



Facilitators for Small Group Study

Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations

Greetings and thanks for your leadership with your small group. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to help you facilitate this new study. We realize some groups are ongoing, and relationships

have already been formed. In other groups we are offering, people will be meeting one another for the first time. Therefore, each group will be different in how it approaches the study of *Five Practices for Fruitful Congregations*. Let God lead you in the best way for your group. For new groups, a few general guidelines follow.

So, what are some HOPEFUL OUTCOMES of this study?

- Everyone would grow in their relationships - with God and one another;
- Everyone will have the opportunity for conversation about the various themes in the book;
- The reading and conversation, with a study guide with questions on each of the *Five Practices*, will be informative, introduce ideas and themes, and help us discern God's direction for Lake Deaton and our individual faith journey;
- Each group will provide feedback (through consensus) on specific questions designated by the Re-Vision Team that will provide them with helpful input from the congregation;
- God will reveal, through study, prayer, and dialogue, God's vision, core values, and strategic goals for Lake Deaton for the next 2-3 years.
- It is great that you are facilitating this session. Remember to pray daily for those who will attend the session that their hearts will be open to connect with God, connect with others and become missional.

Here are some general guidelines before you start the session, especially for new groups:

- Prepare the meeting space (if physically meeting) as well as you can: make it comfortable, good lighting. Have pens, pencils, and extra Bibles in case someone forgets one.
- Welcome everyone warmly as they come – try to learn and address everyone by name quickly. Have name tags in case people do not have one.
- Everyone has a different learning style – some will catch on just reading, others need to discuss it, and others might not get it until they are doing something – keep this in mind as you facilitate the session.
- Encourage everyone to participate and moderate those who tend to talk too much (even yourself) to be mindful of everyone participating in the group.
- End on time – then make an invitation to stay if any have specific questions.

Study Guide - a study guide is provided that includes a summary description of the specific Practice you will be discussing from Schnase's book. Questions are helpful for guiding the group but also especially important to the ReVision Team. The Team wants to receive answers to these questions to learn from our congregation and to facilitate the revisioning planning process.

Do you want individual responses to the questions or a group response? If you need a group response, how can we summarize answers to the questions on behalf of the group?

First, let God's Spirit lead you. Whatever responses you provide the Re-Vision Team will help us to listen to God's voice through our members and friends. EVERYONE'S opinion and perspective should be valued by you as it will be by the Re-Vision Team. Therefore, it would be helpful to receive every individual's questionnaire.

But it is also helpful for us to receive a group response for some questions. As the facilitator, **please keep a GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE** and, when appropriate, answers that represent a group consensus. For example, for some answers, an individual may provide a suggestion and/or comment. It would be helpful to the ReVision Team to know how many in your group agree with that suggestion and/or comment. As facilitators, you can "test" a suggestion/comment by asking others to respond and give their perspective. If most people agree, then it is something the Re-Vision Team needs to hear. On your Group Questionnaire, write the suggestion/comment and give us a number. (E.g., 8 of 10) We don't want to legislate any specific way you must facilitate. We trust you to be led by God's Spirit.

Possible Format for the group study: 1 ½ hours

Welcome others and introduce yourself.

Explain the topic of discussion for the specific gathering. Ask if everyone has a Book and the study questions. This will give you some direction in how to process the session.

Prepare a brief devotional in which you help focus on the topic of the meeting. For example, if the topic is about Risk-Taking Mission & Service, you can prepare a brief devotion that helps the group better understand the topic. We hope most will have read the book but realize that not all will be prepared. End with prayer for God's Spirit to guide the discussion.

Introduce the question for consideration - Display on screen or printed sheet. On ZOOM you can share your screen so participants can see the question.

After you have read the question, let the group know they will have an opportunity to discuss the answer with their smaller group. In ZOOM, you will provide "break-out groups" which divides the participants into smaller groups.

Provide 10 minutes per question. Some will not take that long! The first 2-3 questions were designed to be easier and good discussion starters. Ask participants to keep notes on their questionnaires of what is said so these can be shared with the RE-Vision Team. Be a grace-filled

time keeper! It is important to keep things moving but also care for the need some may have to share longer than has been allowed!

Return to larger group and go to next question.

Conclude session with Prayer of Jabez. You can ask each small group to share that prayer together or share it with the larger group.

Thank persons for their participation and remind them of the opportunity to continue this discussion together and/or with other members and friends of Lake Deaton. Be open to God's leading us into the future!

What do we do with the Questionnaires?

Share with your group members: *Complete the questionnaire for each Practice and bring it to the meeting so you will have it for reference. These are anonymous. When we have completed all Five Practices, there will be a box at the church for you to deposit your questionnaires.* As a facilitator, when you complete the "GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE", please put your name on it so the Re-Vision Team can contact you in case there are any questions.

What is the schedule?

