



INSPIRED BY THE FILM
"THERE BE DRAGONS"
A FILM BY ROLAND JOFFE
DIRECTOR OF "THE MISSION"

FACING YOUR DRAGONS

HEALING BROKEN
RELATIONSHIPS

CONFRONTING
YOUR DARKNESS

SEEING GOD
IN EVERYONE

SEEING GOD
IN EVERYTHING

A FOUR-SESSION DVD-BASED STUDY
FOR GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS





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INTRODUCTION TO FACING YOUR DRAGONS
 a four-session small group curriculum based on *There Be Dragons*



Based on the life of Josemaria Escrivá, a Spanish priest whose life spanned a civil war and World War 2, the movie *There Be Dragons* explores the darkness in the lives of men and the light that drives that darkness away. Escrivá is best known as the founder of Opus Dei, an organization within the Roman Catholic Church that teaches that everyone is called to holiness and that ordinary life can be a path to sanctity. He is the most recent canonized saint of the church. The film takes place during the process of canonizing Josemaria Escrivá. A reporter/author is drawn to write a book on the priest because Josemaria and his own father were from the same town in Spain, though the writer is estranged from his father. It turns out that Josemaria and the writer's father, Manolo, were childhood friends.

The efforts to get parts of the story from his own father forces the writer to attempt a reconciliation and it forces the father to face the dragons of the long past. Eventually, we follow Roberto back to his father's childhood and the parallel experiences of Josemaria and Manolo during the horrific years of the Spanish civil war. Now Manolo is dying, and the opportunity for reconciliation is coming to a close.





OVERVIEW OF FACING YOUR DRAGONS

FOUR SESSIONS:

There are four different sessions related to the film *There Be Dragons*. They can be viewed/used individually or as a series. Each uses different glimpses of the content in the film, highlighting themes that were part of the values and life of Josemaria Escrivá. These themes are not coincidentally the themes that make up much of any person's life:

Healing Broken Relationships
Confronting Your Darkness
Seeing God in Everyone
Seeing God in Everything

BASIC FORMAT:

The basic format of the series sessions is outlined below. There are 7 segments that make up each individual session. The first six segments have an approximate time listed below, related to the DVD. Segment 7 includes some reflections on the session and question that can be used for individual consideration or group discussion. This printed version includes the Segment 7 material that is not on the DVD. The title and brief description of each segment is as follows:



DVD Sessions:

1. Opening-The host (Brett Eastman) briefly introduces the session (Approximately 2 minutes).
2. *There Be Dragons* Movie Clip (Approximately 4-6 minutes).
3. Personal Story –Various Individuals relating paralled life experiences to those seen on the clips (Approximately 3-5 min).
4. Bridge-from the Story to the Teaching-Brett (Approx. 1-2 min).
5. Teaching Segment— Various Pastors/Authors developing the themes and demonstrating their relevance to timeless issues in people's lives. (Approximately 5-7).
6. Transition-from the teaching to discussion–Brett (Approximately 30 sec).

Downloadable Study Material:

Questions-a series of clarifying and exploratory questions which will help the group not only discuss the clips and teaching, but also move toward self discovery and personal application. These you will find in the pages that follow.

Total Session Time will be approximately 18-22 minutes with open-ended question time.





SESSION ONE: HEALING BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS

Transition from the teaching to discussion

Did you pick up what Jason said? “If you’ve got someone in your life who has really hurt you, the best thing you can do for yourself is forgive them.” What an amazing statement. Those words echo the message of Josemaria Escrivá in the film and they have consistently echoed across the centuries in Christianity. Forgiveness shifts our attention away from getting justice or getting even and toward getting well, healthy and whole. Isn’t that what we really want?

Now it’s your turn to share your story. This discussion guide has some questions for you to ponder or to use for interaction. If you are part of a group, take the risk to let others become part of your future. And honor the others in your group by listening to them. You never know when you will discover an insight into your own dragons and your own story as you allow someone else to share their story with you.

