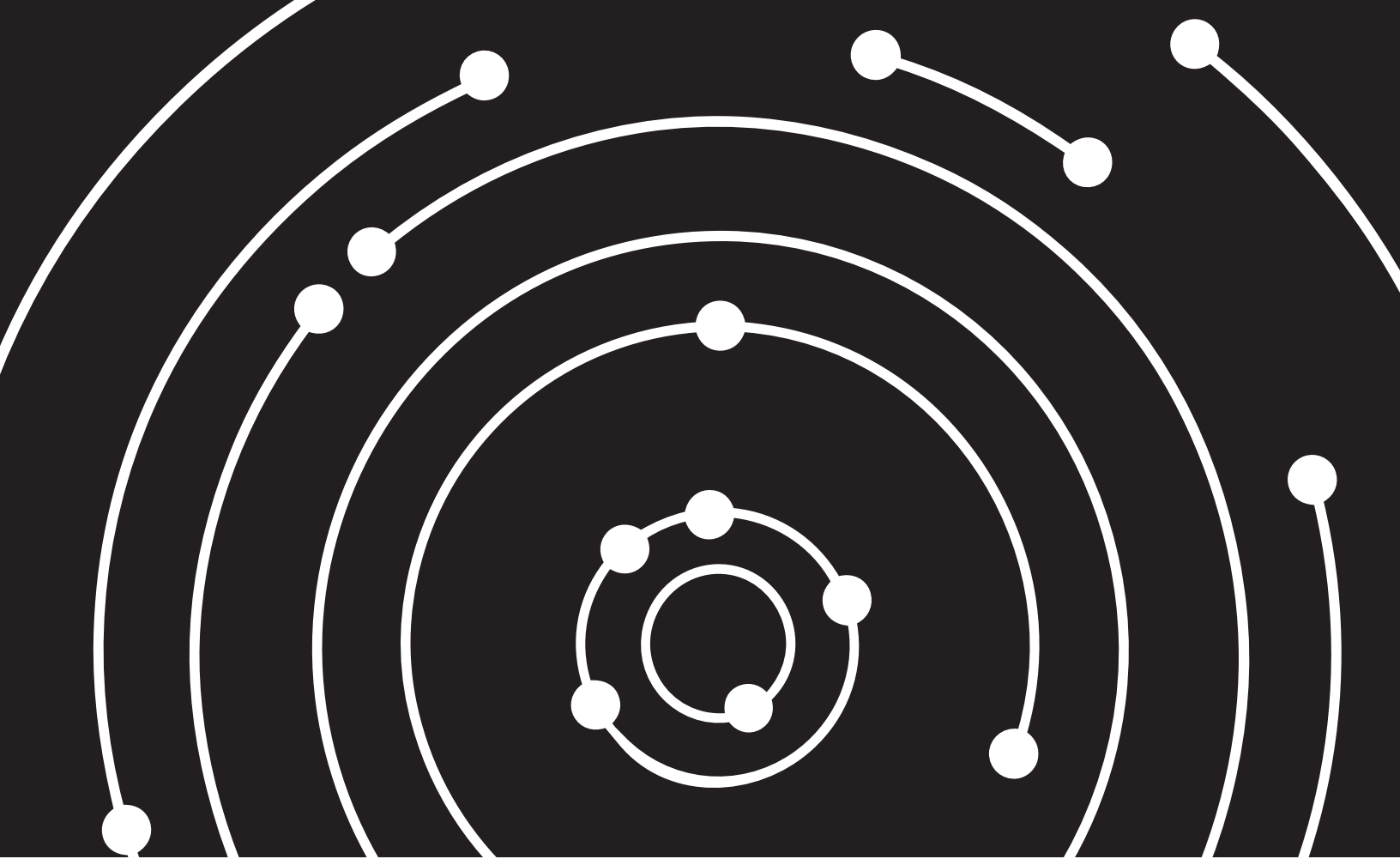




CONNECT *the* DOTS

THE DISCUSSION GUIDE

Five conversations—for your group, or for just you.

