

DC201 (Last updated: March 2016)

Suggested Format of Meetings (1.5 hours)

- I. Opening Prayer, Announcements, and Memory Verse (5-10 minutes)
- II. Discussion of Bible Reading (20-35 minutes)
- III. Topic-of-the-week Bible study (40-55 minutes)
- IV. Closing Prayer and Fellowship (5-10 minutes)

New Considerations on Format for DC201-202

-In DC201 and DC202, get much more intentional about small group prayer. If you remain diligent—and continue to improve—in your time management skills, there is more time at the DC201-202 level. And it is more applicable and appropriate given the topics we'll study.

-Mix up your approach to prayer and get creative: sit vs. stand vs. on knees vs. prostrate; as a group vs. small groups vs. pairs.

-Whatever method you use, center it around the week's topic to frame the direction of the day's prayer. For example, after discussing "the tongue", ask for particular requests that connect to prayer or praise with respect to the tongue. Also consider doing this as written prayer as if prayer journaling.

-Have them praying the verse—in or outside the meeting—for the DC'er on their right/left.

-You may also want to have members share a testimony of some sort—maybe one or a few every week. If so, make sure not to have overlap between these testimonies and what they share in DC202 when you'll talk about evangelism.

-We offer optional word studies throughout DC201-202. At minimum, make this known to your group members—or consider requiring them or at least covering them in class.

-Now that you have modeled these things well, you may want to consider delegating the facilitation of the Bible reading to group members—or at the least, if one of the co-leaders is out-of-town. If so, provide instructions and feedback as appropriate.

Reminders on Running your Group

- The biggest challenges are typically time management and getting everyone to participate. *If you're continuing to struggle in one or both of these areas, make **explicit** plans to address the problems, set goals, re-address the issue in-class as useful, and so on.* If you don't deal with it effectively at this point, you'll find it increasingly difficult to do so—and you'll miss out on an opportunity to build leadership confidence and competence in your group members.
- You may want to remind group members about the distinction between Bible reading and Bible study.
- Continue to arrive early for class, start/end your class on time, and encourage them to be on-time as necessary.
- Continue to pray for your group members on a regular basis—in general terms for their class as a whole and in specific terms for individual members.
- Reconsider contact with group members outside of class—whether emails, phone calls, words before/after class, follow up on prayer requests, meeting for meals, etc.
- Have them read and sign the covenant again. Collecting it again is at your discretion; this is intended moreso as spirit-of-the-law!
- Discuss any or all of the above with your class—and encourage and exhort them as appropriate.

Schedules and winter weather

- With inclement weather or other scheduling challenges (e.g., Spring Break or holidays), whether you meet or not is at your discretion. For early morning classes, you can look ahead at the weather predictions and talk with your group members on the phone the night before for marginal cases. Another option would be to say that if group members planned to go to work on time, then you'd hope to see them at DC as well.
- At Southeast, we start our groups in the Fall. We have no break between DC201 and DC202. We have a one-week break—for a “celebration”—between DC202 and DC301. (If you need to make up a week, you can move the celebration to another day/time.) We also have a break in August which allows you to miss a week in the Winter and reduce the length of the Summer break. That said, at the margin, we would encourage you to meet rather than not to meet. Especially with the lighter, topical coverage in DC201-202, missing a week is not as big of a deal.

1. Introduction

- Revisit (very) limited administrative details (as necessary).
- Collect the covenant for the last time. From here, the implied commitment within the covenant assumes that group members will continue with the program through each “semester” and that they will let you know if they plan to discontinue participation in the group.
- This is a great time to reiterate the need for preparation, discipline, relationships, etc.
- Provide a brief review of DC101 (as basic doctrine and Bible tools) and a brief preview of DC301-403.
- Provide an overview of DC201-202: basic life applications, focusing on us & others, with an emphasis on character/integrity (Eph 4:1).
 - 1.) ministered to by preacher/teacher/author, friend/peer, mentor, spouse
 - 2.) ministering to spouse, children, others, and finally, mentorees
 - 3.) witness (lifestyle and verbally; at work and otherwise in the world)
- As a tickler, ask group members to consider using *The Normal Christian Life* by Watchman Nee as a supplement for our reading in the book of Romans in the first week of DC202.
- Spend the bulk of the time on the second half of the Jeremiah study.

2. Biblical Fellowship

-Some weeks, you may want to consider covering the memory verses in different ways—having all of the group members say one of them together, going around the room one word at a time, etc.

