
So, you're facilitating a group that's reading through my book *Just Show Up: How Small Acts of Faith Change Everything*.

Good for you! Maybe you can't wait to get started. Or maybe you're already regretting volunteering. Or maybe you were absent the night that the committee voted you "Most Likely to Do a Good Job with This."

No matter how you arrived at the seldom-coveted position of facilitator, thank you for showing up! Let's talk about some simple ways to help your group run smoothly and inspire your attendees to show up too.

- 1. Think about your main goal(s) for this group.** Why are you studying this particular book? When the study is over, what will you look back on and say, "That's exactly what I hoped would happen"? Keep that focus in mind as you meet.
- 2. Be prepared.** No boy scout badge is needed for this one, just some basic principles that will help you as much as the group. Read (and maybe reread) the chapter you're focusing on. Take note of passages that encouraged or inspired you, but don't forget the ones that might have confused or bothered you. Your group members may have experienced the same responses or the exact opposite. Either way, good discussion follows the leader.
- 3. Set a time and place that works for your group members.** You might personally love the ambience of your local coffee shop as a meeting place, but if you notice that members are having trouble filtering out that ambience to hear or are distracted by the phone conversations and shades of purple hair at surrounding tables, you might need to consider a location with a little less environmental bling.
- 4. There's one in every group.** Maybe more than one. You know, someone who has something to say about every aspect of the study (and aspects you aren't even studying) or someone who's so motionless and silent that you catch yourself looking around for the AED device. Instead of blurting out "Jennifer, don't even *think* about commenting again!" or "Bob, are you even listening?" try reminding your group at the start of meetings that you'd love to hear from each of them as you continue through the study. Think about prefacing some study questions with, "I'd like to get responses from three or four of you on this."
- 5. Don't panic over "dead air" (unless you're broadcasting live).** Silence isn't your natural enemy. Crickets chirping after a question *might* mean that your group members are shy or confused, or it could mean that they're thinking or just trying not to answer first (again). Of course, you don't want your group looking like they've entered a vow-of-silence commune. But not all silence is bad or awkward, and not every lull has to be avoided or filled immediately by you. Silence? Hang out with it for a while.
- 6. Rabbit trails are the best thing since sliced bread—for rabbits.** For group discussions, not so much. If discussions are wandering off topic, be confident and comfortable in guiding the discussion back to the main road. You may sense God leading you to address an off-topic question for the spiritual or emotional wellness of an attendee, but don't let those exceptions redefine the group's purpose. It may be better to offer to discuss a member's issue or question after the session.
- 7. Revisit point number one.** As you go through the study, ask yourself if what's happening in your group is on track with that exactly-what-you-thought-would-happen plan. If so, good! If not, that might also be a good thing. Fortunately, your group has a great facilitator who's using some basic guidelines to both stay focused and go with the flow.
- 8. Pray.** Pray for the members of your group, that they'll be encouraged to see the Christian journey as small acts of ordinary faithfulness (p. 13). Pray that they'll experience the freedom that comes from not working themselves to death for God. Pray that they'll sense the peace and the patience of Jesus, who loves them. What else comes to mind when you think of how to pray for your study group?
- 9. And one more thing—pray for the group's facilitator.** (That's YOU!) How should you pray for yourself? Great question. Put your answer here:

INTRO OVERVIEW + QUESTIONS

Just Show Up opens with a scene that most parents can relate to: a typical at-home evening of chaos. Kids are yelling, a toddler is on a rampage, and no one is going to bed on time.

A young Mr. and Mrs. Dyck shared some amazing years together while at seminary. Days were peppered with stimulating classroom studies, philosophical discussions with other seminarians, al fresco lunches featuring sandwiches named after theologians—all in an idyllic setting. Drew and Grace knew their lives would be world-changing, and certainly not average.

Then life became average.

Life, the author says, is less about changing the world and more about just showing up. He shares Jesus' story of guests who were invited to a wedding supper but came up with excuses not to attend (Luke 14).

