



BOOK CLUB

Introduction & Reading Schedule

Renew Your Life: Discovering the Wellspring of God's Energy
By Kai Mark Nilsen

I am delighted and honored to share my first solo book with you as we launch the Renovaré Book Club for 2015-2016. The Renovaré community has shaped these ideas within me over the past decade. Their encouragement brought it to fruition.

In his foreword, James Bryan Smith writes,

I believe that in this fine book Kai Nilsen has given us a modern look at the same problem, the same struggle, and the same choice that Paul was writing about (the struggle of flesh and spirit). In place of the language of flesh and spirit, Kai invites us to consider modern equivalents—our spirits paralyzed by the weight of choice in a consumer world, longing to experience the freedom of simplicity in the world God desires; our minds numbed by demand and external expectation, craving a sense of God's delight in us and internal affirmation of God's love; our bodies wearied by the pace of life desperately seeking renewal by the ever present breath of life, the Spirit of God.

Reading this book brings about a confluence of three storylines: 1) My personal journey from burnout or energy depletion to a renewed vitality for living. 2) Your story as you read and reflect on the Essential Life Questions I highlight in each chapter and then experiment with each of the life practices. 3) The story of God's creative, renewable energies that are embedded in the creation narrative of Genesis 1.

The seven creative, renewable energies include:

Grace (Genesis 1:1). Receiving the grace of life itself, I open myself to God's ever-flowing energy in which I "live and move and have [my] being" (Acts 17:28).

Possibility (Genesis 1:2). Hovering over the waters of chaos, the Spirit of God makes possible hope for the new things God has already declared (Isaiah 42:9).

Paradox (Genesis 1:4). Wrestling with the reality of both light and darkness in our lives and in the created world, we receive the energy to move from suffering to endurance to new character to hope that will not disappoint us (Romans 5:3-4).

Natural world (Genesis 1:9-25). Tapping into the ever-present wonder of God's creation, we learn what the natural world teaches us. "Consider the lilies of the field . . ." (Matthew 6:28).

Relationships (Genesis 1:27). Opening ourselves to the divine image in the other, we discover the vitality that comes from relationships. "And who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29).

Fruitful work (Genesis 1:28). Engaging our daily work we multiply our capacity to contribute to the good of the world. "For this I toil and struggle with all the energy that he powerfully inspires within me" (Colossians 1:29).

Rest (Genesis 2:3). By embracing a Sabbath rhythm for life, we learn to let go and trust God's providential care. "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (Exodus 33:14).

I call these *creative, renewable energies* for three reasons:

First, they are *creative* because they are embedded in the creation story and, therefore, accessible to all. You do not have to consider yourself an artist to receive these creative energies. They are simply the energies we all need to live vibrant, vital lives.

Second, they are *renewable*. Unlike a gas tank that runs dry or an oil field that becomes depleted, these energies are always available, waiting for us to access them.

Third, I use the term *energies* because they infuse power for living and for loving service.

The schedule for reading is this:

October 12-17	Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2
October 19-24	Chapter 2 and 3
October 26-31	Chapter 4
November 2-7	Chapters 5-6
November 9-14	Chapter 7
November 16-21	Chapter 8

Throughout the guided journey you will also have access to these conversations and conversation guides:

- **Study Guide:** Included in the book.
- **Leader-initiated posts on the discussion board at renovare.org.**
- **Podcasts:** Nathan Foster and I will have conversation around the primary themes of the book.
- **Papers:** Three papers will be written to further illuminate pertinent themes.

Again, I appreciate James Bryan Smith's encouragement:

The world screams at us, "Seek more and more" while offering us less and less. In this marvelous book, Kai gently reminds us that our souls demand not more and more, but that which is more essential. May God bless you in the reading of this book and provide a wellspring of energy that enables you to do more than you could ever ask or imagine.

I look forward to discovering the wellspring of God's energy together!

Peace,

Kai Nilsen