-If individuals are struggling with the memory verses, renew your exhortation and effort to help them step it up. What are they doing to prepare?

-Remind them to mark up their articles.

-*Intro to Colossians*: One of Paul's letters, written to deal with an unspecified heresy and to exhort the readers to live the Christian life. The book is described by Dallas Willard as "a model" of a discipleship curriculum. In many ways, it is similar to Ephesians—with which we have structured DC101 & DC201-202.

-*Intro to Luke*: The third of the four gospels we will read (trying to spread them out over DC101 and DC201-202) and the longest book in the NT. (Luke, a Gentile, pens the most words in the NT.) In combination with the book of Acts, it provides a "two-volume" look at the ministry of Christ and the origins of the early church. A few other points: 1.) Of the synoptic gospels, in contrast to Matthew, Luke is more focused on Gentiles and the inclusiveness of the Good News. 2) In contrast to Mark, Luke's account is more complete and relates how Jesus ministered to different individuals, especially those outside the community of faith. 3.) Among other things, Luke emphasizes the parables and the role of prayer. All of this will be more obvious in next week's readings in Luke. Peterson ties together these three themes in a wonderful book, *Tell It Slant*—from an Emily Dickinson poem, that oftentimes, people can't handle the truth "straight-up", so it should be "told slant".

-Encourage your members to actually invest in true fellowship with one or two other group members. And make sure to close with at least five minutes of small group prayer.

-You might combine 1a & 1c, 1b & 1d in your discussion.

-1b: Small talk has its purposes and limits.

-1d: Often, people have little/no vision of what it can be.

-2a: Acts 2:42's list alludes to mind, spirit, body, and soul.

-2b: It's interesting that this is the first recorded sin for the Early Church—and that it is the anti-thesis of the preceding passage in Acts 4.

-Ask them with whom they have this sort of fellowship. If X, Y, and Z happened to you, who would you call for prayer, counsel, support, etc.?

3. The Tongue

-Memory Verse: Note the importance of the last two phrases. “Their” implies the existence of a substantive relationship. In reviewing II Cor 5:21, given this week’s topic, it may be helpful to note the context in verses 16-20.

-Throughout this week’s material—from the memory verse forward—the usual temptation is to focus on sins of commission. It may also be interesting to consider the role of one’s profession in how this lesson is seen.

-1a: Encourage them to know the one with which they struggle more.

-1b: It may be amusing/interesting to note the irony that more talkative people are likely to respond (verbally) to this question—probably pointing to sins of commission!

-1b: An interesting bit of DC trivia: When we were tweaking DC to make it appropriate for women, we asked for edits. There were some examples of word-smithing. But the only question they asked us to add: this week, on gossip (#6c).

-1c: pray; sit on it—for awhile or forever; put it in writing—first (to prepare) or instead; committing to apologize and ask for forgiveness when I’ve stumbled; shut up and work harder to listen and have empathy; watch when hungry/tired; consider/count the costs; remember key nasty/cool moments from those who have influenced you

-2a: Note the role of constructive criticism and confrontation vs. carping and complaining.

-3b: all speak to the incredible impact of “small things”—specifically, the bit as the power of a word to start or stop something; the rudder as the direction change that a word can provide to a charted course; and the spark as the one little word that can start a fire for good or for ill

-5b: In wrestling with this, some people condemn or feel guilty about the use of sarcasm. But C.S. Lewis distinguishes between sarcasm and flippancy (never letting anything get serious). So, sarcasm can be flippant, demeaning, etc.—but it is not inherently so, and thus, cannot be rejected out-of-hand. Note also that God was often sarcastic (e.g., Numbers 11:18-23)!

-a nice article on small talk: <http://www.sovereigngraceministries.org/blogs/cj-mahaney/post/Is-Small-Talk-Worthless.aspx>

-Consider challenging your DC’ers to write one note of encouragement per week for the next X weeks.

4. Unity

- Especially within this study, you may find the term “cultural Christian” useful.
- In general, note the art and importance of finding common ground without compromising essential standards.
- See: the Trinity as a picture of unity.
- 1: You may find it useful to allude to our coverage in legalism in DC401 and denominations in DC403.
- 1d: see: Babel, “political correctness” and tolerance, mobs, etc.
- 2c: What’s unified (or not) in Revelation 7:9?
- 3b: We tend to think of the Gospel and the Christian life in individual terms.
- A terrific article from Christian History: <http://www.ligonier.org/blog/oncontroversy/>

5. Managing Conflict

-If they're not already in the practice of doing so, encourage your group members to share nuggets of the next two weeks of DC with their spouse. Also, give them a heads-up about the optional reading from Lewis' *Mere Christianity* for next week.

