



Dessert First Reader's Guide

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No matter your situation—whether you feel devastatingly alone or are connected to a wider community, whether you are active in a small group, and/or merely want to begin the conversation with loved ones—our aim is for *Dessert First* to be a companion on your journey. We invite you and your group to embrace time to think, reflect, write and/or talk through the following.

Using *Dessert First* as an Individual Reader:

You can use this book on your own or with company. If using it on your own, find quiet time to read, think, reflect, and perhaps journal on these questions. You may especially find the resource section useful for at-a-glance practical as well as religious/spiritual questions concerning death and grief. The chapters are also designed such that they may be read in order or at random. We hope *Dessert First* is a resource you will keep close at hand, using it over-and-over throughout your life.

Using *Dessert First* in Group Settings:

This book may easily be used in group settings, which may help you dip a toe in beginning and continuing tough conversations. Consider reading and using this book with your loved ones, neighbors, faith community, book clubs, small group, as well as in an appropriate professional setting.

- 1. Family/Loved Ones:** We encourage you to use this book as a family or with other loved ones. It will perhaps help spark some otherwise difficult conversations. We hope you will consider it sacred time spent with one another. You are invited to hold the space for these discussions in order to ease fears, anxiety, and unnecessary stress and strain at the end of life. *Dessert First*, when used as a family tool, can help us focus on *caring* for one another with love in our final weeks, days, hours, or moments together—instead of scrambling to make decisions and stressing unnecessarily over that which *can* be planned in advance.
- 2. Faith-based, Congregations and Small Group:** Because *Dessert First* contains chapters on research, theology, rituals, and grief, it is ideal for faith communities, Sunday school classes, and other small groups. In these settings, feel free to employ a deeper dive in your own tradition's beliefs about death, the afterlife, and grief. See the Resources sections for some general theological summaries.
- 3. Book Club (Faith-based or Not):** This book works very well in book clubs. They need not be faith-based; death and grief are universal themes. You are invited to use this resource in a deep way: explore the larger question surrounding the narrative; utilize critical thinking to consider the meaning and application for yourself and your community.

Reflection and Discussion Questions:

1. Is anything happening in your life right now that led you to *Dessert First*?
2. How much have you thought about death—your own or others'? Do you avoid thinking or reflecting on death? If so, why?
3. How much experience do you have with death and/or grief? Within that experience, what has been the most meaningful and helpful? What has been the hardest?
4. Name any hesitations you have about this book's explorations and reflections of death, grief, and the afterlife. If you have none, consider any you have encountered previously from your loved ones/friends?
4. Name any curiosity about death, grief, and the afterlife. Name any anxieties you have about death, grief, and the afterlife.
5. Name your intention (purpose) for reading and moving through *Dessert First*. What do you hope to encounter, experience, glean, or accomplish?

Please note that for bulk, group orders of 20 or more, author J. Dana Trent is available for Skype Q&As! Learn more about that and bulk orders at www.chalicepress.com/DessertFirst.

*Let Dana know how you and/or your group used *Dessert First*. Share your individual and group experiences, thoughts, reflections, questions, and comments with her on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).*