The following dates and themes are for our weekly worship services. Our study and discussion of the sermon topic and book chapter will occur the week following the worship. Example: Following the weekend worship services, April 12 - 17 we will be discussing Being a Fruitful Disciple & Congregation using chapter 1 as our text.

Special note: Session 1 is a general introduction to the study of the book and what it means to be fruitful for Jesus Christ. This will be your introductory session. The purpose of this session is to:

- ✓ provide an orientation to your group about how the study will progress,
- ✓ develop consensus on a commitment to prepare for each study,
- ✓ and begin conversation about what it means as followers of Jesus, and as church called Lake Deaton, to bear fruit.

For the first session, you can distribute the study guide for Chapter 1 in advance or work through it together as a group. All other study guides should be provided in advance so people can prepare accordingly.

April 11 - Responding to the Light – Being a Fruitful Congregation - Chapter 1 April 18 - Responding to the Light - Radical Hospitality - Chapter 2 April 25 - Responding to the Light – Passionate Worship - Chapter 3 May 2 - Responding to the Light – Risk-Taking Mission & Service - Chapter 4 May 9 - Responding to the Light – Intentional Faith Development - Chapter 5 May 16 - Responding to the Light – Extravagant Generosity - Chapters 6 & 7

If you need any assistance, however, please don't hesitate to contact us at revisionteam@lakedeatonumc.com. THANKS. God's blessings on the journey together.



Five Practices of Fruitful Living & Fruitful Congregations

Study Guide

This study guide will assist you in your personal and group study of the book, *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations*. Your answers will also greatly assist the Re-Vision Team as they listen to the congregation for the development of Lake Deaton's Vision, Core Values, and Strategic Goals for the future. After completing the study, please share your answers with the team by:

- Bringing them to church and placing them in the REVISION Box in the narthex.
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A Summary of Fruitful Living from *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* by Robert Schnase

Key Scripture: John 15:1-8

The Vine and the Branches

15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes^[a] so that it will be even more fruitful. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

The fruitful, God-related life, as individuals and as a church, develops with intentional and repeated attention to five essential practices that are critical to our growth in Christ: Radical Hospitality, Passionate Worship, Intentional Faith Development, Risk-Taking Mission and Service, and Extravagant Generosity.

The Five Practices are rooted in Scripture and derived from the clear imperatives of the life of Christ.

The study is based on the premise that by repeating and deepening certain fundamental practices, we cooperate with God in our own growth in Christ and participate with the Holy Spirit in our own spiritual maturation.

Through the Five Practices, we open ourselves to grace and let ourselves be opened by grace. As a result, we are changed; we become new creations in Christ.

Every step of the journey toward Christ is preceded by, made possible by, and sustained by the perfecting grace of God through the Holy Spirit. However, becoming the persons God desire us to become is also a fruit of a persistent, deeply personal, and active quest.

This study will be most successful if the reader, facilitator, and participants agree to...

- Approach the conversation/discussion with honesty and openness;
- Share their personal experiences, recognizing that none of us has the complete picture;
- Focus on practical application that is more like a compass than a map (Helpful direction without a step-by-step plan);
- Engage the material personally, discovering what they can learn about themselves and our Lake Deaton church, their relationship with God, their personal desires, and their resistances in the life of faith;
- And commit to carefully read the corresponding chapter in Five Practices of Faithful Congregations prior to each group session, leaving time to answer the provided questions for reflection.

Here are some questions for your consideration and/or discussion with others.

How has God's grace played a part in the change that has occurred thus far in your Christian journey? _____

John 15:1-8 states that when we "remain (or abide) in Christ and he in us, we will bear much fruit." What part have you played in bringing about this change and cultivating fruitfulness in your life?

How has God used a church in your life to help you grow in your faith? _____

When was a time you discovered that the more fully you participate in a study, the more you get out of it? Are you prepared to begin this study with that same commitment? _____



Radical Hospitality

Study Guide

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A Summary of Radical Hospitality from *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations by Robert Schnase*

Christian hospitality refers to the active desire to invite, welcome, receive, and care for those who are strangers so that they find a spiritual home and discover for themselves the unending richness of life in Christ.

It describes a genuine love for others who are not yet a part of the faith community; an outward focus, a reaching out to those not yet known, a love that motivates church members to openness and adaptability, willingness to change behaviors to accommodate the needs and receive the talents of newcomers. Beyond intention, hospitality practices the gracious love of Christ, respects the dignity of others, and expresses God’s invitation to others, not our own.

Radical means “drastically different from the ordinary practice, outside the normal,” and so it provokes practices that exceed expectations, that go the second mile, that take welcoming the stranger to the max. It means people offering the absolute utmost of themselves, their creativity, their abilities, and their energy to offer the gracious invitation and reception of Christ to others.

