

Guidance for Living Deeply course facilitators.

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Introduction

The main resource of the Living Deeply course is the set of 36 short videos, each lasting 4-5 minutes, four videos per session. There are nine sessions, with four videos per session. We envisage the course being run over nine consecutive weeks. However, the sessions come in three groups, with three sessions in each, and there could be breaks between groups of sessions.

We find that 4-5 minutes is a good length for videos. They are short enough to hold people's attention, but they provide enough content to stimulate discussion. They could be shown consecutively, but we recommend a break for discussion after each one. The length of discussion between videos will depend on how discussion flows. Some course leaders will generate their own questions for discussion, but there are suitable questions listed below.

If the videos are used in the group, with a course leader, it may be helpful for the leader to watch them in advance. They can then make a few introductory remarks about how the videos are relevant to the particular group, though it is not essential to do that.

There is also material for Bible study related to each session, listed below. Course leaders will probably want to make a selection from the passages suggested, depending on the time available. One way of using the course would be to take two sessions per topic, using the videos in the first session and doing Bible study in the second.

The particular focus of the course is to connect up personal and pastoral issues with the Christian faith. That gives it a particular relevance, in an age when many people are struggling with personal issues. However, some people will be more ready than others to discuss personal issues. Course leaders need to be sensitive to that.

Everyone who wants to talk about personal issues should have an opportunity to do so, including those who are initially a bit reticent. However, no one should feel under pressure to say more about themselves than they want to. It is also important that the sessions do not become over dominated by one or two talkative people.

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The leader of a Living deeply group has two roles. One is to focus on the content and to help people understand and explore the issues that are raised. The other is to take care of the people in the group, to ensure that it is a safe and comfortable experience for each individual person, and one that meets their needs. Those two roles will often be fulfilled by the same person, but in principle there could be a content-focused leader and a person-focused leader, working together.

The group could meet in a public space such as a room in church facilities, or in someone's home. It is helpful to have some welcome and hospitality time at the beginning of the session, so that people can get to know each other and start to feel at ease with one another. If they don't already know each other, there should be an opportunity for introductions at the start of the first session.

The people in a Living Deeply course will start in different places in their understanding of their faith, and with different personal needs. The hope is that each person will move on in both their understanding of faith and in tackling personal issues. However, that will be different for each person and there should be attempt to force everyone into the same mould. The hope is that each person will get something out of Living Deeply that takes them forward in their particular journey.

There may well be one or two people for whom Living Deeply raises personal issues that they want to take further in another setting. There are various ways in which that might happen, depending on circumstances. That includes church-based pastoral care, professional counselling, help agencies or self-help books. There should be someone in the group who can talk through the options with anyone who feels in need of further help.

It may sometimes be helpful to have a final farewell meeting after the last session of videos, though groups will differ in whether or not they want to do that. It may help to consolidate what people have got out of Living Deeply for them to discuss that with other people in the group and to have a chance to say 'farewell'.

These notes have been written on the assumption that most people will do Living Deeply in a church-related group. However, anyone is welcome to use the material in other ways. People can use it on their own, or in informal groups that have no particular religious affiliation. Though Living Deeply draws particularly on Christianity, it is designed so it can be used with benefit by people of other faiths, or none.

[List of Modules and videos](#)

Module 1 – Personal Issues

Session 1 - Stress and Coping

- 1: How Do you respond to stress.
- 2: How to cope
- 3: How Support Can Help
- 4: How Prayer can help

Session 2 - Depression

- 5: Feeling Low
- 6: Negative Thinking
- 7: Getting Help
- 8: The spiritual side of Depression

Session 3 - Loss and Death

- 9: Being Bereaved
- 10: The Silver lining of Bereavement
- 11: Know your Feelings
- 12: Coming to Terms with Death

Module 2 – Relationships and Community

Session 4 - Personal Relationships

- 13: Place of Relationships
- 14: Helping Each Other
- 15: Attachment and Trust.
- 16: Spiritual Companions

