

Using *We Make the Road by Walking*:

Learning Circles, congregations, classes, families, intentional communities, and other groups can use this book in a variety of ways. They can use/adapt the liturgical resources in Appendix I along with the conversation guidelines in Appendix II.

**1. As a year-long curriculum:** The book consists of 52 chapters for weekly use, plus additional chapters for key holidays in the Christian calendar.

- A. For a weekly fellowship gathering over a meal
- B. For a weekly worship service
- C. For a weekly class or study group
- D. For an online study group

Groups could read the week's Scriptures and chapter aloud when they gather, or participants could read them before coming to maximize time for interaction. See #5-7 below for additional suggestions.

**2. As a 13-week curriculum:** The learning circle would cover 4-5 chapters per week.

- A. For a weekly fellowship gathering over a meal
- B. For a weekly worship service
- C. For a weekly class or study group
- D. For an online study group

Group members could read the chapters privately before gathering, and then two or three participants could provide an overview of key ideas and their responses. Leaders would select/adapt questions from the Engage section for small group interaction. The Quarterly Queries could be used for one-on-one or small group gatherings outside the weekly gatherings, or they could be combined for a final culminating activity - perhaps a day long retreat or experience in group spiritual direction.

**3. As a 4-session curriculum:** The group would cover a quarter/season's worth of material (about 13 chapters) per gathering.

- A. For a weekly fellowship gathering over a meal
- B. For a weekly worship service
- C. For a weekly class or study group
- D. For an online study group

Group members could read the chapters privately before gathering, and then two or three participants could provide an overview of key ideas and their responses. Leaders would select/adapt questions from the Engage and Queries sections for small group interaction.

**4. As a weekend retreat:**

- A. Friday Night - Part 1: Alive in the Story of Creation
- B. Saturday Morning - Part 2: Alive in the Adventure of Jesus
- C. Saturday Afternoon or Evening - Part 3: Alive in a Global Uprising
- D. Saturday Evening or Sunday Morning - Part 4: Alive in the Spirit of God
- E. Culminating Activity

Group members could read the chapters privately before gathering, and/or two or three participants could provide an overview of key ideas and their responses. Leaders would select questions from the Queries section for small group interaction. The Culminating Activity could be a worship service, a joint art project, or a service project with an action/reflection component.

**5. General suggestions:** My strong recommendation for groups is to keep it super simple and super participatory. Here's how:

A. Have the group seated in a circle or gathered around a table. (If the group is too large, invite 6 or 8 people to the front and they'll model participation for the larger group.)

B. Identify someone to begin reading the first Scripture reading. It's best if they read a paragraph or so of the text (about 3 to 5 verses). It helps to be sure everyone has the same translation - whether NRSV, CEV, or whatever.

C. Then someone continues with the next paragraph, and so on, through the Scripture readings. It's good to keep things moving at a good pace.

D. The same pattern continues for the chapter, with each person reading a paragraph. If people don't want to read aloud, of course they can just pass. If kids are present, I encourage you to include them in the readings and Engage questions.

E. When the chapter is complete, the next person can read the first Engage question, and so on.

The group really runs itself. The leader doesn't need to do any preparation; the hour is self-contained.

**6. Additional observations:**

A. By involving everyone with reading, attention levels stay high.

B. By everyone having a Bible and copy of the book, they can follow along as others read, thus taking in the content both orally and visually.

C. The experience of listening to others read aloud may seem unfamiliar at first, but it quickly becomes natural and very enjoyable.

D. When you move from the chapter to discussion, it's important to let people know that it is perfectly acceptable to express disagreement or discomfort with the readings, which the first Engage question invites people to do. Differences of viewpoint don't need to be resolved - simply respectfully expressed, listened to, and understood. (See #8)

E. If there is a large group, it's easy to break into groups of four. Four people can engage deeply with a chapter in an hour.

F. Engaging with the material over a meal works really well too.

G. If you want to add liturgical elements from Appendix 1, of course you can do so before and after the readings, chapter, and engagement questions.

H. At your first gathering, the leader/host should read the 5 guidelines (Appendix II). It's good to get everyone to verbally agree to assist in following these guidelines (like sitting on an exit row in a plane). The leader/host should promise

to remind the group of the guidelines if problems come up, and review them from time to time.

I. If problems do come up - someone is argumentative or over-participates, for example - remind everyone of the 5 guidelines (Appendix II). Because the approach I'm recommending is so highly participatory, I think groups will get in the groove quickly and problems will be rare.

7. **Scheduling:** If you want to begin using the book now so that you get on schedule for the 2014-2015 year, you would begin as follows:

June 22 - Chapter 43  
June 29 - Chapter 44  
July 6 - Chapter 45  
July 13 - Chapter 46  
July 20 - Chapter 47  
July 27 - Chapter 48  
August 3 - Chapter 49  
August 10 - Chapter 50  
August 17 - Chapter 51  
August 24 - Chapter 52

**To sync up with Advent 2014, you would begin with Chapter 1 on August 31.** If you need to begin on September 7 or 14, you would need to skip a chapter or two, or combine a few, so you'll schedule Chapter 14 on November 30, the beginning of Advent.

Because Easter's date changes each year, in 2015 you'll need to drop one chapter (or combine 2) from Part II. I'd probably recommend combining 22-23, 24-25, and/or 25-26. Jan 4 would coincide with Chapter 19.

Lent and Part III of the book begin on February 22, 2015.

Pentecost and Part IV of the book begin on May 24, 2015.

For long-term planners, in 2015-2016, you'll begin Chapter 1 on August 30, 2015, and you'll need to drop or combine 2 chapter from Part II to coincide with Easter.

*If that sounds confusing, don't worry. Once you get the group going, you'll be surprised how easily things flow, how quickly community begins to happen, how refreshing the whole experience is, and how effectively it can contribute to spiritual formation, reorientation, and activation.*