

Working It Out

A Bible study

By D. A. Greiner

Working It Out – study questions

I know what you're thinking. This book is either another one-sided effort to clobber sinners into submission, or it's an attempt to cheapen God's Word to the point where any conclusion is acceptable. I assure you it is neither. Instead it is the story of the struggle to find a Christ-like answer between both extremes, while still portraying the major viewpoints as accurately as possible. Please read the book and let me know if I hit the mark.

These study questions are intended to be used in conjunction with the novel. I did not set-out to write a Bible study, but many readers mentioned that the story lends itself to self-introspection and small group discussion. So I felt led to listen and follow their suggestion.

The story revolves around a particular topic in the workplace, but it could easily apply to any number of real-world situations and/or settings that pose similar faith dilemmas. With that in mind, feel free to appropriately broaden the conversation as you or your group see fit. Let me know how it goes.

My faith grew tremendously as a result of writing this book. It is my prayer that yours will do the same as you read the story and consider the difficulties encountered by each character. Our personal struggle to remain true to our faith while facing the real-world difficulties life throws our way each day deepens and enriches our belief.

Come along for the ride—prepare to be challenged!

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How to locate the materials

Study questions:

<https://dagreiner.wordpress.com/2017/02/18/working-it-out-study-questions/>

Paperback book:

<https://www.amazon.com/Working-Out-D-Greiner/dp/1468190369>

eBook (Kindle edition):

<https://www.amazon.com/Working-Out-D-Greiner-ebook/dp/B006P06QBG>

Prologue

1. How do you draw near to God when something is troubling you?

2. Have you ever been betrayed by a friend? Describe the situation.

Chapter 1

1. What kinds of activities are traditionally associated with boys? With girls? To what degree is it acceptable for girls to engage in activities traditionally associated with boys or vice-versa?

2. How should we respond to tomboyish tendencies in girls and effeminate characteristics in boys? Is it even an issue to which we need to respond? Why or why not?

3. Have you ever suspected someone close to you might be homosexual? What led you to this suspicion? In what ways did it change your interactions with this person? Does it matter if the person is male or female; child, teen or adult?

4. Describe a situation where you felt strongly that God was trying to teach you something.

Chapter 2

1. How would you react if your employer came out in strong support of something that was in direct conflict with your faith? In what way(s) could you express your disapproval? Are some ways better (or worse) than others? Why? Is there another course of action Jacob could have taken?

2. Are faith and the realities of life (e.g., earning a living) incompatible with each other?

3. How should an employer weigh the risks and benefits of policy proposals before instituting them? Should faith be one of the considerations?

4. To what degree does a faith issue damage employee loyalty? Can anything be done to repair the damage?

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: "It was right for him to be responsible, but his faith reminded him that he was responsible for being right, also"?

Chapter 3

1. Does your employer encourage/support “affinity groups” where employees with something in common (e.g., culture, LGBTQ, travel, exercise, etc.) get together on a regular basis? Are there any Christian groups? Other religions? If not, would starting a prayer and/or Bible study group be allowed?

2. Do you participate in Bible studies, prayers groups or something similar at work? Does your employer know? What would happen if they found out? Would certain topics (e.g., homosexuality) be considered off-limits?

3. To what degree do you feel comfortable talking openly about your faith at work? What might happen if others overheard you?

Chapter 4

1. Do you feel comfortable discussing delicate topics in front of your children? Why or why not?

2. Is it possible to run a successful business with overtly Christian principles? To what degree do you sense that companies feel pressure to support LGBTQ rights in order to stay competitive in the workplace? Are there any alternative positions?

3. Have you and your spouse discussed your individual positions on LGBTQ? Do you agree? Is the conversation centered on Christian doctrine or other viewpoints?

Chapter 5

1. What is Godly diversity? How does it differ from the world's definition of diversity?

2. Find and read through the verses cited in this chapter (see list below). Are any of these unclear or open to interpretation? Are there contradictions elsewhere in the Bible?

- Genesis 19 (Sodom and Gomorrah)
- Leviticus 18 & 20 (Mosaic Law against one man lying with another man)
- Deuteronomy 22 (cross-dressing)
- Romans 1 (shameful lust)
- 1 Corinthians 6 (homosexuals will not inherit the kingdom of God)
- Jude 1:7 (strange flesh)

3. Can you formulate an opinion about someone without ever meeting them or getting to know them? Do we tend to make sweeping generalizations about people based on some kind of grouping?