The story of Josemaria and Manolo takes us back to their childhood. Experiences early in most of our lives reveal and shape our character. Hardships that happen to us are important, but not as important as the way we respond. We gradually see Josemaria and Manolo responding to events beyond their control with personal decisions that take them in different directions in life. But we begin the movie at almost the end of a crucial chapter in the story. Death may interrupt or change the direction in someone’s story, but particularly in the Christian worldview, death never ends the story.

QUESTIONS

1. If you could rekindle one relationship from your childhood, what would it be? Why?

In the film, we are introduced immediately to Josemaria Escrivá who has apparently continued to write his childhood friend Manolo, even though he has never gotten a response. His final letter is interrupted by his death. Then we meet Manolo’s son, Roberto, who has been assigned to write on Escrivá and admits to a personal interest because of the possible connection between his own father and the recently dead priest. Roberto and two priests are discussing miracles and how they are verified.



2. Since the context of the discussion with Roberto is miracles, the possibility is introduced that some things in life cannot simply be resolved on the human level. What do you think of the possibility that some relationships require a divine, perhaps miraculous intervention in order to be healed?

3. Not only does Roberto mention his lengthy (8 years) lack of contact with his father, but he also admits to a lack of interest in becoming a father himself. How do broken relationships affect other relationships?

Life has a way of creating confrontations with the past. Things we try to cover up or leave behind sometimes circle around and show up when we least expect them. We don’t know exactly what Manolo’s plan was, but he doesn’t seem ready to reconcile with his son.

4. Roberto calls his father, but there is no response. In the movie, the efforts by both father and son seem to repeatedly miss each other. Once a relationship is “broken” what do you think is the hardest part of initiating the healing process?

5. When Manolo begins telling his story with the childhood adventures he and Escrivá had, he warns that “there be dragons” in the past. What do you think he meant by “dragons” and how does that play out in your own memories of the past—to what degree would you agree that there be dragons back there?





6. To what extent do you feel God is interested and involved in restoring relationships? What does God do to make us feel like He's involved in our lives?

The story of Barb and Dean as well as the teaching from Jason Fenn offered both experienced encouragement and practical advice. You may want to take some time to respond personally or as a group to those two presentations.

7. What relationships in your own life would you like to see improved or restored? How might your desire for reconciliation be an indication that God is working in the situation?

8. Speaking of relationships, how would you describe the current state of your relationship with God?

SESSION TWO: CONFRONTING YOUR DARKNESS

Transition from the teaching to discussion

You know, if what you just heard JP talk about was all new to you, but you're thinking, I get it, I want to face the darkness within, you may want to play that section again, maybe when you are by yourself, and pause each time you need to absorb what he's said. If you know you've had God working in your life for a long time, it doesn't disrespect God to admit that there's still darkness and dragons affecting you. In fact, as both Bob and JP said, God wants to help you face those things in your life.

Use the following discussion questions to clarify and to begin to apply some of what you've thought about in this session.

QUESTIONS:

In the movie clip we viewed, Josemaria is learning about the identity of dragons, but he's also experiencing the effect of dragons. The sunny days of childhood are clouded by the storms of his mother suffering and a baby dying.

1. What are some of the sunny days that you remember from your childhood? What other people participated with you in making those memories? Why are those good memories for you?

2. When you look back, what clouds and storms affected your childhood? What are some of the earliest dragons you became aware of?

As the film indicates, Josemaria took his cues about events and their meaning from his mother and father as well as from the relative who ran the chocolate factory. These were people who not only answered his questions, but lived in a way that made a lasting impression on Josemaria. When the young boy assumes that God has taken his baby sister and that his mother must therefore hate God, he's stunned by his mother's steadfast love for God. But he wonders aloud if his mother would still love God when God takes him away. Mom wasn't prepared for that conclusion. But instead of trying to answer the mystery, Josemaria's father opens his arms and comforts his son.

