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2023

The Sacred Roots Facilitator's Guide: Reading Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics Together

Isaiah Swain

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SACRED ROOTS

***FACILITATOR'S
GUIDE:***

*Reading
Sacred Roots
Spiritual Classics
Together*

Edited by
Isaiah A. Swain



Sacred Roots seeks to equip and empower congregational leaders
in urban, rural, and incarcerated communities to engage the wealth of
the Christian tradition so they can flourish in ministry.

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The Sacred Roots Facilitator's Guide: Reading Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics Together

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ISBN: 978-1-955424-17-2

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Samuel Morris Publications
Taylor University
1846 Main Street
Upland, IN 46989

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“Toward Ten Thousand Tozers”

***The Sacred Roots Facilitator’s Guide:
Reading Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics Together***



Edited by Isaiah A. Swain



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Preface

Welcome to Sacred Roots

Greetings Friends and Fellow Warriors in the strong name of Jesus Christ! This little book will prepare you to serve as Sacred Roots Study Group facilitators. But first, what is Sacred Roots? Sacred Roots is a partnership between The Urban Ministry Institute and Taylor University dedicated to equipping and empowering Christian leaders serving in under-resourced ministry contexts. You can read more about Sacred Roots' vision and mission in Chapter One.

Sacred Roots Study Groups consist of congregational leaders committed to reading the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics together. Let's break this down a bit.

First, what is a "spiritual classic"? A Christian spiritual classic is a non-canonical text considered helpful for the cure of souls across both centuries and cultures. "Non-canonical" means that a spiritual classic is not Scripture; it is not valued at the same level as the Bible. "Cure of souls" means pastoral ministry (Heb 13:17), or helping others "draw near to God" (James 4:8). Spiritual classics address spiritual topics and themes one way or another. "Across both centuries and cultures" means spiritual classics have been read and reread by Christians from different

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parts of the world for many generations—usually at least three or four.

Second, what are the “Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics”? The Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics is a series of Christians spiritual classics uniquely edited for under-resourced ministry leaders. Each Sacred Roots Spiritual Classic is introduced and edited by an expert on that spiritual classic, who gives important background information and suggests discussion questions for each chapter. Additionally, the expert has translated or edited the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classic into easier-to-understand English, making the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics a more accessible series of Christian spiritual classics.

Third, what is a “Sacred Roots Study Group”? A Sacred Roots Study Group is a group of Christian leaders who meet regularly to read and discuss the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics together. The remainder of this book focuses on why reading the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics is best done in community and how to facilitate a Sacred Roots Study Group.

If you are the facilitator or co-facilitator of a Sacred Roots Study Group, read on! If you are considering starting a Sacred Roots Study Group, six steps for launching your group can be found in Chapter Five.

May the Lord anoint your hearts as you begin your journeys together of spiritual friendship as you discover our Sacred Roots!

Grace and Peace,

Rev. Dr. Don L. Davis, The Urban Ministry Institute

Isaiah Swain, Taylor University

Rev. Dr. Hank Voss, Taylor University

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Chapter 1

Why We Read the Sacred Roots

Spiritual Classics Together:

A Letter to God's Friends and Fellow Warriors

Dear Friends and Fellow Warriors,

Greetings in the strong name of Jesus! What a joy to know that Jesus calls us “Friend” (John 15). What an honor to stand with sisters and brothers from every century and culture to shout, “Worthy is the Lamb!” What a privilege to serve in the Lamb’s army, not fighting flesh and blood, but God’s *internal* (the flesh), *external* (the world), and *infernal* (the Devil) enemies. In light of this cosmic struggle, we put on a wartime (not peacetime) mindset as we follow Jesus. Moses stated that God is present and at work in every generation (Ps 90:1), and the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics are for those who desire to be used within their *oikos* sphere of influence like David was used by God in his generation (Ps 57:2; Acts 13:36).

Our Context: A Battle with God's Internal, External, and Infernal Enemies

Scripture teaches our daily need to choose a missional mindset (Matt 6:10). God’s kingdom never advances in neutral territory.

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Every inch in creation, including each inch of our soul, is a contested battlefield. God's enemies are threefold. First, there is an *internal* enemy hiding within the heart of each redeemed child of God. God loves us, even though we often battle a "Judas-heart"—a tendency to betray our Lord (John 12:6). Scripture names this brokenness the "flesh" (*sarx*), the old "man," or the "sin nature" (Rom 8; Gal 5–6). We work to kill ("mortify") this sin lest it succeed in killing us (Rom 8:13).

Second, as followers of Jesus, we battle all *external* enemies opposing the Lamb's kingdom. Sickened by sin, polluted by greed, corrupted by self-centeredness, idolatry, and oppression; our world is not the way it is supposed to be. What God created good has been twisted and now often grieves the Holy Spirit. We choose to stand with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in refusing to bow to the principalities and powers of the age (Dan 3), or to accept the besetting sins of our ethnicities, nations, and generations. Scripture and our sacred roots shine painful yet purifying light on our blind spots.

Finally, we are not ignorant of the Devil's schemes. We may not know if a demon's name is "Screwtape" or "Legion," but we do know that an *infernal* enemy opposes God's kingdom *shalom*. He is the Devil, Satan, the Father of Lies, the Accuser, and one day soon he and his demons will be completely crushed. In this time between the times, the Lamb's followers resist and renounce the Devil and all his ways with the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

Our Mission: To Be Faithful Stewards and Wise Servants in Our Generation

Scripture contains a number of “history” psalms (Pss 78, 105, 106, 136; Neh 9:6–38; cf. Heb 11). These songs challenge us to reflect on women and men who chose to serve God in their generation—Abraham and Sarah, Moses, Phinehas, Rahab, David, Esther and many others. History psalms also warn of those who ignored or refused to participate in God’s work (Pharaoh, Dathan, Abiram, Og). Leaders like Rahab the prostitute (Matt 1:5; Heb 11:35; Jas 2:25) and King David were far from perfect (Ps 51). Yet Scripture declares that leaders like David “served the purposes of God in his own generation” (Acts 13:36).