4. Have you ever attended/participated in a rally for a cause? Describe the circumstances and your experience. Was the rally successful—did change happen as a result?

Chapter 6

1. Have you ever been rewarded/recognized for something that made you uncomfortable? Describe the circumstances.

2. Have you ever been pressured to do or say something that went against your beliefs? Describe the circumstances.

3. Do you feel pressure/motivation to “get ahead” at work? Is it possible to “climb the ladder of success” in a career without straying from your core beliefs?

Chapter 7

1. Describe a time when you felt “caught up” in an event or cause. Did it make you feel uncomfortable? Why/why not? Is there anything that can be done to make it easier to disagree with the crowd?

2. List some ways in which the Bible’s words or intentions might be misconstrued or misused? Do you know God’s Word well enough to refute/argue a conflicting viewpoint?

3. What are some of the differences between your viewpoints on sensitive issues (like LGBTQ rights) and people of a different age group—younger or older?

Chapter 8

1. Describe a time in your life when you identified closely with Peter’s denial of Christ. To what degree were your actions linked to self-preservation or motivated by fear of being singled out because of your faith?

2. Is it easier to show your faith in the company of other believers? What would it take for you to feel comfortable enough to dissent from the prevailing opinion of a larger group?

3. Is it easier to show your faith outside of work? Why or why not?

4. Does the church over-emphasize social issues? Political issues? To what extent should Christians involve themselves in political matters? What’s the right way to determine if things have gone too far or not far enough?

Chapter 9

1. Describe a time when you were shown that your words and actions hurt someone else. How could you have done things differently to avoid this outcome?

2. Could anything have changed the tenor of the conversation? How would Jesus have handled the scene in the restaurant?

3. Are churches in the business of “indoctrinating” people, especially youth? How would you answer someone who accused the church of this practice?

4. What is the best way to teach children the Christian stance on sensitive issues (like homosexuality)? Would you do anything different for new adult believers?

5. Comment on the approach of the truck drivers. Did they do anything right? What did they get wrong?

Chapter 10

1. What happens when you speak God’s Word without love or love without speaking His Word? How do you lovingly tell someone what the Bible says?

2. Have you ever lost a friend because of your beliefs?

3. How would you react if you were the target of a same-sex attraction? What’s the Christ-like response?

4. Was Jacob right to defend his wife the way he did? How could he have handled his response better?

Chapter 11

1. Similar to Lk 12:11-12, can we expect the Holy Spirit to give us the words to say in difficult situations today?

2. The LGBTQ community cites Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan, and the centurion and his servant (Mt 8:5-13 & Lk 7:1-10) as examples of homosexual relationships in the Bible. How would a believer counter these arguments?

3. What parts, if any, of Robert's advice are sound? What are some ways to put into practice the strategy of the Bereans to test the scriptures (Acts 17:11)?

Chapter 12

1. Describe a time when you had a strong feeling that God was moving you to do or say something? Were you confident and excited? Nervous? Did it go well or were others less enthusiastic?

2. Jesus often used parables to make his points. Do Christians sound too preachy when they quote the Bible directly? Is there a better strategy?

3. When does belief become discrimination? When does truth breed hatred?

4. Among the major religions of the world, are Christians in the minority regarding their stance on homosexuality? What about other social issues like abortion, teen pregnancy, etc.?

Chapter 13

1. Is homosexuality a choice? Could it be an example of a “thorn in the flesh” (2 Cor 12:7)?

2. Should the church change to become more modern? In what ways?

3. How is it that “religious” people—even those who consider themselves to be Christian— can have such differing viewpoints on a topic?

4. What does the Bible have to say about judging others? How is that misconstrued by believers and non-believers?

Chapter 14

1. How important is it to be familiar with God’s Word?

2. Jacob concludes his speech with the statement, “I cannot and will not budge on this topic,” and is later told by Valerie that he comes across as inflexible, unapproachable and judgmental. Is there any way for a believer to profess adherence to God’s position on any given matter and avoid these labels?

3. How do believers use the Bible both as a weapon and a hiding place?

4. Jesus questioned a great deal of the “conventional wisdom” of His day (see Mt 5, 6 & 7 for several examples). If Jesus didn’t say anything about a specific sin, does that mean He doesn’t consider it a sin?

