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Dynamis Course Participant's Guide

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World Vision International

The *Dynamis* Course

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Welcome

DYNAMIS: Greek noun for *strength, power, ability*. The root for dynamic, dynamo, dynamite. “*Wait for the gift my Father promised... You will receive power (**dynamis**) when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*” (Acts 1:4,8).

Living the Christian life requires more than conviction and commitment. It is not enough simply to believe the right things. Nor is the quality of our life determined by the sincerity or strength of our faith. Belief, commitment and dedication, all our hard work at obedience and faithfulness, do not keep us from stumbling, doubting and being discouraged. If believing the right things were all it took to live the right way, our lives would look different. We would feel so much better about our journey of faith.

The gospel of Christ is not simply the good **news** of salvation. It is not just a set of ideas and information. As Paul says, “*The gospel is the **dynamis** (strength, power and ability) of God for salvation*” (Romans 1:16). Living fruitfully and hopefully along the journey of faith requires power – the power, strength and ability of God poured into our lives through Christ by the Holy Spirit. **Dynamis** is the word used in the New Testament for this “power”. It appears 116 times!

All people long to live with hope. Hope is nourished in our lives by the power of God. “*Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the **dynamis** of the Holy Spirit*” (Romans 15:13). Abounding in hope requires power!

All people long to be filled with peace rather than fear. Peace pervades our lives through the power of God. “*God has not given us a spirit of fear but of **dynamis** and love and self-control*” (2 Timothy 1:7). Walking so that we are controlled by love rather than fear requires power! Not the abusive love of power that we see all around us – dominating, manipulating and exploiting other people – but the life-giving power of love. The journey of faith depends on God’s love, God’s power used God’s way.

What helps those who are poor to overcome their poverty? We do not just need the power of money, education, good skills, or even the ability to work hard. All of those are good, but insufficient gifts. We also need the power of God.

We are called by God to be renewed by the transforming power of the Triune God – Father, Son and Spirit. This course is about encountering the power of God so that we can live fruitfully, faithfully and joyfully in the journey of faith – abounding in the **dynamis** of God.

What to expect from DYNAMIS! Often when we discuss the power of God, we focus on the gifts, fruit or manifestations of the Spirit; and explore what they are and how to receive them. These vital aspects of the Spirit’s ministry are well explored by many churches. Rather than pursuing these ministries of the Spirit in our life, the **DYNAMIS course** explores the

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power of the Spirit to fulfill God's purposes in our life. How do we encounter more fully the power of God to live God's way every day?

The **DYNAMIS course** is for people who are already on the journey of faith in Jesus Christ. It is for people who want to live life well, who want for today and the rest of their lives to count for Christ. This is a course for people who want to discover how to make a difference in the world. We do not want to settle for merely surviving or enduring. We have heard the call to participate in God's mission and wonder what our place might be.

***DYNAMIS** is not a course on specific forms of mission service. Instead we explore a lifestyle empowered by the Spirit with the ability and strength we need in order to participate in God's purposes with every aspect of our lives, every moment of the day.*

Convictions that shape the Course

1. God will not call us to do something without giving us the capacity to do it.
2. We need more than determination and good intentions to do God's will. We need the power of God to do it.
3. To discern the aspects of God's will that we do not know, it is best to obey the will of God we do know.
4. The joyous privilege of participating in God's purposes for our lives is not limited to exceptional saints or to occasional volunteer activities. Rather it is the lifestyle of all God's people – daily and ordinary engagement in the coming of God's kingdom.

The goal of the Course: *To create a dynamic process so we can be led by God's Spirit in the next steps in our journey of faith and live fruitfully according to God's will and ways.*

Suggestions for making the most of the Course

The **DYNAMIS course** is not designed for passive attendance. It assumes active participation. Nor is it a course in which we can simply listen to lectures and observe others' discussion. Rather, it assumes that participants are eager to pursue greater understanding of God's will and ways for their lives, and to discern the next steps in their journey of faith.

There are several keys to making the most out of this opportunity.

1. Participate. Because each session builds on the previous ones, and much of the interaction occurs in the same small groups each week, the experience is enhanced if participants can attend each session. Obviously, things come up and it might be necessary to miss a session. But insofar as possible, set aside the full time for this journey.