Do you want God to use you in your generation? Are you willing to be a David or Esther today? God is already at work in our communities, schools, and workplaces. Sometimes the neighborhoods with the greatest challenges (those with giants like “Goliath” and armies of Philistine enemies) are the very places God finds servants and stewards he can use (1 Sam 17; 1 Cor 4:1).

Like King David, Prince Kaboo of the Kru people in Liberia chose to participate in God’s work in his generation. As a child, Prince Kaboo (1873–1893) was taken hostage by a rival tribe and was about to be executed when he experienced a super-



natural deliverance. After weeks of traveling through the jungle, Kaboo arrived at a mission station near Monrovia, Liberia's capital. There, as a fourteen-year-old teenager, he wholeheartedly gave his life to Jesus Christ.

Prince Kaboo took on the name Samuel Kaboo Morris at his baptism, and he spent the next four years working and studying Scripture—especially Jesus' teaching

about the Holy Spirit as recorded by his friend John (John 14–17). Kaboo was fascinated with the Holy Spirit, for he had personally experienced the Holy Spirit's powerful deliverance. Eventually, the missionaries told Kaboo they had taught him all they knew and that if he wanted to learn more about the Holy Spirit, he would need to travel to the United States. Kaboo felt the need for more training about the Holy Spirit before being ready to return to the Kru as an evangelist. With no shoes or money, Kaboo walked to Monrovia's harbor to find passage to New York—trusting his Father in heaven to provide.

Kaboo's story is powerful. The ship that transported Kaboo experienced revival with the captain and many crew coming to Christ. Within a few hours of arriving in New York, Kaboo led seventeen men to Christ at an inner-city rescue mission. On his third day in the United States, the eighteen-year-old evangelist preached at a Sunday school meeting and revival broke out with

a new missionary society organized that very day. God provided money for Kaboo's college tuition, housing, books, and necessities. By the end of his first week in America, Kaboo had arrived in Fort Wayne, Indiana to begin studying at Taylor University—an evangelical college committed to raising up workers for the harvest fields and who would walk in the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt 9:36; Acts 1:8).

Prince Kaboo's arrival at Taylor University transformed not only Taylor University's campus, but also the whole city of Fort Wayne. On his first Sunday in town, Kaboo walked to the front of the church and asked for permission to pray. As he prayed, the power and presence of the Holy Spirit descended on the congregation in a way none had ever experienced before. The pastor reported, "what I said and what Sammy said I do not remember, but I know my soul was on fire as never before. . . . No such visitation of the Holy Spirit had ever been witnessed" by our congregation.¹



Two years later, on May 12, 1893, at the age of twenty, Prince Samuel Kaboo Morris died from an illness contracted after traveling through a snowstorm to preach. Since his death,

¹ Lindley Baldwin, *Samuel Morris: The African Boy God Sent to Prepare an American University for Its Mission to the World*, (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1987), 59.

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Kaboo's story has influenced thousands of students at Taylor University and elsewhere to participate with the Holy Spirit in mission and seek the Spirit's power in witness. John Wengatz was a student at Taylor in 1906, the year he first read Kaboo's story. Some fifty years later, after a lifetime invested as a missionary in Africa, Wengatz remarked "my tears never cease to flow as I read that unrepeatable story."² Although Kaboo died at twenty, he was used mightily by God in his generation. Will those who tell the story of your life say the same?

Our Vision: Toward Ten Thousand "Tozers"

If you are pursuing God with the same passion and hunger displayed by Samuel Kaboo Morris, then you will be glad to meet A. W. Tozer (1897–1963). Tozer grew up poor without the opportunity to complete high school. While working in a tire factory he heard the good news about Jesus, repented, and believed. At nineteen, he began to preach, becoming one of the most influential pastors in his generation. His books, *The Pursuit of God* and *The Knowledge of the Holy* have helped millions know and love the Triune God revealed in Scripture. When asked how he learned to read Scripture with such clarity and theological depth, Pastor Tozer would often point to his "friends" and "teachers." These teachers were a list of some thirty-five Christian spiritual classics read and reread throughout Tozer's life. Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics (SRSC) are for

² John Wengatz, *Sammy Morris: Spirit-Filled Life* (Upland, IN: Taylor University Press, 1954), Preface.

those with a hunger for the Holy Spirit like Prince Kaboo and a desire to be used like Pastor Tozer.

The Sacred Roots Project envisions ten thousand Christian leaders, serving in challenging ministry contexts across North America, engaging with spiritual classics in community by the year 2030. Will you join this growing community as we pursue God together by reading and discussing spiritual classics with gospel friends and kingdom coworkers (Matt 9:35)?

A larger dream also informs the Sacred Roots Project—a dream that imagines a million Christian workers equipped to serve among the global poor (Matt 9:36–38). The Center for the Study of Global Christianity reports that in the middle of 2020 there are approximately two and a half billion people living in urban poverty.³ This number will increase to over four billion by the year 2050. Sacred Roots dreams of equipping one million Christian leaders among this great multitude—women and men like Prince Kaboo—with access to excellent editions of some of the greatest spiritual classics the Christian tradition has produced. Ultimately, the goal is increased faithfulness as leaders mature in representing Christ in local churches that are centered on Scripture, grounded in Great Tradition truth (Nicene), and engaged in contextually relevant witness to Christ's love in thousands of diverse contexts.⁴

³ For the most current statistics, see www.gordonconwell.edu/center-for-global-christianity/resources/status-of-global-christianity/.

⁴ Don Davis, *Sacred Roots: A Primer on Retrieving the Great Tradition* (Wichita, KS: The Urban Ministry Institute, 2010), 35–45.

Our Strategy: Scripture, Friendship and Spiritual Classics

Sacred Roots' strategy is simple. We believe fresh readings of Christian spiritual classics can lead Christian leaders into a deeper engagement with the God revealed in Scripture and into deeper friendships with one another.

