

Seminars and Workshops: A Further Unpacking of “Zoe-Life” Programming Options



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Overview

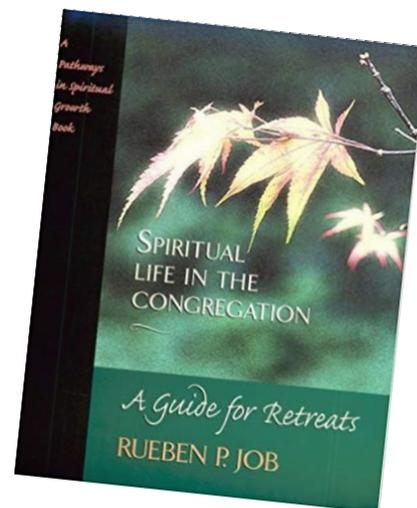
Rueben Job outlines at least four distinct types of spiritual retreats or experiences : (1) dialogical, (2) personally guided, (3) preached, and (4) private.

Two of these are at the heart of Zoe-Life offerings in congregational/group settings. Desired outcomes and the make-up of the individuals involved are important in determining which format to engage:

Seminars (along the lines of what Job calls “preaching or teaching” events) provide an introduction to and overview of a subject — with some room for questions & answers at the end of sessions as well as participant reflection. Given their nature as “overview”, workshops tend to be shorter in length — ranging anywhere from one to three hours in length. (To borrow from Job, this form of programming is an easy entrance for individuals who have never had such an experience before.)

Workshops (along the lines of what Job calls “dialogical” events) tend to be longer and “fuller” in nature. To borrow directly from Job: the “rely more heavily upon interaction of the participants and may be a natural next step for persons who have had some experience as participants or as leaders in a preached or taught [setting]. Dialogue is the center around which the activities of this kind of event revolve. The design includes some input times by the leader and usually involves some specific questions to guide the discussion of the small groups.”

It should be noted that Zoe-Life is exploring the ways that Job’s other formats (private and personally guided) might have meaning in an individual’s and congregation’s life/experience. Here, though, we confine the discussion to those two formats which most concerns individuals as they plan for an initial “exploration” in their community.



Seminars & Workshops

Any one of Zoe-Life’s “explorations” (defined under that section on our Web site, zoe-life.net) can be structured and conducted as either a seminar or a workshop. Highlighting a few (but not all) possibilities may help to clarify the nature of each format:

A Specific Example: “The Art of Pilgrimage: Explorations in the Stages of Faith”

As a seminar, “The Art of Pilgrimage: Explorations in the Stages of Faith” can be conducted in a 60 to 90 minute format — highlighting:

- the six stages of faith (drawing from Hagberg & Guelich’s The Critical Journey)
- the ways we can get stuck/caged... and facilitators of movement in that Journey
- snapshot implications of this discussion for individuals and congregations in their spiritual journeys

As an expanded workshop, this same subject matter is engaged over the course of three to four sessions—covering a full day, a multi-day retreat... or a weekly “study” conducted over several weeks. Extra time and facilitated group dialogue allows individuals to more fully and deeply engage and appropriate their own spiritual stories and journeys — highlighted in the following sample schedule:

TITLE

Session 1:

- ⇒ Introduction to “Stages of Faith” and Hagberg’s Critical Journey
- ⇒ Individuals begin to reflect on their own spiritual journeys (recalling key spiritual experiences before age 20... and 2 key spiritual events post-age 20)
- ⇒ Individuals will be introduced to Hagberg’s Spiritual Life Inventory (with instructions to complete it before the next session)

Session 2:

- ⇒ Introduction to Stages 1-3
- ⇒ A discussion of these stages in the lives of others (with a focus on Simon Peter)
- ⇒ Individuals will be encouraged to review their experience in these early stages
- ⇒ Individuals will begin to engage results/findings from their Spiritual Life Inventories

Session 3:

- ⇒ Introduction to Stages 4-6 (including “the Wall,” the Dark Night of the Soul)
- ⇒ A discussion of these stages in the lives of others (with a focus on Simon Peter)
- ⇒ Individuals will begin to engage the afflictive emotions that can surround risk and threat and change
- ⇒ Facilitated discussion, engaging various articles highlighting the Church’s failure to assist individuals in these stages

Session 4:

- ⇒ Overview of the “Means of Grace” (the spiritual disciplines) as facilitators of movement in our journeys
- ⇒ Engaging “A Suggested Pathway for Proactive Spiritual Formation in the Local Parish”, participants will be encouraged to work out their next steps in spiritual formation planning (for themselves and for their parish)

Other Examples

More generally, we might differentiate similar options/possibilities for other Zoe-Life Offerings, including:

- *“A Life of Jesus: Insights for Spiritual Formation”*
(grounded in gleanings from Holy Land travels and Biblical studies with Dr. Jim Fleming)
 - ⇒ As a 60-90 minute seminar, there might be a [Seasonal] focus on the Birth Narratives or the Lenten-Holy Week chapters of Jesus’ Life — with an eye to the ways that “historical geography” sheds light on matters related to our spiritual formation and growth
 - ⇒ Or again, As a 60-90 minute seminar, there might be a focus on Jesus’ prayer life — again, with an eye to the ways that “historical geography” sheds light on matters related to our spiritual formation and growth

