

CHRISTIAN FORMATION SMALL GROUP SESSIONS
For
THEOLOGY 101
CHRISTIAN FORMATION

by

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Submitted to Dr. Linda Cannell
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
DES 964A Teaching in Higher Education
At Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

Deerfield, Illinois
July, 1999

Christian Formation Group #1
For the week beginning Monday, January 15, 2007

Since this is the first session of your formation group go to the designated area a day before and look carefully at the room, (even if you are familiar with the room). Be alert to the physical arrangement of the room you are assigned. You will want to arrange the room in a circle to facilitate dialogue with enough chairs for each member. Of course, put the room back as it was when the group is done. Pray that God will be at work in you and that the students will be receptive to the work of the Holy Spirit.

The focus of this session is to get acquainted, talk about your mutual hopes and goals for your group, and begin the unique journey that this group provides. It is easier to hit the target if you clearly understand the goals.

This course should enable attentive and diligent students to:

1. Gain a working knowledge of the basic doctrines of the Christian Faith
2. Reflect on the student's personal faith
3. Understand and experience practices of the Christian lifestyle
4. Learn to relate the student's personal faith to the catholic (universal) church
5. Explore dimensions of Kingdom life and community
6. Learn to value authentic dialogue.
7. Engage creatively with the content of the class.

All of these goals relate to our groups, but especially # 2, 3, 5, 6, and 7. The Christian formation groups are the critical link to realizing these goals and moving towards genuine transformation.

Feel free to adapt the session to the needs of your group. This is even truer after you have lead a group for at least a semester. Do what you can do to make this a safe and hospitable place for everyone to feel comfortable and to express themselves. It is helpful if you can hear from **every member** of the group in the first few minutes of the session. **Listen actively** as others speak and encourage and expect that behavior and attitude in others. We only get one opportunity to make a positive first impression.

A. Getting Started

Welcome each person as they arrive. Introduce yourself **briefly**.

Ask everyone to respond to either question 1 or 2... You share first and go around the circle ...

1. Tell about one highlight from your Christmas break (or)
2. What is one of your favorite activities in January?

If a person "draws a blank," he/she can pass. Come back to them later.

B. The next step...The E-Bay Game

Keep the group in a circle. Give each person a 3x5 card. Have them fold it in half and make a name placard. Ask each person to print their first name largely on the card and place it in front of them on the table. Pick a person to begin (probably you). State your first name and one item you would enjoy having from E-bay. Go to person #2. They begin by stating the name and item of person #1, then adding their first name and item from E-bay. The game continues until everyone around the circle has participated. If you have 15 people in your group the last person will need to remember 15 persons' names and the items they want before sharing their own name

and item. Help each other and make it fun. This is a great way to reinforce the names of everyone in the group quickly. One of the goals of this session is for you to begin to learn the name of each student and help students learn the names of those in the group.

C. On a journey

Tell the group that you are beginning a journey today. Not a journey to an exotic vacation spot but a journey of faith as a community. As leader, share some of your hopes and goals for the group. Some worthy goals may be: accountability to encourage each other on their faith journey and treating what is said with respect and confidentiality. Help students realize that this gathering should be a high priority for processing and applying the concepts discussed in the larger class.

Ask other students for their hopes and goals for the group. Listen and take notes.

D. Pathway to Joy

During the course of the semester explain that the group will focus on an important Scripture passage each week. This is not to be viewed as only something to do just to get a good grade, but as Richard Foster states in *Celebration of Discipline* (page 6) they are “God’s means of grace.” The disciplines allow us to place ourselves before God so that he can transform us. As we experience God’s transforming work, we can expect to know genuine joy (Foster, page 166.) One of the adventures of this class is to develop a “rule of life” that will guide our spiritual disciplines in the future.

The passage for this week is John 1:1-18. Encourage students to bring their Bibles to the formation group. Read this passage now, asking each person who has a Bible to read one verse until the reading is complete. Ask what you find interesting about this passage. Allow students to make comments.

This is not an in depth study of this passage, so do not linger here very long.

Encourage students to read this passage every day and allow God to speak to them. You may want to post the Lectio Divina sheet on Blackboard to give them a way to process the Scripture (see attachment).several times and think about its meaning and application to their life.

Also collect all student introduction papers now. Plan to grade and post these grades on blackboard before the next session. Make personal notes from the introduction papers to help you develop rapport and relationships quickly. Work at learning the names of each student...some take a video or picture of students...do what works for you.

E. Assignment for the Week

Think about what you are reading and learning in the large group class. Keep record of questions or insights that you would like to discuss in our next group.

F. Tell Part of Your Story

Help the members of your formation group get to know you better. Tell them about some of the significant or shaping events of your life. You may want to include some of your spiritual pilgrimage, your home life or formative times, and how you came to Olivet. Keep it short but personal.

G. Their Story (MOVE IN GROUPS OF THREE)

Ask each student to share in their own words some of the story they wrote in their Introduction Paper with their peers. Subdivide the large group to groups of three. This is a vital section...be sure to save at least ten minutes for this. Shalom!

Introductory Paper Guidelines

Write a three-page paper introducing you to the formation group leader. Include personal interests, family background, church background, and highlight some of the details of your personal spiritual journey. You may also include your vocational goals and some possible plans after graduation, if those are forming yet.

Due at your first Christian Formation Group...groups begin meeting on Monday, January 15th.