Christian spiritual classics strengthen and deepen our roots in Scripture and help us produce the Spirit's fruit. One day Jesus asked a serious student of the Bible a simple question, "*How do you read it?*" (Luke 10:26). Of the more than three hundred questions asked by Jesus in the Gospels, few are more relevant today. Faithfulness in our generation demands that we learn to read Scripture in a way consistent with the foundational truths held by followers of Jesus in every culture since the first century. We read Christian spiritual classics to discover faithful and fruitful readings of Scripture. As Dr. Davis has noted, the church's "Great Tradition" perennially opens our eyes to new riches in Scripture's "Authoritative Tradition."⁵

A truth believed by all Christians, in all places, and at all times is that there is one God who exists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. From "before to beyond time," an eternal friendship between the Trinity's three persons has existed at the center of reality. Spiritual friendship provides the start and heart of truth. Just as spiritual classics can reveal new riches from Scripture, so they help us grow in love for God and neighbors. They can provide practical help in deepening our friendships with the

⁵ Ibid.

Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and with other believers—both with believers in this generation and with those surrounding us in the great cloud of witnesses (Heb 12:1; 13:7). Why do Christian leaders desperately need to pursue strong friendships? Start with these three reasons.

1. First, each of us has eyes far too small to see what God wants to show us! No one can begin to grasp the great things God is doing across 100 billion galaxies and throughout the many generations since the universe's creation. Friends, standing in different places, provide additional eyes to see from different perspectives what God is doing in the world and across history.
2. Second, each of us battles a sinful nature that distorts our perception of the truth. We need friends who speak truth to us, sharpening us like iron sharpening iron (Prov 27:17).
3. Third, all of us view creation through a particular culture's time and place. Each culture exists with a unique version of virtue and vice. Friends who speak to us from other cultures and centuries often affirm virtues in our culture, but they can also reflect ways our culture's vice habitually offends against kingdom shalom.

In sum, Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics help us grow in our friendship with God and neighbor (Matt 22:37–40). Neighbors include the living Christian leaders with whom we read and discuss this spiritual classic. However, “neighbor” also includes the author (or authors) of this spiritual classic. These women and men walked faithfully with God and neighbor. Their life and

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teachings produced good fruit in their generation and then continued to do so in the lives of other Christian leaders—often across many cultures and centuries. As an editorial team, we can personally testify to the fruitfulness of the time we have spent with our “friends,” the “ancient witnesses” in the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics. If you choose to invest in careful conversation with these saints of old (Heb 13:7), we are confident you will not only experience practical fruit in the present, but you will also gain new friends for eternity.

Christian Leaders Are Christian Readers

Throughout church history, fruitful Christian leaders have been intentional readers. Augustine (d. 430), a pastor and bishop in Africa, was challenged to a new level of ministry by reading a spiritual biography about an Egyptian Christian leader named Anthony (d. 356).⁶ Protestant leaders like Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, Elizabeth Fry, Phoebe Palmer, and many others all published editions of spiritual classics for Christian leaders in their generation. Charles Harrison Mason (d. 1961), founder of the largest Pentecostal denomination in North America (Church of God in Christ, or COGIC), was called to ministry through a reading of the autobiography of missionary and evangelist Amanda Smith.⁷ More recently, leaders like C. S.

⁶ Athanasius, *Renewal in Christ: Athanasius on the Christian Life*, ed. Jeremy Treat, Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics 6 (Wichita, KS: The Urban Ministry Institute, 2022).

⁷ Amanda Smith, *An Autobiography: The Story of the Lord's Dealings with Mrs. Amanda Smith, the Colored Evangelist; Containing an Account of Her*

Lewis, A. W. Tozer, James Houston, and Rick Warren have encouraged Christian leaders to read wisely, especially choosing Christian spiritual classics.⁸

How to Read the Text

Plan your reading. Reading a spiritual classic is a bit like reading your Bible. You can read it anywhere or anytime, but there are times and places that will position you to better receive insight and truth. SRSC readers tend to read each spiritual classic several times, and many will “read” it in both a written version (print or electronic) and in an audible version (audio-book). We read to hear what the original author of the text is saying and to understand what the Holy Spirit might be directing our attention to hear or reflect upon. On your day of rest (Sabbath), reserve some time to read or at least set aside some time to plan when you will read from your spiritual classic that week. If you have a daily commute, perhaps use some of the time to listen and reflect on an audible version of the SRSC.

Work your reading plan. Once you have planned to read your spiritual classic, begin with the Introduction. The Introduction is written by a contemporary friend with significant ministry experience. This friend has spent much time reading and getting to

Life Work of Faith, and Her Travels in America, England, Ireland, Scotland, India, and Africa, as an Independent Missionary (Chicago: Meyer, 1893).

⁸ Explore the essays in Jamin Goggin and Kyle Strobel, eds., *Reading the Christian Spiritual Classics: A Guide for Evangelicals* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013).

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know the spiritual classic and the author who wrote it. Often, the introduction is written by someone who has read the spiritual classic dozens, if not hundreds of times. The introduction will help you get the most out of your first several readings of the text.

After reading the Introduction, notice that all Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics are divided into eight chapters. These chapters are not always of equal length, but they all are weighty enough to engage your head, heart, and hands as well as your habitat and habits. Following the eight chapters, every SRSC includes a short section called Continuing the Conversation. If you enjoyed reading the spiritual classic, then Continuing the Conversation will help you discover more resources to engage the author(s) of the spiritual classic.

The Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics are divided into ten parts to make it easier to talk about the text with friends and coworkers. The table in Chapter Four (page 30) provides four (of many) examples of how to read a SRSC with a group of friends. When friends commit to read and discuss a SRSC together, the group is called a Sacred Roots Study Group.

Review your reading. The best readers, like the best leaders, do more than make a plan and work it. They also pause to take time to review their work—or in this case—their reading.⁹ Robert Clinton has noted that only around 25 percent of leaders in the

⁹ The PWR (Plan, Work, Review) process is explained further in Don Allsman, *The Heroic Venture: A Parable of Project Leadership* (Wichita, KS: The Urban Ministry Institute, 2006).

Bible finished well.¹⁰ If we hope to finish well in our generation we must learn to *attend* to our habitat, our head, our heart, our hands, and our habits. To *attend* means to pay attention, to apply our self, to prioritize and to value something enough to give it our time and our energy. Each chapter concludes with five types of questions aimed at helping you review your progress toward finishing well and hearing Jesus say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matt 25:23).