2. Keep a Journal. The **DYNAMIS course** provides extensive opportunity for personal reflection through lectures, discussions, the study of Scripture, and various exercises.

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Participants will find it helpful to keep a journal, and record their insights as they encounter more fully the power of God for their journey of faith.

3. Engage in small group discussions. Over dinner – if that is how your sessions are structured – and then after the large group presentation, the **DYNAMIS course** is based on discussion with the same group of people each session. Learn the names of the people in your group and pray for them during the course. Participate actively in group discussions and activities.

There are few “right or wrong” answers to the questions or activities. Rather, they are designed to help each participant grasp more fully God’s will and ways for his or her life.

Discussion and Reflection Resources

- *Personal reflection questions:* Immediately following the video presentation, it might be helpful for participants to write a few of their own reflections.
- *Discussion springboards:* Depending on a small group’s interests and the time that is available, select from a range of questions provided to guide discussion.
- *Group activity:* If time permits, each session includes opportunities to examine the relevance of the topics for personal and contemporary issues.
- *Concluding reflections:* Suggestions to conclude discussion and for prayer are provided.
- *Diving deeper:* If time permits, there are some additional questions and exercises that could help a group to explore more fully the implications of what was presented.

4. Invest in Personal Study and Homework. Though it is possible to participate without doing any additional preparation, the experience will be improved by investing time outside of class in personal reflection and engagement to help encounter the **dynamis** of God in our daily lives. Following the questions for group discussion are a series of *Personal Application Resources*:

- *Springboards to encountering God’s dynamis in daily life:* Questions and exercises are provided that will take about an hour to complete.
- *Journey of Faith:* In addition to specific exercises for each week, there is one over-arching exercise that participants are encouraged to work on throughout the **DYNAMIS course**. Using a map, road, image or some other metaphor, participants are encouraged to create a “picture” of their journey of faith.
- The goal is that each week, new insights will be added to help understand more fully one’s journey of faith and gain insights into the next steps God is inviting participants to take. This process is for each participant’s own benefit, so no one needs to worry about being an accomplished artist.

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- *Diving Deeper*: For people who are able to invest more time, an additional set of questions and application exercises are provided. These will involve an additional 30 minutes of reflection.

5. Pursue the Next Steps. The purpose of the **DYNAMIS course** is not simply to gain more information about following Christ, but to encounter more deeply the transforming power of God so that we can live more faithfully as Christ's followers.

At the conclusion of the course there will be the opportunity for participants to draft a one-page summary of the next steps they believe God is calling them to take as they live by the **dynamis** of the Spirit. This can be a set of personal lifestyle mission commitments.

Jesus said, "*Knowing these things, blessed are you if you do them*" (John 13:17). We are called to the grand adventure of participating in God's mission in the world. May God bless and encourage us as we abound in joy by the power of the Spirit and live as witnesses to the coming Kingdom.

I. Homecoming

Where can we find the love we're looking for?

Central Scriptures	John 14:18-23: <i>"I will not leave you orphaned...My Father and I will come and make our home with you."</i>
	John 13:34-35: <i>"Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another"</i>
Central Conviction	The journey of faith is our participation in God's great love. Rather than a quest to find the love we are seeking, it is a joyous adventure to live more fully the love we have received.
Central Words	Home: literally "mansion" – a spacious and safe place where we can abide in beauty and intimacy, with plenty of room to welcome others

The Christian life does not begin with commands about what we are supposed to be and do in order to be loved by God. It begins with the stunning affirmation that in Christ, we are embraced in God's love. Not just loved and kept at a distance, for in Christ, we receive the gift of a home! By the presence of the Holy Spirit, the Father and Son come and make their home with us. Our lives become the dwelling place of God – God's mansion – a spacious and welcoming place of beauty and intimacy.

Personal reflection. Take a few moments for reflection.

- What is your response to what you have just heard?
- How aware are you of being beloved by God? Does God seem somewhat aloof? Why?
- If you were an orphan, what would it feel like to be adopted into a family? How does this relate to your relationship with God?
- What kind of things typically stand as barriers to our feeling loved by God?
- What contributes to a sense of intimacy with God?