CHRISTOPHER PAUL BURNETT

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

How to Use This Guide

This guide runs five conversations—one for the Introduction and DOT ONE together, then one for each DOT after that. It works with a group around a table or with just you and a journal. The questions don't change; only who's listening.

You will need the book. Every session begins with a reading and every question sends you back into its pages. This guide adds no new teaching—the book carries the teaching. This is where you talk back to it.

Each session has the same shape. Before you start tells you what to read. If you're leading the discussion gives you the words to open with—read them aloud, even if the group is just you. Six questions follow. Before you close gives the one thing to do before the next session. None of it requires an expert in the room. It requires honesty in the room.

One word to leaders: your job is not to have answers. The book says discernment starts when honesty finally shows up—so protect the honesty. Let silence sit. Let “I’m not ready to say that yet” count. Go first when you can; a room follows whoever tells the truth earliest. Then keep bringing the conversation back to the book. When someone shares an experience or an opinion, ask what in the reading supports, challenges, or changes the way they’re thinking. The goal isn’t to get everyone to agree. It’s to understand the teaching more deeply.



SESSION ONE



Stop Lying About What You Want

Benjamin's Opening • The Introduction • DOT ONE

BEFORE YOU START

Read Benjamin's opening ("Hello, My Name Is Benjamin"), the Introduction, and DOT ONE.

If you're leading the discussion—with others or with yourself—start with this

This whole session is really one question asked six different ways: What do you actually want? The first chapter says nothing starts moving until you stop giving the edited answer—so that's our only ground rule. No résumé answers, no church answers. If you're not ready to say the real thing yet, say "I'm not ready to say that yet." That counts as honesty too. What doesn't count is the polished version.

1. The book opens with a man awake at 2:17 a.m., asking, How did I end up here? Without fixing anything or explaining anything—what's your version of that hour? What's the question that finds you when it's quiet?
2. Benjamin says he spent years asking "the safe question" about his brother instead of the true one, because the true one would have cost the whole table its comfort. Where in your life might you be doing what Benjamin did—keeping a conversation safe because the real question would change the room?

3. In DOT ONE, the author sits with his godmother and can feel “the safe answer loading, the smart answer, the résumé answer.” Then he tells the truth: no job title, no blueprint, just raw desire. If someone you fully trusted asked you, “What do you really want to do—and what does that look like?” what might your safe answer be? And what could be underneath it?
4. The book says most people don’t lie to God—they offer “the edited version,” trying to be acceptable. Look at the examples on the page: “open a door” meaning I’m stuck, “use me” meaning I’m tired of feeling invisible. Which edited prayer sounds most like one you may have prayed—and what truer prayer could be underneath it?
5. Find the chart in DOT ONE—“How to Discern: From Desire to Divine Clarity.” The second box asks what’s really in the way, and the book warns against the quick answer that “lets you blame spiritual opposition without ever examining yourself.” What might be an impediment in your life that you’ve been calling by a more comfortable name?
6. The chapter ends: “The moment you stop editing, you become able to hear more clearly.” Why might telling the truth about what you want need to come before examining what God is saying? What could happen when we confuse our own desires with God’s direction?

BEFORE YOU CLOSE

The book says honesty isn’t just confession—it’s exposure. Nobody has to share their answer to this one out loud. Sometime before Session Two, tell God the unedited version of what you want. Not the acceptable version. The real one. That’s the whole assignment.

NEXT SESSION

DOT TWO—Discernment, and the five things that may be blocking you from settling what you’ve heard.



SESSION TWO



Settling What You Heard

DOT TWO

BEFORE YOU START

Read DOT TWO, including Benjamin's section in the middle—the dark pages.

If you're leading the discussion—with others or with yourself—start with this

The chapter says most of us are not confused—we're conflicted. Hearing is not the hard part; surrender is. So here's the one rule for this session: when somebody shares, we don't fix them. No advice, no verse to patch it. We let what they said stand. Learning to let a true thing stand without negotiating with it—that's the whole subject of this session.

