

Weavings® Reading Groups *For* One Hour Settings

WEAVINGS Reading Groups are designed to foster the ancient practice of spiritual reading (*lectio divina*). This practice promotes the formation of Christian community and helps group participants gain deeper insight into God's presence and call in their lives. At the center of this small group experience is the commitment to dwell patiently and attentively in a text selected from

Weavings. Participants learn to trust that it is not always necessary to read new material from week to week. It is God,

rather than we ourselves, who is doing the new things that guide us in the way of spiritual growth. And God can do new things through material with which we are already familiar. Indeed, often it is precisely a growing familiarity with a text

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that opens the door to a genuinely fresh word of life. Moreover, dwelling for a time in the same stretch of text offers participants rest and relief from the normal pace of consumption

in our culture. Rest and relief from daily pressures are among the many gifts God offers us through the practice of spiritual reading.



WEAVINGS Reading Group Process

WELCOME AND OPENING PRAYER [5 minutes]

The leader gathers the group, welcomes participants with special attention to newcomers, and sets the tone with a simple opening prayer or prayerful activity (for instance, lighting a candle in the middle of the group followed by a minute of silence).

SPIRITUAL READING [10 minutes]

The leader guides participants into the text. Various approaches will be described below. The actual time spent will depend on which approach the leader chooses (10 minutes for Option Three). This, in turn, will affect the amount of time available for sharing of questions and insights.

SHARING OF QUESTIONS AND INSIGHTS [20 minutes]

The leader invites responses to the reading in the form of one question or one insight from participants. Participants offer these freely (rather than by moving person by person around the group) and not every participant must speak. Participants should have permission to pass if neither a question nor an insight emerged from the reading experience. The leader may choose to record participant responses on flip charts, one for insights and one for questions. Conversation should not begin until all who wish to have offered their question or insight. When participants have offered their responses to the reading, the leader may initiate the conversation in any way that seems most suitable (for instance, invite engagement with a specific insight or question, or ask participants to respond to what they have heard). The leader is also responsible for drawing the conversation to a close, although this does not necessarily mean wrapping up the loose ends or unresolved issues in the conversation. These may well be important continuing themes for group consideration.

LOOKING AHEAD [3 minutes]

If a new reading assignment for the following week is part of the group process (see Option Two below), the leader informs the group of that assignment.

BLESSING OR PRAYER [2 minutes]

The leader, or one of the participants, offers a closing blessing, prayer, or other expression of sending participants into the world in peace.

gather welcome
participate guide
share question
respond offer
speak emerge
choose converse
offer nourish
invite engage
read encounter
ask challenge
learn inform
pray promote
express savor
bless facilitate
expect persevere
listen support
create discover



Participants have an opportunity to
live together in patient expectation,
to persevere together
in listening for God's word....

Group Process Options

OPTION ONE

1 Read one article per month. This option reinforces the simplicity and repetition that characterize spiritual reading. We do not have to read a lot to be richly nourished and challenged in our journey with God and others. Option One is perhaps the most counter-cultural because it asks participants to slow down and savor a relatively small amount of text over an extended period of time. This option promotes an ongoing conversation in which questions or insights from the previous class meetings can be picked up and woven into the conversation of the current meeting. Thus, participants have an opportunity to live together in patient expectation, to persevere together in listening for God's word, and to learn together how to read through the eyes of other brothers and sisters in Christ.

OPTION TWO

2 Read one article each week. If this option is chosen, participants will want to commit to reading the article prayerfully several times during the week prior to the class. Here, as with the other options, the purpose is not to get through the text but to dwell in it, resting in active expectation that God will address us through the words of the author.

OPTION THREE

3 This option requires no reading prior to the class meeting. Instead, the leader selects one or two paragraphs from a *Weavings* article. This format is also especially good for poems or even the text excerpts that appear in the journal's margins. The leader, or members of the group chosen by the leader, reads the article aloud slowly two or even three times, each reading separated by a time of silence (30 seconds).



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It can be helpful to alternate readings between male and female voices. Following the last reading and short silence, the leader invites insights and questions. This option uses a small swatch of text. Nevertheless, no less than the other options it supports a real encounter between author and participants and creates an environment in which participants may discover a living word sounding in head and heart, all without presupposing prior reading as a condition for full participation in the group process.

NOTE: In each of the first three Options, we encourage the leader to devote the final meeting of the Reading Group class to exploration of the question, “What invitation from God has emerged for me through participation in this group?”

OPTION FOUR

4 Develop a one-day spiritual life retreat based on one article. The design of the day could be an expansion of the central elements of the Reading Group process. These elements are described here and in the PDF file named “On Spiritual Reading,” which can be downloaded from the *Weavings* Web site: www.weavings.org.

Questions about whether *Weavings* Reading Groups are right for you? Email us at weavings@gbod.org or call 1.877.899.2780, ext. 7254.

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