Drew Dyck invites us to see life as a feast provided by God. What will happen if we just show up?

The Drew's list of people he most admired didn't contain anyone "famous." Who are the top three people on your not-famous/most-admired list and why?

Can you think of a time when you "started your journey with a bright burst of idealism—and then slammed into reality" (p. 12)?

Drew says that God doesn't call us to save the world but instead to "small acts of ordinary faithfulness" (p. 13). Do you agree or disagree?

Have you ever sensed that God was inviting you to do something, but you made an excuse not to accept His invitation? What was it, and what happened?

For fun: If you could name a sandwich after a favorite theologian or Christian leader, who would you name it after and what would be in it?

CHAPTER 1 | “Join the Plodders” Synopsis

Drew Dyck begins the first chapter of *Just Show Up* by sharing his father’s life story. Raised in an eleven-member Mennonite family in a one-bedroom farmhouse with no electricity or running water on the Canadian prairies, Drew’s dad faced many challenges. Yet the challenges of childhood would prove less difficult than the struggles he would later face in higher education.

Drew observes that people who go through life “showing up” and acting on the most important things all seem to share two characteristics: They have a deep faith (pp. 21–22), and they plod (pp. 23–24).

The inspiring story of William Carey, often known as the father of modern missions, is included in this chapter. Carey considered himself a plodder. Continuous and constant, plodders don’t move fast, but they keep moving.

The chapter concludes with the story of Antoni Gaudí, who began building La Sagrada Familia cathedral in Barcelona, Spain, in 1882. He continued working on it for forty-three years, once saying, “My client is not in a hurry” (pp. 27–28).

Drew’s father had two great encouragers during his seminary struggles: his wife and a professor. Has anyone’s encouragement ever helped you to persevere in difficulty? Who was that person and how did they encourage you?

What came to mind when you first read the phrase “You are working for an audience of one” (p. 28)?

Does the idea of plodding appeal to you? What obstacles prevent you from plodding?

What does “walking by faith” mean to you? How might your life change if you rooted your confidence in God’s abilities and not your own?

This chapter defined showing up as “being willing to take that first, scary step toward what you feel God is calling you to do.” Is there something you feel God is calling you to do that you’ve been reluctant to pursue? If so, what’s the “first, scary step” you need to take?

CHAPTER 2 | “Show Up In Person” Synopsis

Chapter 2 opens with the story of Chon Armsbury, who won three amazing, all-expenses-paid trips to Hawaii because he entered as many times as possible, AND he showed up on the day of the drawing. He described his secret to winning as, “You gotta be there.”

Drew focuses on the downside of technology and devices in this chapter. He states that, among other things, “Instead of creating a global village, [technology has] broken us into millions of little lonely islands” (p. 34).

The chapter also looks at the example Jesus set for us. Instead of isolating Himself like some leaders, He walked among people, went into their homes, held children on His lap, touched the sick, and set aside times to fellowship together with His disciples.

Drew shares the stories of an elementary school teacher who went to some of her students’ sporting events, of a pastor who visited an elderly woman in a nursing home, and of his own brother who bought coats and handed them out to the homeless. All three wanted to be physically present for others, and their presence impacted lives.

Professionals who work with at-risk teens and with hurting adults often have the same advice for those who want to help: Don’t over think it; just show up. People need our presence more than our words.

Since the restrictions of the COVID pandemic, do you notice that you are more content to avoid people and spend time alone, or do you find yourself wanting to be around people more than ever? Why?

This chapter tells the story of Beethoven, who couldn’t offer any deep counsel to a friend who had lost a child. But he could play the piano. What talent or skills could you offer to someone who needs to know that they are seen and not forgotten?

Why is being physically present so important? What dangers are there in connecting mostly through our devices?

This chapter describes several people who exemplify what it means to show up. Are there people you know who do the same?

Think back to a difficult time in your life. Who showed up for you? How can you show up for others in a similar way?

CHAPTER 3 | “Find God’s Will with Your Feet” Synopsis

This chapter begins with some funny examples of children questioning Drew Dyck’s career choice of becoming a writer. He uses those questions to make a point: sometimes even adults don’t know what they want to be when they “grow up.”