- ⇒ As a fuller 4-6 session “workshop” (again, covering a full day, a multi-day retreat... or a weekly “study” conducted over several weeks) in which all the “chapters” of Jesus’ life are more fully unpacked in a “survey” of his life and teachings
- *“Developing a Rule for Faithful Living”*
 - ⇒ As a 60-90 minute seminar, there’d be an unpacking of the meaning/notion of a “Rule” (including its place in Christian, including Methodist, history) as well as the provision of practical handles for crafting a such a rule (in the life and individuals and, even, staffs, and congregations)
 - ⇒ As a “workshop” (again, covering a full day, a multi-day retreat... or a weekly “study” conducted over several weeks), there’d be a fuller/deeper engagement of seminar content as well as facilitated opportunities for participants to craft and hone their own “rules for [more] faithful living”
- *Introduction to the Enneagram*
 - ⇒ In a 60-90 minute seminar, there’d be an overview of the Enneagram — including it’s history, a general description of the 9 personality types, and acknowledgement of the ways it can be used as a tool for personal and relational renewal
 - ⇒ As a “workshop” (again, covering a full day, a multi-day retreat... or a weekly “study” conducted over several weeks), there’d be a fuller/deeper engagement of seminar content — augmented by facilitated group sharing (helpful in distinguishing defaults and stances of each personality style)
- *An Introduction to 12-Step Spirituality*
 - ⇒ As a 60-90 minute seminar, there’d be a brief overview of the history of the Twelve Step Movement and their roots in the Bible and Church tradition. Encouragement would be given to individuals seeing the ways each and all of us have addictions... and the ways that the 12-steps provide a viable model of spiritual formation for everyone.
 - ⇒ As a “workshop” (again, covering a full day, a multi-day retreat... or a weekly “study” conducted over several weeks), seminar contents would be expanded with facilitated opportunities for participants to more fully experience and “work” the steps.
- *A Survey of the Christian Scriptures*
(founded in teachings and Crossways materials from Rev. Harry Wendt)
 - ⇒ 60-90 minutes is sufficient to be about a “flyover” of the Old and New Testaments, yielding a view of the fundamental Christian metanarrative of which Christ is the pinnacle and fulfillment.
 - ⇒ As a fuller “workshop” (again, covering a full day, a multi-day retreat... or a weekly “study” conducted over several weeks), there’s time to visit key chapters in this narrative.
- *Holy Habits: A Survey of the Spiritual Disciplines*
 - ⇒ As a 60-90 minute seminar, there’s time to affirm our spiritual journeys, their “destination,” and the role of spiritual disciplines/practices (traditional and not-so-traditional) as “provisions” in this journey.
 - ⇒ As a “workshop” (again, covering a full day, a multi-day retreat... or a weekly “study” conducted over several weeks), there’s room for a fuller unpacking of these disciplines — with facilitated exercises/experiences which enhance participant understandings and praxis.

- *A Pilgrimage to the Heart of the Gospel: Biblical Explorations in the Recovery of Our “True Selves”*
 - ⇒ As a 60-90 minute seminar, there’d be an overview of “true/authentic self” vs “false self” discussions — with an eye to their roots in the Biblical narrative. Time would also be given to a definition of “spiritual formation” as the process by which we progress in this journey.
 - ⇒ As a “workshop” (again, covering a full day, a multi-day retreat... or a weekly “study” conducted over several weeks), there’d be a fuller unpacking of the classical phases of renewal (illumination, purgation, and union) through the lens of the parable of the Prodigal Son.

- *Reel Theology: Focused Discussions at Intersection of Hollywood and Divine*
 - ⇒ As a 60-90 minute seminar/presentation, there’s time to review (ala Niebuhr) the ways that Christ and Culture may be understood as interfacing. Ultimately, a few movie clips work to demonstrate the ways that culture can contain and illuminate Christ and Christianity.
 - ⇒ As a “workshop” (again, covering a full day, a multi-day retreat... or a weekly “study” conducted over several weeks), we move from the “heady” orientation of the seminar, above, to actual viewings (or synopses, using selected clips), followed by facilitated

A Proposed “Method” for Setting Your Course...

- 1) In dialogue with other group/congregation/district leadership:
 - a) assess and prioritize your group’s needs and interests in spiritual formation and growth. The more specific you can be at this level, the better: are needs focused in one area (say, Bible study or prayer) or more general considerations of spiritual growth?, how might you define the “stage of faith” of potential participants?
 - b) related, assess and define your group’s preferred orientation to materials: is there a desire for general information or deeper transformation?, is your group more oriented to seminars or workshops?

- 2) On the basis of the above dialogue, hone in on both a subject and a format (i.e., seminar vs workshop). For many groups, a seminar or seminars are recommended prior to the planning of any protracted studies/workshops/retreats. As a critical mass of individuals demonstrate a real interest in matters of spiritual formation (and digging deeper therein), workshops/retreats become more viable and practical in a community.

- 3) Having arrived at some clarity about desired outcomes and the preferences of your group, give us a call. At this point, we can begin to dialogue about the exploration which best meets the interests of your group — customizing it to best meet the schedule and unique needs of your group.

- 4) In time, you and your group may want to visit about a fuller, in-house plan for spiritual formation — especially as there is a critical mass of individuals (6 to 8 people) expressing a strong interest in the development of a discipleship/spiritual formation “pathway” for their community. Here, we’d love to visit with you (and that leadership) about the ways you can proactively posture for this kind of work. As you’d like, we’d even be willing to be about the coaching/companionship that can facilitate such work in/for your group.