



Study Guide



INTERNATIONAL COOPERATING MINISTRIES
NURTURING BELIEVERS AND ASSISTING CHURCH GROWTH WORLDWIDE

Thank you for your interest in the 4 Spiritual Secrets. Whether you are doing this study by yourself or in a small group, we hope that you discover how the 4 Spiritual Secrets can be applied to your life.

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Small Group Participants:

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Resource Information:

- **<http://www.icm.org> FREE** Downloadable Study Guides & Information on International Cooperating Ministries church building
- **<http://www.4spiritualsecrets.org>** Visit Dick Woodward's website & blog
- **<http://www.minibiblecollege.org> FREE** downloadable Mini Bible College Course

Chapter 1: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- What occupies most of your attention each day?

- If you had to give a title to a book about your life over the past few months, what would the title be? Why?

- When they get to the end of life, why do so many people seem to have regrets about how they used their time?

- Have you had a “wake-up call” or negative experience that God used to get your attention? Describe it. What did you learn?

Chapter 2: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- What were you like in high school?

- Who has played a key role in your journey of faith?

- Can you relate to Dick's feelings of inadequacy? Why or why not?

- What are some of the messages we get from the world around us about self-esteem, self-worth, and success? How are those messages similar or dissimilar to the Gospel?

Chapter 3: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- What did those orphaned children probably feel on that awful night? How was God's love made real to them in such a horrible situation?

- Have you ever been the recipient of God's love, expressed through other people, in a time of great sadness or need? How did you feel?

- Have you ever experienced being a conduit of the love of God? Describe what happened, and how you felt.

- Are there hurting people in your life right now? Are you willing to ask God to make you an instrument of His love for them? How will doing that inconvenience you? How might it change your life?

Chapter 4: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- Did God use Dick in Mickey’s life? How does this little story show that serving Christ is a team sport?

- Dick’s lack of confidence made him do some crazy things, and it’s pretty ironic that he went from being an “inmate in the prison of shyness” to being a mega pastor and local celebrity, as you’ll see as you read on. Are you an introvert or an extrovert . . . i.e., do you get your energy from being alone, or from being with other people? How does God use both types of people for His purposes?

- Can you think of any areas of your life in which you are not free? What’s holding you back?

Chapter 5: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- Where are you? Have you been eating from the wrong trees, i.e., have you been seeking your comfort and fulfillment from physical things rather than from God’s spiritual provision for you? Is God calling out to you?

- Jesus said that people “don’t live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4, quoting from Deuteronomy 8:3) How do His words connect to Adam and Eve’s eating from the wrong tree?

- What if you went to a hotel room and did nothing but read the Bible? Does that idea appeal to you . . . or does it sound dull? (We’re not suggesting that you run out and rent a room, Bible in hand. The important thing in Dick’s story is not the details of his particular experience, but the results of his experience.)

- Where is Bible reading on your priority list? How much time do you really spend reading the Bible each day? Is there a disconnect between your answers to these two questions, i.e., the Scriptures are important to you but you spend little time actually reading them?

- Jesus talked about people asking, seeking, and knocking . . . is your relationship with God and the Bible a passionate pursuit or a dry duty?

- Do you have your spiritual suspenders stuck to someone else's bumper?

- Dick doesn't apologize for having doubts about the Bible. He wrestled with his uncertainties about Scripture. Do you have doubts about God and the Scriptures? What do you do with your doubts and questions?

Chapter 6: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- How was Dick’s experience of knowing he was nothing different from his earlier struggles with inferiority?

- Have you ever had an experience of the presence of God?

- So often we think of God living in time, just as we do. What does the name “I AM” (as opposed to “I was” or “I will be”) show us about the nature of God and the fact that He dwells in eternity?

- Do you feel like God can’t or won’t use you until you have your act together? If so, what does that kind of thinking show you about how you view God?

- Have you come to the place where you are ready to learn the first spiritual secrets?