Group Formation Session 2 For the Week of January 22

Assign the Theology Response Paper for next week (see attachment)
Lectio Divina for the new week: ***Deuteronomy 5-6:9, II Timothy 3:14-17***
Post the Response Paper and *Lectio Divina* on Blackboard

I. To Begin

- A. Prepare the room. Welcome students as they arrive. Call each student by their first name if you have mastered it.
- B. Everyone in the circle should respond to the following question, beginning with you...How did you come to choose to attend Olivet? (Try to avoid a response that is long and complicated, ask for the brief version...model that in your response)
- C. In an attempt to develop relationships and begin to form community, ask students to subdivide into groups of three. Have them re-arrange their chairs in a circle. If you did not have time for students to tell part of their story last session, this activity will suffice. Ask each student to respond to question 1. When all have finished go to question 2, etc.
 1. Where did you grow up?
 2. What were the home dynamics and how did that affect you?
 3. What are two or three key events that have shaped your life?
- D. When most have finished, unite the students as a whole group.

II. Accountability and preparation

- A. Give direction for this week's reflection paper. (see Attachment)
- B. Next week you will be responsible to begin the four step process we call *lectio divina* with ***Deuteronomy 5-6:9, II Timothy 3:14-17***. Be prepared to answer if you have done this and be prepared to give evidence of this by stating how the Scripture helped to transform your thinking and action.

III. *Lectio Divina*...

- A. (In preparation for this section, digest pages 51-52 in McGrath about the four ways to process the reading of a Scriptural text. You may want to explain the four stages

in your own words and read the bullet points on the top of page 52. Remind students to begin by reading in a different dimension than you would read a newspaper or a text. Read as if this was a love letter. Invite students to enter *lectio divina* as a fresh, yet classic practice to experience God and His revelation.

- B. Begin to make this four step “rhythm” a part of your own practice and encourage your group to do the same.
- C. Let’s begin this “rhythm” from John chapter 1 in this session.
 - 1. Read John 1:1-18 asking each person (who has a Bible) to read one of the verses until the text is completely read.
 - 2. Meditation: What is the meaning of this text and how does it apply to use now? You may ponder such questions as: Why does this Gospel begin “In the beginning” rather than at Jesus’ birth? What facts do we discover about the “Word” from the first five verses? In what ways are we like John? How is our life different because of the reality of verse 14?
 - 3. Pray: Ask a few students to pray an appropriate prayer of thanksgiving for Jesus and the truth of this passage. Begin the prayer yourself.
 - 4. Contemplation: Take a minute or two (this is something we are not used to doing in our culture) to be quiet and to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. No talking here.

IV. Final Prayer

- A. To conclude pray a final prayer of blessing on each student and pray for a genuine season of revival on campus that each person would be open for the work of God in their life
- B. Shalom!

The Joy of *Lectio Divina*

There are four basic phases in the classic practice of spiritual reading, termed in Latin *lectio, meditation, oratio, and contemplation*. The ordering of these four phases represents a general and often natural sequence of progression, not to be understood rigidly. In practice we may experience great fluidity between them, a weaving back and forth as the Spirit of God moves us.

***Lectio* literally means reading. It signifies a different kind of reading than we often engage with reading a newspaper or a text. This reading is reflective, gentle paced, one-bite-at-a-time. It means reading if you had a love letter in hand. The question behind our reading is God, what are you saying to me just now?**

***Meditatio* naturally translates as meditation. The mind work of meditation moves allows our minds to focus and concentrate on the meaning of the text. Active imagination can sometimes help us find connections between our life stories and the great story of God’s redemptive work in us. Meditation engages us at the level of the “heart” in its biblical sense, where memory, experience, thoughts, feelings, hopes, desires, intuitions, and**

intensions are joined. This is where we are likely to discover what a given passage means in our lives personally or as a community.

Oratio means the prayer that naturally flows out of our meditation. It is the direct cry of the heart to God that rises when we have heard ourselves personally addressed through the Word. *Oratio* allows a full range of human responses (hurt, anger, frustration, confession, repentance, thanksgiving, joy, adoration, praise, etc.) to tumble forth in heartfelt prayer to the One for whom we were made.

Contemplatio means contemplation. It is a quiet entrance into the presence of God. Contemplation is essentially rest, play, Sabbath-time, in God's presence. Here we are receptive, open, listening to God and responsive to His voice. We enjoy the simple pleasure of the presence of Jesus.

Condensed words of Marjorie J. Thompson, Soul Feast, pages 25-27 and A. McGrath, Christianity, pages 51-52.

THEO-101 Response Paper A
For the week of January 22
Due at your next formation group session

Review the following four topics discussed in this class. Pick **one** topic to write about that is of interest to you.

- The understanding that Christianity is a revealed religion
- Explore the relationship between the Old and New Testaments
- Discuss Lectio Divina and what it means to read and process the Biblical text in the four stages suggested by Guigo (McGrath 51-52).
- Probe the sources of authority (diagram in class). Explain your understanding of the relationship of Scripture, reason, tradition and experience.

Write clearly and succinctly about the one topic you choose. The paper should be at least one page in length, but no longer than two pages. You will be careful to use proper grammar and spelling. All papers should be formatted as follows: 1 inch margins, 12 pt. Times New Romans font, double-spaced. Your name, professor's name, group facilitator's name, formation group number, class name, and date should be listed in upper left corner. All papers with multiple pages must be stapled in upper left corner.

Group Formation Session 3
For the Week of January 29

Collect the Theology Response Papers by the end of the session
Lectio Divina for the new week: Genesis Chapters 1 and Hebrews 11:1-6

I. To Begin

- A. Prepare the room. Welcome students as they arrive. Call each student by their first name throughout your interactions.