-*Intro to I & II Thessalonians*: Two of Paul's earliest letters, written to encourage new converts in the midst of their trials and to deal with their confusions about the 2nd coming of Christ.

-Be careful to anticipate and avoid getting stuck in largely-fruitless discussions of the end-times. Deflect to the 400-level and encourage them to find and report personal applications from the Scripture reading.

-*Intro to Philemon*: Paul's letter to Philemon concerning the plight of his runaway slave—and recent convert, Onesimus. As we saw in DC101, this “postcard” is a fascinating study of Paul's approach to ministry. You may want to directly combine discussion of this book with Borthwick's article. Among other things, it's worth mentioning that, throughout our lives, we will have occasion to play the roles of all three characters.

-Key principles: Commit to repent/apologize (as Onesimus); commit to deal with significant problems—vs fostering resentment (as Philemon and Paul); commit to forgive others and receive apologies well (vs. trivializing them as no big deal).

-Another nice article: www.relevantmagazine.com/life/when-responding-critics-becomes-destructive

-This is a good week to emphasize the leadership development (and expectations) that come along with going through DC. “Managing conflict” well is a crucial characteristic for leaders and a difficult stretch for many people. Sometime during the discussion, you'll want to offer wise counsel/tips—e.g., be as objective as possible and listen to both sides (especially in a marriage dispute).

-A great quote that ties together weeks 2-5 of DC201—and leads nicely into our next two weeks on marriage—from Peter Leithart (not yet in the book): “Unity requires maturity, the willingness to deal with those who differ, the willingness to face conflict without anxiety. Think of marriage. Maturity is nurtured by the difficult work of unity. When we face conflict without fear, we grow, most especially in faith. Think, again, of marriage.”

5. Managing Conflict (cont'd)

-This week's topic is very important, so make sure to leave enough time for it—especially the questions based on Scripture! In particular, be careful to limit the discussion on question #1 and 2. You'll want less discussion of #1 if there was ample talk on Borthwick's article and Philemon. On #2, don't get trapped into long and painful tangents (including interpretations of 7:6). Direct the discussion; make a few points about the topic at hand; and move on.

-2a: The whole of Mt 7 implies the need to exercise “judgment”—i.e., discernment! Interestingly, one of the review verses speaks of the same thing; in the NKJV, Heb 4:12 talks about “discerning”.

-2b: If you can avoid a lengthy discussion, it's interesting to think about the implications of this concept for Christian political pursuits.

-3a: The point of including Lk 7:34: it implies that “sinners” enjoyed the company of Christ, apparently modeling love without condoning sin.

-3b: Christ's sacrifice (and from Acts 15, the Church's willingness to compromise)

-4a: Prayer for self-control and insights; pick your battles and bide your time; separate the issue from the person (or not—depending on the context); active listening (seek first to understand and letting them know they've been heard); be willing to forgive; clean own table first; find common ground and compliment as possible; plan approach in advance; build relationships from which to offer comments; be specific; avoid old news; shift language from “you” to “I”

-5: I Timothy 5:20 in the NASB adds the detail that the sin “continues”.

-6: On Joshua 22, see: chapter 17 of Eric's *Inheriting Our Promised Land* (a book for supplemental reading in DC301).

-7: Mark Twain said that if you're going to swallow two frogs, you should swallow the biggest one first. In other words, if Gideon had the guts to do this—to stand against this god, his dad, and the community—then the rest would be a piece of cake (relatively speaking). Note also that once Gideon takes this stand, his father is finally convinced, converted, and courageous.

-If they haven't been doing it already, they should consider talking about the topical material in the rest of DC201-202 with their spouses.

