



WHAT NEXT?  
Life After the  
Apprentice Series



THE  
APPRENTICE  
SERIES

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## Life After the Apprentice Series

Whenever we share such a profound journey with others, we hate to see the journey end. As a result, some groups will begin to grieve and ponder continuing their groups when they approach the end of *The Good and Beautiful Community*. If your group is thinking about options for continuing, here are a few thoughts to consider and a few examples from other groups.

Start by asking, WHY DO I WISH TO CONTINUE? There are many reasons we might wish to keep meeting. The most common reason is that group members have formed profound friendships with each other, and they do not want to see those end. A second common reason is that the material was so dense that they feel it would be beneficial to go through it again. Explore these two possible reasons, and any others, with your group. Finding out what the group is looking for will give you insight into what to do next.

With a general understanding of “why,” you may want to consider if those reasons are healthy for your group and your congregation. It could be unhealthy if the group is trying to cling tightly to each other without considering ways to take this good news into the world. Along these same lines, it could be unhealthy if the group has formed a clique that has elements of exclusivity. This is especially dangerous with Apprentice because it has a unique vocabulary and set of disciplines, so be aware of this risk.

If your group wants to work through the material a second time, will new members be invited to join your group? There are advantages and disadvantages to this. They can keep the group fresh and open, as new people bring new perspectives and new questions. Perhaps even more important, inviting new members forces the original group to reach out and connect with new people. Furthermore, the teachings of Apprentice run deep, and it can be helpful to have people who have gone through the material share how they have been impacted by the teachings and how they are living the material.

The primary disadvantage to adding members is that there is a unique energy when people discover something together for the first time. Those who are

going through the material a second time will not necessarily share in this energy and may unknowingly undermine it. For example, when someone new to the material shares in class, “Wow. I’ve never thought of the Kingdom of God being present—right now!” they are expressing a deep insight that is packed with excitement and energy. If someone from the previous year chimes in and says, “Yeah, I remember I was really blown away by that last year. And since then I keep coming back to that idea,” the repeat student has softened the excitement of discovery just a little.

Based on these considerations, the best solution is to have members “sent out” to form new groups including two to three people from the original group. The sent-out approach is not for everyone, but it does offer some great benefits. When the new group gets formed and starts meeting, the two or three people who have been through the material are less likely to steal the new members’ thunder. This is partly influenced by the size of the group. Ideally, there would be two or three leaders for a group of seven to ten.

It is also important to explore what roles the leaders will have. With two or three leaders to a group, one person might facilitate the group discussion while another serves as the caregiver and the third could gather necessary supplies for each session.

If you travel the sent-out path, it will be important to train the leaders of the new groups. Reviewing the material on how to lead their groups is a good place to start. And, although you have probably heard it a thousand times, it is worth repeating: LEADERS SHOULD NOT NECESSARILY SEE THEMSELVES AS TEACHERS. A teacher has specific knowledge to pass on. But leading an Apprentice group means discovering together the good and beautiful God and the life that flows out from the Kingdom that Jesus proclaimed.

It helps for the leader to come to the material as if they are learning it for the first time. A few things to keep in mind to encourage this attitude: first, while the material is the same, there are certainly some aspects of it that they did not fully absorb the first time. Second, the leader’s life and perspectives have probably shifted slightly since first reading the material. Third, having a

new group of people around will draw out very different insights to the Kingdom of God. What a blessing to be in community! Keeping these thoughts in mind will ensure that all will be well.

SHOULD YOU CONTINUE WITH THE OLD GROUP BUT CARRY OUT A DIFFERENT STUDY? This is always a difficult approach to take. A different study may bring its own particular strengths to the experience, but we are often less enthused by something that does not take us deeper.

SHOULD YOU TAKE A BREAK? While the Gospels don't mention any times when the disciples "took a break from Jesus' teaching," there is wisdom in understanding that we are on a lifelong journey of deepening our relationship with God. It also matches the teaching at the end of *The Good and Beautiful God* that there are periods of growth and periods of solidifying that growth. Perhaps the summer would serve as a chance to solidify what you have learned together and energize you when you begin meeting in the fall.

SHOULD YOU CONTINUE WITH THE OLD GROUP BUT EXPLORE AN ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL? For an example of this model see "A Fellowship of

Apprentices." Keep in mind the "leaven" parable. Jesus tells us that the Kingdom of God is like leaven that is mixed into dough until finally the entire batch is leavened (Matthew 13:33). When it comes to sharing the good news, do not worry as much about size as depth. Focus your energies on helping people experience true inner transformation and union with God rather than getting every person on the planet to participate in this study. We operate out of the good news that the Kingdom is never in trouble, and, in fact, God is already doing far more than we realize. So keep leavening the dough and trust that God will bring about the desired results.

Finally, ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR OWN DESIRES but remain detached from them. It is easy to be drawn into our own agendas. While the right direction to go may not always be clear, we can at least have a hope of doing what God would have us do. Throughout this process, keep inviting God to show you the way. God is faithful in answering this prayer—even though the results may not be success as others define it.