- B. Everyone in the circle should respond to the following question, beginning with you...
 1. Tell about one of the happiest days of your life, so far.
 2. (Volunteer's only on this question, leader go first please) Tell about one way God is using our campus revival to help you to become more spiritually healthy and alive.

II. *Lectio Divina*

Reinforce the fourfold process of lectio divina. Ask if each person received a copy explaining the four step process on Blackboard. Invite students to enter *lectio divina* as a fresh, yet classic practice to experience God and His revelation.

- A. Read and examine **II Timothy 3:14-17**. According to this passage how might we benefit from saturating our lives with God's Word? What do you see in this passage that intrigues you?
- B. Focus now on **Deuteronomy 6:4-9, the Shema**. What kind of commitment to God and His Word is suggested in verse 5? In what ways are the Words of God to shape our very life and transform our lifestyle? What do you find interesting in this passage?
- C. Accountability. Distribute a 3X5 card to each member of the class. As a part of the rhythm of each group you will be asked to write a response of the lectio divina passage. Each week you will be asked the same two questions: Side 1, **name one truth** (from last week's lectio divina passages) **that God is revealing to you**. Side 2; **write about one way that I am beginning to live out this truth**.
- D. Mention that today's response is "practice." However, come expecting to write a thoughtful response each week to the *Lectio Divina* passage.

III. Exploring Faith

- A. Who do you hope wins the Super Bowl this Sunday? Why do many people show much faith and trust in the Bears or the Colts? Do you think they might lose faith in a team that has never won the Super Bowl (Colts) or not won since 1986 (Bears)?
- B. How have you demonstrated faith this week within the physical realm? (Example: I sat on a chair, turned on a light, put my foot on the brake)
- C. What would you include in a definition of faith in God?

IV. Into the Word

- A. Read Hebrews 11:1-6. Have each person in the group who has a Bible read one verse until the short passage is completed. Look carefully at the Scripture. What do you see in this definition that builds on a good definition of faith? What verbs describe faith? What does faith have to do with creation? Why is Abel's sacrifice regarded as better than Cain's (see Genesis 4:1-12)
- B. Who is the object of your faith? Is it enough to just have blind faith...faith in the Colts or Bears...faith in a president...faith in the government...faith in good people. How is faith in God different?

V. Down Memory Lane

- A. Give everyone a 3x5 card. Have them write the verse from Hebrews 11:6 on the card in one common version (probably the NIV). Challenge students to begin to memorize the verse. After a few minutes go around the circle asking each person to say one word in the verse at a time. Person #1 says “And,” person #2 says “without,” until the verse is completed. Now pick a different person to start the verse and reverse the direction. Have fun with this.
- B. Discuss, “What does this verse mean to you?” Encourage each person to place the memory verse card in front of them throughout the week and to meditate on the meaning. Find concrete ways to demonstrate a greater trust in God.

VI. Prayer partners

Give each person in the group a card and ask them to write their name on the card and place it in a hat. Pick secret prayer partners for this week.

VII. Steps in the Right Direction (In groups of two, if time allows)

What is God teaching you lately? (maybe through the revival, maybe in a class, maybe through life experiences) What are a few steps that you need to take to grow in your walk with God. Walk in faith this week.

**Group Formation Session 4
For the Week of February 5-9**

Return the Theology Response Papers during the session
Lectio Divina for the new week: **Colossians 1:15-23**

I. To Begin

- A. Begin with prayer thanking God for His movement among us and for his presence and promises, and for his guidance in guiding us into all truth.
- B. Ask each person to join with two others from the group and circle their chairs when it is time to begin. Each person should respond to **ONE** of three questions, beginning with the person who has the smallest foot...
 1. Something you are thankful to God for...
 2. Something “fresh” you are learning in this class...
 3. Express one way you are growing as a person during this semester at Olivet...

II. *Lectio Divina*

Review these important texts carefully, but keep the dialogue moving quickly.

- A. Read and examine **Genesis chapter one**. What foundational truths do you see in the opening chapter of the Bible? How are we created? What was God’s response to his creation?
- B. Focus now on **Hebrews 11:1-6**. What do you discover about faith in this passage? What do you find interesting in this passage? How have you demonstrated faith this week?

- C. Accountability. Distribute a 3X5 card to each member of the class. On side 1, **name one truth** (from last week's lectio divina passages) **that God is revealing to you.** Side 2; **write about one way that I am beginning to live out this truth.**

III. Discussion

- One of the goals of this session is to process some of the key elements of the content of the class. Encourage each student to listen actively and to contribute to the discussion. Watch that one or two students do not dominate. Explore the following questions, being careful to talk about each question with some depth, but avoiding getting bogged down in relatively unimportant tangents.
- A. What does it mean to say that we are all "theologians?" Why does that matter?
 - B. Consider how creeds might be useful in explaining Christianity to a non-Christian.
 - C. What do you think is the difference between knowing God and knowing about God?
 - D. What does "faith" look like? Give an example of faith.
 - E. Discuss the relationship between faith and reason. If we have to decide which one is true what do we do?
 - F. What about God as a "mother?" (see Isaiah 49:15-16)
 - G. If God is the sole creator of all that there is in our world (before sin) what implication does that have for how we live in the world?
 - H. Give a specific example of how sin has affected the world.
 - I. If God didn't need creation, but created solely for our good, what does that say about us?

