



BECOMING A  
GROUP SPIRITUAL  
DIRECTOR  
Advice for Leading an  
Apprentice Group



THE  
APPRENTICE  
SERIES

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## I PRAYER IS A FIRM FOUNDATION

The Apprentice Series is a major undertaking that requires time and energy. Not everyone is ready for this type of commitment. Spend time praying about the study—whether or not to offer it and how God might work through it to change lives. Leave room to listen for God’s answer in a way that is comfortable for you, such as journal reflection, praying with Scripture, or dialogue with your spiritual companions and mentors. By creating space to listen, you allow God to enter this process and serve as a guiding presence throughout the study.

## 2 LEADER’S RESPONSIBILITIES

The Apprentice Series is well developed and the books are very well written. We have seen the Spirit work through these materials in amazing ways. However, much responsibility lies with the leader to create a space that will allow such transformation to happen. Do not be intimidated by these responsibilities, but do not take them lightly either. Here are a few things to consider.

- a. Before beginning, the leader needs to promote the class and invite individuals to participate. For more details, see the “Complete Timeline for Preparing the Class” on pages 5-7.
- b. Along with participants, you will need to read each chapter and engage in each spiritual practice.
- c. Spend time each week considering your answers to the discussion questions; which questions resonate with you and which questions would you like the class to address?
- d. Gather all needed supplies for each session. This could include candles, movies, a TV and DVD player, computer or video projector, and so on.
- e. Prepare the meeting space and be ready to clean up afterwards.
- f. Hold your group in prayer each week. Invite God to work deeply in their lives, and also pray for yourself as their leader to have wisdom, compassion, and patience.

- g. Ask for help. As we hope you have found, the Apprentice website ([www.apprenticeofjesus.org](http://www.apprenticeofjesus.org)) is packed with helpful resources as well as contact information for people who have done this before. We welcome your words and questions.
- h. Order books, or have the participants do that on their own. Either way, order early at [www.apprenticeofjesus.org](http://www.apprenticeofjesus.org) or via our friends at [www.renovare.us](http://www.renovare.us) or from other booksellers.
- i. The leader is responsible for planning three retreats which occur at the beginning, middle, and end of the study. If you are not familiar with planning a retreat, visit with a pastor or church staff member who has experience doing so. If you do not have a pastor to work with, contact a retreat center and visit with their staff about the retreat and your needs.
- j. Keep the overall vision of Apprentice in front of yourself and the group. This vision is described in the document “The Vision of the Apprentice Series” available on the website. It is always energizing to remember that all this work has a purpose—a sacred purpose at that! We can keep ourselves busy doing a lot of things, but few things will lead to the type of heart transformation that God can bring about when people take their relationship with God and each other seriously. As the group leader, you are helping make that happen and it is an awesome experience. Enjoy the ride!

## 3 CLASS SIZE

Ideally, the class size should be between four and twelve people, plus the facilitator. With more than twelve people, conversations will tend to be less personal and more focused on making observations about society, church, and others. Such observations can be helpful, but in smaller groups it is easier for the conversation to move from observational statements to more personal reflection such as, “I tend to seek happiness through material possessions,” or “I’m afraid of God.” When we focus on our own experiences and feelings rather than what society and the Church are doing, we are more open to the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

4  
PRACTICAL COACHING ON  
HOW TO LEAD A GROUP

**W**e arrive with a desire to serve God and our neighbor, but even the most heartfelt desires can be met with disappointment, confusion, and dismay. Gathered below are a few thoughts to assist group leaders in creating meaningful experiences for those who participate, and enjoy the experience as well.

