

STUDIES for Small Groups

OUR BEST RECOMMENDATIONS



Among our most frequent requests are questions about small group study and conversation. Sometimes this means bible study or a study on biblical themes; others ask for resources that will help them with specific topics. They all reflect our common need for meaning and purpose, our search for God and God's presence in the chaos of life, and a desire for thoughtful study and meaningful community.

We've worked hard to identify and collect a cross-section of resources that embody the best of our Lutheran heritage together with the riches of the ecumenical community. Making these distinctions is not always clear or simple. We're inundated with choices from denominational publishers and from a barrage of resources being marketed to individuals and churches.

So we've chosen a sampling here of "our best recommendations." Clearly, these reflect a wide range of topics, interests, approaches, and styles. And clearly, they *are* a sampling. We invite your recommendations as well. Always we are looking for resources that bear Christ to the world and challenge us as followers of Christ to see ourselves and the world through the lens of God's overwhelming grace.



Julie K. Ageson
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BOOKS and STUDIES

"God says to you, 'I have a dream. Please help Me to realize it. It is a dream of a world whose ugliness and squalor and poverty, its war and hostility, its greed and harsh competitiveness, its alienation and disharmony are changed into their glorious counterparts...'"

—God Has A Dream



[Grounded in Prayer](#) by Brent Dahlseng (Augsburg Fortress) Provides daily exercises for six weeks to deepen and strengthen congregational and individual prayer. Includes a small group training guide.

[That You May Have Life: A Study of the Gospel of John](#) by Susan Briehl (GIA Publications) This exceptional study of John's gospel follows the readings for Cycle A and is accompanied by a collection of music by Marty Haugen.

Lutheran Voices Series (Augsburg Fortress) Accessible books for study by Lutheran authors who inform, teach, inspire, and renew. Among the titles: *Reclaiming the L Word: Renewing the Church from Its Lutheran Core*; *Gravity and Grace*; *Open the Doors and See All the People*; *Public Church: For the Life of the World*; and *Listen! God is Calling!*



Sing the Faith Series (Augsburg Fortress) Eight studies that explore the music, poetry, and stories associated with five well-loved hymns. Volumes include *Hymns on Prayer*, *Hymns of Grace*, *The Presence of God*, *Hymns of Comfort*, *Spirituals*, *Carols of Christmas*, *Hymns of Community*, and *Hymns of Lent*.

Practicing Our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People by Dorothy Bass (Jossey-Bass) Explores twelve Christian practices that address human needs and form a way of life rooted in community. Study guide included.

The Cup of Our Life by Joyce Rupp (Ave Maria) Six week study and prayer inviting consideration of the cup as a symbol of life, empty and full, broken and flawed, blessed. Daily readings, questions, journaling.

"There should be a warning label on this book: 'Caution! Reading this book could result in the transformation of the Church.'" –Reclaiming the "L" Word from Lutheran Voices



A Spiritual Formation Workbook: Small Group Resources for Nurturing Christian Growth by James Bryan Smith (Renovare) Seven sessions that include readings, prayer, exercises and practices for deepening faith.

Receiving the Day: Christian Practices for Opening the Gift of Time by Dorothy Bass (Jossey-Bass) Drawing wisdom from poets, theologians, and monastics, Bass provides a fresh vision of time and identifies specific practices for ordering the day, the week, the year to enable us to live more wholly. Study guide included.

Food and Faith: Justice, Joy and Daily Bread edited and compiled by Michael Schut (Living the Good News) A collection of voices invite us to explore the meaning of meals and basic issues related to food. Study guide included.

". . . a bold [study] about changing the life of American society, from the inside out, through the 'source action' of prayer." –Where Your Treasure Is: Psalms That Summon You from Self to Community

The Story of Ruth: Twelve Moments in Every Woman's Life by Joan Chittister (Eerdmans) Twelve excerpts from the Book of Ruth highlighting challenges like loss, change, aging, fulfillment. Accompanying video: "There is a Season".



Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope by Joan Chittister (Eerdmans) An account of the way hope grows in us despite struggle, depression, and despair. Accompanying video of same title.

Sunday Dinner by William Willimon (Upper Room) Ten chapters plus study resources for groups wanting to reflect on the meaning of the Lord's Supper and the power of meals.

"...true life faces and experiences...that will rock your preconceptions, get you thinking and talking and help you discover together why grace is more amazing than you've ever dreamed." —What's So Amazing About Grace?