Group Formation Session 5

For CF groups meeting Monday through Thursday

February 12-15, Friday groups cancelled (Winter Break)

Lectio Divina for the new week: Philippians 3:7-14, Philippians 4:4-9

A word about the expectations for Lectio Divina

10% of the total grade for this class relates to reading and the lectio divina process of primary Biblical texts. Our expectation is that each student will be involved with several of the four processes of lectio divina every day. Throughout the week all four processes of lectio divina (careful reading, meditation, prayer from the Scripture, and listening and responding to God and His Word) will be enjoyed. Each week in CF group a written response to the lectio Divina process will provide some accountability for this discipline.

I. To Begin...as an entire group

- A. Ask each student to briefly tell about one aspect of the winter season that you actually enjoy (You go first)
- B. Ask for lectio divina accountability of the Colossians 1:15-23 passage. Give each person a 4 x 6 card. **Side 1 question:** What quality or qualities of Christ do you especially appreciate that are listed in this passage? **Side 2 question:** What action, described in this passage, do you appreciate that Christ has done for you personally? Collect the cards with their names on the card. Encourage students to continue the habit of lectio divina. Promise that this is becoming part of your practice as well.

II. Topic Dialogue

- A. Give every student another card. Ask each student to write down one idea they find interesting that you are now discussing in the class. You will want to begin the discussion.
- B. Take a few moments to explore these ideas. Do not feel that you must come to closure on all ideas discussed or that you should cover all ideas written.. Allow several students to suggest their idea for dialogue. Encourage active listening during this exercise.

III. Exploring “The Fellowship of the Believers.” As an entire group...

- A. Ask all students to get out their Bibles and turn to Acts 2:42-47. Select one student to begin the reading. Ask each student to read one verse at a time until this passage is completed.
- B. Use your imagination...what do you think the early New Testament church was like?
- C. What can we learn about the early church from this passage? Do you think the early church had problems, disagreements, conflicts?
- D. How is the church fellowship you are apart of like or unlike the description in Acts?
- E. Move to I Peter 2:9-12. Ask a student to read these verses. How does one become a part of the true church of Jesus Christ? What is distinctive about this people?
- F. Now, read Ephesians 4:1-7. How do the qualities in verses 2 and three promote unity? What important truth do you see in these verses?
- G. Finally, Read Ephesians 4:11-16. What benefits come to those you are a part of the church? If you had a close friend at Olivet that did not come from a Christian background who recently accepted God’s saving grace and became a believer, would you recommend he or she become a part of a local church? Why or why not?
- H. Shalom!

Group Formation Session 6

For CF groups meeting Monday, February 19 to 23

Lectio Divina for the new week: Colossians 3:1-17

I. To Begin

- A. Welcome the group as they arrive. Ask them to immediately form into groups of three.
- B. Give each group a copy of these questions to discuss. Have each person respond to question one, and then go to the next question. Watch for those that arrive late and help them ease into the flow of the session by helping them connect with a group.
 - 1. Tell one thing you enjoyed or about one interesting aspect of your winter break.
 - 2. If you could change one thing about the way the world is presently...what would you change? Why?

3. Tell about a special gift you received as a child. Why was it meaningful to you?
4. Tell about a time that you were treated with “grace” instead of “justice.”

II. *Lectio Divina*

Ask for lectio divina accountability of the Ephesians 1:15 through 2:10 passage.

- A. Give each person a 4 x 6 card.
 1. **Side 1 question:** Write about one thing the Lord is teaching you through this passage.
 2. **Side 2 question:** How are we saved according to this passage? Have you experienced what is described in chapter 2, verses 1-10? Collect the cards with their names on the card. Encourage students to continue the habit of lectio divina.
- B. After the results are collected, mention that everyone will receive a 100% this week on the above assignment as an example of grace...really!
- C. Note the assignments for next week for the C.S. Lewis reflection paper on *The Great Divorce*. (See attachment).

III. Grace (As an entire group)

- A. What does the word “grace” mean to you? Weave into the conversation that grace is God’s spontaneous, though unmerited love for us revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. It is God’s love in action empowering those whom God regards with favor. Grace is God being for us, even though we do not deserve it. (Romans 8:31)
- B. Interact as a group to the following three statements from Dallas Willard...
 1. Grace is not opposed to effort, but to earning...
“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door...” Luke 13:24
 2. Grace does not eliminate the need for discipline.
“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling” Philippians 2:12-13
 3. Grace does not change the fundamental fact that I am in charge of my character. God does not bypass the human will. However, He does not expect me to manage on my own.
- C. Tell a brief story of “grace” in your life...this could be a story of **God’s** grace at a time of conversion, sanctification, protection, guidance, etc. or it could be a time when someone else offered you grace...a teacher, a parent, a coach, a pastor. (I have a story of grace I will share with you on Thursday.)
- D. Allow a few students to tell one story of grace in their life, this may be a story shared earlier in the smaller group.
- E. Discuss what is the balance of life between grace and responsibility for ethical living?

IV. Into the Word

- A. Focus on one segment of our *Lectio Divina* for last week, Ephesians 2:8-9. You read it carefully, and then have the group quote the verse together, phrase by phrase.
- B. Allow some more discussion about what this verse means to them

V. John Newton

- A. Read the story of John Newton, the author of the hymn, *Amazing Grace*. It may be best to have students assist you with the reading...

Newton was born in London, July 24, 1725, the son of a sea captain. His mother, a devout Christian woman, died when he was seven years of age. A few years later he went to sea with his father. While ashore between voyages, he was “shanghaied” aboard a man-of-war and cruelly abused. Attempting to escape he was labeled as a deserter and unmercifully flogged and degraded. After many terrible experiences he joined the crew of a slave-trader and within a few years was himself the captain of a slave-ship.

