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Running a Book-Study Program

On the Book

“Radical Forgiveness,

Making Room for the Miracle,”

by Colin Tipping.

First of all, let me say how grateful I am that you are considering running a book study program using my book. It’s a wonderful feeling to know that people have this much interest in the book to want to share it in this way. I am honored.

As you probably saw on my website, I have devised a particularly effective method of facilitating a book study group and I am offering a training program on how to use this method to become a very successful book study facilitator. The program includes a video and a manual. Being a facilitator of a book study group can be difficult and challenging — especially with books like mine that are likely to evoke strong emotions and bring up memories. My method seeks to avoid most of the problems and enables you to be more professional.

However, this is not the purpose of this brief set of guidelines. I would not be able to teach you that method here, so I am just going to presume that you are going to run a very informal group — perhaps at church — with people you know most probably and that your leadership role in the actual discussion will be minimal. In fact, my first piece of advice is that unless you have a great deal of experience doing book study groups and know the book really well —

- ***Don’t Assume the Role of Facilitator — nor even that of Group Leader.***

Just let your role be limited to that of bringing the group together. Then settle back to be a regular member of the group just like everyone else. If you let the group think you are the group leader or facilitator, you will find yourself becoming more of *the teacher* or *the expert* on Radical Forgiveness. Then it will become like work and they will expect you to feed them, and it will not be much fun for you. They definitely need to know that you are NOT the authority on Radical Forgiveness —

- ***The BOOK is the authority on Radical Forgiveness.***

However, having said all that, the trick is to know your way around the book well enough to always shift discussion back to the book. That way you are leading, but in a subtle way; subtle enough we hope for the others not to notice. Golden rule —

- ***Always shift the discussion back to the book and avoid arguing for your own corner too much. Be neutral if poss.***

To start things off on the right foot, before you start the program —

- ***Have them align behind a set of Agreements (see Page 3)***

That should be enough to enable the group to function with you as a participant rather than a leader, although it might have to be you who from time to time may have to remind them of the Agreements.

- ***Use of the “Talking Stick”***

The talking stick is a great way for a group to create a sense of order, fairness and control. The rules are that you can only talk when you have the talking stick. If you wish to speak, raise your hand and ask that the talking stick be passed to you. It seems a little awkward at first, but once people get the hang of it, works well. The group must be committed to using it. You or someone else in the group may be nominated each week to be the ‘referee’ in any dispute over who should have it next.

- ***Have a suggested structure and ‘curriculum’***

This will help things get started right away and impart a structure. It can be presented for discussion on the first session along with the Agreements, and agreed upon.

STRUCTURE:

- **Duration:**

I don’t think it should be less than 6 weeks, preferably ten. You might do a succession of six week programs where they go through the book or parts of the book in the first six weeks, and then elect if the people so desire, to do another six weeks going back over the material they didn’t give much time to before or going even deeper on the material they touched on previously, and then another six weeks and so on.

- **Session Time:**

I think 2-1/2 hours is about right, with a break at the midway point.

- **Open or Closed Group:**

Once the group is formed and the work has begun, no one else should be allowed join until the next round of six weeks if that occurs.

- **Size of Group:**

The ideal is between 6 and 10. Two few limits the discussion and too many gets too unwieldy.

CURRICULUM:

- **Balance:**

Because this is a self-help book and about half of the book consists of how to use the tools, my recommendation is to spend the first half of every session discussing the concepts and the second half going over and actually using the tools — especially the worksheet.

- **Reading Assignments:**

It is one of the Agreements that reading assignments will be honored and everyone will come to the group having read the piece agreed upon. Obviously, **Jill’s Story** is a good place to start. There is a shorter version downloadable from the website if you would prefer to use that in order to expedite things.

• **Worksheet as Curriculum:**

My suggestion is to use the worksheet as your curriculum. Remember, the Radical Forgiveness process is done in five stages. In the new worksheet, which is attached, you will see that down the side of the sheet are the five stages of Radical Forgiveness. 1) Telling the Story 2) Feeling the feelings. 3) Collapsing the Story 4) Reframing the Story 5) Integrating the new story. Going through the items on the worksheet corresponding to each one of these for the six weeks will enable you to cover a lot of ground.

Chapter 29 (*in the first edition*) and **Chapter 20** (*in the 2002 new edition*), **Making Room for the Miracle**, is the key to understanding how to do the worksheet and might well be the main chapter to focus on in the second half of the meeting. You might suggest that people do worksheets each week at home and give a brief report on them if they sense a shift in energy as a result of doing one. You might tab places elsewhere in the book that reference the things likely to come up in the discussion about each part of the worksheet.

