



A STUDY GUIDE FOR FRIENDS WHO WOULD LIKE TO IMAGINE GOD'S GOOD FUTURE TOGETHER

Weird Church: Welcome to the Twenty-First Century is available at www.thepilgrimpress.com. We, the authors, have created this study guide as a way of helping you structure fruitful conversations with your friends, your fellow church members, your clergy colleagues and/or those like-minded souls who (like you) are tired of *church-as-it-currently exists* and who are ready for something different. We believe that God's Better Thing is already rising upon the horizon in a host of different configurations!

This guide can be used to structure a series of conversations over several weeks, springing from the book OR it can be used to resource a single extended gathering, such as a retreat. In the latter case, please allow plenty of down time for recreation, worship, good food and spirits! Because this book, and the topics it engages are endless. Have fun!

-Beth Ann Estock and Paul Nixon

Opening statement: The house that we call Christian faith has good bones. But we want to observe that the rugs are worn, and they are starting to pull out from under us and the furniture is toppling. We also want to observe that the floors underneath are gorgeous. This is a moment of great hope, not only for Christians, but also for our species. This house has very good bones, and a bright future!

Module 1: Read Initium, Intro to Primus Motus, and Chapter 1.

Spiral Dynamics

Spiral Dynamics allows us to look at what is happening in our world through a non-anxious lens. It gives us a platform to calmly consider changes in faith practice without a panic that shuts down good thinking. This is important as we look to the future of the church. Instead of being reactive we can become a part of the new creation. As we look more closely at the communities in which we live we can create faith communities that match people's value systems. When we look beyond our current realities we can begin to envision where we might want to be 10 years from now.

Don Beck says that a meme code is a bio-psycho-social-spiritual DNA- type script; a blueprint that spreads throughout a culture, and plays out in all areas of cultural expression and senses of community. It encompasses the following:

- World views
- Thinking Systems
- Behavioral Styles
- Motivations
- Organizing Principles

Time, place, conditions and circumstances awaken these systems. As conditions change so does our place along the spiral. It is interesting to note that this is the first time in history that all the colors of the Spiral are at play in our networked world. We need only look to our political polarities and cultural collisions all over the world. It is important as people of faith to understand this in a way that brings hope and healing instead of more division and distrust.

For our study we will be focusing on the colors of the Spiral that are awakened in our current and future expressions of church. These will include blue, orange, green, yellow and turquoise.

We invite you to try on these different value memes knowing that we can operate out of many of them depending on the context in which we find ourselves. For example at work we might operate out of "orange" while in our families we might find ourselves in "blue".

Questions to ponder:

Where in your country do you see the different value meme's present?

Where do you find your faith community along this color spectrum? Remember that we can be anywhere along the spiral as faithful Christians.

What value system do you operate out of the most?

Bring to mind people that you know in your community who are under 30 years old
– Where would you locate them along the spiral?

Engagement ideas:

Read John 14:6 through the value memes of blue, orange, green, yellow and Turquoise. We invite you to be playful with this exercise as a way to really begin to highlight the differences between each color.

- How would each Value meme interpret this passage?

As we begin to understand the value of the different ways that people interpret scripture we can also begin to see that an orange expression of church looks different from a green expression of church.

- How would each value meme configure church?
- What would worship look like?
- What would discipleship look like?

To read more about Spiral Dynamics download this article.

“The Never Ending Upward Quest” by Jessica Roemischer

http://www.mcs-°@-international.org/downloads/046_spiraldynamics_wie.pdf

Modules 2-7: (45 min each – and they can be combined into 3 90 min sessions also).
--

Module 2: Read Chapter 2

Lectio Divina¹: Read Luke 10:1-12

As you come to the scripture ask the Holy Spirit to help you as you read.

Read this passage slowly 3 times and allow it to have its way with you. Become aware of the place, the people, what is happening, and God's presence and action in the story. Finally listen deeply for the nuggets of wisdom for your life.

¹ Lectio Divina is a traditional [Benedictine](#) practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of [God's Word](#).^[1] It does not treat Scripture as texts to be studied, but as the [Living Word](#).^[2]

First reading: What word or phrase captures your imagination?

Second reading: How does this passage relate to your life? What is stirring in your soul?

Third Reading: What is your response to this passage? Is there any shift God is asking you to make in your life?