Session 5 - Community

- 17: Living in Groups
- 18: Badges of Membership
- 19: Individualism and Conformity
- 20: Telling our Story

Session 6 - Forgiveness and Reconciliation

- 21: Guilt
- 22: Reconciliation
- 23: How to Forgive
- 24: The Challenge of Forgiveness

Module 3 – Spirituality and Religion

Session 7 - Sin and Salvation

- 25: What is Sin
- 26: Common Sins
- 27: Human Liberation
- 28: How we Benefit

Session 8 - Suffering and Wholeness

- 29: Suffering
- 30: Health and Healing
- 31: Wholeness
- 32: Social Wholeness

Session 9 - God and Self

- 33: God and Ourselves
- 34: Finding God in Ourselves

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35: Words and Reality

36: God and Desire

Introduction video. <https://youtu.be/KkqZBS7f6SM>

Playlist. <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQA4Onbfff7v4salwD1d80cmB36APOAQo>

Living Deeply Questions for Discussion

Stress and Coping

What are the biggest stresses for you at the moment; notice what signs of stress you are showing now.

What ways of coping with stress work best for you?

What kinds of support have been most helpful to you?

Think back over any times when prayer has helped you to get through.

Depression

Do you sometimes respond to your low periods in ways that make them worse?

Can you spot when you are thinking negatively, and can you turn it off?

Think back over when God, or friends, have helped you get through difficult times.

How could it help you to focus more on the spiritual side of depression.

Loss and Death

What do you find most painful about bereavement?

Has any good come of some of the losses you have experienced?

How in touch are you with your feelings?

Are you frightened of dying? If so, how do you cope with that?

Personal Relationships

How much do you depend on other people? How much do they depend on you?

Think of someone who has shown you understanding, warmth and genuineness, and ask yourself whether you feel able to show those qualities to others.

Do you have people you can trust? Can other people trust you?

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Have there been times when praying with someone has been a powerful experience? OR, if not, imagine what that could be like.

Community

What does it feel like to be part of a group of like-minded people?

Think of a church or other group you know and ask yourself what are the implicit marks of membership.

How can we be ourselves, but also be close to others?

Take a church or group you belong to, and see what their story is about who they are and why they matter. If you start with, 'We are the people who...', how would you go on?

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

How far are your guilt feelings realistic? How far are they excessive?

Can you think of people doing now whose relationship has become difficult and who have found a way to overcome the difficulties? OR think how they might try to do that.

What do you understand by 'forgiveness'? Take a situation where forgiveness has been hard for you and try applying the approach set out here.

Why is forgiveness sometimes so hard to do?

Sin and Salvation

How will it help you if you avoid 'sin'?

What kind of things are most likely to keep you trapped in your own little world, not able to see beyond?

How can you make sense of the idea that Jesus made a permanent and decisive difference to us all?

How could you personally benefit more from the death and resurrection of Jesus?

Suffering and Wholeness

Can any good come from human suffering? Can you think of examples of when it has?

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How can religion be good for your health? How could it help with your own health problems?

What would the signs of 'wholeness' be for you?

Question: How can we go about building wholeness in society?

God and Self

What connection can there be between getting to know yourself better and getting to know God better? OR Are you aware of a deep layer in your personality that reflects God? How can you connect better with that aspect of yourself?

Looking back over your life, with the benefit of hindsight, how can you see the hand of God at work?

Do words and ideas about God sometimes get in the way of your experience of God?

Where do your desires ultimately lead, if you follow them through? Do they lead to God?

Living Deeply Bible Study

Stress and Coping

The Old Testament story of Joseph includes a busy and stressful time for Joseph in Egypt (Genesis 41:33-52). See Sara Savage (2011) *Joseph: Insights for the Spiritual Journey*. SPCK. Chapter 3.