To Dance with God: Family Ritual and Community Celebration by Gertrud Mueller Nelson (Paulist Press) For reflection and conversation about the meaning of ritual and ceremony in family life and in the seasons of the church year.

Where Your Treasure Is: Psalms That Summon You from Self to Community by Eugene Peterson (Eerdmans) Eleven Psalms for small group discussion and prayer calling Christians to reexamine what it means to be the Body of Christ.

God Has a Dream: A Vision of Hope for Our Time by Desmond Tutu (Doubleday) Eight short and profoundly moving reflections about love, forgiveness, humility, generosity and courage.

"How do you experience God? Has anyone asked you that lately? Or ever?" —Talking About God

Praying Our Goodbyes by Joyce Rupp (Ave Maria) Six experiences of loss and change—a job change, a death, financial struggle, illness, the end of a friendship, a mid-life crisis—helping readers recognize and ritualize loss centered in prayer and scripture. Accompanying video: "Spiritual Growth in Tough Times".



Listening for God: Contemporary Literature and the Life of Faith (Augsburg Fortress) now includes four volumes of short stories by well-known writers with accompanying leader guides and video clips.

Amazing Grace: A Vocabulary of Faith by Kathleen Norris (Riverhead) An accessible, compelling approach for discussing Christian "vocabulary."

"Joan Chittister, mystic and prophet, has given us yet another perspective on holding fast to hope. Hope is rooted in the past, she says, but it believes in the future, for God's world is in God's hands. Hope is in the struggle." —Scarred by Struggle, Transformed by Hope

VIDEO and PRINT RESOURCES



The following resources include video segments with printed study guides.

TALKING ABOUT GOD Seven programs that raise important questions about God and provide responses from teachers, pastors, rabbis, theologians: What's Your Experience of God?, How Do You Talk About God?, Who Are You to God?, Where is God in Your Life?, and more.

WHAT'S SO AMAZING ABOUT GRACE? Ten sessions about the power of radical, life-changing grace based on Philip Yancey's book of the same title. Study guide.

"Why would God put a tree in the garden and tell Adam and Eve not to eat its fruit?"—What's God Up To? Bible Stories Through New Eyes



WHAT'S GOD UP TO? BIBLE STORIES THROUGH NEW EYES Six sessions inviting fresh perspectives and thoughtful probing of familiar Bible stories. Study guide.

THE JESUS I NEVER KNEW A journey through the gospels exploring various views of Jesus using print curriculum and video clips from films about Jesus. Based on the book of the same title by Philip Yancey. Leader's Guide, Participant's Guide.

REVELATION: GOD'S DREAM, OUR CHALLENGE A stimulating, challenging six session study illustrating the broad themes in the book of Revelation. Guide included.

EXPLORING THE SACRED IN DEATH AND DYING Listen to "holy moments" at the end of life and learn more about grief, how to talk to a dying person, how to say goodbye, and how to be present to the dying and the grieving. Six sessions. Guide included.

WRESTLING WITH ANGELS Like Jacob, we too wrestle with difficult questions of life: what does God want me to do?, why did this have to happen?, why don't my prayers get answered? Six sessions on guidance, forgiveness, doubt, love, prayer, and why me? Guide included.

"Ceremonies abound whenever a people mark and make an important new transition . . . God invites humankind [as co-creators] in the ongoing process of creation." —To Dance with God



THE SYSTEM BELONGS TO GOD An engaging and timely discussion about "the powers that be"—government, corporations, institutions—and God's claim that even "the system" can be redeemed. Seven sessions. Guide included.

WHEN IT'S HARD TO CHOOSE About values and ethical living, this six session series addresses compassion, respect for difference, responsibility, truth-telling, non-violence, and connectedness. Guide included.

SEARCHING FOR SPIRITUALITY This five part series invites reflection on ten attributes that form a Christian spiritual life: Seeing God in Others, Finding God in Daily Life, Understanding Others as God Understands Us, Falling into the Presence of God, and Receiving Others Kindly. Based on Joan Chittister's [The Illuminated Life: Monastic Wisdom for Seekers of Light](#). Guide included.

FAITH AND REASON Four series of six sessions each inviting conversation around questions like What Can We Expect from Prayer?, Is God Just?, How Did Jesus of Nazareth See Himself? Discussion guide.