However, Radical Hospitality is not merely focused on getting people to come to church. Rather, it focuses with greater intentionality about how we carry hospitality with us into our neighborhoods, work life, and affinity networks. What good is Christian hospitality if it’s something we only practice for an hour on Sunday morning while failing to form relationships with people who live next door?

Here are some questions for your consideration and/or discussion with others.

How did you first become a part of Lake Deaton? _____

Remember the first time you entered Lake Deaton? How were you welcomed? How did you feel? What was helpful and what was confusing to you? _____

What does the word "radical" mean to you when applying to hospitality? _____

How does Lake Deaton invite people? How do you personally invite people? What could be done to help be more effective? _____

How could we make inviting people a *regular* part of how our congregation plans, events, small groups, classes, and worship? _____

Have you invited neighbors or friends to join you at Lake Deaton for worship or some other event? Why or why not? What programs would help you to invite someone to church?

What are the three or four key entry points (groups, activities, events) through which new people are most likely to connect with our congregation? What makes these attractive and inviting? What could you do to make these more inviting? _____

Can you list two or three groups of people in your area that are not currently part of Lake Deaton? What might they need? What could we offer?

Groups	A Need	We could offer:
<i>Ex: Widows/widowers</i>	<i>Support, community</i>	<i>Support groups; men's and/or women's ministries</i>
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Do you use Lake Deaton's website for information about engaging? Why or why not?

On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being highest priority, rate how important Radical Hospitality is to Lake Deaton as one of our Core Values.

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THANK YOU FOR SHARING WITH US!



Passionate Worship

Study Guide

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A Summary of Passionate Worship from *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* by Robert Schnase

Worship describes those times we gather deliberately seeking an encounter with God in Christ. We cultivate our relationship with God and with one another as the people of God. God uses worship to transform lives, heal wounded souls, renew hope, shape decisions, provoke change, inspire compassion, and bind people to one another. Through worship, God actively seeks a relationship with us, pardons sin, restores relationships, and changes lives.

Passionate describes an intense desire, an ardent spirit, strong feelings, and the sense of heightened importance. Passionate speaks of a connection that goes beyond intellectual consent. It connotes eagerness, anticipation, expectancy, deep commitment, and belief.

Passionate Worship means worship that connects people to God, worship that people enter with expectancy, and with the anticipation that God desires to speak to them and connect to them. Whether traditional, blended, or contemporary, Passionate Worship is authentic, connecting, and sustaining.

Passionate worship also extends beyond improving what happens on Sunday morning in the sanctuary. Worship becomes mobile, portable, on the move, going where people live, and work, and play.

Here are some questions for your consideration and/or discussion with others.

What sustains your devotional life during the week? _____

Does Lake Deaton have an environment where you feel comfortable worshipping freely and expressing yourself? _____

Name one element you would add to a worship service at Lake Deaton to make it more inspiring.

What does the word 'passionate' mean to you? Describe a personal worship experience that you might categorize as passionate. What made it passionate? _____

How does Lake Deaton create expectation and anticipation for worship each week? What could we do better to help you prepare? _____

What part of service would you like to see enhanced or diminished? Where do you see peaks of excellence? What changes could boost effectiveness and excellence? _____

What part of worship at Lake Deaton makes you feel the most connected to God and your fellow worshippers? _____

Passionate worship includes elements that reach both the head and the heart. Think through this week's service. What elements or moments in the service ignited your intellect? What did you learn? Have you experienced a moment of "goose bumps" in a worship service? What led to that? _____

On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being highest priority, rate how important Passionate Worship is to Lake Deaton as one of our Core Values.

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Risk-Taking Mission & Service

Study Guide

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A Summary of Risk-Taking Mission & Service from *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* by Robert Schnase

Risk-Taking Mission and Service includes the projects, the efforts, and the work people do to make a positive difference in the lives of others for the purposes of Christ, whether they will ever be part of the community of faith. Some churches have after-school programs for at-risk children, some send work teams across the state or across the world, some offer regular ministries to the incarcerated.

Risk-Taking refers to the service we offer that stretches us out of our comfort zone and has us engaging people and offering ourselves to ministries that we would never have done if not for our desire to follow Christ. Risk-taking steps into great uncertainty, a higher possibility of discomfort, resistance, or sacrifice. It pushes us beyond the circle of relationships that routinely define our church commitments. It changes the lives of the people who are served as well as the lives of those who serve.

Risk-taking mission and service explores relationships more deeply and offers examples of shifting from doing ministry *for* to less patronizing, more relational models of doing ministry *with* those who suffer hardship or injustice.

Here are some questions for your consideration and/or discussion with others.