- a. **BE PREPARED.** While the Spirit is free and will move freely through any group, it is still important to be fully engaged in the Apprentice process yourself. Of course, life is unpredictable and this may keep you from always being ready, but generally you want to make it a practice to spend time each week thoroughly reading the chapter and engaging in the practices. It is also wise to occasionally return to previous chapters, supplemental readings, and podcasts (available at [www.apprenticeofjesus.org](http://www.apprenticeofjesus.org)) to help you. Your preparation will help keep the group focused on their true purpose and allow you to do the “deeper” listening necessary.
- b. **KEEP TRACK OF TIME.** You are in charge of beginning and ending your sessions. Groups will tend to run long, and while sometimes it is good to linger with a topic, normally it is better to move on with the session plan.
- c. **ADJUST THE NUMBER OF SESSIONS AS NECESSARY.** Because some topics may be totally new to your group, it may be necessary to spend two weeks on a particular chapter. If this seems necessary and helpful, then feel free to do so. However, if two weeks are given to multiple chapters, the study becomes considerably longer. If you find that the group consistently needs two weeks to process a chapter, then discuss a long-term plan for revising the schedule.
- d. **SEEK HELP.** You are the small group facilitator, not a superhero. Do not be afraid to give opportunities for your group to participate in the ministry of the group itself. Be aware of your strengths and passions, as well as your weaknesses and aspects of leading the group that do not interest you. Invite

individuals to cover areas in which you are not strong. For example, you may want someone to serve as a caring minister to the group, checking in on prayer requests and following up with those who are missing or have particular struggles in their lives. Also, welcome assistance with prayers and discussion questions. Involvement in these areas helps nurture people into future leadership roles.

- e. **PATIENTLY BUILD TRUST.** Groups gradually go through stages of developing trust with one another, and every group is unique. As facilitator, you can help by recognizing how well group members know each other and how much trust they may have developed during previous experiences. For example, if your group is completely new and members don't know each other's names, spend time each week getting to know one another. More suggestions like this are contained in the “Outlines & Schedules” (see page 7).
- f. **DEALING WITH RESISTANCE TO “GOING DEEPER.”** People can only share what they are ready and comfortable sharing. If one person tends to stay on a judgmental or observational level, your questions as a leader can invite them into deeper self-reflection, but they may never go there. This is all right. Give the person a little grace and allow them to be where they are. Hope that through love and support and watching others go deeper, they will talk about whatever the Spirit leads them to discuss in time.
- g. **DO NOT FEAR THE SILENCE.** When you are leading conversations, there can be moments of awkward silence. Do not panic! When we begin to share our deeper spiritual experiences, it is not always easy to put them into words. Give people time to ponder, reflect, and eventually answer. Avoid jumping in with your own answer too quickly.
- h. **BE AWARE OF WHO IS TALKING AND WHO IS NOT.** As you go through the Apprentice Series, certain chapters will speak more to different people, so at any gathering one person may talk more than the others. This is normal and acceptable. However, do be aware of individuals

who dominate the conversation. A few simple statements or questions can usually bring others into the conversation such as:

- ☞ Ask each person to answer a particular question.
  - ☞ Have everyone write down their thoughts regarding an idea or question, and then invite them to discuss what they wrote down.
  - ☞ Invite a minute of silence for everyone to ponder a particular question.
  - ☞ “Thank you for sharing your insights. Are there others who would like to add a comment?”
  - ☞ If necessary, you may need to speak directly to a person about the amount they speak in class. Approach such a conversation compassionately, explaining that there needs to be sufficient time for everyone to discuss their thoughts and feelings stimulated by the material.
- i. **LISTEN WITH YOUR HEART.** It is sometimes tempting to only listen for right answers whether “right” means theologically correct, biblically profound, or good practice. Nevertheless, as this level of sharing is good and appropriate, pay attention to the deeper movements of the Spirit within your group. What emotions are being brought to the surface? What challenges are being brought into our lives through this study? What are we being invited to let go of? Your attention to these types of questions will help you lead the group into the deeper waters of transformation. But one word of warning: the group should not be thrown into the deep end. You, as the leader, may have to swim there yourself and invite them to follow your lead. Their willingness to go deeper will depend upon their level of trust with each other and other unknown factors in their lives. If the group is reluctant to go deeper, but you feel that is what the Spirit is inviting you to do, utilize questions such as:
- ☞ “Will you say more about your feelings on that?”
  - ☞ “How would you describe God’s presence in that moment or experience?”
  - ☞ Spend a few minutes in silence asking the Spirit, “What do you want to show me here?”

