers in a deep and meaningful way. Maybe not life or death, but in the grad struggles I've noticed, a hefty dose of community and spiritual intimacy would go a long way in healing some deep hurts. As Larry Crabb states in his book *Connections*, there is a power we release in community: "I envision a community of people who intentionally mingle in settings where these "nutrients" are passed back and forth, where I pour into you the healing resources within me and you pour into me what God has put in you. Like spiritual gifts, these nutrients only nourish our own souls as we give them away for the blessing of others." Unfortunately, due to the independent style of many grad students, there is an avoidance of this very needed remedy: meaningful connections.

So the question becomes, How do we maximize our time during a study, communicating a message and insuring that the connections made are meeting needs? Let me propose a brief formula and a few principles.

### Hook, Book, & Took

A communications student once shared with me that he has a standard outline for preparing messages and lessons. They include a strong opener that grabs attention and focuses the listener on the lesson he is about to hear. Note the opener to this paper: a burning building usually grabs attention. I enjoy having a clear outline that hits a few broad points, a few modifying points and then illustrations that put an emotional connection to the points made. Finally, I always seek a closing illustration or statement that summarizes the key point and plants the idea of application into their minds. However, in a group setting, you want to do most of these things by asking questions and getting the participants to engage in the discussion and arrive at the answers themselves. This creates ownership.

Another way to state this process is: Hook, Book and Took. A hook grabs their attention and points them to the topic. The book is the passage, the excerpt from a lesson, and the series of questions that will help you get your folks to the desired end. The took is the suggested application that you would want taken from the

study.

## Goal Setting

In order to insure that you have a clear direction for each of these elements you should set goals for each lesson answering the questions, What do you want them to know, how do you want them to feel and what do you want them to do? It is important to have limited objectives for each lesson so that your focus is on a single "Big Idea" you want them to learn and a single application that should move them to action. The means of assessing how well people are "catching it" is generally through well designed questions that ask for a person to demonstrate that they truly understand the content. I enjoy asking questions that have conflicting right answers that could provoke some conflict in the wrestling. An example might be, "In the Christian life is it our role to change lives (our own included) or God's?" Colossians 1:29 seems to give a clue when Paul mentions our striving, in His power. Yet most people have not considered how these concepts come together. I often use an agree/disagree test to assess understanding and force folks to wrestle through answers. The goal is to communicate truth that is not simply acquired head knowledge but internalized and applied in a life-changing way.

## Refining Skills

Some studies will stick with you as ones that were on target, lively and moving. Those are good ones to analyze and ask, what did I do right? In some cases it is the chemistry of the group or the great questions that stimulated the discussion. You will improve your abilities over time with practice. I will often make an attempt to recognize the various motivation styles throughout the content: some people are moved by relationships, others by challenges, and some want to have an opportunity for influence. Including a statement to each person/type through the course of the study helps to provide connections with a variety of people. I try to get creative with some memorable word pictures or even skits. Last month I spoke of the trials Joseph suffered (pit, slavery, prison) and stated that there were character qualities that God wanted to produce in his life that could only be hammered into him through trials. However, it is important to note that God is the one holding the hammer, our responsibility to surrender to His work in our lives. I had a friend of mine come into the group and play "I Surrender All" on a trombone. Then I explained that I bought the worthless instrument for \$10 at a garage sale. I had a professional "hammer out" the dents in the slide, and it is a great sounding instrument. Several people came up afterward to say they will never forget that lesson. In reality it will be only the ending that they will remember more than the rest of the content. Always spend ample time on your closer!

I would encourage you to see the group as a means of teaching you more than you teaching them at first. Remember that God's Word does not return void and that His Spirit is the one who imparts truth and creates changes, you are simply His instrument.