Habitat? *Habitat questions* ask us to pause and look around at our environment, our culture, our generation, our nationality, and the things that make up the *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the times). Questions may ask about the author's habitat or our own. Since the SRSC were written across many centuries and cultures, they often help us notice aspects of our culture needing attention.



Head? Auguste Rodin's sculpture known as *The Thinker* sits before an 18-foot-tall sculpture called *The Gates of Hell*. The massive sculptural group reflects Rodin's engagement with a spiritual classic by Dante, *The Divine Comedy*. *Head questions* require serious intellectual engage-

¹⁰ Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development*, rev. ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2012), 185–87.

ment as you talk with friends about the author's ideas, claims, and proposals.



Heart? In August of 1541 John Calvin wrote a letter to a friend with this promise: “When I remember that I am not my own, I offer up my heart presented as a sacrifice to God.” Calvin’s personal seal expressed this sincere desire. God not only owns our mind, but also our will and emotions. *Heart questions* will help you attend to the people and things to which you give your loves.



Hands? Albrecht Dürer sketched a drawing called *Study of the Hands of an Apostle* in the year 1508. The apostles were men of action, yet Dürer portrays the apostle’s hands in prayer. The action to which SRSC call us are often surprising. *Hands questions* will challenge you to evaluate carefully what action you are to take after a particular reading.



Habits? Charlotte Mason (d. 1923) was a master teacher. She believed Christian formation must carefully attend to habit formation. Like laying railroad tracks, habit formation is hard work. But once laid, great work requires little effort just as railroad cars run smoothly on tracks. *Habit*

questions challenge you to reflect on small daily or weekly actions that form your character and the character of those around you.

Reading with Friends

The Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics are not meant to be read alone; indeed, it is impossible to do so. Every time we open a SRSC we read a book that *has been read* by thousands of Christian leaders in previous generations, *is being read* by thousands of Christian leaders in our generation, and *will be read* (if the return of Christ tarries) by thousands of Christian leaders in generations after us. The readers before us have already finished their race. These thousands of Christian leaders read the text in hundreds of different cultures and across dozens of different generations. All these “friends” read this text with you now. As you read the SRSC, imagine yourself talking about *The Rule of Benedict* (SRSC 2) with the reformer Martin Luther; or picture yourself discussing Madam Guyon’s *A Short and Easy Method of Prayer* with the missionary Amy Carmichael. Remember you never read a Sacred Roots Spiritual Classic alone.

However, it is not just leaders who have gone before, it is also leaders in the present with whom you must imagine reading this SRSC. Whatever benefit you find in reading will be doubled when you share it with a friend. Whatever trouble or difficulty you find in reading the text will be halved when you share it with

a friend. Resolve to never read a Sacred Roots Spiritual Classic alone.

Perhaps you have noticed that the word “generation” has already appeared in this preface more than fifteen times? The Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics represent the work of many generations working together. Five generations of evangelicals have worked and prayed together on this project since its public commencement in 2018. But these five generations of living evangelicals represent only a small sample of the many generations who have tested the faithfulness and fruitfulness of the SRSC. Why does this matter? In part, it matters because these texts are treasures to use and then pass on to the next generation of leaders. Recognize the emerging leaders God has called you to serve and steward—share the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics with them.

Careful readers of Scripture know that the most influential leaders among God’s people have always worked in teams. King David’s teams became legends—“the three,” “the thirty.” The list of Paul’s missionary and ministry team members whose first name we know from the New Testament runs to nearly one hundred. Our Sacred Roots team of teams prays that this text will be a blessing and a reliable resource for you and your gospel friends as you pursue kingdom business together.

Grace and Peace,

Don, Uche, Greg, May, Ryan, Isaiah and Hank



Chapter 2

Tips for Facilitating a Sacred Roots Study Group

This section provides practical tips for facilitating an effective Sacred Roots Study Group with your leaders. None are required, but many can significantly improve your leaders' study group experience.

Preparation

- Commit your group to prayer. As noted in the previous chapter, we are in a battle against internal, external, and infernal enemies of God. Commit to pray regularly for your study group.
- Read the assigned Sacred Roots Spiritual Classic chapter(s) well before your study group meeting. Reading early gives you time to think over what you read and brainstorm possible applications for your group or additional questions to ask.
- Contextualize the discussion questions. After you read a chapter, carefully examine the discussion questions. Look for ways to rework the discussion question to make them as relevant as possible for your leaders.

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- Learn about your leaders. Contextualizing the discussion questions and drawing relevant connections between the spiritual classics and the leaders' lives will be easier if you have a working knowledge of your leaders: who they are, what they do, what motivates them, their personal and ministry goals, and so on. Whether these leaders are old friends or new friends, find ways to connect with them outside of the study group so that you can invest in them.
- Watch the supplemental spiritual classic videos. Every spiritual classic has ten videos (one for each chapter) available at SacredRootsMinistry.org and on the "Sacred Roots Project" YouTube channel. In each video, the editor of that spiritual classic gives an overview of the chapter and mentions how the chapter relates to contemporary ministry and life. Watching these videos can supplement your study group's discussion.

Before the Meeting

- Determine when, where, and for how long you will meet. The regularity of keeping the same location, time of day, and day of the week, month, or quarter can help your leaders build a habit of attending your Sacred Roots Study Group. See "Sample Meeting Schedules for Sacred Roots Study Groups" below.
- Pick a suitable location. Find a centralized location for your group that has minimal distractions. Possible meeting locations include your or a leader's home, a

room in your or a leader's church, or even a restaurant. If your group wants to meet over a meal or coffee, try to pick a restaurant that is not too loud. If your group is meeting online through a videoconference, encourage your leaders to pick a quiet, distraction-free location from which to join. Joining a videoconference while driving is not recommended!

- Communicate logistics to your group. Your leaders need to know when, where, and for how long your study group will meet. Clearly communicate these details to your leaders. Consider starting a group text message or email thread with the entire group.
- Clarify expectations for group members. Group members should read the assigned spiritual classic chapter(s) before each group and come ready to discuss. Group members who have not read for a meeting may still participate in the study group. However, if coming unprepared becomes a habit for one of your leaders, try reiterating group expectations with the entire group at your next meeting. If that does not work, consider having a grace-filled, one-on-one conversation with that leader. Ask why the leader is having trouble building a regular rhythm of reading the spiritual classics and help the leader make a specific, realistic goal for the next meeting.