☞ “Can you say more about your struggle with that soul-training exercise?” or if the person had a good experience, “Can you tell us what it felt like during your Sabbath?”

- j. **EMOTIONS ARE NOT BAD.** If you lead a group through the entire Apprentice experience, eventually emotions will be exposed. These books are written with real human pain, suffering, struggle, and joy in view. These subjects touch on our deep wounds, and for some people, sharing about these experiences will bring out tears, anger, frustration, and more. As a group facilitator you want to create a safe environment where emotions can be expressed and processed openly. That does not mean the feelings will be resolved, it simply means that when someone starts crying, you tell them it is okay to cry. If someone gets angry, you can affirm their anger. Whatever the emotion is, let the person feel it.
- k. **ENCOURAGE DIALOGUE—LIMIT DEBATE.** Although this material is not highly contentious, there will be times when individuals from the group will disagree with either the author or someone else in the group. This is not bad. In fact it can be a great learning moment. However, it is important for respect and openness to serve as the framework for these conversations. One insightful approach is to see such conversations as a chance for dialogue, not debate. Dialogue accepts the fact that there are differences of opinion and allows those differences to be identified and explored. Debate sees those differences but strives to supplant one position beneath another. Dialogue also implies a willingness to have your perspective deepened and perhaps altered. Debate is about winning over a majority in order to hold more power or to establish that one is right while others are wrong.
- l. **TRUST THE WISDOM OF YOUR GROUP.** It’s easy to worry when someone raises a question you cannot answer. Instead, let others speak up and share from their own experiences. Your job is not to give all the answers, but to draw out the wisdom of the group. Ask open-ended questions that encourage people to share what they know. It takes practice, but we are all capable of these types of questions.

- m. **NOT ALL QUESTIONS CAN BE ANSWERED.** When it comes to suffering, loss, depression, injustice, and so forth, sometimes answers cannot be put into words. While it is true that the group will have a lot of wisdom, some questions just cannot be answered, and some situations cannot be explained. This does not mean you have failed as a leader. In fact, it really means you have succeeded—almost. What you have to do to completely succeed is not fumble through a bunch of words trying to making everything all right. Remember the biblical story of Job and his friends? When they sat in silence they were succeeding, but when they opened their mouths they failed. In the same way we must realize that life is complicated, souls are immense, and words sometimes cannot make everything better. When questions cannot be answered, invite the Spirit to guide you in how to be a loving presence to persons in pain.
- n. **DIRECT PEOPLE TO ADDITIONAL HELP.** It is unusual, but this material could stir a deep issue within a person. It could be a wound from a past relationship with a parent, spouse, or child, or it could be the result of a hurtful action on the part of the church. The small group is a wonderful place to support and care for this person, however it may reach a point where there is not enough time to address the person's needs as well as discussing the material with the rest of your group. When this happens, prayerfully consider meeting with the person individually and looking at additional options to help them in their journey. **IMPORTANT:** This does not mean you ask them to leave the group—these are additional options. These could include meeting with a pastor or spiritual director on a regular basis, finding a support group to work through this issue, or perhaps simply setting aside extra time for conversation around this wound. The person's work outside of class should be seen as a potential blessing for the rest of the group, and the group should continue to pray for the person as well as follow up with the person to see how things are progressing. An example of this would be if someone began to realize they had deep wounds

from their relationship with an alcoholic parent. It might benefit this person greatly to meet with a therapist or a support group to specifically address these wounds.