5. Describe an instance where you had or witnessed a faith conversation with someone who wasn’t Christian. How did it go? What strategies would you employ or leave behind?

Chapter 15

1. Comment on Jacob's pastor's advice in this quote: "We live in a fallen world that grows more complicated and pushes us further from God every day," he intoned. "How can Christians counter this accelerating spiral? How do we shake-off the ill-effects of this daily reality and recalibrate our focus onto the one true source of peace? Our heavenly Father does not leave us in the dark to figure this out; he graciously gives us the answer by instructing us to, 'Be still and know that I am God.'" (Ps 46:10)
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2. God created Jacob with a gift for logical thought, but he struggles to reconcile faith and logic throughout the story—in his words: "His growing faith worked to fill-in the gaps that reason could not bridge and freed his mind from the clutter of endless debate over matters that seemed to have no solid answer." How does faith free us?
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3. Is it possible to communicate God's disapproval of sin in a kind and friendly way? How? Is it true that *how* something is communicated is just as important as *what*?
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4. Comment on Jacob's question to himself: "He was told that he was inflexible, unapproachable and judgmental. How did that square with God being inflexible about sin, unapproachable without Christ's sacrifice and the perfect judge of all that is right and wrong?"
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5. Are there times when being "too nice" would fail to fulfill the goal of the Great Commission? Was the Apostle Paul considered nice? How did he make it work?
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6. Most people would agree that physical violence is wrong, but where is the line? At what point does taking a stance turn into bullying?
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Chapter 16

1. It is clear that Jacob’s boss and coworkers recognize his abilities. What special challenges does a talented, hardworking Christian face in the workplace? In what ways does their faith make them susceptible to being taken advantage of?

2. Other than normal productivity, would the modern workplace lose anything special if all believers suddenly walked off the job?

3. In what ways are Christians open to the accusation of discrimination?

4. Describe a time when you considered doing something dishonest and God seemed to step in to prevent you from moving forward with your plan.

Chapter 17

1. How can a simple Bible study group change the world? Why doesn't this happen more frequently?

2. To what extent do both believers and non-believers harbor misconceptions of each other? What can be done to fix this problem?

3. Should African-Americans welcome homosexuals into their on-going struggle for civil rights or has their movement been harmfully co-opted by the LGBTQ community? Discuss the similarities and differences between the two groups.

4. Discuss Robert's argument about steering clear of sinful situations: "We are to stay away from harmful influences that could lead ourselves down a wicked path away from Christ. Regular exposure to this world of sin could give Satan a foothold on Jacob's heart by making him sympathetic to the gay cause. Second, God also expects believers to conduct themselves as shining examples of holy living for the rest of the world to see. Close, public association with blatant sinners could easily be misconstrued by those who are weak in their faith or have yet to accept Christ but are considering it. If they see a known Christian engaging in an obviously friendly activity, like breaking bread, with a gay person, that may leave them with the false impression that homosexuality is acceptable. We cannot allow any of this to happen." Jacob answers by pointing out that Jesus frequently associated with sinners, but Rajan responds that none of us possesses Jesus' "unique and supernatural ability to identify and resist evil." Who's right?

Chapter 18

1. In 1 Cor 15:33, Paul quotes a Greek poet when he writes, “Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’” Does that mean believers should not engage in social events with unbelievers? What are the appropriate boundaries? Did Jacob follow them?

2. Do you agree with Jacob’s assessment that he and many others may be considered “ardent but ignorant” believers? What is the danger in being zealous for God but not knowing the Bible?

3. In what ways do non-believers use the Bible against believers? Are they right? What can be done to change this? What would change if this problem were corrected?

4. Discuss Douglas’ assertion that homosexuals must go above and beyond what is considered normal (speak intelligently, remain fit, etc.) in order to be taken seriously and/or avoid being dismissed as dumb or sickly. Do Christians have a similar perception problem? What about reformed felons, military veterans, women or other minorities?

5. How can Christians join with groups who are already making positive change in our community? Is there a way to bring God glory through participation with non-Christian groups?

6. Why would a person seek God’s love and mercy unless they feel the guilt of their sinfulness? Must a person understand the consequences of their sin (hell) before they can see their need for a Savior (Jesus)? How can a church welcome sinners but still accurately represent God’s Word?