During one of his visits to London he met and fell in love with Mary Catlett. During the years of his sea-faring experiences, she kept praying earnestly for his protection and for his conversion. His father also, having retired from the sea and settled in London, was in constant prayer that John would be converted.

Having trouble with a mutinous crew, Newton was put ashore on a lonely island off the coast of Africa. His father, back in England, asked a captain-friend to search for John and to ask him to return to London. One day, on this lonely island, John signaled a passing vessel. It proved to be the very ship captained by his father’s friend! He returned to London for a while, but again entered the slave-trading business.

One night in 1748 during a terrible storm at sea, John asked God for forgiveness and accepted the free gift of salvation through faith. Illness caused him to forsake the sea, and finally he settled in London, marrying Mary Catlett, the woman who had prayed for him during the years of his wanderings. He later came under the influence of John Whitefield and John and Charles Wesley, who helped him to grow in his walk with Christ. He felt God’s call to ministry and at the age of 39 and became the pastor at Olney, England.

While living in Olney he discovered his ability to write poetry. While serving 15 years at Olney he produced more than 300 hymns. It was his custom to write a new hymn each week. He moved to be pastor of a church in London and remained there until his death 28 years later.

He died December 21, 1807, at the age of 82. The following self-composed epitaph was placed on his grave: “John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and libertine, a servant of slaves in Africa, was by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ preserved, restored, pardoned and appointed to preach the Faith he had labored to destroy.”

From *Music in Evangelism* by Phil Kerr, pages 94-96

- B. Read (or sing) the words from John Newton’s hymn...or play your favorite rendering of *Amazing Grace* on CD. Examine the words carefully...

Amazing grace! How sweet the sound! That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.

“Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!

Thro' many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come. 'Tis grace hath bro't me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.

When we've been there ten thousand years, Bright, shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun.

VI. Benediction

Close with a prayer of thanksgiving for God's grace at work in our lives.

Response Paper-THEO 101 Due at the next formation group session

Response to *The Great Divorce*, by C.S. Lewis

Why do you think C.S. Lewis wrote this book? What was the primary purpose he wanted to communicate?

Give two or three specific examples that illustrate important messages in the text. These may include (but are not limited to) such items as:

Heaven and hell, p. 69

Two kinds of people, based on their self-choice, p. 75

The artist, p. 82

The mother, p. 97

The meaning of the lizard transformed into the horse, p. 106

Misfit, p. 139

What affected you personally from *The Great Divorce*?

Write clearly and succinctly. The paper should be at least one and one half pages in length, but no longer than two pages. All papers should be formatted as follows: 1 inch margins, 12 pt. Times New Romans font, double-space. Name, professor's name, formation group number, class name, and date should be listed in upper left corner. All papers with multiple pages must be stapled in upper left corner.

Two further notes...Wheaton College has one of the largest collections of C.S. Lewis works in the country and has a museum displaying many interesting items about the life and writings of C.S. Lewis. To gain more information about C.S. Lewis and his works go to www.cslewis.com

Group Formation Session 7

For CF groups meeting Monday, February 26 through Friday, March 2

Lectio Divina for the new week: I Thessalonians 4:3-12 and 5:16-24

I. To Begin

- A. Welcome the group as they arrive. Ask them to immediately form into groups of three.

- B. Give each group a copy of these questions to discuss. Have each person respond to question one, and then go to the next question. Watch for those that arrive late and help them ease into the flow of the session by helping them connect with a group.
 1. Tell about one interesting part of your week.
 2. How are you changing since you first arrived at Olivet?
 3. Tell about a time that you felt God especially near.

II. Accountability/ Christian Formation Practices

- A. Ask for response on a 4 x6 card of the *Lectio Divina* from Colossians 3:1-17. Ask students to write about one specific idea in this text that God is using to challenge you to grow. You may use both sides of the card to respond.
- B. Give everyone another card and ask students if they want to participate in a prayer partner exchange for the week. This is strictly a volunteer experience. If interested have them print their first and last name on the card as well as one specific prayer request for the coming week. Put all of the names in a basket or a hat and have each person draw a name. This is their secret prayer partner. Ask each person to pray for their friend each day until we meet again, but keep it a secret. The practice of intercessory prayer is very special.
- C. Breathing...Ask each person to inhale only for 15 seconds or more...can you do this? We do not generally even think about our breathing, but we experience the rhythm of inhaling and exhaling all day long. In a similar way, God intends us to have spiritual balance with Christian practices or disciplines. We are to “inhale” by taking in from God through such practices as Scripture reading, meditation, journaling, prayer...but God also wants us to “exhale”...to serve others. So our challenge over the next few days is to serve someone in Jesus name. Examples may be intercessory prayer, serving in a role at church, helping your roommate with ordinary things, getting together with a high school friend, sending an encouraging note to a person going through a difficult time, or spending extra time listening to a family member, get involved with a worthy fund-raising event. Don’t make this complicated...but be aware to keep balance.

III. The Great Divorce

- A. **The primary focus of this group** is the discussion of *The Great Divorce* by C.S. Lewis. Try to engage the entire group. Be careful not to dominate but give clarity and direction. Begin by talking about who is C.S. Lewis. For help see the back cover of your text or visit www.cslewis.com
- B. Why do you think Lewis wrote this story?
- C. Ask students to share the ideas they wrote about in their papers. Ask students to raise questions about items they did not understand or share insights about what they found to be especially meaningful. You will want to know the story well.
- D. You may want to include these highlights...
 - Heaven and hell spill over to earth, p. 69
 - Two kinds of people, p. 75
 - The artist, p. 82
 - The mother, p. 97
 - The lizard transformed into the horse, p. 106

Misfit, p. 139
E. Enjoy!