- o. **CELEBRATE!** All of this talk about emotions and questions might lead you to think that Apprentice is like a weekly downer, but it really isn't. It is often a joyful and amazing journey. Pay attention to the little breakthroughs people have on their faith journeys. As they fall more deeply in love with God, celebrate! As they become more forgiving, compassionate, patient, or playful, celebrate! As Richard Foster explains in *Celebration of Discipline*, celebration produces joy, and joy is the engine that drives the spiritual life. Celebrate by sending notes or e-mails of encouragement. Affirm each other in the midst of the class. And don't be afraid to break bread together—even in the form of brownies—to be reminded that life is a beautiful gift and we are growing to receive it more fully all of the time.

## 5

### COMPLETE TIMELINE FOR PREPARING AND LEADING THE CLASS

The entire Apprentice Series is 34 sessions long plus 3 retreats and Getting Acquainted and Introduction sessions to *The Good and Beautiful Community* study. Because of the length and the necessary time off that most groups take, we recommend beginning the series in the fall with *The Good and Beautiful God*. In January the group can continue with *The Good and Beautiful Life*, which will normally conclude by early May. The summer can either be a time for the group to take a break, or it may choose to meet in a different format. One possible format that works well is described in the document, "A Fellowship of Apprentices: Leading Meaningful Follow-up Sessions," on the [www.apprenticeofjesus.org](http://www.apprenticeofjesus.org) website. Finally, the group could conclude the series by studying *The Good and Beautiful Community* in the fall. Of course, these are only suggestions. The study can be started at any point, but the timeline we have suggested is based on our experiences of working with various groups in numerous settings. The timeline below is based on beginning your group with the

Opening Retreat the weekend after the Labor Day holiday.

a. Organizing details for the class

- i. **MARCH 1:** Six months before you hope to start your group, meet with the leadership of your church and share your idea of leading the group. Give them a copy of *The Good and Beautiful God*, encourage them to look at the website, and think about ways this material could be shared in the life of the congregation.
- ii. **APRIL 1:** Establish the day, time, and location for your class. Confirm the availability of space. Also establish your sign-up deadline or deadline to receive essays if you are doing that. We suggest August 15. Sometimes it is tempting to have people sign up first, and then pick a day and time for the class. Experience has taught us this does not work because people's schedules are too busy and someone will be alienated by the date selection process.
- iii. **APRIL 15:**
  - ☞ File your taxes.
  - ☞ Find a location for your Opening Retreat. For details of what type of space you will need, see "Retreat Outlines" in the Leader Guides. Keep this location in mind as a possibility for the Silent and Closing Retreats.
  - ☞ Complete the dates in the "Apprentice Group Schedule." It will help you get organized and will serve as a handout to help participants plan.
- iv. **MAY, JUNE, AND JULY:** Promote the class within your congregation utilizing your church website, bulletin, newsletter, and worship announcements. Log onto [www.apprenticeofjesus.org](http://www.apprenticeofjesus.org) and visit "Getting Together: Promotional Items for Recruiting an Apprentice Small Group" for a fact sheet, newsletter insert, letter, flyer, and brochure you can personalize and print. There is a four-minute video you can download to describe the Apprentice Series.

☞ As people sign up, remind them of the dates for the Opening Retreat.

- v. **JUNE:** Personally invite a few folks you have prayerfully considered to be part of the class. Let them know why you have invited them and what would be expected of them if they choose to participate.
- vi. **JULY:**
  - ☞ Follow up with those you have invited to the class.
  - ☞ On the second weekend in July, show the four-minute introductory video in your worship service.
  - ☞ On the third weekend in July, share your hopes for the group in your worship service.
- vii. **August 1:** Order or purchase the appropriate number of books, or let the participants know they will need the book before you begin.
- viii. **First Sunday in August:** Give a final word in worship about the class and the number of seats available—remember that class size is limited to twelve. Remind everyone that the sign-up deadline is August 15 or the second Sunday in August. Confirm the space you'll be using for the Opening Retreat.
- ix. **AUGUST 15 OR THE SECOND SUNDAY IN AUGUST:**
  - ☞ Compile the list of those who have signed up for the class.
  - ☞ Select the translation of the Bible that your group will be using when memorizing Colossians 3:1-17. We discourage the use of *The Message* simply because of the length of the passage.
- x. **AUGUST 20:** Begin gathering supplies for the Opening Retreat.
- xi. **LABOR DAY WEEKEND: REST.** You've earned it.
- xii. **WEEKEND AFTER LABOR DAY:** Opening Retreat.