Drew leads us to consider the difference between a “common calling” (based on the Scripture) that all Christians have and a “particular calling,” the call on our lives that applies only to us individually. When we focus on fulfilling the common calling, the particular calling of our life has a way of becoming clearer (p. 47).

We can probably identify with the examples of people who have fallen far down the social/professional/economic ladder, as Moses did when he went from a prince of Egypt to a shepherd in Midian. Drew reminds us that if we seek to honor God, our work—whatever it is—matters. God uses the menial, the failures, and the setbacks.

The chapter closes with an encouraging reminder that we don’t usually find God’s will with our head or even our hands. We find it with our feet. As we keep walking, God shows us the path. As we keep showing up, so does God.

Have you found your “particular” calling? If so, was it a one-time thing or a gradual unfolding? Are you still figuring it out?

Did you ever have an it-was-just-a-spider-web experience (p. 48), a time when you thought you had a sign from God, but it turned out not to be? Share that story.

Can you look back and see how your past experiences prepared you for what you’re doing today? How could that impact the way you encounter future difficulties?

On page 47, Drew says, “God cares about your occupation, but I don’t think it’s His number one concern. And it’s not the most important thing about you.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?

What does it mean to find God’s will with your feet? What steps can you take right now to discover where God might be leading you next?

CHAPTER 4 | “Be a Long-Haul Hero” Synopsis

In this chapter, Drew shares the story of his childhood friend “Axe” who was killed in a car accident at the age of 37, along with his 10-month-old daughter. Drew notes that while he himself moved from community to community, Axe put down roots and invested in one community for years.

A look at 1 Thessalonians 4:11 reveals an admonition from Paul that doesn’t fit with the average graduation address or motivational talk: “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life. You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you.” Choosing a quiet, rooted life can feel like failure in today’s world.

This chapter also explores how racking up “friends” on social media can strain our empathy and actually numb us to the overwhelming number of tragedies, needs, causes, and arguments of other people. Our time, attention, and energy are not endless, and it’s the people closest to us who should be first in line for all of those.

The residents of a nursing home who wanted to share real stories about their own lives and the lives of their fellow residents instead of reading disconnected headlines in the newspaper reinforces the point that, in the end, it won’t be money and success that will define our lives. It will be the relationships that we’ve built with the people God gave us to love and to serve.

On page 59, Drew defines “Infinite Browsing Mode” as a mindset of his generation that practices restlessness and not rootedness, a mindset that values always keeping your options open. Regardless of your age, can you identify with “Infinite Browsing Mode”? Why or why not?

Do you know any “long-haul heroes”? What enabled them to invest deeply in people?

What does it mean to “live a quiet life”? How might that enable you to better pursue your calling and bless others?

Have you felt overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information and tragedy you’re exposed to online? How can you protect your time and compassion reserves so you’re able to be present to the people around you?

Think about one of the “long-haul heroes” that came to mind when you answered the second question. What part of that person’s character would you like most to emulate and why?

CHAPTER 5 | “Play the Role” Synopsis

“Play the Role” opens with the story of Athanasius, the fourth-century church father who was a staunch defender of the doctrine of the deity of Christ. Drew and Grace named their son Athanasius, hoping the little one would take on some of the great man’s best characteristics.

Drew examines the roles that each of us plays in our lives and how these roles shape us and give our lives substance. Roles demand a level of commitment that we (particularly Western cultures) who have been conditioned to value individualism can find difficult to accept.

It can take time to settle into the roles we have in life: spouse, parent, grandparent, caregiver, coworker, leader, etc. We may stumble and fall. But as we plod along, as we show up, God provides the grace and power that these roles require.

Chapter 5 closes with this thought: When God calls you to do something, His abilities matter more than ours. The One who sends is more important than the one who goes (p. 76).

If you were to name yourself after a biblical or historical character, who would it be? What character do you think OTHERS would name you after?