Group Formation Session 8
For CF groups meeting Monday March 12 through Friday, March 16
Lectio Divina for the new week: Romans 12

See the attachment for the response paper this week on Romans 12

I. To Begin

- A. Tell about one aspect of your spring break that you found especially meaningful or enjoyable.
- B. It is March Madness time. What is your favorite team in this year's tournament? Tell about a personal memory related to basketball.

II. ...Imagine more than a decade from today

- A. Encourage students to form into groups of four
- B. Ask students to move to "imagination mode" as they respond to the following situation:
It is time to use your imagination. Imagine that you successfully graduate from Olivet. You experience God's abundant blessing and a wonderful decade (plus) of growth. Olivet's men's basketball team is selected to compete in the NAIA National Tournament in Kansas City and your formation group decides to gather for a reunion. You meet from across the country and world at the Marriott Hotel for lunch. Each group member responds to the following from this ten-year perspective:
 - A. Where are you living now?
 - B. What kind of a job do you have?
 - C. How would you be serving in the Church?
 - D. Describe your immediate family.
 - E. Tell about one of your accomplishments that you are most proud of.

II. Accountability/ Christian Formation Practices

- A. Ask for response on a 4 x 6 card of the *Lectio Divina* from I Thessalonians 4:3-12 and 5:16-24.
- B. What is God's will for you, according to these Scriptures? What does that mean to you? You may use both sides of the card to respond.
- C. Collect today's reflection paper
- D. Go over the direction on next week's two page reflection paper on Romans 12. (see attachment)

III. Dialogue/discussion of this week's class

- A. Give everyone another index card. Have them write on the card a topic discussed in class that they found particularly meaningful or interesting.
- B. You may want to begin with something you have written on your card. Engage many in the group to think and express their ideas relating to the subject. Try to facilitate the discussion towards growth, understanding and edification.

- C. Ask for others in the group to share a topic of interest to them. Work on exploring this topic with as much involvement of the group as possible.
- D. Continue this process until the time is elapsed or you sense it is time to go. Offer a word of prayer as you go.

***Lectio Divina* Reflection Paper**
Due at next week's formation group

Follow the four step process of lectio divina throughout the week.

Write two pages (12 point font, Times New Roman) responding to the following questions or questions you substitute.

Begin your writing by focusing only on Romans 12:1-2.

1. What does "in view of God's mercy" mean to you?
2. How is it possible for you to be transformed?
3. What must happen before personally discerning God's will?
4. What else do you notice in these beginning two verses?

Now move to verses 3-8:

1. In what ways does Paul use the word "grace" in this paragraph?
2. How are we to use our spiritual gifts?
3. In what ways does this section help you to realize that you are a significant part of God's Kingdom?
4. How are we to think of ourselves?

Finally move to the final paragraphs, verses 9-21.

1. Look at the final verse first. How is this possible?
2. Which of these admonitions do you find most challenging? ...easiest to do?
3. What do you think is one of the primary things God wants to communicate to you in Chapter 12?
4. Name one or two specific steps to begin to put these truths into your life.
5. Conclude with a brief prayer to God as a result of your living in Romans 12.

Group Formation Session 9

For CF groups

Meeting March 19 through March 23

Lectio Divina for the new week: Psalm 100

Ask students to turn in their reflection papers on Romans 12

Provide advanced guidelines for the paper on Hotel Rwanda which is due in two weeks.

Encourage students to view the PG-13 version of the movie this week

I. To Begin

Share one important truth you learned as a result of thinking about Romans 12. Allow for volunteers to respond.

II. The Gratitude Attitude

Today's theme is on developing an attitude of gratitude.

- A. Read Exodus 17:1-7. What is the attitude of the people of Israel? Is this justified? What did God do for them earlier (Exodus 13:17, Exodus 16)
- B. What do we have a tendency to grumble and complain about?
- C. Have you ever journeyed to the top of the Sears tower or another tall skyscraper? How does the view at the top change the perspective of all the things below?
- D. Has anyone traveled outside the United States? If so, where did you go? How did that trip change your perspective of life in America?

III. A Global Perspective

If we could, at this time, shrink the Earth's population to a village of precisely 100 people, with all the existing human ratios remaining the same, it would look like this:

- There would be 57 Asians, 21 Europeans, 14 from the Western Hemisphere (North and South) and 8 Africans.
- 70 would be non-white; 30 white
- 70 would be non-Christian; 30 Christian
- 50% of the entire world wealth would be in the hands of only 6 people
- All 6 would be citizens of the United States
- 70 would be unable to read
- 50 would suffer from malnutrition
- 80 would live in sub-standard housing
- Only 1 would have a college education (source unknown)

How do you respond to this?

IV. Exploring a Psalm

- A. Read Psalm 100 together. What benefit comes to us as we learn to develop the gratitude attitude? Do you think this is especially difficult in our American culture? Why or why not?
- B. Name two things you are especially grateful for just now.

V. Thanksgiving Prayer

Lift prayers of praise and thanksgiving to God for who He is and what He is doing in our lives. Pray spontaneous sentence prayers allowing all to participate.

VI. Into the Word

- A. Read Luke 17: 11-19. Have each person read one verse each until the passage is completed.
- B. What strikes you about this story? Note in verse fourteen that it was through priestly examination and ritual that healed lepers are accepted back into society.
- C. Why is it special that the Samaritan was the only one to return thanks?
- D. Who do you think benefited the most from the thanksgiving exchange, Jesus or the Samaritan? Why?
- E. How is our batting average when it comes to thanksgiving? How can we nurture a lifestyle of thanksgiving?