Chapter 19

1. What does the Bible say about gender? In what ways does it reinforce specific roles for men and women? Do these definitions still apply today? How does God’s plan for marriage teach children His roles for men and women?

2. According to Jacob’s grandfather: “You should never be worried about doing the right thing as long as you’re on God’s side in the matter.” How do you know if you are on God’s side in a matter? How difficult is it to take a stand for something you believe in? What are you willing to risk?

3. Under what circumstances would you feel confident enough to write down your thoughts and send them to the owner/boss of your company?

Chapter 20

1. Would you invite a homosexual to your church? Would he/she be welcomed there? Would it give Satan a foothold?

2. What can church leadership say and/or do to promote a welcoming worship environment? Should God’s Word ever be compromised and/or downplayed in order to make a church more welcoming? What are some appropriate ways to “market” a church to non-believers? Believers?

3. What would it take for you to feel bold enough to interrupt a service at your church?

4. Do you believe the following statement by Jacob is a correct use of scripture: “God understands it will be hard for us to follow him, but he still wants us to make the effort and encourages us to keep trying. And as a Christian, I believe God wants me to behave like Jesus did in this story and reach out in love to those who show any interest at all.”? (Mt 19:16-30 is an account of the rich, young ruler)

5. Do you agree with Robert’s statement: “We cannot allow sin to infiltrate! Do not give the devil a foothold! If we show softness toward blatant sinners, toward avowed homosexuals, then we run the risk of compromising our beliefs. Too many other churches have started down this slippery slope, and I, for one, will do everything in my power to keep it from happening here at Mad River. I say we must act boldly and purge the evil that storms our gates!”?

Chapter 21

1. Describe how it feels to retract something you said. Is this the same as asking for forgiveness?

2. Rom 13:1-7, Heb 13:17 and 1 Pet 2:13-15 all teach that believers should submit to authority figures. What if the authorities go against Biblical teaching? Is there a way to submit without compromising Scripture? How?

3. Have you ever received bad advice? How do you respond if the bad advice comes from a fellow believer? Or from a mentor?

Chapter 22

1. Like Jacob, have you ever been so sure you were following God’s leading and guiding only to be disappointed in the outcome? Were you misled? Did you read God’s intentions incorrectly? Did you deviate from God’s plan at some point?

2. Have you been asked to do something at work that made you uncomfortable? Are there situations where God would condone lying, cheating or stealing?

3. When does “love” become an excuse for, or defense of, sin? How do we, as believers, tell the difference?

4. From whom do you seek advice when dealing with faith issues? What kind of advice is typically offered? Do you typically take the advice or blow it off? (Consider Prov 12:15 & 19:20, for example)

Chapter 23

1. How do non-believers typically respond when asked if a believer can pray for them? Are there things that should be included in or omitted from this sort of prayer situation?

2. Is it possible for a Christian to have a real friendship with a non-believer? How close can that friendship be? When has it crossed a line?

3. What's the right balance between "love" and "legalism"? Why is it so hard for people and churches to strike the right balance? What does God want?

4. How far would your employer have to go for you to be willing to quit or be fired for your faith?

Chapter 24

1. Discuss a situation where you experienced God’s grace and/or mercy. How uncomfortable was the lead-up? How did you feel afterwards?

2. What special pressures are on leaders? To what extent should their personal beliefs inform or override the realities of their position?

3. What can be done to encourage a person who seems to be on the verge of receiving Christ as Lord and Savior? What shouldn’t be done?

4. Describe an instance where a mentor let you down. Was it a person of faith?

5. In what ways can faith be misused? As believers, what can we do to correct these situations?

6. Read Mt 18:15-17. Should Jacob employ this strategy for confronting Robert? Why or why not?

Chapter 25

1. Have you ever prayed for a non-believer? In front of non-believers?

2. Critique Jacob's decision to pray for healing for Stephen. Did he do the right thing? What could he have done differently?

3. Describe your thoughts about the outcome of the story. Would you have ended it differently?

Capstone

1. What's the overall moral of the story?

2. What are the keys to delivering God's truth to the world?

3. In what sense is it a healthy sign of one's faith to struggle with God and with humans (Gen 32:22-28)?