Have you participated in a service project that impacted you? How did that feel? Did it change you? In what ways might it have been outside your comfort zone? _____

List some mission/outreach at Lake Deaton that make the greatest impact in the community and world for people who may never be part of the congregation? Have you engaged with any of them? _____

Do you consider being involved in acts of mission and service as being a vital part of your Christian journey? Why or why not? _____

When you think of helping others around the world, where do you personally feel called to help? Is there an area of service that you would like to pursue? _____

How are invitations to mission, service, and mission projects work, or reports about mission incorporated into:

- Worship*
- Small groups*
- Men's & Women's Ministries*
- Task Teams (Choirs, committees, etc.)*

Think about Lake Deaton and the way information is shared, and ideas are developed. Where do you most often hear about mission and service projects, their stories, and results?

How does Lake Deaton serve the community around you? Think of as many services to the community that you can recall. How many are face-to-face? Who do they serve?

Ministry
(Soup Kitchen)

Who is Served?
(Homeless, hungry, lonely)

What groups of people can you list who are in your community who, though they may not ever attend or join Lake Deaton, could be helped? _____

What skills do you have that could contribute to risk-taking mission and service? (health services, construction skills, cooking, organization/management, teaching....) _____

On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being highest priority, rate how important Risk-Taking Mission & Service is to Lake Deaton as one of our Core Values.

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Intentional Faith Development

Study Guide

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A Summary of Intentional Faith Development from *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* by Robert Schnase

Intentional Faith Development refers to the purposeful learning in community that helps the followers of Jesus mature in faith, such as Bible studies, Sunday school classes, short-term topical studies, and support groups that apply the faith to life challenges.

Learning in community replicates the way Jesus deliberately taught his disciples. People cannot learn grace, forgiveness, patience, kindness, gentleness, or joy, simply by reading about it in a book. These are aspects of spiritual formation that one learns in community, through intentional engagement. The sanctifying presence of God's spirit works through these practices to help us grow in grace and in the knowledge and love of God.

Intentional faith development includes more focus on experiential learning, mentoring, spiritual formation, and forming relationships in addition to traditional content-based education in Bible studies and Sunday school classes.

Here are some questions for your consideration and/or discussion with others.

What was your first experience in this congregation for learning? Who invited you? _____

Are you in a small group at Lake Deaton? If not have you been invited to join one? Do you know how small groups are formed? _____

Have you participated in any of the Grow Night opportunities at Lake Deaton? Why or why not?

What might influence you to be more intentional in your faith development? _____

Think about the people you have met that are not currently part of any faith community. What might interest them? _____

What kind of learning experiences in the past has grown your faith or interested you the most?

What hobbies or activities in which you currently participate could include intentional faith development? _____

What classes have succeeded and grown? What are some of the reasons for success? (setting, time, place, leadership, the way they invite others)

What has not been successful?

What are some reasons for failure? Could they be improved and tried again?

On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being highest priority, rate how important Intentional Faith Development is to Lake Deaton as one of our Core Values.

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THANK YOU FOR SHARING WITH US!



Extravagant Generosity

Study Guide

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A Summary of Extravagant Generosity from *Five Practices of Fruitful Congregations* by Robert Schnase

Extravagant Generosity describes practices of sharing and giving that exceed all expectations and extend to unexpected measures. It describes lavish sharing, sacrifice, and giving in service to God and neighbor. Every scriptural example of giving is extravagant, and churches that practice Extravagant Generosity teach, preach, and practice the tithe. The focus is on the Christian’s need to give because of the giving nature of God whom we worship.

Extravagant generosity involves helping people learn to love generosity as a way of life not just a way of supporting the church. This shift of energy, focus, and imagination is life-giving. When the church leaves the building to offer ministries that matter, we view ourselves as part of Christ’s mission in a whole new way, as sent into a mission field uniquely prepared by God that uses the talents, gifts, and relationships God has given us.

Here are some questions for your consideration and/or discussion with others.

What comes to mind when you think of the phrase “Extravagant Generosity “?

Extravagant Generosity describes practices of sharing and giving that exceed all expectations and extend to unexpected measures. It describes lavish sharing, sacrifice, and giving in service to God and neighbor. When, if ever, have you witnessed someone displaying 'extravagant generosity'? What was your reaction? _____

What's the most fun you've ever had giving money? What made the experience meaningful, memorable, and delightful? _____

How do you feel about how Lake Deaton talks about "giving"? Too much, not enough or exactly right? _____

In which area do you share your generosity the most: Prayers, Gifts, Presence, Service, or Witness? _____

Do you know the impact of your contributions? _____

How does Lake Deaton show generosity to the community? List as many ways as you can that demonstrates this generosity outside the church wall.

On a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being highest priority, rate how important Extravagant Generosity is to Lake Deaton as one of our Core Values.

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EXTRA!!!

Since this is our last Practice, the Revision Team is interested to know if you have other "Practices" or Core Values you think we should consider in our Re-Visioning process. Please list them here with any comments. _____

THANK YOU FOR SHARING WITH US