F. Read Psalm 100 again before leaving.

**Preview Questions for the movie, *Hotel Rwanda*
Assignment for THEO 101**

View the PG-13 version of the movie, *Hotel Rwanda*, **this week**. You would be wise to view the movie this week to avoid a rush. It is **your responsibility** to obtain the movie. You may wish to rent or purchase the PG-13 version of *Hotel Rwanda* from a store in the community. To assist you in this assignment, several copies of the DVD are now available for free check out at the front desk of Benner Library. Consider having a *Hotel Rwanda* party and inviting several members of your formation group or friends in your lecture group to view the movie together. Before viewing the movie, consider these questions...

1. Look for the inner qualities the main character, Paul, displays as the crisis unfolds. Which qualities are ones you would expect from a follower of Jesus? How does Paul change?
2. What did you find disturbing about this true story?
3. Look for the response of the United Nations and the international community towards this tragedy. Does it seem appropriate?
4. In what ways (specifically) did the movie challenge you?
5. What connections did you make between the themes of the movie and the themes in this class? How does this story demonstrate the problem of sin?
6. Although you do not face a crisis like this today, how does God want you to show courage in the situations of your life?
7. What Scriptures come to your mind as you watch the movie? (I thought of Romans 12:21 and II Timothy 1:7)

If you watch the movie together you may want to debrief together using the above questions or others you select. Your paper is due in two weeks. We believe this will be a unique and meaningful learning project.

***Hotel Rwanda* Response Paper-THEO 101
Due this week**

View the PG-13 version of the movie, *Hotel Rwanda*. You will obviously **not** have room to write about all of the items listed in a two page paper. Respond to **only three or four** of the items below:

1. Look for the inner qualities the main character, Paul, displays as the crisis unfolds. Which qualities are ones you would expect from a follower of Jesus? How does Paul change?
2. What did you find disturbing about this true story?
3. Look for the response of the United Nations and the international community towards this tragedy. Does it seem appropriate?
4. In what ways (specifically) did the movie challenge you?
5. What connections did you make between the themes of the movie and the themes in this class? How does this story demonstrate the problem of sin?

6. Although you do not face a crisis like this today, how does God want you to show courage in the situations of your life?
7. What Scriptures come to your mind as you watch the movie? (I thought of Romans 12:21 and II Timothy 1:7)
8. Respond to the quote from Pastor Martin Niemoller displayed in the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. ... "First they came for the socialists and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me and there was no one else left to speak for me."
9. What else seemed significant to you?

Write clearly and succinctly. The paper should be no longer than two pages. All papers should be formatted as follows: 1 inch margins, 12 pt. Times New Romans font, double-space. Name, professor's name, formation group number, class name, and date should be listed in upper left corner. All papers with multiple pages must be stapled in upper left corner.

Group Formation Session 10
For Monday, March 26 through Friday, March 30
Lectio Divina for the new week: **Acts Chapter 2**

I. To Begin

- A. Welcome the group as they arrive. Stay together as a unit today for our opening questions. Tell about one thing that you enjoy about the season of Spring.
- B. Discuss briefly...why is it healthy to develop an attitude of gratitude? (You may use the dot illustration...see me if you need help with this)
- C. Name something today you are genuinely thankful to God for.
- D. What did you think about the chapel message last week of Morgan Jackson...particularly the response of people to the Word of God who had never heard the Scripture in their own language? What did you think of the challenge to not only listen to the Word but respond to the author? Read James 1:22

II. Hotel Rwanda

- A. The primary focus of this group is to discuss the movie and insights from the reflection papers.
- B. Use some of the items below to prompt discussion...focus some thought on item #8...
 1. Look for the inner qualities the main character, Paul, displays as the crisis unfolds. Which qualities are ones you would expect from a follower of Jesus? How does Paul change?
 2. What did you find disturbing about this true story?
 3. Look for the response of the United Nations and the international community towards this tragedy. Does it seem appropriate?
 4. In what ways (specifically) did the movie challenge you?

5. What connections did you make between the themes of the movie and the themes in this class? How does this story demonstrate the problem of sin?
6. Although you do not face a crisis like this today, how does God want you to show courage in the situations of your life?
7. What Scriptures come to your mind as you watch the movie? (I thought of Romans 12:21 and II Timothy 1:7)
8. Respond to the quote from Pastor Martin Niemöller displayed in the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. ... "First they came for the socialists and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me and there was no one else left to speak for me."
9. What else seemed significant to you?
10. Blessings...

Group Formation Session 11
For Monday, April 2 through Thursday, April 5
Lectio Divina for the new week: John 3:1-21

I. Accountability/ Christian Formation Practices

- A. Ask for response on a 4 x 6 card of the *Lectio Divina* from Acts Chapter 2. Imagine that you were present in one of the three settings of Chapter 2; the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, or Peter's sermon, or experiencing the fellowship of believers.
- B. How did this event help to birth the church? How would you feel about God working in this way? Use both sides of the card to respond.

II. Moving Ahead

- A. Tell about your plans for your Easter break.
- B. Where were you born? How long did you live in this place?
- C. What day is your birthday?
- D. Tell about one meaningful birthday and why it was special.
- E. Share the story about when you were "born again" or share about a time where you had a significant connection with God.

III. Into the Word

Read John, chapter 3: 1-21 each person reading two verses until the passage is completely read.