• **VIDEOS by Colin Tipping**

You could take this book study group to a whole new level by using the videos that are available from the website. The three-video set at \$49.95 includes a great deal of material presented by Colin which is not in the book would give you four hours of viewing to slot into the discussion schedule. This would very much enhance your group's experience and make you look good.

AGREEMENTS:

1. Sacred Confidentiality:

We solemnly agree to hold sacred and confidential anything that is shared in this group. We agree to tell each other the truth at all times but in sacred trust that anything that we share in this group goes no further. Nothing shall ever be shared with our spouses, our friends nor anyone, not now or at any time in the future. This a sacred covenant.

2. Time Agreement:

We solemnly agree to always be on time and ready to be totally present at the agreed-upon start time of every meeting and after any break that we might have in the session, in clear recognition of the fact that being late is a way of withholding love from ourselves and others.

3. Commitment to the Group:

a) We solemnly agree to make this program a very high priority in our lives and to be totally committed to showing up at every one of the scheduled meetings, whether we feel resistance to doing so or not, in clear recognition that to not attend would hurt the group and would be a withdrawal of love from ourselves and others.

b) We understand that this program may involve reading assignments and preparation assignments essential to the success of the following session, and solemnly agree to abide by our commitment to do them, in the knowledge that to not do them would hurt the group and would be a withholding of love from ourselves and others.

IN THE MEETING ITSELF

4. Respecting and Honoring the Facilitator's Role.

It is fully understood that the facilitator is running a book study group, NOT a class, and is NOT to be considered the AUTHORITY on Radical Forgiveness and as far as possible is to be considered a regular participant in the discussion. It is understood that the book is the only authority in this situation and each person is responsible for finding the truth of what is in the book for themselves.

5. Respecting and Honoring the Opinions of Others:

We solemnly agree that while it is perfectly acceptable to criticize or even attack the content of the book, we shall not criticize or make wrong the participants of the book study group based on what they say or on the basis of their opinions with which we may disagree. We agree to share our own truth at all times and at the same time to respect the opinions of others.

6. Staying on Task:

We agree to stay committed to the task as agreed for that meeting and not to change the subject, introduce side issues or personal agenda items where to do so would interfere with the group journey.

7. Adhering to the Rules of Discussion.

We solemnly agree to follow the rules of discussion as defined and agreed to below by checking the boxes, or in any other way the group decides is desirable. These rules are designed to allow the maximum involvement of all members of the group and to help the discussion flow easily and freely, without anyone dominating, etc. We agree to be reminded of these rules by the 'referee' elected for that evening if we forget.

- a) You can only speak when you are in possession of the talking stick.
- b) If you wish to speak, indicate that you wish the talking stick be passed to you.
- c) Do not interrupt the person speaking.
- d) Where more than one person asks for the talking stick, the 'referee' decides.
- e) Be willing to share speaking time and not to dominate the discussion.
- f) Speak only for and about yourself - not others. "The way I see it is...." "I feel"
"My experience was....."

8. Respecting Where People Are:

We agree to respect where people are in all aspects of their beingness and to remain willing to be as non-judgmental as possible. We agree not to give advice or try to correct people. If anyone should become upset we will resist the urge to FIX. Fixing means trying to make them feel better by saying 'nice' things to them, cuddling them, putting your arm around them, patting them on their arm, and generally trying to get them out of their feelings. We recognize and accept that feelings are good and to feel them and to express them is healing.

9. Not a Therapy Group:

While we might expect that some feelings may surface during the discussion, we understand that this book-study group is not the place to 'process' feelings or to seek therapy. If tears come and need to be expressed, that is OK, but if there is a need to process, this needs to be done outside of the group meeting. No-one, not even a therapist if there is one present, shall take anyone into 'process' during the meeting.

CONCLUSION:

Well, I trust that these few tips will help you get started and I hope they will prevent you from making some of the mistakes that most people make when they start a book study group — the main one being that of trying to be the expert on the book. I hope too that I will have made the whole process more enjoyable for you.

*If indeed you find it so enjoyable that it might be something you would like to do regularly,— and perhaps make money doing it — and you want to learn my special method of facilitating a book study group, on this or any other book, send for the **Certified Book Study Facilitator Program** immediately using the form below.*

Mail to The Institute for Radical Forgiveness Therapy and Coaching, 26 Briar Gate Lane, Marietta, GA 30066 or fax to 770-429-0276

As a Certified Book Study Facilitator, you will also be listed as an approved Book Study Facilitator for my book on our website and you can buy books at 50% discount (minimum order 5 books).

Good luck and many blessings,

Colin Tipping

ORDER FORM

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