Drew quotes a former supervisor who said that pastors (though Drew extends this thought to anyone) “sometimes need to ignore their feelings; they need to set aside whatever might be going on in their personal lives and just perform the role people need from them” (p. 71). Can you think of a time when you set your feelings aside to perform a role and the result was better because of that? Or a time when the result was worse because of that?

How do you view roles? Do you see them as confining or liberating? Have you ever taken a role that felt scary at first but ended up being a great fit?

Can you identify with how reluctant Bible characters like Gideon and Moses felt about filling the roles God called them to? What do their stories teach us about how we should respond when God directs us to a new role?

Professor Heather Thompson recommends looking back to see what gaps you fell into and then asking, “How can you fill them so someone else doesn’t?” How can your past struggles shape the roles you take to help others?

CHAPTER 6 | “Just Crack Open Your Bible” Synopsis

Drew begins “Just Crack Open Your Bible” with his childhood memory of “Bible Quizzing” competitions. Though he’s grateful for the experience that caused him to memorize large portions of Scripture, he recalls being motivated to win prizes instead of wanting to know God better through His Word.

This chapter focuses on not overreaching when it comes to developing spiritual disciplines like prayer and Bible reading. Setting unachievable goals guarantees failure and ignores the value of taking small steps. It’s okay to start small when it comes to communing with God (p. 84).

Every relationship benefits when the people in it show up, whether they “feel like it” or not. In fact, the authenticity of relationships isn’t dependent on emotions. “The spiritual life is no different. Often, we must act in the absence of feelings” (p. 87).

Prayer and Bible reading nourish our souls like good eating habits nourish our bodies. When our souls are nourished, our connection with God is strengthened. And when our connection with God is strengthened, we begin to build the kind of faith that won’t quickly collapse under the weight of life’s burdens.

What is the biggest, most sweeping change you ever tried to make in your life? Were you successful? If not, did you abandon the goal completely or just revise it?

Do you find yourself struggling to pray and read your Bible consistently? If so, what prevents you from engaging in these spiritual disciplines?

What was the last passage of Scripture that you read as part of a “quiet time”? Do you remember anything about the theme or message of the passage? Do you have any study habits that help you retain and reflect on the Scriptures that you read (underlining, note-taking, journaling, etc.)?

What role do emotions play? Do you have a hard time engaging in spiritual disciplines when you’re not feeling particularly spiritual?

What happens when you push through and do it anyway? How can being too ambitious in your goals sabotage success? What are the benefits of starting small, even when it comes to communing with God?

CHAPTER 7 | “Show Up for Church” Synopsis

When it comes to church, Drew asks the question, “Why bother?” and then proceeds to answer that question in chapter 7. A main focus of “Show Up for Church” and probably the primary answer to the question is—people!

Drew addresses both the positives and the negatives of being part of a community of people, and he explores what we can *give* to our relationships with others instead of only what we can *get* from relationships.

He shares the answers that others gave when asked why they went to church, and he takes time to look more closely at one woman’s response: “Isolation tells you that being alone is safer. But isolation is a liar.”

Gathering with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ to worship God nourishes our souls and strengthens our faith. As Drew says, “Don’t underestimate the power of showing up” for church.

Why is going to church important? What obstacles cause you to miss? What steps would you have to take to attend church more regularly?

If you met someone who had no idea what a church was and they asked you to explain it, what are the first three descriptions that you would share? (“A church is a place where...”)

Amber Benson wrote, “When you want community least is when you need it most.” Have you found that to be true? If so, why is that?

Do you consider yourself a fairly regular church attender? If so, has there ever been a period of time (not including pandemic restrictions) when you stopped attending church altogether? Why?

How have you been blessed by showing up for church? How can you help others who may be hurting?

CHAPTER 8 | “Learn to Walk in the Rain” Synopsis

This is a deeply personal chapter that varies a bit from the ones before it. In chapter 8, Drew shares his personal struggles with anxiety and depression.