- What obstacles block you from experiencing the reality of the first Spiritual Secret?

Chapter 7: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- Do you struggle with pride, inferiority, or both?

- Why was Dick’s discovery that God could use him, even when he messed up, so liberating? Did it mean that Dick could just do whatever he wanted, and God would use him anyway? What could a similar discovery (or re-discovery) in your own life look like?

- Has the virtue of “meekness” appealed to you in the past, or were you like the rest of us and thought it was kind of wimpy? How does Dick’s description of the stallion alter your understanding of Jesus’ view of meekness?

- In terms of advertising, movies, music, media, and books, how does the culture around us reinforce our natural tendency to keep our eyes on ourselves? What practical steps can we take to keep ourselves from conforming to the world in this way?

Chapter 8: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- Have you ever come to the end of your rope, like Dick, realizing that you are just plain unable to do what you're supposed to be doing? Describe the scene. If you haven't experienced that, does the idea of saying "I can't" seem weak to you? Why or why not?

- Do you ever feel like other people seem to have it all together? Do they?

- Have you experienced any miracles lately?

- Why is it hard for some people to accept help?

- We live in a high-achieving, can-do culture. What happens to people who say, "I can't"?

- What do you think Dick meant when he said, "I can't"? After all, he survived the double diaper change; we presume he got up from the floor and went on to preach his sermon the next day. What was his experience on the nursery floor about, really?

Chapter 9: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- What kind of “I shoulds” do you carry around in your head? How do they make you feel?

- Through the first Secret, Dick realized he was nothing. With the second Secret, he realized he could do nothing. Why the distinction? What’s the difference between being and doing?

- Marathoners will tell you that they run with patience, and that their muscles are relaxed as they run. How do we really “relax” in our run with Jesus? How does He really work through us so it’s not us doing stuff, but Him doing it through us?

Chapter 10: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- Why do you think Peter and his partners followed Jesus in the first place?

- How is catching men like catching fish?

- After Jesus' miracle of the full nets, why did Peter respond by telling Jesus to go away, that he was a sinful man? What did that have to do with anything?

- What was Peter afraid of?

- Are you ever afraid of Jesus?

- What were Peter's strengths? Weaknesses?

- How did God's power work through Peter after Jesus' resurrection?

- What are your strengths and weaknesses? Do you believe that God really can use you in supernatural ways, or do you assume that He only uses other people, people who have their act together?

Chapter 11: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- What is your sphere of influence right now, i.e., who are the people whose lives you touch? Do they know that you love them with the love of Christ? Are there people who intimidate you, or people you don't know how to connect with? Why? How might Jesus interact with them?

- Why does God sometimes do miracles of growth and blessing, and sometimes not? What's up with that?

- What do we learn during bad times that we wouldn't necessarily even notice during good times?

- What season are you in right now? Feast or famine . . . or a mixture? Based on Dick's insights, what do you think God might be teaching you?

Chapter 12: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- A lot of pastors and other leaders can relate with Dick’s experience. Sadly, statistics show that many spiritual leaders burn out. Why is a busy lifestyle so conducive to burnout? What are the antidotes to a miles-wide/inch deep way of living? What might the Dutch priest Henri Nouwen have meant when he said that “Nothing conflicts with the love of Christ like service to Christ”?

- Why does success so often cause us to become spiritually shallow?

- What is the definition of success in the secular world? How is it similar to or different from the Bible’s perspective on success? Are you defining your own success—or lack thereof—based on Scripture or on the culture around you?

- When things are going well, do you assume God is pleased with you? When your life is a mess, do you assume God is punishing you? Where do you really get your concepts about God and His perspective from?

Chapter 13: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- Dick briefly described the stages of response to his illness: denial, anger, depression, bargaining, and acceptance. Have you experienced these in response to loss in your own life? Are you stuck in one of the stages? What would it take for you to move on? Do you want to move on?

- What are the obstacles to the profound “inner healing” that Dick experienced? Have you experienced a similar sort of spiritual restoration after a tough challenge?