Questions to Ponder:

Name a time in your life when you have trusted in that still small voice of wisdom deep within even when it seemed weird or crazy? What happened?
What baggage do you need to let go of in order to live into the future of the church?
What would it look like for you to be a stranger looking for people of peace?
What people of peace have you encountered outside of the church?

Engagement ideas:

Find a public place that will be your mission field. Covenant to go there a few times a week to just sit, watch and listen. Ask God to open you to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

What are the opportunities to encounter people of peace in this place?

What are the needs for healing?

What are the signs of grace?

Where is God's Kingdom manifest?

Come back together as a group and share and your experiences.

Read Luke 10:17-24 and rejoice!

Module 3: Read chapters 3 and 4

Lectio Divina: Read Acts 4:1-22

As you come to the scripture ask the Holy Spirit to help you as you read.

Read this passage slowly 3 times and allow it to have its way with you. Become aware of the place, the people, what is happening, and God's presence and action in the story. Finally listen deeply for the nuggets of wisdom for your life.

First reading: What word or phrase captures your imagination?

Second reading: How does this passage relate to your life?

What is stirring in your soul?

Third Reading: What is your response to this passage?

Is there any shift God is asking you to make in your life?

Questions to Ponder:

What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase, "Christian subversion"?

What is God's preferred future in your neighborhood?
What would the Kingdom of God look like in your community? What would have to change in order to live into this?
What does it mean "to be faithful"?

Engagement Ideas:

1. Mike Breen from 3DM teaches a simple small group practice of sharing *Kairos* moments - when ordinary time seems to stop and eternity shines through in utterly breathtaking and simple ways. This is a key practice of discernment as we follow Jesus and learn to trust in God's subversive good news.

This week pay attention to where God is present in your community.

Where is God speaking to you? Listen with your heart to where God is present and calling you to join in the work of the Kingdom.

Talk about what you are discerning together.

2. Have a one to one conversation with a young adult who does not attend church. Ask them these questions not in an attempt to convert them or invite them to church, but simply in an effort to listen deeply to them. There is nothing more honoring than being listened to.

1. What are you passionate about?
2. What do you like to do?
3. What do you care deeply about?
4. What are your hopes for the future?
5. Where do you feel a sense of belonging?
6. Where/how do you touch deep meaning in your life?
7. How do you connect with the Holy?

Module 4: Read Chapter 5

Lectio Divina: Read Genesis 3

As you come to the scripture ask the Holy Spirit to help you as you read.

Read this passage slowly 3 times and allow it to have its way with you. Become aware of the place, the people, what is happening, and God's presence and action in the story. Finally listen deeply for the nuggets of wisdom for your life.

First reading: What word or phrase captures your imagination?

Second reading: How does this passage relate to your life and the life of the community? What is stirring in your soul?

Third Reading: What is your response to this passage? Is there any shift God is asking you to make in your life?

Questions to ponder:

How does this shift challenge, trouble or puzzle you?
How does this shift encourage and energize you?

Tony Jones writes, “The account of the original sin in Genesis 3 teaches us a lot about the state of human nature, our freedom to know right from wrong, and our proclivity not to trust God. But it does not teach that the sin of Adam and Eve is responsible for the sins of subsequent generations.” Jones goes further to outline three different interpretations of the story of Adam and Eve. The Eastern Orthodox Church teaches that we inherited death from Adam. Western Christians include guilt along with death. Reformed Calvinists see our inheritance as guilt plus total depravity.

It is by grace that you are saved, through faith, not by anything of your own, but by a pure gift from God, and not by anything you have achieved. Nobody can claim the credit. You are God's work of art. --Ephesians 2:8

What would it be like to entertain the Eastern orthodox interpretation that the creation story explains why we are not immortal but does not point to our guilt or total depravity?

How does this interpretation challenge, trouble or puzzle you?
How does this interpretation encourage and energize you?

Cynthia Bourgeault says, “... the primary task of a Christian is not to believe theological premises . . . but to put on the mind of Christ” so that we can become radiant (transfigured) with the light and love of God. She explains the powerful practice of “kenosis” (letting go) as a way to put on the mind of Christ.

What does this have to do with the movement between *fides* (belief) and *fiducia* (trust)?

Where do we lack trust in our lives?

What does trust look like in a community of faith?

Engagement Ideas:

Watch Brene Brown’s TED talk on shame.

