

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR

TEN QUESTIONS TO DIAGNOSE YOUR SPIRITUAL HEALTH

How to Use This Discussion Guide

This discussion guide can be used in a small group setting, in a counseling relationship, by two friends or spouses reading the book together, or as a self-study.

When two or more are discussing the book, there are several possible ways to use this guide. One method is to use each of the ten general questions in the discussion of each chapter, as well as each of the questions specific to the chapter being discussed.

Another method—if time does not allow for the discussion of each question—would be to select only what you believe to be the most useful questions from the first group, then address all the questions from the chapter-specific list.

A third approach would be to ignore the general questions altogether and use only the questions designated for each chapter.

If you do utilize some of the general questions, you may find it beneficial to insert them strategically into the chapter-specific questions rather than keeping the two sections separate. For example, you might ask general question number seven (“How has something in this chapter increased your understanding of the gospel?”) at a point in a chapter where the gospel has been presented. Or you might use the final general question (“What’s one thing you could do in response to this chapter?”) after you have discussed all other questions.

General Questions for Use with Each Chapter

1. What did you find most helpful in this chapter?
2. What questions did this chapter raise for you?
3. What surprised you in this chapter?
4. Which Scripture passage in this chapter struck you most powerfully?
5. Was there something you disagreed with?
6. What’s something in this chapter you wish were more widely proclaimed or better understood?
7. How has something in this chapter increased your understanding of the gospel?
8. What was left unsaid in this chapter that should be added?
9. What would be a wrong response to this chapter?
10. What’s one thing you could do in response to this chapter?

Chapter One—“Do You Thirst for God?”

1. Often people will say, “That person is seeking God.” What is it that many such people are actually seeking?
2. What does the author mean when he says that the empty soul “is not thirsting for God as He is revealed in Scripture, but only for God as they want Him to be”?
3. What is the difference between an empty soul and a dry soul?
4. How does a Christian become a dry soul? Also, see Psalm 65:9, 119:10, and 119:145.

5. Describe a time when you experienced “a withdrawing God.”
6. What should we do when we are in a spiritually arid condition?
7. What is the difference between the thirst of a dry soul and that of a satisfied soul?
8. Read Philippians 3:10. What does this “knowledge” mean?
9. Meditate on the question, “Has your worship or devotional experience lately provided you with refreshing tastes of what A.W. Tozer called ‘the piercing sweetness of Christ’ only to leave you with a divine discontent that desires more?” Write your thoughts here.
10. How does God initiate spiritual thirst? See Romans 8:5, 15.
11. Why does God initiate a thirst for himself?
12. What is the promise of Psalm 107:9 and Matthew 5:6?
13. How would you summarize Edwards’ explanation of what God intends by making us “capable of exceeding great happiness”?
14. What does it mean to drink of “the river of [God’s] delights” (Psalm 36:8)?
15. How does meditation on Scripture help to slake our spiritual thirst?
16. Do you think most Christians meditate on the Bible in their daily intake of Scripture? If not, why not?
17. What’s the most practical way to increase your meditation on Scripture without adding to the time you are already devoting to God’s Word?
18. Have you ever heard of praying the Bible? What common problem in prayer could it reduce or eliminate?
19. What might it look like to pray through Psalm 23?
20. What book by a thirst-making and thirst-slaking writer could you begin or resume?

Chapter Two—“Are You Governed Increasingly by God’s Word?”

1. Why is the Bible the single most valuable object in the world?
2. How is the Word of God described in each of the following verses?

Psalm 119:105

Jeremiah 23:29

Ephesians 6:17

1 Peter 1:23

Psalm 19:7-10

Psalm 119:72

Hebrews 4:12

1 Peter 2:2

Meditate on each and pray these back to the Lord. For example, you might pray, “O Lord, Your Word is a light. I pray earnestly that You would enlighten me through Your Word in this situation and show me the way I should go.”

How does each influence or affect your life? (Review each reference and write your responses above.)

