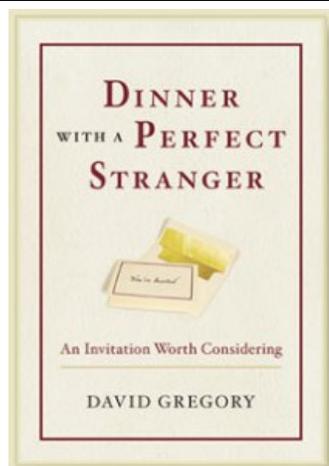




Discussion Guide

About the Book



Book Title: *Dinner With a Perfect Stranger*

Author: David Gregory

Published by Water Book Press, 2005

Author Website: davidgregorybooks.com

Book Website: <http://waterbrookmultnomah.com/dinner/TheBook.html>

Available on: Amazon.com, BN.com, CBD.com

Questions for Discussion

What were your general impressions of the book?

What did you most like about the book and what did you most dislike?

Read over the MAMs comments. Which of the MAMs do you most agree with and why?

The Book Publisher has prepared some questions for discussion. At the MAMs Book Club Springfield, each MAM was asked to select a question from these lists to ask of everyone in the group. We had some very interesting discussions with those questions. To download questions sheets, check out this link: <http://waterbrookmultnomah.com/dinner/ReadingGuides.html>

Would you recommend this book for other Book Clubs? Why or why not?

In what ways, if any, will this book change your life or perspective?

Nancy and the MAMs discuss the book...



NANCY: Kudos to David Gregory for creating a serious story with a gentle, credible tone that lifts up the love of Jesus and Gregory's understanding of Christian truth. The character, Nick, is well developed and evolving as he grapples with the surreal aspects of the situation, and as gradually his doubts give way to belief. The story line replicates a common path toward faith.

I like this story for its creative imaging of Jesus among us. Too often, the historical Jesus is relegated to the pages of the Bible or kept in a shrine away from everyday life. Here we see Jesus inviting a common man to a restaurant and engaging in conversation over things that are important to his dinner guest. Gregory has Jesus speak with insight and knowledge, and great understanding of "Nick", both his history and inner life.

Eric receives a priceless gift at the end of the dinner: a paper with the Biblical reference: Revelation 20:3. Pivotal, also to my book *Revelation in the Cave*, is this image of Jesus knocking. All who open the door are invited into the spiritual life and relationship with Jesus.



PRISCILLA: I loved this book. I want to read it again and again. Can you imagine actually having dinner with Jesus? He was so kind and loving, caring for Nick and he had all the right answers! I want to read it again. And all we have to do is knock and Jesus is there!



ABIGAIL: While I appreciated the gentle, loving relationship that developed between Nick and Jesus, I had problems with some of the pat answers of his Jesus, as well as his outright dismissal of other belief systems. Within Christianity there is a tendency by many to claim a monopoly on the truth, yet there are over 30,000 varieties of Christian denominations. Jesus did not focus on right belief in his teachings as much as loving, serving and welcoming the stranger and those with whom you disagree. If I were to write a book about a dinner with Jesus, it would be quite different than Gregory's account.



MOLLY: Abigail makes a good point there. As a person of color, I often feel excluded and so perhaps I'm a little more sensitive to that exclusivity that he attributes to Jesus. Martin Luther King, Jr. had no problem learning from Gandhi. I like to believe that the West has things to learn from the East. Not just how to do nonviolence, but some other spiritual things, too. Jesus included everybody.



SALLIE: Yes, I wondered about what he said about Hinduism. At our Global Education Speaker Series, I learned that the Hindus don't really believe in having 10,000 deities – but rather there are 10,000 names for God. And he picked some rather strange things about Islam to draw out. Islam really has more similarities to Judaism and Christianity than to other religions. It accepts our scripture as background text. And the Buddhists have helped us learn to listen, to be quiet, to meditate – something I believe Jesus encouraged and practiced. You know how often Jesus went off to pray alone? Heck, he said "Go to your closet and pray."



KATHERINE: This book brings out that historical debate between the more fundamentalist Christians and the liberal Christians. For many, the "litmus test" of whether or not you have the right beliefs to get into heaven hinges on Gregory's focus. Yet, I agree with Sallie. Jesus was not nearly as close-minded as many modern Christians. Sometimes we forget that Jesus was Jewish, and he never left his own faith tradition. Like Luther, he encouraged reform and return to the true message of God: Love!



JANE: Well, you know I don't really know about all that, but it reminded me of my spiritual awakening on our trip to Greece and Turkey. When you encounter the living God it wakes you up, startles you, turns you inside out, rearranges your thoughts and everything about your life. I really identified with Nick. I could see him changing. You know when he went home and kissed his daughter and apologized to his wife he would never be the same. That's what an encounter with God can do for a person. This is a good story.