He begins by revealing that when his first symptoms started while he was a seminary student, he was convinced he had a degenerative disease. Even when friends convinced him not to assume the worst and medical diagnoses pointed to treatable panic attacks, he didn't want to believe that his issues might be psychological. He was facing his first real experience with suffering.

Drew likens the suffering in our lives to the long bouts of rainy weather in the northwest part of the United States. Newcomers struggle and curse it; longtimers carry on with life, often walking in the rain without an umbrella.

The Greek myth of the sirens who used their sweet songs to lure sailors to their deaths takes on new meaning for Drew. On board the ship *Argonaut*, Orpheus took his lyre and sang a “sweeter song” to his fellow sailors, turning them toward something beautiful as they passed through the sirens' trap.

Drew compares Orpheus' song to the suffering of Christ, who endured because a greater joy was yet to come. Suffering doesn't have to be the final word. For the Christian, there is hope and there is joy yet to come.

What is your immediate reaction when you suffer? How does it change the way you relate to the people around you? How does it change the way you relate to God?

Think of someone you know who is facing (or has faced) great suffering of some kind. What kind of attitude are they practicing (or did they practice) through that suffering? Would you want to emulate that person in your own times of suffering? Why or why not?

How does having a lot of responsibilities complicate things when you deal with hardship? In those times, how can you show up for yourself and get the rest and help you need? How can you continue showing up for others, despite the challenges you face?

When you're going through hardship, is it difficult to see the joy ahead? Does it help to remember that God may be working through the experience to make you a more beautiful person?

If you're currently walking through a season of suffering, what one thing can you do today to “tune your ears to a sweeter song” (p. 114)?

CHAPTER 9 | “Practice Incarnation” Synopsis

Chapter 9 begins with the bizarre 1947 story of a New York City bus driver who decided he needed a break, so he drove his bus to Florida. While he became a sort of unlikely hero to the public, the man’s absence from home traumatized his son.

In this segment on showing up for our families, Drew tells the stories of two different dads. One left his family, then claimed to become a Christian, but only returned home to judge and criticize his family. The other man was not very verbally communicative but never failed to attend his children’s sporting events and faithfully put the needs of his children and his wife before his own.

Drew emphasizes the point that presence matters. While he acknowledges that parenting can be very complicated and that he’s not a perfect dad, he knows that “my kids don’t have to wonder where I am or if I’m going to leave. And my presence says I love them” (p. 126).

Discussing both “quality” and “quantity” time with his kids, Drew shares the overwhelming and emotional responses he received when he posted this question online: “How much would you pay to go back and hold your kids when they were small” (p. 129)? He closes by reminding us that being present isn’t just important to parent-child relationships, it’s important to all relationships. After we’re gone, people will remember the times we showed up for them.

Think back to your childhood. Who made the greatest impact on you? How did they do it?

Would you say that your parent(s) were present for you as a child? Explain.

Drew quotes a friend who said, “Mostly, children can handle anything as long as there’s some stability. Same person, same house, same cheese and macaroni.” Do you agree? Why or why not?

Is it reassuring to hear the difference just being present makes? How can you organize your schedule to be more present for your family?

Are there ways you can show up for people outside your family?

CHAPTER 10 | “Let Something Slide” Synopsis

“Let Something Slide” begins with Drew’s story of wanting to have a beautiful lawn but instead having something brown, patchy, and sprinkled with weeds. He’s come to terms with the fact that his life is very busy, and he’ll have to “let go” of having that perfect lawn.

Realizing that we can’t do everything is connected to realizing that our lives are finite. It’s hard for us to admit that our time, our energy, our resources, and even our willpower is limited.

Drew states that perfectionism is paralyzing (p. 137). And while we may feel like we have to say, “Yes!” to everything, people may be more understanding than we think when we say, “No.”

Chapter 10 concludes with an emphasis on this point: To show up for the most important things in our lives, we have to let other things go (p. 141). As Christians, we have the ultimate resource to help us make these decisions—the guidance of God through prayer. Jesus set an example for us in the times when He rejected distractions and rebuked those who seemed to want to lure Him away from His mission of reconciliation and sacrifice.