Several of the psalms speak quite powerfully about stress, including Psalm 56. You could also look at Psalm 62:3-8 and Psalm 120. A great many psalms convey the experience of desolation or persecution quite powerfully.

We quoted about what Jesus says about worry (Matthew 6:25-34). There is a similar passage in Luke 12:22-32. St Paul also echoes this teaching of Jesus, "Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4.6). Think through the implications of the mind-set Jesus is recommending.

When we are stressed it is tempting to become very judgemental about others, or to want to blame someone. Jesus generally seems to want to avoid that. For example, in St John's gospel, he wants to avoid condemning the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). In the story of the blind man who receives sight back, he rejects the question of who is to blame for his being born blind (John 9:2-3).

There is an important strand running through the Bible about taking rest, which can be important in coping. The Sabbath is a day of rest, and Christians are encouraged to enter into that rest (Hebrews 4:9-11). There is a similar strand about the importance of withdrawing from the demands of life for prayer, and that is a feature of how Jesus lives his life (e.g. Mark:1.35; 6:46; 14:32).

Depression

There are periods of what must have been depression in the story of Joseph, when he is thrown into a pit and abandoned by his brothers (Genesis 37. 12-36), and when he is imprisoned in Egypt (Genesis 39:1 – 41:32). See Sara Savage (2011) *Joseph: Insights for the Spiritual Journey*. SPCK. Chapter 2.

The Psalms again provide a good expression of what we would now call depression. We referred about to Psalm 102, but there are mainly other psalms that give depression a voice, such as Psalm 39 or 69.

The suffering Servant in Isaiah (52:13 – 53:12) gives a vivid picture of a suffering comparable to that of someone who is deeply depressed, but there is at least a hint that something good may come of all this suffering, that 'out of his anguish he shall see light' (53:11).

St Paul has quite a lot to say about hope, in the Letter to the Romans for example. There are two key passages: 5:1-5 and 8:18-25; also the powerful verse 'May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit' (Romans 15. 13). Reading such verses gives a powerful sense of being sustained by a hope that is bigger than ourselves.

Both St Paul and St John have much to say about the power of love, even if they don't refer explicitly to the power of authentic love to ward off depression. St. Paul's great hymn to love (1 Corinthians 13:8-13 is well known). St John has a counterpart in 1 John 3:11-24.

Loss and Death

The story of Joseph is again a good basis for reflection on loss. Think about Joseph's loss of connection with his family and how he regained it (Genesis 43:15 - 45:24); and for his approach to death see Genesis 45:16 – 50:26. See again Sara Savage (2011) *Joseph: Insights for the Spiritual Journey*. SPCK. Chapters 5 & 6.

Read all or part of what Jesus says to his disciples to prepare them for life beyond his crucifixion (John 14-16, or perhaps just John 16:16-24), and how Jesus says that their sorrow will turn to joy.

Read the story of Mary Magdalene feeling bereaved after Jesus crucifixion (20:1-18), and follow her through her journey to a sense of life and joy.

Read what Jesus says about being the door to the sheepfold (John 10:9-18) and ponder whether and how he can be the door between our life before loss and trauma and our life afterwards.

Read what St Paul says about baptism being a transition from death to life (Romans 6:3-10) and ponder whether life beyond trauma and growth can be like coming up out of the waters of baptism.

Personal Relationships

The Bible is full of stories of relationships. The story of Adam and Eve is the first relationship in the Bible (Genesis 2:4-7 & 15-24). The account of the female being taken from the male may sound strange to modern ears, but the key point seems to be that humans need companions; the man 'clings to his wife and they become one flesh'.

In the Old Testament the story of Joseph's early life (Genesis 37:1-31) illustrates many issues about the formation of attachments. See again Sara Savage (2011) *Joseph: Insights for the Spiritual Journey*. SPCK. Chapter 1.

