

Our Prison Neighbors



Deep and Simple - Bo Lozoff

Study Guide/Journal Queries

www.OurPrisonNeighbors.org

This study guide is the result of using Deep & Simple in several book discussion groups at MCI Concord and MCI Shirley, MA. Each group meeting begins with a spiritual practice and then personal check-in. Composition book journals were provided and group participants used them for a variety of writing including their own spiritual journeys and experiences, the answers to the prompts below, and drafting letters to those with whom they wanted to dialogue about the book. We generally spend two months with this book.

The Human Kindness Foundation PO Box 61619 Durham, NC 27715 will send books including this one to prisoners for free. They will also provide newsletters several times a year.

Introduction:

Where does your life stand on spiritual practice, simplicity and dedication to service right now? We'll look at this again at the end of the book.

A Wide Round Curve

Changes in attitude never come easily. The development of love and compassion is a wide, round curve that can be negotiated only slowly, not a sharp corner to be turned all at once. It comes with daily practice. His Holiness, the Dalai Lama of Tibet

Make It Real

What are some possible daily practices I could do?

What habitual patterns do I need to stop?

Take It On Faith

Am I ready to take it on faith?

A statement of faith... I believe...

Gandhi called his attempts to live nonviolently his experiment in truth.

Possible experiment...

I will try....

Who are my role models?

When Everything Goes Wrong

There are no guarantees. We must play the hand we are dealt.

What hand has life dealt me?

Worldly Failure, Spiritual Success

Every encounter is an opportunity. What opportunities are in front of me?
Who are the people I think are below me? How can I join them?

Fortress of Anger

List the things that make me angry:
Who taught me anger? Who were my models?
What does my anger cover up?

It's Not the Top, It's the Climb

What climb have I made already?
What things still make me whine?

Nothing Personal

What helps you keep from taking things personally?
How do you know which principles are worth fighting for?
Think of an example of doing the right thing and feeling like doing the right thing more.

Buddha Time Off?

What would your day be like if you were able to practice compassionate awareness all day long?

The Great Equalities - We have no control over the circumstances of our birth and no idea of when or how we will die.

P.55 What have been my life changing experiences so far?

How do I stay open to continuing revelation?

How do I stay open to recognize the potential in people and events?

p.56 Do I agree we are born with the spiritual responsibility to love one another?

Can I see that the only people truly happy are those who are dedicated to the cause of love?

Can I envision myself as an elder? Who are my elders?

How Little We Need

Simple Joy

63 To feel eternity in a moment and infinity in a grain of sand...

What parts of the American Dream am I willing to give up to become a deeper person? Clothes? Labor saving devices? Entertainment? Wealth? House, car, vacations, travel, prepared foods, alcohol, substances?

67 Every day, am I more contented?

Do I have a Quiet joy?

Am I becoming a bigger, wider, deeper human being of peace and joy on a daily basis?

The Great Activism

70 What is the role of money in my life? My idea of success is& .

72 What are ways I am willing to share in my community?

Feasting on Poisoned Cake - the move from loving things and using people to loving people and using things

Has personal debt been a problem for me? & my family or loved ones?
Could I take risks of financial security? What will I give my loved ones instead of material gifts?

Living in Tune with Our Beliefs - The gap that exists between our deepest beliefs and our daily behavior - it s called self-hatred.

What parts of my heart have I closed off? What events in my life closed a door to my heart?

Recognition versus choice - our ego chooses values contrary to our deepest values and beliefs. We think we can take short cuts to happiness...

Whatever I Can

This is the true joy of life, the being used up for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community, and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live.

Life is no brief candle to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for a moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations. George Bernard Shaw

Communion & Community

Our community is exactly where we are at every moment during the day: exactly what life places in front of us at any time.

Quietly envision your community. Start in the room you are in.... think of each other person with all their idiosyncrasies and desires for a full life.... slowly expand to the next room or cell... think about what challenges and opportunities this brings into your life... step by step enlarge your circle of community accepting both the supports and challenges brought into your life..... How can you make every part of your community a better place to live?

The Great Recovery - Do I believe that living for the greater good can help me stay off substances? How can I try it while I am incarcerated to see?

...The Other Tastes Salt - relationships as paths to service - paths into the heart of God.

Think of your relationships with family, lovers and friends... How can each be a path into the heart of God?

How will I choose a partner to build a marriage with?

To Be Able -

105 What are my values, interests and useful skills?
How can I develop them?
How can I find more?
How self-sufficient can I be? Carpentry? Plumbing? Cooking? Growing food? Car maintenance? Health maintenance?
Do I give myself credit for these things?
How can I use these skills to help others? & to earn a living?
How can I learn GED, College credits, another language, computers, vocational programs?
Self Discipline & How can I make more time available to develop skills...
TV, games, sports, job &

The Myth of Personal Freedom -

When have you experienced deep pleasure from helping someone?
What duties do you freely accept?
What duties is it hard for you to accept?
What are you willing to sacrifice to feel deeply connected to others?

But Enough About Me... -

What have you done that gives you true self-esteem?
What examples of altruism have you witnessed?
What altruistic acts have you done?
What associations do you have with the words humility and modesty?

We Need You! -

What is your plan?
What things around you are in need of repair?
Who is already engaged in this work?
Who will join you?

12 Practices for a Deep & Simple Life

These are self explanatory. Each is a wonderful opportunity to reflect and write about your own experience. There is enough material here to keep you growing as long as you draw breath. Just do it. Now! Bo recommends using a practice for weeks, or months, or years to fully experience its power in your life. If this feels like a burden with such richness, then feel your way from one to another but remember to come back at a later time and work with each again.

Introduction

- 1. Clarifying Your Motivation**
- 2. Mountain & Wind Meditation**
- 3. Tonglen**
- 4. Mantra**

5. **The Richness of Poverty**
6. **Mother Teresa's Prayer**
7. **Sacred Reading**
8. **Two Bright Guardians**
9. **Practicing the Presence of God**
10. **Working with Anger**
11. **Breaking Free**
12. **Vow Practice**

Final writing prompt:

Where does your life stand on spiritual practice, simplicity and dedication to service right now? How has it changed since the beginning of the group. What aspects of the group have supported the change? Bo's writing? What is a favorite passage? Group discussion? Group spiritual practices?