

ECLIPSING EMPIRE

PREPARATION AND ORIENTATION



ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

The primary role of the facilitator is to coordinate the flow of each session. The facilitator is not expected (and should resist the temptation) to provide answers for the class. The facilitator can also help or be responsible for organizing the location of the gatherings, collecting supplies and materials, organizing refreshments, recruiting participants, etc.

MATERIALS

There are three sets of written materials for *Eclipsing Empire*:

- 1) The Participant Reader written by John Dominic Crossan (60+ pages).
- 2) The weekly Discussion Guide with questions for participants (1 page each week).
- 3) Orientation material and session outline for facilitator use.

The Participant Reader is formatted to be printed into a 34-page booklet, printed on both sides of most pages (some pages have been left intentionally blank for layout purposes). To allow the reader to turn pages easily and lay flat for easy note taking, it is best if the Participant Reader is bound with comb or coil binding. Many organizations already have the capability to create these types of booklets. Your local office-supply or print shop can also do the binding at a reasonable cost. The reader can also be hole-punched for use in a 3-ring binder.

The bound Participant Reader is intended to be kept together as an integrated resource. It can be distributed prior to or at the first session of the series. The facilitator distributes the one page Discussion Guide at the beginning of each session. Some groups have found it helpful to hand out the Discussion Guide for the following session at the end of each session, giving readers a chance to preview the questions as they read the written material.

Note: Please remember (and remind the participants) that the printed material is copyrighted and licensed for the purchaser's use for one year from the date of purchase.

SETTING

The most important thing about preparing the meeting place is for people to be comfortable. Arrive early; help the host organize any refreshments **AND MAKE SURE TO TEST THE DVD TO ENSURE YOU HAVE THE CORRECT DISC AND THAT EVERYTHING WORKS!**

PREPARATION

- 1) View the DVD segment ahead of time and make your own notes and observations regarding its contents. Note your own observations on your Discussion Guide.
- 2) Make the necessary number of copies of the Discussion Guide before each gathering. Have extras of everything (Participant Reader, pens/pencils, etc) for visitors or folks who forget their materials.

SESSION OUTLINE

Eclipsing Empire has been designed with flexibility in mind. Each session may be completed in a one-hour setting or expanded to fill as much as two hours. The session may be shortened by agreeing to read the material ahead of time, limiting discussion to large group interaction, etc. It may be expanded by including discussion in small groups, a refreshment break, etc. In general, the outline of each session includes:

- 1) It's always good to begin with introductions, especially the first week, but also whenever you have new people joining.
- 2) Have someone read aloud (or in unison as a group) the Pauline excerpt at the top of the Discussion Guide.
- 3) If participants haven't been asked to read the material ahead of time, read the Participant Reader together (15 minutes, if necessary).
- 4) Discuss any observations and questions from the reading material (10-15 minutes).
- 5) View DVD session (20-25 minutes).
- 6) Discuss the questions from the Discussion Guide (20 minutes).

See the Session Outline sheet for details.

SOME GROUP DYNAMICS CONSIDERATIONS

- 1) If you have more than ten in your group, you may want to consider forming smaller groups in order to promote sharing.
- 2) Regardless of whether or not the Participant Reader will be read together as a part of each session, participants are encouraged to read the material before class. Keep in mind that if the Participant Reader is not read as part of your session, it will indeed shorten the class time, but questions and observations may also not be as "fresh" on people's minds.
- 3) As you move into pairs or groups of three, be sure to encourage people to find someone that they don't necessarily know each week. Often, asking people to pair up with someone they're not related to or didn't come with does the trick. Remind them to introduce themselves to one another even if they think they know one another.

CLOSING

Depending on the tradition and comfort level of your group, each session may be closed with silent reflection, spoken prayer, or Pauline benediction. Several Pauline benedictions are included as part of the Session Outline.

The facilitator may want to have someone identified through a sign-up sheet who will be responsible for the close of each session.