- Is there anything that you know you are called to do that you in fact are not doing? What’s stopping you?

- What keeps you busy? Is your life bearing lasting fruit, or are you, as Dick describes, too busy “doing stuff” to even see the things that God has prepared for you to do, things whose impact will last forever?

Chapter 14: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- Jonah 2:8 says “Those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.” When you think honestly about your life, are there any “idols” you’re clinging to? They’re probably not graven images, but are there things that occupy and obsess you, distracting your attention from God? If so, what grace might you be forfeiting?

- Has God gotten your attention by means of crises?

- Can human beings change for the better when things are going well, or do we only change when forced to?

- Why did God give us freedom of choice?

- What don’t you want to do that God is calling you to do?

Chapter 15: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- Dick says that serving Christ is a team sport. Why? How? Are you connected with other believers? Who's on your team?

- Are there people in your life who can challenge and encourage you in your faith journey? Are you part of a local church? Why or why not?

- What do you notice about the stories about the Smileys and the Lius? What changed their lives? How are they bucking the cultural norms around them? How are they connected to others?

- What are your gifts?

- Are you using them to enrich other people's lives? Looking back in time, have you seen how God has used your abilities—and/or your disabilities—in other peoples' lives, for good?

Chapter 16: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- Why do human beings love applause?

- How does the world around us encourage pride and self-sufficiency?

- What does pride do in people's personalities?

- What is the antidote to pride?

- Why is it liberating to give God the credit due Him?

Chapter 17: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- Dick doesn't give much detail about Mitch's mental health challenges, and his story is not suggesting that immersion in the Bible will always heal people's neurological conditions. What risks did Dick take in developing a relationship with Mitch? What might have happened if Dick had not done so?

- Can you give an example of how God's Word healed a broken area in your life or in the life of a friend or family member?

- C. S. Lewis called faith in Christ "the good infection," in that it's like a virus that infects one person, who passes it on to two more, who infect four more, who spread it to eight more, and so on. How has God's touch in your life been passed on to others, and others beyond them?

Chapter 18: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- Where are you, *really*?

Chapter 19: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- What does it mean to be in religion, but not in Christ?

- What does Dick mean when he says that we can be in alignment with Christ one day, and not in alignment with Christ the next? Can you see examples of that in your own life?

- At this point in your life, are you current in your relationship with Christ? Or has your power cord slipped out of the socket, and when you talk about faith you're basically describing a dynamic from the past, not the present?

Chapter 20: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- To go with Dick’s reference to Ephesians 5:18—“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit”--how does a person get drunk, anyway? What parallels are there in terms of how we get “filled with the Spirit”?

- Dick says that we’re all control freaks, in one way or another. It’s hard to let go of our natural desire to manage all the outcomes we possibly can. Is there any area of your life that you’re holding back from the Spirit’s control? Are you afraid of what might happen if you yield your control? What is control, really? What keeps you from being fully available to God?

- Dick says that one of his favorite quotes—which is actually a summary of his convictions formed over decades, as a result of all the good mentoring he had--is as follows: “Jesus Christ, the Christ Who still is, because He’s risen, is everything He says He is. He can do everything He says He can do. You are everything Christ says you are, and you can do everything Christ says you can do, because He is, He is in you and you are in Him.” That can be kind of hard to penetrate . . . but keeping Dick’s understanding of God’s presence and goodness in mind, what does it mean? How could these truths change your life?

- What troubles or confuses you about the four Spiritual Secrets?

Chapter 21: What Can It Mean in Your Life?

- There is a lot to chew on in this chapter. What struck you about Dick's reflections on life, work, death, and eternity?

Please visit the International Cooperating Ministries at **<http://www.icm.org/>** and Dick Woodward's website & blog at **<http://www.4spiritualsecrets.org/>**. Also, download more from Dicks Mini Bible College at **<http://www.minibiblecollege.org/>**.

God Bless!