The story of the relationships of Jacob and Esau to their father Isaac, and the troubled sibling rivalry between them (Genesis. 27:10-40) raises also many issues about attachment relationships. There are also many stories of close bonds forming between people, and the story of the covenant that David and Jonathan made with each other (1 Samuel 18:1-5) illustrates the diversity of these close relationships.

There is less about human relationships in the New Testament but, though we lack detail, there are tantalising glimpses into several key relationships of Jesus. Probably the most important one is with his unseen 'heavenly Father'. This comes through most clearly in John's gospel, where Jesus repeatedly refers to his relationship with the Father, for example in John 10:14-18 & 29-30.

There is also Jesus' enigmatic relationship with his mother. Jesus sometimes seems quite dismissive of his mother (Matthew 12:46-50), but on the cross he shows love and concern for her, and commends her and John to each other (John 19:26-27), John probably being the beloved disciple who was reclining next to him at the Last Supper (John:13-23).

Community

Read the story of the battle of Jericho (Joshua 6:1-20) and imagine as vividly as you can being one or the people involved. Feel the tramp of feet marching together, and the horns blowing, and sense the energy that would have created.

Read about the life-style of the first followers of Jesus (Acts 2:43-47) and sense the remarkable solidarity of that group of people. Also read what St Paul says (1 Corinthians 12) about the place of different individual gifts within the same community. Think over how there can be both recognition of the differences between people, but also solidarity between them

St Paul has a powerful vision of how all those who live in Christ are united together, making all other human divisions irrelevant in comparison (Galatians 3.:27-29). Going still further, he sees as a centre of unity for all things in creation, the one in whom all things cohere (Colossians 1:15-20)

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

The drought in the Joseph story (Genesis 41:56 – 43:14) is an interesting case study in forgiveness and unforgiveness (see Sara Savage (2011) *Joseph: Insights for the Spiritual Journey*. SPCK. Chapter 4.

Jesus is clear about the importance of forgiveness (Matthew 18:21-35) and reconciliation (Matthew 5:23-24). He has a big understanding of the what is involved in forgiveness, as is evident in his saying to the paralytic man (Mark 2:1-12) that it is virtually equivalent to say to forgive the man his sins or to tell him to get up and walk (v. 9)

Jesus sets a moving example of forgiveness from the cross (Luke 23:32-34) in his dealings with the prisoners crucified with him, and in his moving words 'Father Forgive'. His commission to his disciples is to proclaim the gospel of repentance and forgiveness to all people (Luke 24:45-47).

St Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21, has a powerful vision of reconciliation as being both what God did in Christ, and what we are called to do now.

Sin and Salvation

The idea of the sacrificial lamb bearing the iniquities of the people is an important one in the Old Testament, and has shaped Christian thinking about the work of Christ. See Leviticus 16:7-22. As I have suggested, it seems that one member of a dysfunctional family can play a somewhat similar role.

For an example of animistic thinking about nature in the Old Testament, see Psalm 18: 6-19. Elijah comments on his not finding God in this way but in the sound of sheer silence (1 Kings 19:11-13). The most vivid account of a prophet being singled out by God, and told what to say, is in the first few chapters of Ezekiel (e.g. Ezekiel 2:1-7). By the end of the Old Testament prophets are not just in decline, but disapproved of (Zechariah 13:2-6).

St John's gospel has a strong sense of the spirit within as a gift of Jesus, for example in what Jesus says to the Samaritan woman about springs of living water welling up within (John 4:14) and about the Spirit coming to dwell within (John 14:10 & 17).

Though St Paul has a strong sense of the importance of believing in Jesus Christ, and of living as children of light, this is based on a clear belief in Christ as a kind of new 'Adam', (i.e. new humanity). 'As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive' (1 Corinth 15:22 & 45).