During the Meeting

- Arrive early to set up the space. This may include rearranging tables or chairs, setting up your laptop or a TV, finding a large enough table at a restaurant, or unlocking the door for your leaders. Arrive at least fifteen minutes early to give yourself enough time to get situated.
- Greet your leaders as they arrive. Showing interest in your leaders by listening to them talk about their day, week, or month can go a long way in creating a warm learning environment.
- Allow time for camaraderie among your group. Since the two pillars of Sacred Roots Study Groups are spiritual friendship and spiritual classics, dedicate a significant amount of your group time to friendship. Do not jump into the spiritual classic immediately. Let your leaders be friends with one another. A key tactic the enemy uses against those in ministry is isolation. Promote community among your leaders by allowing them to connect—and do not rush them!
- Spend time in prayer. Ask your leaders how the group might be praying for them. You can assign one person to pray for everyone, allow each person to pray for one other person, or spend time in silence to allow your leaders to pray as they are led. Choose whatever method of prayer fits with your group members and meeting agenda.

- Transition to discussing the spiritual classic. Leave enough time for discussing the assigned chapter(s) for the meeting. For a 75-minute meeting, you might schedule fifteen minutes for spiritual friendship, fifteen minutes for prayer, and forty-five minutes for the assigned spiritual classic reading.

After the Meeting

- End the meeting on time. Respect the personal schedules of your leaders (and yourself) by ending the meeting when it is scheduled to end. You do not want your meeting to go long and interfere with your leaders' other responsibilities, appointments, or family time.
- Consider being available after the meeting. There may be some in your group who leave on time and others who want to stay and continue chatting. As your schedule allows, try to be present after the meeting for this valuable time together.

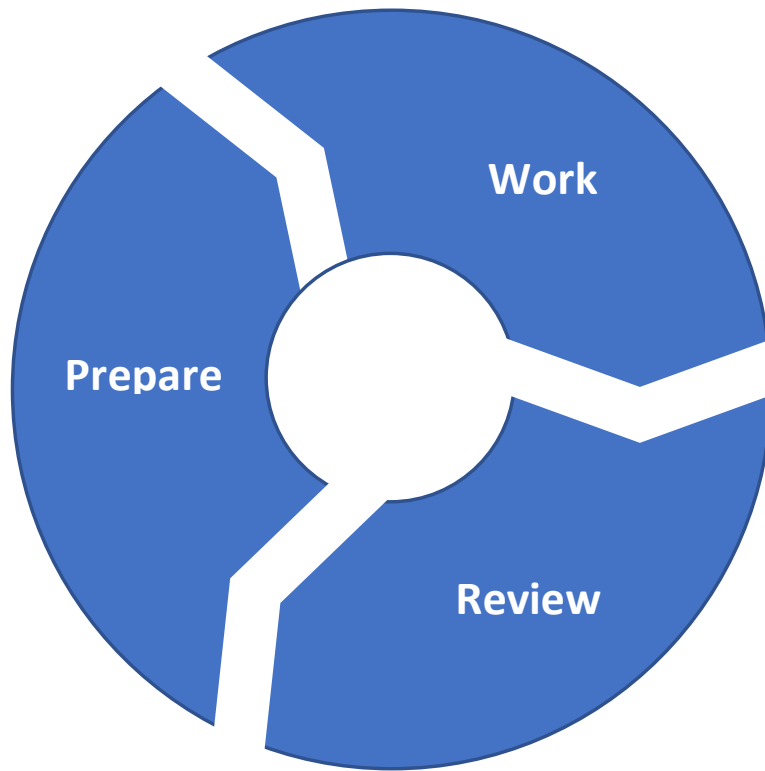
Ending the Group

- Create “on-ramps” and “off-ramps” for your leaders. In other words, set a determined time to which your group members commit. For example, if you are planning to facilitate a group through one spiritual classic for ten weeks reading one chapter per week, you might ask your leaders to commit to the study group for those ten weeks. At the end of those ten weeks, you can then congratulate

the group on completing the study group, and then offer a new Sacred Roots Study Group commitment for another ten weeks. This gives your study group an “on-ramp” to invite new leaders into the group, a chance to “stay on the highway” and make a renewed commitment to study group participation, or to take the “off-ramp” and leave the group either permanently or temporarily. Creating “on-ramps” and “off-ramps” for Sacred Roots Study Groups promotes participation and protects the group from slowly fizzling out as leaders slip away unannounced.

- Apprentice a cofacilitator before you take the “off-ramp.” You likely will not facilitate your Sacred Roots Study Group forever. If your group wants to continue meeting after you leave, slowly transition the facilitator role to another leader over the course of several meetings before you leave.
- Split your group if it gets too large. The ideal size of a Sacred Roots Study Group is four to twelve leaders. Once your group begins approaching eleven or twelve members, you should begin apprenticing a cofacilitator so that your group can multiply. If your group splits, be sure to have the new facilitator complete a Thrive Plan for the new group. See “How to Launch a Sacred Roots Study Group with Your Community” below.
- Use the Prepare, Work, Review (PWR) framework to evaluate your study group. For more information about the PWR framework for decision making, problem

solving, and project leadership, see Don Allsman's *The Heroic Venture: A Parable of Project Leadership* (Wichita, KS: TUMI Press, 2017).



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Chapter 3

Sample Meeting Agenda for a Sacred Roots Study Group

The following template is a proposed agenda for a Sacred Roots Study Group meeting lasting an hour and fifteen minutes. This is not a required structure for your study group, but a model of what could work well for many groups.

Time	Activity	Description
-15:00	Facilitator Arrives	The facilitator arrives early to set up the space and to be ready for group members.
-10:00–15:00	Spiritual Friendship	Group members fellowship together by sharing about their lives and spending time with one another. This may be structured or unstructured.
15:00–30:00	Prayer	Group members pray for each other, their families, their ministries, their work, and so on.

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30:00– 75:00	Spiritual Classic Discussion	Group members discuss the spiritual classic reading assigned for that meeting. The discussion may be directed by the facilitator.
75:00– 90:00	End of Meeting	The facilitator ensures the meeting ends on time, but may allow discussion or fellowship to continue for those who want to stay longer.