3. Who had the strongest influence on you when it came to understanding the mysteries of life, like suffering? How did that come about?





4. How did you become aware of God in your childhood, and what were some of your earliest conclusions about the character and the work of God?

It's worth noting that when you view the entire movie, the story is told through the eyes and memories of Manolo, who had his own dragons to deal with from childhood. Yet Manolo realizes that Josemaria was taking the better path, even though at the time he didn't believe so. The scene with the cocoa bean in the factory will be recalled at several significant points in the movie. Vivid conversations such as these often turn out to be life changing events that we don't realize until later.

5. What are some examples of conversations you had or witnessed from your childhood that have become an unforgettable part of the way you think and live? Why do you think that's the case?

In Bob's story and the teaching by JP Jones, it becomes clear that we often carry darkness with us that undermines even the best things that happen later on. One way to think of this is the account of the raising of Lazarus found in the Gospel of John, chapter 11:1-44. While the entire story is fascinating, it's easy to miss the significance of the last scene. Jesus has just raised Lazarus from the dead and he comes hopping out of the tomb, still wrapped in the grave-clothes. He's alive, but bound. Jesus asks those standing there to un-wrap Lazarus. In our relationship with God, it is often the role of others to help us identify the dragons, darkness, and "grave clothes" of our past and then help set us free.

6. There Be Dragons allows us to see two very different ways to deal with dragons and darkness in life. Josemaria faces his dragons as they come along, struggling with hatred, anger, and fear, but always seeking to honor God. Manolo denies or runs from his dragons (as it turns out almost to the end of his life) and has to deal with their increased control over his actions. When it comes to dragons and darkness in life, with which of these men do you identify most closely?

7. Bob talks about the resurrection-like experience of recognizing for the first time God's love and forgiveness and then later realizing that there are still "left-over" dragons connected with his past that haven't been confronted. How do you relate to Bob's story? Would you describe yourself as someone yet to confront dragons, someone who has faced the basic darkness in your life and received forgiveness, or someone who is actively using the light Christ has brought into your life to confront the past and deal with it?

8. Describe one action or decision that this session has provoked you to consider that you know will alter your life.

SESSION THREE: SEEING GOD IN EVERYONE

Transition from Teaching to Discussion:



What do you think about Sergio's point? Would you say that you've got an open heart? Have you got the outlook that says, "God I'm excited about everything that you are doing in my life and the people you're doing it through. Help me to do my part and listen carefully. Help me to learn." As you talk together about Sergio's teaching, use the following questions or others that may come to mind in the group.

QUESTIONS

There are many people moving through Josemaria's life in the movie, but he has little understanding of what an impact he is having on them. When you see the entire movie, you will be amazed at how the incident at the piano, when Josemaria leaves the rosary with Manolo and his childhood friend makes a crude bet with him—all that comes back into play by the end of the film. In one way or another, God allows each person who passes through our life in a permanent way or a temporary way to have some kind of effect. We often don't realize that until much later. but when we start looking for God at work in everyone, it's often amazing what we do see!

1. In the conversation by the piano, Manolo and Josemaria discover they have arrived at very different conclusions about the meaning of life and God's place in it. What were some of your earliest conclusions about God and life from your childhood, and how did you come to think that way?





2. When you see the entire movie, you will discover that Manolo is grieving the loss of his father at this point. It's a hard loss, but everyone in life experiences losses. What differences can be seen in your life when you choose to respond to life's hardships with bitterness or with faith?

Josemaria doesn't condemn Manolo when his friend mocks God's role in life, but cautions him about the way he is thinking. Later, despite the strong desire to hate that even he feels, Josemaria talks to his friends about the necessity to forgive in particular when we have the fewest reasons to. But, as the film makes clear, maintaining a commitment to forgiveness and love costs a person dearly. It isn't the easy way even if it is by far the best way. Josemaria took literally Jesus' command to forgive our enemies and do good to those who persecute us.