6  
OUTLINES & SCHEDULES  
COMPLETE APPRENTICE SERIES SCHEDULE (EXAMPLE)

Date (week of)	Event	Focus	Length of Time
9/10-11/2010	Opening Retreat	Getting Started	Friday evening to Saturday evening
9/19/2010	Session 1	Chapter 1: Good and Beautiful God	90 minutes
9/26/2010	Session 2	Chapter 2: Good and Beautiful God	90 minutes
10/3/2010	Session 3	Chapter 3: Good and Beautiful God	90 minutes
10/10/2010	Session 4	Chapter 4: Good and Beautiful God	90 minutes
10/17/2010	Session 5	Chapter 5: Good and Beautiful God	90 minutes
10/24/2010	Session 6	Chapter 6: Good and Beautiful God	90 minutes
10/31/2010	Session 7	Chapter 7: Good and Beautiful God	90 minutes
11/7/2010	Session 8	Chapter 8: Good and Beautiful God	90 minutes
11/14/2010	Session 9	Chapter 9: Good and Beautiful God	90 minutes
11/21/2010	Session 10	Celebration of Completing Book I	2 hours
11/28/2010	No class	Thanksgiving	
12/5/2010	Session 11	Watch "The Nativity"	2.5 hours
		Christmas Break	
1/9/2011	Session 12	Chapter 1: Good and Beautiful Life	90 minutes
1/16/2011	Session 13	Chapter 2: Good and Beautiful Life	90 minutes
1/23/2011	Session 14	Chapter 3: Good and Beautiful Life	90 minutes
1/30/2011	Session 15	Chapter 4: Good and Beautiful Life	90 minutes
2/6/2011	Session 16	Chapter 5: Good and Beautiful Life	90 minutes
2/11-12/2011	Silent Retreat	A day without words	Friday evening to Saturday evening
2/13/2011	Session 17	Chapter 6: Good and Beautiful Life	90 minutes
2/20/2011	Session 18	Chapter 7: Good and Beautiful Life	90 minutes
2/27/2011	Session 19	Chapter 8: Good and Beautiful Life	90 minutes
3/6/2011	Session 20	Chapter 9: Good and Beautiful Life	90 minutes
3/13/2011	Session 21	Watch documentary: "Affluenza"	90 minutes
3/20/2011	Session 22	Chapter 10: Good and Beautiful Life	90 minutes
3/27/2011	Session 23	Chapter 11: Good and Beautiful Life	90 minutes
4/3/2011	Session 24	Chapter 12: Good and Beautiful Life	90 minutes
4/8-10/2011	Closing Retreat	Celebrate the Past, Discern the Future	Friday night to Sunday morning
9/11/2011	Session 25	Chapter 1: The Good and Beautiful Community	90 minutes
9/18/2011	Session 26	Chapter 2: The Good and Beautiful Community	90 minutes
9/25/2011	Session 27	Chapter 3: The Good and Beautiful Community	90 minutes
10/2/2011	Session 28	Chapter 4: The Good and Beautiful Community	90 minutes
10/9/2011	Session 29	Chapter 5: The Good and Beautiful Community	90 minutes
10/16/2011	Session 30	Chapter 6: The Good and Beautiful Community	90 minutes
10/23/2011	Session 31	Chapter 7: The Good and Beautiful Community	90 minutes
10/30/2011	Session 32	Chapter 8: The Good and Beautiful Community	90 minutes
11/6/2011	Session 33	Chapter 9: The Good and Beautiful Community	90 minutes
11/13/2011	Session 34	Developing a Group Rule and Celebrating the Completion of the Study	90 minutes

*Please Note: These dates can be changed to fit your particular situation or to reflect different years.*

## WEEKLY SESSION OUTLINE

This outline describes the general schedule to be followed each week for the first two studies, *The Good and Beautiful God* and *The Good and Beautiful Life*. There will be a few exceptions to this format, but overall having this schedule in mind will help make your time the most productive.

