

NOTES from the **TILT-A-WHIRL**

STUDY GUIDE

FOR LEADERS, GROUPS, AND INDIVIDUAL USE

N.D. WILSON



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Published by Beloved Media

8721 Santa Monica Blvd., #1205

Los Angeles, CA 90069

N.D. Wilson, Notes From the Tilt-A-Whirl

A film series with best-selling author N.D. Wilson

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Content by Joe Rigney

Cover Design by Rachel Hoffman

Published in the United States of America

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INTRODUCTION

This Study Guide is designed to be used in a ten-session, group or one-on-one study of the *Notes from the Tilt-A-Whirl* Film Series. Each lesson examines one segment of the *Notes from the Tilt-A-Whirl* Film Series. (Note: The film also contains a Winter, Spring, and Summer Hiatus. There are no discussion questions for these sections. However, you should feel free to explore them with your group).

If you are the leader of your group, it is especially important that you be familiar with the layout and content of the film and Study Guide. Therefore, we recommend that you 1) watch all of the chapter segments prior to showing them to your group, 2) skim each lesson in the Study Guide, noting the key themes and questions, and 3) have a plan for how you will approach each group time. We have tried to design this Study Guide so that you have as much flexibility as possible, while still providing guidance and help in understanding the main thrust of each lesson. Feel free to adapt this Study Guide to meet the needs of your particular situation.

Each lesson is divided into four sections.

- **Introduction** – the opening paragraphs give a brief overview of the lesson and a basic summary of the main objectives for each segment in the film series. These will help set the overall tone for each lesson and guide your preparation.
- **Connecting the Dots** – This section will consist of key questions, quotations, background information, and exercises to complete with your group. In this section you may find:
 - **Background** – brief comments that provide helpful background information on key persons, philosophical concepts, or theological doctrines.
 - **Read** – relevant Scripture passages that connect with the lesson content.
 - **Think** – key quotations from the film for further reflection.
 - **Ask** – suggested questions to provoke discussion and further understanding of the lesson content.
 - **Act** – exhortations and assignments designed to help the members of your group practice what they are learning through the films and discussion.

- **Further Reading** – This section will connect the film segments to relevant chapters in *Notes from the Tilt-A-Whirl* (Thomas Nelson), as well as provide illuminating quotations from the book. While it is not required, we recommend that, if possible, you read the relevant chapters from the book before each meeting. This will enable you to better lead the discussion.
- **Back into the Story** – This section will contain brief ‘take-away’ points to aid the members of your group as they re-enter their daily lives. They will also help you to keep the main point in mind as you lead the discussion.

None of the lessons require any preparation on the part of your group. However, we recommend that the members of your group keep some kind of journal as they participate in these sessions. In this journal, they can write down key points from the video, take notes during the discussion, and complete some of the exercises and assignments under the **Act** heading.

As you lead a group or individual through the film series, we recommend that you keep the following things in mind:

- Cover everything in prayer. Only God can change the hearts and minds of those in your group. Therefore, it is crucial that you seek the Lord’s help in prayer during your preparation and as other opportunities present themselves.
- Seek to connect the content of the film to the Word. We’ve sought to include relevant biblical passages in this Study Guide. Feel free to make additional connections to the Scriptures. The more that your group can see that the content of the film is rooted in the Bible, the more solid their foundation will be.
- Draw the members of your group into the discussion. Truth goes deepest when it comes nearest. Labor to include the members of your group in the discussion. Welcome personal reflections and stories that relate to the content. Pray for patience and wisdom as you seek to draw them in to the discussion.
- Encourage your group to take what they learn with them as they go. Don’t be content to merely discuss truth in a small group. Push them to live the truth that they are seeing in the Scriptures and the film. As the leader, you should seek to model this type of application in your own life.
- Aim for transferability. Paul encourages Timothy with these words: “And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Timothy 2:2). Paul thinks three generations ahead of him as he passes the faith on to Timothy. Likewise, your goal should be to aid others in understanding and embracing the truth in such a way that they can take the same tool and use it with others.

May the God of all grace equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you and your group that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

LESSON 1

Introduction

Introduction

The introductory segment of the film is meant to be a wake-up call. The fast-pace of the cinematography and Nate’s seemingly random observations are intended to shock us into recognition that the universe we live in is not a normal place. In fact, it’s a downright odd place. Who needs science fiction when the world is already as crazy as it is? Thus, one of the main goals for those leading a study is simply to point. Like Nate, point at the splendors that fill the cosmos. Describe the magnificent transformations that occur every second of every day in every corner of the world. Help others to realize that they walk among wonders...if they will only open their eyes.

On top of this, it is important to introduce three related themes that will appear again and again in the film. First, the universal human need to explain this place. How did it get here and what is the point of it all? Second, the tendency of philosophical explanations to hide more than they illuminate. Philosophy is often an attempt to avoid actually seeing the way the world is. Third, God as Author and the world as his novel. This is his spoken world.

Connecting the Dots

Ask: Recall some of the random ‘residents’ of the universe that Nate lists. Which ones particularly struck you? Encourage the participants to add to the list of odd, wonderful, and crazy things about the world we inhabit.

Read: The book of Job contains some magnificent descriptions of creation and God’s lively engagement with it. Read through Job 38-42 (or at least portions of it). Why do you think God asks Job so many questions? What response is he trying to awaken? What response does Job give?

Ask: Having discussed and reflected on the wonder and amazement of the universe, why is it that so many of us are so bored so much of the time? (Push others to probe the roots of their own boredom and numbness.)

Think: “There is not going to be an easily believable explanation for an impossible to believe world.” Agree or disagree? What would you consider “an easily believable explanation”?

Background

- Philosophy – the study of ultimate and abstract problems having to do with the nature of existence, knowledge, morality, and human purpose. It is distinguished from other ways of addressing these problems by its use of big words that attempt to hide the fact that philosophers, like the rest of us, have to take out the trash.
- Comparative religions – the field of religious studies that analyzes the similarities and differences among world religions. In the chapter entitled “Welcome” in *Notes from the Tilt-A-Whirl*, Nate gives some examples of creation myths from various world religions.

Ask: What danger does Nate identify in philosophical explanations of the world? How would listening to a child’s first laugh help?

Read: Read John 1:1-3. What is your initial reaction to the notion that the world is God’s poem, his play, his novel? Discuss some possible implications of viewing God as the Author.

Act: As you go through your life this week, open your eyes to the world. See it in a new light. Break out of the boredom. Write down one event, one thing, one occurrence that you viewed in a different light because of this video.

Further Reading

- For further exploration, read “Preface” and “Welcome” in *Notes from the Tilt-A-Whirl*.

Back into the Story

- This is a crazy, crazy, world, filled with unfathomable wonders and deep layers.
- Beware boredom (and easy explanations that use big words).
- This world is God’s story.