<https://youtu.be/psN1DORYYV0>

What is the difference between guilt and shame and why is that important?
Talk about how shame plays out both intentionally and unintentionally in church.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin said, “We are not human beings trying to have a spiritual experience; rather, we are spiritual beings having a human experience.” Everyone has a spiritual life because we are spiritual beings.

Begin to make a list of all of the ordinary ways that we can embrace our spiritual life.

Module 5: Read chapters 6 and 7

Lectio Divina: Read Matthew 9:16-17

As you come to the scripture ask the Holy Spirit to help you as you read. Read this passage slowly 3 times and allow it to have its way with you. Become aware of the place, the people, what is happening, and God's presence and action in the story. Finally listen deeply for the nuggets of wisdom for your life.

First reading: What word or phrase captures your imagination?

Second reading: How does this passage relate to your life and the life of the community? What is stirring in your soul?

Third Reading: What is your response to this passage? Is there any shift God is asking you to make in your life?

Questions to Ponder:

If you and 11 of your friends were told by Jesus to spread the good news of God's love to the ends of the earth, how would you go about doing that in the 21st century? What are the new wine skins of communication? What are the new wine skins of transformation? What does it mean to be an incarnational leader?

Engagement ideas:

1. Share ideas about what it would look like to set a table of grace instead of broadcasting our truth. Who could you collaborate with?
2. Engage in a season of deep listening using one to one conversations. Begin with your small group and then extend out into your church community and beyond. For more information go to <http://www.mtselca.org/assets/OnetoOne%20Conversation.pdf>

Module 6: The first section of Secundus Motus (Intro and Chapters 8-16)

These first chapters in SM have in common simplicity. They are anti-institutional by design and denominations will maintain an awkward relationship with such simple units of community since they are hard to homogenize, hard to control, and very very hard to tax. (45 - 90 min)

Flag the ones that are intriguing in light of your context and focus your discussion around those glimpses.

Questions to ponder:

How do these glimpses challenge, trouble or puzzle you?
How do these glimpses encourage and energize you?
What is that next faithful step your team can take to experiment with one of these ideas?

Module 7: Middle section of Secundus Motus (chapters 17-24)

Each of these glimpses get more complex, requiring larger per capita funding. Gallant Fortress of Defiance ended up in this section because it holds on to yesterday with a vengeance, and thus, often to a more institutionalized form of church than may be normative in the future. (45-90 min)

Flag the ones that are intriguing in light of your context and focus your discussion around those glimpses.

Questions to ponder:

How do these glimpses challenge, trouble or puzzle you?
How do these glimpses encourage and energize you?
What is that next faithful step your team can take to experiment with one of these ideas?

Module 8: Chapters 25-26 and Postremo. (90 min)

Each of the last two examples of Weird Church challenges fundamental assumptions about church.

Moment of Grace challenges the idea that a church has to have a long life or conscious legacy in order to be valid. It turns upside down the notion that all of these brave planters whose projects end in 2-3 years are failures. We simply reject the notion of failure – which is a blue – orange imposition that carries heavy assumptions. When we look at the band of apostles that Jesus led, they were done after three years. The movement carried on with them and through them, but they ceased to meet and function as a church.

The Holocracy is also a total re-think.

Lectio Divina: Read Ephesians 4:1-16

As you come to the scripture ask the Holy Spirit to help you as you read.

Read this passage slowly 3 times and allow it to have its way with you. Become aware of the place, the people, what is happening, and God's presence and action in the story. Finally listen deeply for the nuggets of wisdom for your life.

First reading: What word or phrase captures your imagination?

Second reading: How does this passage relate to your life and the life of the community? What is stirring in your soul?

Third Reading: What is your response to this passage? Is there any shift God is asking you to make in your life?

Questions to Ponder:

What does it look like to equip the saints for the work of the kingdom?
How willing is your community to try something new knowing that it might fail?
What kind of legacy do you want to leave for future generations?

Engagement ideas:

Talk in your group about your next faithful step in living into the 21st century unfolding of church.
How can your team develop practices that encourage innovation as well as support failure?
How can your team pray for and support incarnational leaders that long to do a new thing?
How can your team pray for, support and bless that new thing that longs to spring forth?

In closing watch as a group “The Pale Blue Dot” by Carl Sagan.

<https://youtu.be/kmP4Xzt0rN4>

Questions to ponder:

What is stirring in your soul?
How are you called to take a stand for the world?
Where is God in all of this?
Why church?