### PREPARATORY INFORMATION

#### CHAPTER CHALLENGE

As groups have worked through this material, certain questions have routinely surfaced and certain topics regularly get discussed. With these in mind, we have provided a paragraph or two to address them. Remember, though, that the point of this information is not to solve the problem when it comes up—your job as a leader is not to fix, but simply facilitate. By knowing ahead of time a few questions that might surface, you can be more prepared to ask basic, reflective questions that allow your group to go deeper into the subject.

#### SUPPLIES

Most sessions will require a few basic items as part of the learning experience.

### CLASS SECTION

#### WELCOME

Greetings and any specific announcements for the week.

#### RECITE THE MEMORIZED PASSAGE FOR THE WEEK

An explanation of this soul-training exercise with details and tips is contained in the outline for the Opening Retreat.

#### 5 MINUTES OF SILENCE

#### PRAYER TO END THE SILENCE

This will usually be provided in the early sessions, and less often as the year continues. Feel free to use your own prayers at any time.

#### ENGAGING THE CHAPTER

This section is made up of main points and questions gleaned from the chapter just read. The questions explore thoughts and emotions stirred by the ideas in the chapter.

#### SOUL TRAINING

This is a time for groups of three or four to sit together and discuss the soul-shaping exercise for the week.

#### ENGAGING THE WORD

This segment varies between a Bible study and praying with Scripture. It will usually draw on Scripture that is mentioned in the chapter.

#### BREAK

It is good to take a five-minute break so everyone can stretch their legs and step back for a moment before moving into the second half of the session.

#### EXPERIENCING TRANSFORMATION

In each session, this segment is a chance to connect with the material in a unique way—through hands-on experiences, prayers, music, and videos. The goal of this time is to help the participants gain a different perspective on the material. Sometimes this perspective will come through sensory or emotion-based experiences or a combination of many levels of knowing. For many groups it will be tempting to skip over this part of the small group gathering, but it is very important to let it remain. The experiential piece will lead to deeper transformation—if the group will risk trying it. Best of all, people are usually pleasantly surprised when they try it and find that it wasn't as bad as they feared and, instead, was profound or insightful in a way they had not expected.

#### GO IN PEACE

The conversation each week concludes with a quote or thought from the chapter or a Christian writer to send participants out on a positive note.

#### FOR THE COMING WEEK

This brief note at the end of each session is simple but important. It will mention the focus of the next chapter as well as the soul-training exercise for the coming week. Several of the soul-training exercises require planning early in the week in order to be successful. This closing note will let participants know if that is the case.

The schedule for the third study, *The Good and Beautiful Community*, is simpler. It excludes “Welcome,” “Recite the Memorized Passage for the Week,” and the Break, “5 Minutes of Silence” and “Prayer to End the Silence” are changed to “Opening to God,” and is in a little different order.

## SUGGESTED WEEKLY SCHEDULE FOR PARTICIPANTS

One of the original ideas that inspired the Apprentice Series was that discipleship had been compromised to a point where little or no change was taking place in our lives, and this was leading people to think that Christianity was not capable of changing lives. James Bryan Smith created the Apprentice study with a high expectation for those who would participate. This higher expectation, along with the quality of the material and the work of the Holy Spirit, proved to be the necessary ingredients to transform lives.

The following suggested weekly schedule illustrates the type of commitment needed as you begin this study. Not every week will fit nicely into this pattern, because the soul-shaping exercises change and require different amounts of time.