Are you tempted to think you can “do it all”? Does facing your finitude feel confining or freeing?

Is there an opportunity you’re currently considering? If it went away, would you feel sadness or relief?

Can you think of a time when you said “Yes” to something that you weren’t really sure of or fully able to commit to, and then it backfired? What happened?

Can you identify something you need to let slide? How would dropping inessential tasks free you to focus on what matters most?

Drew mentioned several biblical occurrences of times when Jesus let everything else slide so that He could isolate Himself and pray. What do you think He prayed about?

CHAPTER 11 | “Don’t Be an Escape Artist” Synopsis

To open this chapter, Drew tells the story of a habit he developed during COVID. He began spending an inordinate amount of time online scrolling through real estate sites. The more he looked at bigger, more grandiose, and more expensive houses, the more dissatisfied he became with his own home.

The pursuit of distractions that disconnect us is “escapism,” and Drew defines it as “the tendency to engage in activities that prevent you from being present in your own life” (p. 149). He gives examples of people who became obsessed with end times theories, with politics, or with social media to the point of ignoring and even losing their families.

Chapter 11 looks at not only the “what” of escapism but the “why.” Much of our escapist behaviors center around unfulfilled needs and desires. We’ve been designed to find fulfillment in God and in community. When we don’t find it (or don’t seek it), we turn to cheap replacements that, ultimately, don’t satisfy.

Drew encourages us to be aware of these “escape artist” patterns and to substitute them with practices that connect us to others and to our Creator (p. 155). He likens these bad habits to dry, “dead” cisterns that have no ability to satisfy our thirst. Jesus, however, is like a source of water that is “living” and quenches fully.

Do you ever find yourself engaging in behaviors to escape from your life? What circumstances or emotions cause you to want to check out?

What are your top two escapist behaviors? How much time do you spend on these behaviors each day? Each week?

Drew quotes a man who asked his phone-surfing wife, “Why are you spending all your time looking at other people’s lives? I’m right here!” Is there someone in your life (or more than one someone) who is being cast aside to make room for your escapism?

How do you feel after engaging in escapist behaviors? What healthy activities could you choose instead?

Are there “dry cisterns” you use to try and quench your spiritual thirst? How would it change your life if you regularly accepted Christ’s invitation to “come to me and drink”?

CHAPTER 12 | “Keep Wrestling with God” Synopsis

In an age when people post about the “deconstruction” of their faith, this final chapter looks at the challenge of continuing to walk in faith when we feel overcome by forces that are chipping away at not only our beliefs but our belief.

When it comes to dealing with doubts and trials, Drew points out that, at the most simplistic level, there are two types of people—those that run away from God and those that run toward Him (p. 160). He also discusses emotional and even physiological responses that fall into what nineteenth-century American psychologist William James called the categories of “sick souls” or “healthy-minded souls.”

This chapter encourages us to see that our doubts, our questions, our anger, and even our accusations toward God can serve as a conduit to keep us connected to Him in dark times. Though these might seem like reactions that detach us from God, they are genuine expressions of emotion that are actually keeping our spiritual lines of communication open (p. 163).

Drew uses the story of Jacob wrestling with God (in the form of an angel/man) to illustrate that the only thing more dangerous than wrestling with God is letting go (p. 165). Even in an environment of spiritual apathy and fallen leaders, our faith can endure and thrive. We may not know why we face trials, but when we know God and His goodness, we can trust Him in all circumstances. We can refuse to let go.

How does it affect you to see people walking away from the faith? What about when you see Christian leaders fall?

Do you see yourself as more of a what William James calls a “healthy-minded believer” or a “sick soul”? What are the advantages and drawbacks of each kind of disposition?

In what ways have you wrestled with God? Has it strengthened your faith?

Look back over the list of chapters on the “Contents” page of the book. Which three chapters were your favorites? Why?

Is there a chapter (part of chapter, or even one of Drew’s points) that you didn’t really connect with or even strongly disagreed with? Which one and why?