- A. What do the first two verses reveal about Nicodemus?
- B. Contrast the way Nicodemus and Jesus think about birth. How does this illustrate how we think?
- C. What does Jesus claim about himself in verses 13-15?
- D. What parallel do you see between this Old Testament reference (Numbers 21: 4-9) and the mission of Jesus?
- E. Verses 16 and 17 may be the most familiar words in all of Scripture. Look at them as if you were reading them for the first time. Why is the good news here?

F. What metaphor does Jesus use in verses 19-21? What does this mean to you?

IV. Prayer

- A. As a group, lift sentence prayers of praise and thanksgiving for who God is and what He is doing for you.
- B. Divide the group in groups of two or three. In the sub-group ask, “What are one or two things that bring you fear during this time of the year?” Pray for each person just after they respond to the question above.
- C. Go in peace!

Final Group Formation Session #12

For the week of April 16

I. To Begin

Welcome the group as they arrive. Stay together as a unit today for our opening questions.

1. Tell about one thing you are excited about doing during the summer.
2. (Volunteers only...you as leader should respond first) Share one way this formation group has enhanced your growth during the semester.

II. Accountability/ Christian Formation Practices

- A. Ask for reading accountability of the I Timothy 4 passage...yes or no. You will want to have each student record this on a 3x5 card. Encourage students to make processing God’s Word, *lectio divina style*, a way of life.
- B. Read I Timothy 4 having each student read one verse at a time. Before the reading begins, ask students to hear for one fresh insight from the reading that they need. Remind the group that God’s Word is living and active and that God will use His Word to speak to us now, as we listen.
- C. Allow comments on one thing students hear from God through the Scripture.
- D. Focus now on only a few words in the middle of the chapter...verses 7b and 8. *Train yourself to be Godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.* Explore the meaning of these words. How does it integrate with our text, *Soul Feast*, and the current teaching on spiritual disciplines?
- E. Assist students with the Rule of Life assignment that will be a part of the final (see attachments...you may want to run off a copy of these for each student...one page, double-sided...or e-mail them) Give suggestions from your life experience. Help them understand the assignment and encourage them to see this as a means of grace.

III. Final Gifts of Encouragement

- A. Read a paragraph from Hebrews 10. Begin with reading verses 19 to 25. Reread verses 24 and 25.
- B. Gifts to each other... Today, as we conclude the semester as a formation group, we are not going to discuss the theological implications of these significant words

from Scripture as helpful as that may be. Today we are going to attempt to act on the Word.

- C. The instructions: When we think of gifts we usually imagine "things." Today we are going to give each other the gift of encouraging words. We will begin with one person in the group. At least three or four members of the group will spontaneously speak words of affirmation and encouragement to this person. You will probably want to begin the process. The words must be honest, and sincere. Everyone in the group need not comment for each person. Go to the next person in the group and shower them with three or four affirmations from different group members. Expect a few seconds of silence as you transition to a new person.
- D. Continue the process until every group member has experienced the powerful words of several affirmations. It will probably take 20 minutes. Expect an incredible session...it will be a "Holy moment."

Lectio Divina Reflection Paper
I Timothy 4

Follow the four step process of lectio divina throughout the week.

Write two pages (12 point font, Times New Roman) responding to the following questions or questions you substitute.

Background: The letter, focusing on a faithful ministry was written about A.D. 63-65. The author is the Apostle Paul. Timothy is a young man from Lystra who was probably converted during Paul's first missionary journey. Paul returned to the area one or two years later and Timothy was recommended to him as a faithful disciple of Jesus who would make a good traveling companion. Paul put Timothy in charge of the Ephesian church after some of the elders of the church were involved with heresy. Paul went on to Macedonia where he wrote this letter to encourage Timothy in bringing the church back to health and spiritual vitality.

One of the key verses of this chapter is in verses 7 and 8, "Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come."

What does this verse mean to you? What are the implications for your life if you apply this admonition?

Verse 12 is another significant verse. Give concrete examples of how you can be a godly person within the five areas mentioned in this verse.

Reflect on the final two verses. With what kind of intensity are we to go about training ourselves to be godly?

What connections do you see with the theme of this chapter and the chapel theme of the semester?

What else in this chapter did you find meaningful or challenging?

In what way is the Lord speaking to you through His Word?

What is needed from you to really obey God in these matters?

CREATING A RULE OF LIFE

Begin with three basic questions:

What?: Spiritual Discipline	How?: How will I practice the discipline?	When? When will it occur?	Who? Who will hold me accountable
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What spiritual disciplines am I deeply attracted to and why?

Where do I feel God is calling me to stretch and grow?

What kind of balance do I need in my life?

Commit yourself in print

Name goals and plan for implementation

Keep a copy in a place for regular review

Choose a person or persons to whom you will be accountable

FOR THE FINAL:

Name at least five spiritual disciplines you would like to introduce or deepen in your life over the next semester. Consider practically how that might be incorporated in your schedule. Include how accountability will take place.

If you are not a person of Christian faith at this time, from the class lectures and text create a Rule of Life for a Christian. Include at least five spiritual disciplines, ways to incorporate those disciplines in a student's schedule and how accountability might take place.

Name at least five spiritual disciplines

Create a Grid

What – name the discipline

Who – Who is going to hold you accountable

How – How you are going to incorporate the practice of the discipline into your life

When – When in your schedule are you going to plan to practice this discipline

1. Service	Collecting Shoes for Saving Soles, an organization that provides shoes for people in underprivileged countries.	Twice a year – December and May	My roommates – we are planning to do this together every year.
2.			
3.			
4			
5.			

Example
RULE OF LIFE
Name
Class #
Date