DAY 1: Read the chapter.

DAY 2: Spend 5-10 minutes in silence as well as 10 minutes memorizing the Scripture for the week. Spend 30 minutes reviewing the chapter and making necessary arrangements for the soul-shaping exercise for the week.

DAY 3: Spend 5-10 minutes in silence. Spend 10 minutes memorizing the Scripture for the week. Engage in the soul-shaping exercise as applicable.

DAY 4: Spend 5-10 minutes in silence. Spend 10 minutes memorizing the Scripture for the week. Engage in the soul-shaping exercise as applicable.

DAY 5: Spend 5-10 minutes in silence. Spend 10 minutes memorizing the Scripture for the week. Engage in the soul-shaping exercise as applicable. Spend 30 minutes reflecting on the soul-shaping exercise and reviewing the chapter for further understanding and insight, and calling the main ideas to mind.

DAY 6: Rest.

DAY 7: Your group will gather to discuss the chapter you read on Day 1.

Each week you are expected to:

- ☞ Read the chapter (early in the week)
- ☞ Answer the reflection questions
- ☞ Carry out the spiritual practice
- ☞ Come to class prepared to share your experiences, thoughts, and questions

## FIRST SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

### MEMORIZE COLOSSIANS 3:1-17 OVER THE NEXT NINE WEEKS

As part of this curriculum, groups are challenged to memorize Colossians 3:1-17. The good news is that you have nine weeks to memorize the entire passage, and you will work through it together as a group.

James Bryan Smith writes, “I am asking you to begin memorizing Colossians 3:1-17. Some of you are going to be alarmed right away, saying, ‘I cannot do this.’ Yes, you can. In your mind you have hundreds of song lyrics, countless lines from movies, and dozens of phone numbers and passwords. You CAN do it.

“I can also attest to the fact that this discipline is one of the most transforming disciplines. Paul said, ‘be transformed by the renewing of your minds’ (Romans 12:2). Memorizing something is powerful because it conforms our mind to truth, and those truths become a part of how we think, and how we think determines how we live. The reason I am encouraging you to memorize such a large amount is because the structure and flow of the words cannot be experienced by memorizing a verse or two here or there. Be encouraged—you can do it. And count on this being a very transforming exercise.”

What difficulties will you face when practicing this exercise?

Smith answers, “It takes time and repetition. You have the capacity to do it, but if you are not used to it, the repetition necessary to do this will sometimes discourage you. If you have ever been in a play or a musical and had to learn lines, you will not find this so hard. But for the rest of us, the sheer redundancy of repeating it, over and over, can become boring.”

Your group leader will have a particular translation of the passage already selected—New International Version, New Revised Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and others. The discipline will involve memorizing two verses each

week. During the weekly session, your group will recite as much as has been memorized up to that point together. For example, during the first class you and your group will recite Colossians 3:1-2. During the fourth session you will recite Colossians 3:1-8.

Why Colossians 3:1-17? Certainly, there are many passages from the Bible that could have been selected. This one has been chosen because it addresses so many of the ideas contained in the Apprentice Series, such as identity, transformation, spiritual practices, putting on the character of Christ, and community.

Here are some helpful suggestions:

- ☞ Memorization is best done clause by clause, so start with the first clause. Repeat that clause over and over until you know it. Then move to the next clause. Repeat the second clause until you

have it memorized, and then add it to the first clause. Repeat clauses one and two until you have them down, then go on to the next clause.

- ☞ Set aside specific times—even just a few minutes—when you will work on memorization.
- ☞ Write the verses on 3”x5” cards so you can carry them with you wherever you go. If you get stuck in line somewhere or at a traffic light, you can pull out the cards and work on a verse.

“These words you memorize will stay with you forever. You can count on them having an impact on the way you see the world. You will find that other parts of the Bible will make more sense because you will have paid attention to the detail of this one passage,” writes James Bryan Smith.