Chapter 4

Sample Meeting Schedules for Sacred Roots Study Groups

The following table provides four example schedules for a Sacred Roots Study Group. Choose a rhythm that fits best for your group. For example, an option with a slower reading pace could be a biweekly group that discusses one chapter per meeting.

Of the four models described on the table, which would work best for your group?

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	Ten-Week Sunday School Class	Eight-Week Church-Based Seminary Module	Monthly Pastor’s Meeting	Quarterly Retreat
Introduction	Week 1	Week 1	Month 1	Read text before retreat, then discuss.
Ch. 1	Week 2			
Ch. 2	Week 3	Week 2		
Ch. 3	Week 4	Week 3	Month 2	
Ch. 4	Week 5	Week 4		
Ch. 5	Week 6	Week 5		
Ch. 6	Week 7	Week 6		
Ch. 7	Week 8	Week 7	Month 3	
Ch. 8	Week 9	Week 8		
Afterword Soul Work and Soul Care	Week 10			



Chapter 5

How to Launch a Sacred Roots Study Group with Your Community

If you are interested in starting a Sacred Roots Study Group with your community of Christian leaders, the Sacred Roots team invites you to follow these six steps.

Step One: Apply

Your first step is to complete the study group facilitator application found at SacredRootsMinistry.org/cohort-resources or by following the QR code below. This application provides general information about you and your ministry. After submitting your application, a member of our team will reach out within 7–10 business days regarding your application status.



Step Two: Prepare

Once your application is accepted, you will receive links to three study group facilitator training modules. These modules each contain a video and a short series of questions to help you learn the “what” and “why” of a Sacred Roots Study Group. Take notes on the videos and reflect on how you might share the information with others. Once you complete all three modules, you are prepared to facilitate a Sacred Roots Study Group.

Step Three: Commit

After completing the three modules, you will receive a link to complete your study group’s Thrive Plan. The Thrive Plan will ask for the names of your group members and the names of their congregations, your tentative schedule for meeting, and which Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics your group would like to study.

Step Four: Resource

We will resource your Sacred Roots study group with up to four spiritual classics which you chose on your Thrive Plan. You will receive one copy of each spiritual classic for each member of your group. A complete list of spiritual classics can be found at SacredRootsMinistry.org/#our-books. Depending on your location, spiritual classics may be provided in print for free, in print at a significant discount, or digitally for free.

Step Five: Execute

Meet with your Sacred Roots Study Group weekly, biweekly, monthly, quarterly, or in whatever rhythm works best for your leaders. Read and discuss the spiritual classics together, apprenticing yourselves to our spiritual mothers and fathers of the faith who have gone before us. Remember that generations of Christian leaders have read and reread these spiritual classics.

Step Six: Reflect, Report, Certify

Lastly, report completion of your Sacred Roots Study Group and study group members' names to SacredRoots@taylor.edu. We will send a brief evaluation for you and your group members to complete. Upon completion of the evaluation, your group members will be eligible to receive a *Sacred Roots Certificate in Spiritual Formation* from The Urban Ministry Institute and Taylor University's Office of Church Relations. And, you will be eligible to receive a *Sacred Roots Certificate in Formational Leadership* from The Urban Ministry Institute and Taylor University's Office of Church Relations.

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Chapter 6

A Note for Church Planters

By Rev. Bob Engel

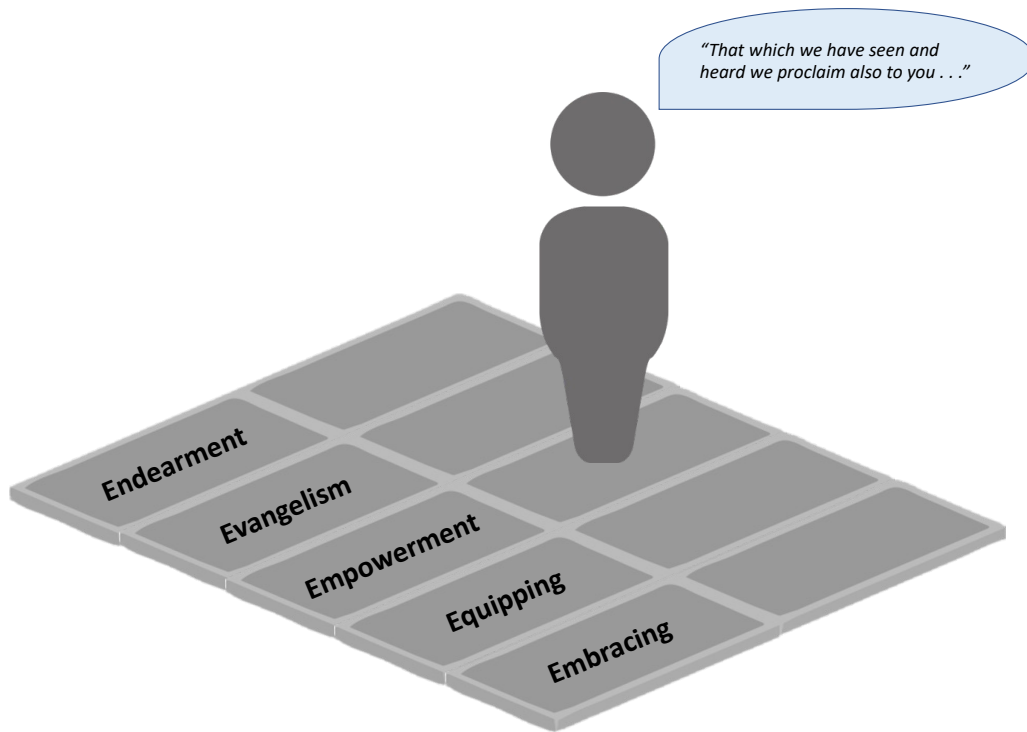
God Almighty, the Creator of all things visible and invisible, is a missionary God. He is the God of missions. It is His undeniable character, scope, being, and thought. “For God so loved” (the character of God—love, mercy, compassion) “the world” (the scope of God—every creature [Mark 16:15]) “that he gave” (the being of God—sending, initiating) “his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved” (the thought of God—salvation, hope, rescue) “through him” (John 3:16–17).” It is the Missions-DNA of God.