3. Imagine the shock Josemaria experiences in watching a fellow priest gunned down in the street. What would make it possible for you to forgive those who had done that barbarous act?

4. Jesus made the following stunning statement:

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' (Matthew 25:31-40 NIV)



Josemaria Escrivá believed these actions were before each person, not just those who were priests and pastors. His movement provided ordinary followers of Jesus with the opportunity to practice obedience to Jesus' words. In what ways have you participated in efforts to take seriously Jesus' command to feed the hungry, supply water to the thirsty, welcome the stranger and the other actions of compassion?

Mary Love discovered this same truth in looking back at her life growing up with an alcoholic mother. She had to find out in very painful encounters with dragons that God was directing her life to a good end.

5. What did Mary learn about balancing the disappointments that we experience with people? How have you discovered that God can even work in the middle of dysfunctional relationships?

6. In Sergio's teaching segment, he uses the Parable of the Good Samaritan to make the point that God often uses unusual means to get his help to us. The importance of seeking to see God in everyone isn't just because that view affects the way we treat them; it also affects the way we accept help from them. What examples of God's unusual messengers have you experienced in your life?

7. Consider doing some research into the life of Josemaria Escrivá. What do you find in his life that would have drawn him to start an effort like Opus Dei? In what ways do you find yourself called to this kind of work in your relationships with others?



8. What people in your life would you say you find the most difficult to imagine as God's servants? What would it take to cause you to look at them again from the perspective of God's love for them?



SESSION FOUR: SEEING GOD IN EVERYONE

Transition from teaching to discussion:

What an amazing thought: the fact is that EAR is right in the middle of HEART! Take off the “H” and the “T” and you’ve got EAR. It’s a neat reminder that God most often communicates through the heart-gate. It’s often true that the reason we can’t hear God is because we’ve got our hearts shut down. We need to turn up the volume and get busy listening with our hearts.

As you talk to each other, share what you got from Phil’s teaching. Use the questions below to guide your discussion, and feel free to share with each other any other questions that might have come to mind.

QUESTIONS:

One of the strong ideas that comes through the thinking of Josemaria Escrivá reflected in *There Be Dragons* is the importance of looking for God in everything. It is an idea rooted in the Bible and is a direct deduction from the belief that God is Maker and Creator of the world. His fingerprints are on everything. The letter to the Romans declares, “Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature--have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.” (Romans 1:19-21 NIV).

1. What are the things you see, hear, and feel that make you most thankful to be one of God’s creations?

2. If you cannot yet see God in everything, where can you see him most clearly?

One of the telling moments in the film comes when Josemaria’s father loses his chocolate factory and Manolo is forbidden by his father from spending time with Josemaria. Manolo admits that although his father had more of almost everything, he was envious because Josemaria had more Dad. The seed of envy began to grow in Manolo.



3. What events from your childhood have turned out to be very beneficial to you, even if they were setbacks, or hardships?



4. Sometimes, the loss of friendship, as in Josemaria’s case, makes us open for a relationship with God that we might not have otherwise desired. What experiences have you had where a loss suddenly made you sensitive to God presence in the world around you in new ways?

The winter scene during which Josemaria sees the priest delivering firewood to the needy, he interprets as his own call to a life of service to God: It is a turning point in Escrivá’s life.

5. How were you impacted by Josemaria’s gesture of taking off his own shoes as he was following the monk in the snow through the city streets?

6. What experiences have you had that got your attention in such a way that you suspected God had just called you to serve Him in some way? How did you decide whether that was a vocation or simply an interest?





7. When in your life have you realized that you were able to serve God in someone else's life? What was that experience like?

Psalm 19 says, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world" (Psalms 19:1-4a NIV).

8. What advantage do you believe a person has when they can move through life seeing God at every turn, on every face, and in each situation?