Suffering and Wholeness

One of the most vivid accounts of suffering in the Bible is St Paul's description of his own sufferings in 2 Corinthians 11:23-31. Jesus also talked to his disciples, in Mark 10:32-34, about all that he was going to suffer. How would you have felt if you had suffered such things? How did Jesus and St Paul feel, and can you learn from them about how to bear your own sufferings?

There are also some moving visions of wholeness in the Bible, such as the vision of peace and harmony in Isaiah 65:17-25, or the vision of paradise in Revelation 22:1-7. It was Jesus' explicit purpose to establish this comprehensive wholeness (Luke 7:22). The healing of the flesh of individuals is a sign of the more general wholeness that God desires and promises.

The healing of Naaman in the Jordan is one of the most vivid healing stories in the Bible (2 Kings 5:1-15). It is a very vivid story with a lot of impatience, dispute and misunderstanding before Naaman is eventually healed. It may be helpful to think of how you would have

behaved if you had been Naaman, or what obstacles might get in the way of your own the healing.

God and Self

Psalm 139:1-11, is a marvellous reflection on the presence of God, wherever a person might go? Are places you go, or things you do, when you want to get away from God? How do you feel about the idea that God is always present?

St Paul talks about God being 'unsearchable', and calls for the 'renewing' of our minds (Romans 11:33 – 12"2), about the partial character of our current knowledge, which will be fulfilled in love (1 Corinthians 13:8-13), and about how we need the eyes of the heart to be enlightened if we are to understand the purposes of God (Ephesians 1:17-19).

You might like to read the story of Zacchaeus and Jesus (Luke 19:1-10) and compare his search for Jesus with your own search for God. Zacchaeus is curious and wants to see Jesus, but he doesn't want to get too close or be seen. But, in fact, Jesus does see him and takes the initiative.

Books Related to “Living Deeply”

Joseph: Insights for the Spiritual Journey

by Sara Savage, SPCK, 2011 (Available on Amazon)

Like Joseph in the book of Genesis, every human being will face problems in life: relationship breakdown, depression, stress, and forgiveness, bereavement and suffering. Have these crises negotiated and water resources are grasped, shape the turning points of life. They are fuel for transformation. Joseph’s story sets out a life pattern for our own. His psychological and spiritual journey foretells the struggles – and the potential for transformation – of our own hearts.

The book was written to accompany *The Beta Course*, an earlier version of *Living Deeply* and uses the story of Joseph to reflect on:

- The birth of the social self
- Entering and exiting depression
- Stress and coping
- Forgiveness and unforgiveness
- Loss and grieving
- Transformation.

Living Deeply: A Psychological and Spiritual Journey

by Fraser Watts, Lutterworth Press, 2018 (Available on Amazon)

Living Deeply involves a new way of relating to

- the issues we each face as we go through life,
- the challenges and opportunities we find in others and in events around us, and
- the ever-present call of that deeper spiritual reality that many call ‘God’.

The three facets of that transformation of our relationships are inter-related. They work together and each one helps the others.

The inner journey involves being true to yourself, but there are good and bad ways of going about that. It is more difficult and demanding people realise, especially when you face serious life challenges. We can’t make this inner journey on our own; we can only do it in the context of relationships with others, and as part of a wider society. That involves the healing of relationships, in which forgiveness plays a key part. Finally, the journeys of self-transformation, and of the healing of relationships, are intertwined with a transforming engagement with the deepest spiritual reality of all, God.

This book incorporates the script of the film clips used in *Living Deeply*, though there is additional material on each topic, and several additional chapters. It begins with an introductory chapter on *The Inner Journey*, about how using both psychological and spiritual perspectives can help us each one of us on our in our journey. *Loss and Grief* is relocated in the section on Personal Issues, and there are several additional chapters in the religious section on *Going Deeper: Something More; Darkness and Light; and Jesus*.

Living Deeply Course

If you have any suggestions to improve the written content of the course, please contact us on our email address at livingdeeplycourse@gmail.com.

This course is provided free of charge and can be freely shared with others.