It was Jesus of Nazareth, born of the virgin Mary, the Son of God and Son of Man, sent by God Almighty with this same Missions-DNA who, after calling and equipping His apostles, and having been given all authority in heaven and earth, gave them the Great Commission mandate to, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt 28:19–20).

It was the apostles, now infused with this Missions-DNA by God the Holy Spirit (Acts 2), who went and proclaimed the gospel: that in Christ Jesus, God was reconciling the world to Himself. They were moved not primarily because of the Great Commission mandate but because the Missions-DNA of God was now in them. They could not help but go. As Paul the Apostle passionately said, “For the love of Christ controls [constrains, urges, impels, afflicts with (sickness)] us” (2 Cor 5:14). It is the Missions-DNA that becomes the deepest motive for missions.

As the apostles passed on from this world to their heavenly home, the Missions-DNA was infused into the emerging early church. This Missions-DNA molecule contained the instructions for the development, function, and reproduction of the church. It is what made the church alive, unique, robust and engaged in the world but not of it. From its beginnings, the early church was founded upon a solid apostolic missions “platform” made of five actionable “planks” (E’s), one action for each “plank”: (1) **Endearment** to Jesus as Lord; (2) **Evangelism** as proclamation of the gospel; (3) **Empowerment** by the Holy Spirit for the evangelization of the world and advancing God’s kingdom through church planting; (4) **Equipping** the saints “from and for” the church; and (5) **Embracing** as one, holy, universal and apostolic community representing the kingdom of God, His rule and reign.

Despite all the satanic obstacles relentlessly hurled to hinder, frustrate, stall, and even destroy the church, she has faithfully moved forward in the Missions-DNA of the Triune God. There



is much that the church of today can learn from the early church and their faithfulness to the God of missions. Their endearment, that is, their sincere and pure devotion (2 Cor 11:3) to the Lordship of Jesus, kept the Missions-DNA untainted.

For over forty years I have been engaged in missions—proclaiming the gospel, making disciples, equipping leaders, to establish new churches for the glory of God—in low-income, high-crime communities. In various ways, many have asked me how I have endured in keeping my Missions-DNA untainted. My reply is simple: reading the spiritual classics of the early church. Given all the challenges and struggles my family and I have encountered and continue to encounter, it has been the readings of spiritual classics that the Holy Spirit has used countless times to keep me focused, inspired, passionate and in

concert with the God of missions. They have kept my Missions-DNA unpolluted.

As the facilitator of the Evangel Network, an initiative of World Impact, a Christian missions organization, it is a joy to partner with Taylor University's Sacred Roots project. The reading of their spiritual classics, along with many others, I firmly believe, will bring revival to the church through a fresh infusion of the Missions-DNA of God. The closer one is drawn to the Father in Christ Jesus, the clearer one hears His heartbeat for the lost. The spiritual classics are a means to an end. The means: to be endeared to the Lord Jesus. The end: to evangelize the nations and advance His rule and reign by establishing churches for the glory of God.

The present-day slogan, *missional*, is not a new concept but rather a late byproduct of Christian missions or a late awakening of the Christian conscience. This is a good thing in my opinion. Better late than never. It is the Holy Spirit, the "Commander" of God's kingdom movement through the church, bringing a Missions-DNA transfusion that is desperately needed for revival, health, and reproduction. I do have a concern at the same time. Will the church as a whole permit the Missions-DNA transfusion of reviving power to penetrate, cleanse, reform, transform, and redirect her total life so that the character, scope, being, and thought of God is flowing freely and powerfully in her, that God's desire would be passionately ours, "not wishing that any should perish" (2 Pet 3:9)? Missions is the sweeping wave of revival to keep the church focused on her purpose and calling. The early church clearly experienced this. The Missions-

DNA was untainted. A fresh reading of the spiritual classics from the early church saints, leaders and martyrs will cause the church of today to thrive in the purpose and calling our missions God has given us.

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Chapter 7

A Note for Church-Based Seminaries

By Rev. Ryan Carter

*By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us,
guard the good deposit entrusted to you.
~ 2 Timothy 1.14*

Guard the Good Deposit¹

The Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics can enhance your leadership training by connecting students to the great heritage of our family as believers, and by offering them a doorway to continue learning after they graduate from The Urban Ministry Institute.

As Christians today, we stand in a long history of heirs to the apostolic faith, the gospel of Jesus Christ, and his kingdom. Generations of Christians have guarded this faith by articulating, defending, and passing on the truth of Christ.

The Great Tradition is this legacy of Christian engagement with Scripture that fundamentally shaped the Church as we know it.

¹ This section is adapted from material in Ryan Carter, *Guard the Good Deposit: The Great Tradition for the Whole Church* (Wichita, KS: TUMI Press, 2019).

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It “represents the central core of Christian belief and practice derived from Scripture that runs between the time of Christ and the middle of the fifth century.”² We guard this “good deposit” of the Great Tradition by providing a clear witness to what has been believed and practiced everywhere, always, by all Christians.

At its heart, the Great Tradition is simply the story of God infused into the whole life of the church. Scripture bears witness to the person and work of the Triune God, focusing especially on Christ and his kingdom. We confess this in our theology, retell and reenact it in our worship, embody it in our spirituality, and continue it in our witness. These fundamental responses are the “Sacred Roots” of every branch of the church.

The Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics connect us to the Great Tradition by mining the riches of our historical texts. So often these texts are difficult and daunting for modern readers. This series offers shorter selections of the classics and modern translations that bring into focus the stunning relevance of these old books.

Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics and Church-Based Seminary

The Urban Ministry Institute (TUMI) equips urban church leaders with contextualized training for the purpose of revitalizing the urban church and empowering urban leaders in

² Don L. Davis, *Sacred Roots: A Primer on Retrieving the Great Tradition* (Wichita, KS: TUMI Press, 2010), 74.

communities of poverty. In our view, retrieving the Great Tradition is integral to this purpose. New life and vitality come from tapping into our Sacred Roots.