Small Group Discussion. Introductions: Share your names, and, if you would like, why you are taking this course. What is one thing you hope will occur in your life through it?

Discussion Springboards. New Capacity to Love

The following questions are provided to prompt discussion. They are not a checklist that needs to be "completed." The facilitator of your group can help you select from these what would be most helpful to discuss.

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- How do you respond to the assertion that living life fully is not found in tasks or accomplishments, but in receiving God's love, loving God in return, and expressing that love to others? Why is it often hard to accept that God *really* loves us?
- What are some of the qualities that characterize God's love for us in Christ?
- When was a time when you were aware of God's love for you? What contributed to this? When have you felt most safe and sheltered by love?
- What are ways we can better grasp that loving God is a basic purpose for our lives? What stands as barriers?
- Discuss the following statement and share how it impacts you: "A new commandment I give to you, love one another as I have loved you. By this will all people know that you are my disciples – by the love you have for one another." (John 13: 34-5)
- Describe someone you know who lives this kind of love.
- What are implications of the notion that our calling is to live as participants in God's love for the world?

Concluding Reflections. Read together out loud: "Our ability to love others flows from our participation in God's love. 'A new commandment I give to you, love one another as I have loved you. By this will all people know that you are my disciples – by the love you have for one another' (John 13:34-5). Paul says in Romans 5:5 'God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.'"

Pray for one another. Envision as you pray the Holy Spirit standing over each person, pouring into them the love of Christ.

Diving Deeper. Write a brief, personal response to each of the following. Share one response with the group.

- When do you tend to experience most fully God's love? Why?
- Where in your life do you feel "dry" and in need of encountering more fully God's love for you?
- What does it mean to love others with the love you have received in Christ?
- Reflect on the statement, "God loves us first and keeps on loving us first." Write anything you sense God is seeking to say to you.

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GROUP ACTIVITY. Turn to the **Group Activity Worksheet** on **page 45**. In the first row of the chart, make a list of two situations you encounter in your daily life (local, national or global situations) where people need to encounter God's love, and experience belonging rather than abandonment, home rather than loneliness.

In the next row, brainstorm what the impact of God's love would look like in each of these situations.

For what would you like this group to pray for you as you begin this journey together?

Personal Application Encountering the *dynamis* of God in daily life

Springboards: Find a prominent place and post this reminder:

God loves us first and keeps on loving us first every day, throughout the day.

Read | John 3 and John 3:16. Compare these two passages. What insights do you gain from them about how you might participate in God's love for the world?

Reflect: Our privilege is for the Spirit to pour out through us the *dynamis* of God's love in Christ.

- Who is someone to whom God might be calling you to love with the love of Christ?
- What might you do this week to love them with Christ's love?

Doodle. Draw, write, color, paint – and bring to your group to show (if you'd like!):



- A portrayal of your present relationship with God.
- A depiction of the things that stand between God and you – and those things that knit you together.

Reflect. Pray. Confess. Find a coloured piece of paper and write the following on it: "Knowing we are loved frees us to live in the midst of the world without being controlled by it. The world's demands and expectations, cries of suffering and seductive comforts don't determine our reason for living."

Post it some place prominent. As you see it this week consider - are there areas in your life in which you long for the Spirit of God to set you free from being controlled by others' demands and the world's comforts?

Journey of Faith. Turn to **pages 46-48** and select the metaphor you would like to use to create a picture of your journey of faith. Begin to draw on **page 49**.

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- If it's helpful, draw a  indicating those times when you have felt particularly close to God and aware of God's love for you.
- Draw a  at those times in your life when you have really felt at home.
- On the reflection **page 51**, summarize some of your observations about this.

Diving Deeper. *“Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me into the world, so send I you”* (John 20:21).

- To which person or situation is God sending you this week to express God's love?
- What specifically do you think God is asking you to do?
- When are you going to do it?
- If you don't follow through on this, what might be holding you back?
- After you have sought to step out in the power of the Spirit and express God's love to this person/situation – what happened? Reflect on what you learned through this and you might want to talk about this with your small group.