6. Marriage I

- Next week, note that there are separate memory verses for the women and the men.
- Intro to I, II, III John*: John's epistles dealing with a Gnostic heresy (elevating the role of knowledge and arguing that material things were evil and separate from spiritual things), and providing hospitality with discernment. His primary positive focus is the importance of maintaining a deep and abiding relationship with God.
- Intro to Philippians*: A "thank-you" letter from Paul, commending this church for its financial and prayerful support. Often called the "letter of joy", it underlines many of the features necessary for living the "abundant Christian life"—both individually and in community. A terrific letter with many memorable passages, it is often memorized in its entirety.
- If you have the appendix from Boyd and Eddy's *Across the Spectrum* (from the web), you may find appendix 4 useful.
- Watch for potential overlap with next week's lesson.
- Watch the amount of time you spend on the three articles (5-10 minutes?). Don't sacrifice too much time in the study's focus on the Scriptures.
- Encourage your women to write "biggest fans" letters to their husbands—and husbands to write lavish love letters to their wives—this week.
- 2a: It might be helpful to note that Eph 5:21 stems from 5:18's being filled with the Spirit. See also, from DC301: Larry Crabb's "desires" vs. "demands"—or the Christian concept of "rights" (even if I have them, should I exercise them?)
- 3b: See: David Blankenhorn's story about the woman who said her husband was the head and she was the neck "which turns the head in the direction it should go".
- 3c: omission vs. commission; weak vs. a jerk
- 3e: Adam came first, had greater knowledge, and was held to a higher level of accountability and responsibility. With "the curse", he was afforded future opportunities to lead well vs. his failure in Gen 3 (the "silence of Adam"). Are men built to do this &/or not so good at it and need to work on it?
- 5a: respect the office and the person vs. some of their actions; and consider what you can do better:
 - drop relatively unimportant issues—of character or circumstance; weigh in on the big ones with tact
 - seek responsibility in areas of comparative strength and accept responsibility within the bounds offered; encourage/acknowledge his leadership as possible

6. Marriage I (cont'd)

→ esp. if he's (acting like) a jerk, there are three options: 1.) submission "as to the Lord" and prayer; 2.) fire up in defense of others' rights (as Jesus!); and 3.) esp. if a Christian: direct confrontation by self, with witnesses, and by church as with any standard serious sin (vs. lukewarm; nit-picking/nagging; talking to others instead of him)

-This week or next week, a good article on dealing with household responsibilities:

https://tifwe.org/division-of-labor-at-home/?utm_source=IFWE+Subscriptions&utm_campaign=fedf63a7b1-11_12_2015_Daily_Blog_Email&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_8ffd80135f-fedf63a7b1-9594329&mc_cid=fedf63a7b1&mc_eid=dae15ae600

-This week or next week, you might get a kick out of Eric's testimony on Kurt and Chad's radio show, about his parents' marriage, divorce, and remarriage:

<https://soundcloud.com/solidstepsradio/sets/solid-steps-radio-2-6-16>.

-This week might be a good opportunity for a (pop) quiz on spouse names. Then, next week, you can quiz them again if they need to study a bit!

7. *Marriage II*

-As people move through DC201-202, they sometimes begin to have trouble with getting the work done. (Some of the initial excitement may have worn off.) Make sure to encourage the group &/or particular individuals.

-Memory Verse: The women have an optional memory verse. This week, ask those who know the optional verse to recite theirs first.

Intro to Song of Solomon: Solomon's love poem to his bride—in the form of a dialogue—celebrating love within marriage in its many forms.

-1a: See: Gary Chapman's book on the *(Five) Love Languages*—on the “languages” we use and want used with us.

-2d: You may find it useful to compare coffee mugs and tea cups. Is this question more about the attributes of the “weakness” or the man's responsibility?

-3a: It may be useful to note that sex was God's idea. And if sex is God's idea, does he want married couples to have an excellent, mediocre or poor sex life?

-3c: Adultery is the most obvious answer. But there are interesting applications of this concept to work, children, sports, material possessions, and so on.

-4a: What each needs &/or what each finds difficult to give; love similar to respect but commitment (present based on future) vs. accomplishments (present based on past); emotional vs. logical.

-5a: No adultery but a dry/functional relationship—far less than what God envisioned with marriage (connecting back to 1b)! To what extent is this “normal” and desirable—and to what extent is it something to be guarded against and overcome?

-Toward the end of the study, remind them that we're trying to be “thoroughly equipped” to be disciple-makers. One big application of this is having a vision—and having tools—to make a difference in others' marriages. Challenge your DC'ers to look around and prayerfully consider couples they might be able to help.

8. *Temptation I*

-*Intro to II Corinthians*: Another of Paul's letters to the church at Corinth—meant to explain the reason for his change of plans (which his opponents had used to accuse him), to defend his ministry, to argue against his opponents, to applaud generosity, and to exhort them to avoid carnal living. Lawrence Richards says it “is the most personal and revealing of Paul's letters...and shows us how to minister.”

-If you have the appendix from Boyd and Eddy's *Across the Spectrum* (from Eric or available on-line), you may find appendix 9 useful.

-Watch for potential overlap with next week's lesson.