1. The chapter opens in an airport: a hundred people imagining the sky splitting and thunder rolling. Before reading this, how might you have pictured what hearing God is supposed to look like? Where could that picture have come from?
2. The author describes a message that “clung to my psyche like superglue”—something he could neither shake nor explain away. Has something ever landed on you with that kind of weight—a certainty, a conviction, a pull? Without deciding right now what it was, what did it press on?

3. Reread Benjamin's dark pages. He says his family lived thirteen years in which the dream had "so obviously, so completely failed." Where might your circumstances currently be talking louder than something you once sensed? What could it take to carry a thing through years that argue against it?
4. The chapter names five things that block a clear word from settling, and it ends by asking you directly: Which one is blocking you? Somewhere in those five, the book says, a line "didn't just sound true—it felt personal." Which one was it for you—and what may that blocker be protecting?
5. On selective attention: "God says, 'Set the boundary,' and you rewrite it to, 'Just be nicer, don't make it a big thing.'" What might be a full sentence you've been shortening—an instruction, a conviction, a truth—because the whole thing would cost too much?
6. The chapter's gut check: "Is it unclear, or is it just uncomfortable?" What's one thing you've been calling unclear that, if you're honest, may just be uncomfortable?

BEFORE YOU CLOSE

The chapter gives the assignment itself: bring it to God exactly as it is—say what you want, say what you fear, say what you don't want to let go of. Before Session Three, take whatever surfaced in question 4 or 6 and do that. Undressed. Exactly as it is.

NEXT SESSION

DOT THREE—Obedience, and what "whatever it takes" actually costs.



SESSION THREE



Whatever It Takes

DOT THREE

BEFORE YOU START

Read DOT THREE, including both of Benjamin's sections—his opening and the one in the middle he calls “the anatomy of a yes.”

If you're leading the discussion—with others or with yourself—start with this

The chapter says the hardest part isn't hearing God—it's living with the fact that you already heard Him. So understand what this room is and isn't. Nobody's going to be asked to commit to anything at this table; obedience happens in your actual life, not in here. What this room is for is telling the truth about what your yes is costing you—and where it's slipping.

1. Benjamin says what made Joseph different is “almost embarrassingly plain. He did what God said. That's it.” Why might we prefer a more complicated answer than that one? What could the plain answer expose?
2. The washing machine: the agitator “is not there to ruin the load, but to do the work that cannot happen while everything just sits in clean-looking water.” Where might something you've been calling an interruption actually have been doing that kind of work in you?

3. The author left the bank, then took a pastorate at a pay cut: “On paper, it looked like I was moving backward.” When could obedience in your life have looked like moving backward on paper? Or if you’re facing that kind of choice now—what does the paper say?
4. The author identifies six responses that complete obedience: Ask, Believe, Choose, Deny, Eat, and Face the Challenge. Each one builds on the one before it. Why might simply deciding to obey not be enough? What could happen when someone tries to face the challenge without walking through the responses that come first? Which response do you think people are most likely to skip because they assume they don’t need it?
5. Benjamin: “He didn’t say yes once... Same yes, but a brand new cost, over and over for thirteen years.” What’s a yes you said some time ago that may be asking to be said again now—at a new cost?
6. The chapter closes by telling you to name three things: the instruction you keep postponing, the excuse you keep protecting, the part of the process you keep skipping. Which of those three is easiest for you to name out loud? Which may be hardest? (Nobody has to name the hard one out loud.)

BEFORE YOU CLOSE

The chapter’s own words: “Don’t close this chapter inspired. Close it surrendered.” Before Session Four, write all three—the instruction, the excuse, the skipped step—somewhere only you and God will see them.

NEXT SESSION

DOT FOUR—the four rooms where your yes comes due.



SESSION FOUR



One Thing, Moving Through Four Rooms

DOT FOUR

BEFORE YOU START

Read DOT FOUR, including Benjamin's opening.

If you're leading the discussion—with others or with yourself—start with this
Benjamin says your life isn't falling apart in a hundred places—it's usually one thing, moving through four rooms. So as we walk through all four rooms, watch for how a struggle in one can show up in the others—and why God may address something different from what we're asking Him to fix. By the end, each of us takes home the chapter's question: Which dimension is God putting His finger on right now?