According to Rev. Dr. Don Davis, the founder of TUMI, World Impact's church-based seminary, "This Story of God in Christ is the fuel in the engine of authentic theological preparation and leadership development, and every [church-based seminary] satellite must confess what all Christians have confessed from the start. Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. The Story of God in Christ can greatly enhance your purpose and studies, enrich your worship, and recalibrate your direction as you recruit students and mentors at your site."³

This commitment is evident in all of our leadership training curricula, including our premiere seminary-level training, The Capstone Curriculum. Students engage our Sacred Roots through Christ-centered biblical studies, Nicene Creedal theology, church-focused ministry, and apostolic mission.

The Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics provide an invaluable opportunity to relate these studies directly to the writings of key figures in church history. This series categorizes the classics in the same four subject areas as The Capstone Curriculum, so they are easily correlated to what students are studying. The selec-

³ From Don L. Davis, "Of Whose Spirit Are We? A Primer on Why We Seek to Retrieve the Great Tradition for the City Church" in Don L. Davis, ed., *Multiplying Laborers for the Urban Harvest: Shifting the Paradigm for Servant Leadership Education*, 15th ed. (Wichita, KS: TUMI Press, 2013), 19.

tions and translations are designed specifically to connect with people taking TUMI courses and to enrich their training as leaders for the church. You will find yourself wondering how some fifth-century monk or sixteenth-century missionary is speaking directly to your situation. These classics are a goldmine for the modern church.

Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics and Lifelong Learning

One of the most common questions from TUMI students and mentors is, “How can I keep studying and learning after I graduate?” While there are many avenues graduates can pursue, the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics provide a ready-made and fruitful opportunity for students to continue learning.

The depth and richness of the texts in this series bear serious consideration and study. Each one has stood the test of time and proven over many centuries that it is worth your time and effort. Their enduring relevance is a testament both to their quality and to the mighty work of God’s Spirit throughout history and across the world. These classics can open a doorway to vast potential for lifelong learning in the Great Tradition of the church.

In addition to furthering one’s own formation, the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics are designed to foster fellowship and discipleship. Many graduates and former students say that, more than anything else, they miss the conversation, mutual encouragement, and camaraderie of a classroom setting. Sacred Roots Study Groups help leaders create this kind of environment and connection in their church, allowing them and others to get the

most out of these texts. There are few things sweeter than learning and growing together in Christ.

We believe the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics will bless you, your training, and your students. May God reward your diligence and faithfulness with abundant life and fruitful ministry for the name and glory of Jesus.



About the Sacred Roots Project

The Sacred Roots Thriving in Ministry Project seeks to equip and empower under-resourced congregational leaders in urban, rural, and incarcerated communities. One avenue for accomplishing this goal is the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics, a series of abridged Christian spiritual classics that expose congregational leaders to the wealth of the Great Tradition.

The Senior Editorial Team of the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics includes:

Rev. Dr. Don Davis
Publisher

The Urban Ministry Institute

Rev. Dr. Hank Voss
Executive Editor
Taylor University

Dr. Uche Anizor
Senior Editor
Biola University, Talbot School of Theology

Rev. Dr. Greg Peters
Senior Editor
Biola University, Torrey Honors College

Dr. May Young
Senior Editor
Taylor University

Rev. Ryan Carter
Managing Editor
The Urban Ministry Institute

Isaiah Swain
Managing Editor
Taylor University

The Senior Editorial Team acknowledges and appreciates the support and encouragement of the following ministers and scholars for their various contributions to this project: Dr. Gwenfair Adams (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary), Rev. Dr. Nigel Black (Winslow Baptist Church), Dr. Jonathan Calvillo (Boston University School of Divinity), Dr. Laura Edwards (Taylor University), Rev. Nathan Esla (Lutheran Bible Translators), Dr. Nancy Frazier (Dallas Theological Seminary), Dr. Jeff Greenman (Regent College), Dr. Kevin Hector (University of Chicago Divinity School), Rev. Dr. Wil Hernandez (Centerquest), Dr. James Houston (Regent College), Dr. Evan B. Howard (Spirituality Shoppe), Rev. Susie Krehbiel (Missionary, Retired), Rev. Dr. Tim Larsen (Wheaton College), Dr. Stephanie Lowery (Africa International University), Dr. Daniel Owens (Hanoi Bible College), Rev. Dr. Oscar Owens (West Angeles Church of God), Dr. Bob Priest (Taylor University), Rev. Dr. Robert Romero (University of California, Los Angeles), Rev. Dr. Jerry Root (Wheaton College), Dr. Fred Sanders (Biola University), Dr. Glen Scorgie (Bethel University), Dr. Kyle Strobel (Biola University), Dr. Daniel

Treier (Wheaton College), and Dr. Kevin Vanhoozer (Trinity Evangelical Divinity School).

The Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics are dedicated to all Christian leaders who have loved the poor and have recognized the importance of Christian spiritual classics for nurturing the next generation. We especially recognize these fourteen:

John Wesley (1703–1791)
Rebecca Protten (1718–1780)
Elizabeth Fry (1780–1845)
Phoebe Palmer (1807–1874)
Dora Yu (1873–1931)
A. W. Tozer (1897–1963)
Howard Thurman (1899–1981)
Watchman Nee (1903–1972)
James Houston (1922–)
J. I. Packer (1926–2020)
Tom Oden (1931–2016)
René Padilla (1932–2021)
Dallas Willard (1935–2013)
Bruce Demarest (1935–2021)

Remember your leaders,
those who spoke to you the word of God.
Consider the outcome of their way of life,
and imitate their faith.

Hebrews 13:7

If you would like to facilitate a Sacred Roots study group, please use the QR code below to submit your application.



For more information about Sacred Roots, go to SacredRootsMinistry.org or find us on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.



Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith.

~ Hebrews 13:7

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Sacred Roots Study Groups are groups of Christian leaders who meet regularly to read and discuss the Sacred Roots Spiritual Classics together. This book guides Study Group Facilitators through the process of considering, launching, facilitating, and ending a Sacred Roots Study Group. It includes contributions from Rev. Ryan Carter, Rev. Dr. Don Davis, Rev. Bob Engel, and Rev. Dr. Hank Voss.



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