-In preparation for the book of Romans in two weeks, I encourage you to read—and I would encourage your group members to acquire and read Watchman Nee's *The Normal Christian Life* as an awesome supplement. If you haven't finished this yet, the week on Romans is a good opportunity to hear more testimonies/stories from DC'ers.

-1a: Our sin nature is a platform for the other two.

-1b: Carnal is with the body. Spiritual is with the mind/heart/spirit. Obviously, there is overlap between the two.

-1c: The “seven deadly sins” are lust, laziness (sloth), greed, gluttony, anger, envy (jealousy) and pride. Evagrius Ponticus (345-399 AD) and John Cassian (360-435 AD) produced similar lists of eight “evil thoughts” or “faults”. Eventually, Pope Gregory I (540-604) modified and officially adopted the now-famous list.

-2a: This is an interesting question, but in a large sense, it doesn't matter in terms of how we *should* live our lives. Note also that “falling into sin” is over-rated; typically, there is a slippery slope that leads to “the fall”. Beyond that, there is also a difference between “falling into sin” and scheduling sin on your calendar.

-3: “Sin nature” is often translated as “the flesh”. But “the flesh” (biblically) does not equal the body. Christianity is a religion that values and redeems both body and spirit. Make sure that trashing “the flesh” does not degenerate into trashing “the body”.

-4a: “World” can be taken in the sense of creation, “worldly system”, and all people.

-4b: The world is both mission field and mine field. Are we affecting the world moreso or vice versa?

-5b: Note the serpent's guile vs. the lion/dragon's power. See also: Satan as Beelzebub—the Lord of the Flies—and Rick Atchley's comment that if you put on garbage, you're going to attract the Devil.

8. *Temptation I (cont'd)*

-5c: You're probably more likely to be attacked, but better yet, you're also better able to defend/stand.

-5d: It may be useful to talk about Christians in bondage to sin or the world as POW's—soldiers on the winning side, but little use in the battle against the enemy.

-5f-g: It may be useful to draw an analogy used by Jim Bergen, comparing the devil to Saddam Hussein leaving Kuwait in 1991. (He was going to lose, but wanted to cause as much destruction and chaos as possible.)

-5g: Strategy and counter-strategy; reactive and proactive; defense and offense; defending own and others' vulnerabilities; choose weapons wisely and be well-equipped (sets up next week's lesson).

-Toward the end of the study, remind them that we're trying to be "thoroughly equipped" to be disciple-makers. One big application of this is having a vision—and having tools—to make a difference in others' lives with respect to temptation. Challenge your DC'ers to look around and prayerfully consider couples they might be able to help.

9. Temptation II

-For Romans next week, Watchman Nee's *The Normal Christian Life* is an awesome resource. If you haven't finished this yet, next week is a good opportunity to hear more testimonies/stories from DC'ers.

-*Intro to James*: A letter addressed to Jewish Christians, pointing to the need for a spoken faith that is matched by good works. Its emphasis on works is so strong that it has often been thought to propose a works-based salvation, but instead, the point is that a saving faith will yield fruit. James also provides considerable practical counsel.

-*Intro to I & II Peter*: Peter's epistles touch on a number of themes in the Christian life and are meant to encourage his readers in the face of persecution and heresy.

-*Intro to Jude*: A brief letter on salvation and a warning against false teachers.

-3a: God has promised that He will not tempt us beyond what we can bear. He makes no such promise about how we might tempt ourselves.

-3b and 3c: We can't always flee or have hedges (at least tactfully); we might miss the long-term—to be strong in the Lord, character development, etc.; these may turn into legalisms.

-3d: This is a huge point! Christianity calls us to plant flowers in addition to pulling weeds (and having flowers makes avoiding weeds easier). For David, note the irony that military battle was the safest place for him to be.

-3e: confidence in a battle already won

-4b: past tense (largely justification) vs. present/future tense (sanctification)

-5b: defends vs. "any charge"; grace within justification; evident righteousness as ministry/evangelism

-5c: peace of mind within sanctification; peace thru trials with prayer; readiness to explain the hope we have within evangelism

-5d: On faith as a shield: it can protect self and others; and its thickness and size as a function of obedience, trust, and knowledge of God's word.

-5d: On "flaming arrows": arrows pick at you, can be devastating in certain places, and the flames can spread.

-5f: Note the difference between Christ wielding it in Mt 4 vs. Eve in Gen 3.

-having the weapon, we may avoid a battle and (as with our shield) may be able to defend those close to us (vs. helmet which each individual must have)

-see: fighting with a butter knife; bringing a knife to a gunfight