1. The toothache “starts in one spot, then steals your sleep, shortens your patience, and drains your focus. One problem, four echoes.” When may your life have felt like everything was collapsing at once—and looking back, could it have been one issue spreading?

2. Which of the four rooms—relational, vocational, financial, physical—might God be putting His finger on in your life right now? What makes you say that room and not another?
3. The relational room: “nothing reveals your maturity faster than how you handle people when you’re tired, triggered, or misunderstood.” Which of those three may reveal the most about you—and what might it look like when it does?
4. The vocational room says discernment “exposes the difference between assignment and ambition” and forces the question: Am I doing this because God said it, or because I need it to validate me? Where may that question land in your own work—your job, your ministry, your home? What could obedience look like there?
5. The financial room describes two voices: “God provides” and “Hold tight, nobody is coming to save you.” Where might you hear both? Which one could be winning right now?
6. The physical room says the only prayer most of us have ever prayed about our body is for healing—we ask God to fix it after it breaks, but rarely for a word on stewarding it while it works. What may be true of your own prayers about your body? What could asking for instruction—not just healing—sound like this week?

BEFORE YOU CLOSE

Take the room you named in question 2 and sit with the chapter’s two questions for that room only: Which dimension is God addressing right now? What is He asking me to obey? One room. Before Session Five.

NEXT SESSION

DOT FIVE—the room in Egypt, and the name for what God produces when obedience outlasts everything.



SESSION FIVE



Who's Waiting on Your Yes

DOT FIVE • A Prayer to Start Connecting

BEFORE YOU START

Read DOT FIVE all the way through “A Prayer to Start Connecting”—including both of Benjamin’s sections. This is the longest reading of the study. Don’t skip the ending; the ending is the point.

If you’re leading the discussion—with others or with yourself—start with this

Last session. Benjamin ends this book by saying it was never only about you—that somewhere, a Benjamin is attached to your obedience. So this last conversation does two things: tell the truth about where each of us is in the story, and lift our eyes to who might be on the other side of it. Then we end the way the book ends—we pray the prayer on its last pages. Out loud, together. If it’s just you, still out loud. This study doesn’t get discussed to a close. It gets prayed to one.

1. “You can get the ‘yes,’ the promotion, the approval, the win... and somehow still feel unfinished.” When may you have reached a goal that didn’t create the feeling you thought it would? Using the chapter’s own words, how would you explain what Transcendent Significance is—and what it isn’t?

2. The chapter walks five stages and warns: if you can't recognize the stage you're in, you'll misjudge it—and if you misjudge it, you'll resist it. Which stage might you be standing in right now? What in the chapter's description made you think so?
3. “You can be faithful and still be forgotten for a season”—the cupbearer forgot Joseph. Where may you be serving faithfully in a place that feels hidden? What does the chapter say that season could actually be building?
4. Benjamin's turn: “The dream was never about Joseph being right. It was about us being alive.” How might that reframe change the way you look at something in your own story—a dream, a delay, a detour you've assumed was about you?
5. “I am the proof. Not Joseph—me.” Benjamin says somebody's whole life may be hanging on whether you trust God in a room nobody's clapping in. Who could be attached to your obedience—someone you can name, or someone you haven't met? What may they be waiting on?
6. Across these five conversations, you've walked the whole system: telling the truth about what you want, discerning what God is saying, obeying what He reveals, and stepping into Transcendent Significance. Looking back at Joseph's story, how do you see those pieces connecting? What may you understand about connecting the dots now that you didn't when you started?

BEFORE YOU CLOSE

Turn to “A Prayer to Start Connecting” and pray it—together, out loud. Then let the last line of it stand: Now let God connect the rest.

WHERE THIS GOES NEXT

Keep Walking

This guide was built for conversation—but conversation isn't the same as practice. The book names what has to be built: discerning, obeying, carrying a yes through all four rooms. More resources are being developed to help you move from understanding the D.O.TS. system to using it in everyday life.

If you want to be the first to know when they're ready—and to keep walking—you already know where to find me.

www.connectthedots.group · connect@connectthedotsgroup.org

The line is still being drawn...