3. According to Octavius Winslow, how can we know when we are moving in a spiritual “retrograde” direction?
4. From the references in Psalm 119, what does it mean when we “delight” ourselves in God’s commandments?
5. According to 2 Thessalonians 2:10, what does it mean if a person does not “love the truth” of God’s Word?
6. Why is it important for us to know the influence that the written word of God had upon the incarnate Word of God in Matthew 4?
7. According to Isaiah 8:20, what does it mean if someone’s life isn’t guided by God’s revelation in Scripture?
8. In daily life, what does Psalm 119:105 mean for God’s Word to be “a lamp to my feet and a light to my path”? Give some illustrations.
9. In response to the opening question of the chapter, what does it look in practical terms for your life to life to be *increasingly* governed by God’s Word?
10. The author gave two examples—evaluating what is appropriate for worship and his activities on the Lord’s Day—of how the Bible’s influence had increased in his own life. Give an example of when Scripture has recently exerted a growing influence in your life. For example, a new understanding of a Biblical truth that changed you in some way (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
11. What does 2 Timothy 3:16-17 say about the place of Scripture in daily life?
12. What does the author say about the role of the local church in deepening your desire for God’s Word? Do you pray for the preaching and teaching in your church? How does the last part of James 2 apply to this?
13. Briefly describe what the following verses teach about meditation on Scripture:

Joshua 1:8

James 1:25

Psalm 1:1-3
14. What are some ways we can encourage one another to spend time in God’s Word on a daily basis?

15. How does the author suggest we seek to apply the Bible daily?
16. Do the exercise at the end of the chapter (list at least five areas, etc.). How did the Bible speak to these for you?
17. How can you train yourself to ask, “How does the Bible speak to this?”

Chapter Three—“Are You More Loving?”

1. What did Jesus say was the clearest mark of a Christian?
2. Were you surprised by how many verses in the New Testament command us to love one another? Which one attracted your attention the most? Why?
3. What are the ways 1 Corinthians 13 reveals when our love has declined? In what kinds of ways are these manifested in daily life?
4. Referring to other texts, what are some other ways the author demonstrated when our love has cooled?
5. Why is it, as Maurice Roberts said, “The best believers find their progress slow and their attainments meagre.”
6. Why do many people falsely assume that they are growing in love?
7. If love is the chief mark of a Christian, why, according to Edwards, why would there be so many counterfeits of it?
8. What is the counterfeit of “natural affection”?
9. What is the counterfeit of “Does it please me first?”
10. What is the counterfeit of “I’ll love you if you’ll love me”?
11. What is the counterfeit of “unbalanced love”?
12. Describe the three areas emphasized by the author where we can tell if we’re growing in love.
13. How does the author apply Scripture to each of these?
14. If we do the very same thing as a non-Christian in a given situation, what internal factor determines if our actions are done in Christian love? What’s a common situation in your own life where this distinction might be demonstrated?
15. How does the Bible explain how a Christian can love in certain situations when they otherwise would be incapable of doing so? What’s a situation in your life where you experience this?
16. Hebrews 10:24 commands us to “consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.” Consider it, and describe some practical ways to do it.
17. How would you respond to a professing Christian who said of love, “That’s not my gift”?
18. What are some ways, as the author suggests, to “Let your heart be often warmed by the fire of God’s love”?

19. How is growth in love associated with assurance of salvation?

Chapter Four—“Are You More Sensitive to God’s Presence?”

1. When was the last time you thought, “God is here”? What caused you to think that?
2. Do you agree with the author that, “perception of the presence of God should not be an occasional experience”? Why or why not?
3. Which, if any, of the survey results quoted by the author regarding people’s perception of God’s presence surprised you? Why?
4. How do you explain the response by those calling themselves “born again Christians,” that “one-third (32%) have either *never* felt God’s presence or have sensed it only *once or twice* in their lives”? Would you identify with the 32%?
5. What will result from a true Christian’s dullness to God’s presence?
6. What is commanded, and what is implied by Psalm 105:4, “Seek his presence continually”?
7. Describe the six terms theologians use for the “presence of God.”
8. What does the Bible say about how we gain access to the presence of God?
9. What does it mean to be “Immanuelized”?
10. The author expresses concerns about the influence of mysticism in Christian spirituality. What does he say is the essence of mysticism and what are his concerns? Where have you seen examples of this?
11. The Bible tells us three places through which we are to seek God? What are they?
12. What is the “unmediated” way of seeking God and what is the “mediated” way?
13. Why is it important to base and interpret our experiences with God upon the Word of God?
14. How does John Piper explain what seeking God in our experiences means?
15. Our experience with God must go beyond just knowing he is present. What else must we know? Why?
16. What is meant by the term “God Desertions”? Why, in the context of a chapter on being aware of God’s presence, is it important to know about them?
17. What is one good thing about sensing a lack of God’s presence?
18. What’s the most important step to take when you need to increase your awareness of God’s presence?
19. What’s the most common reason Christians who read the Bible daily are not perceiving the voice and presence of God through it?
20. How does the author suggest we pray in order to help us more often experience prayer for what it actually is—a real conversation with a real person? What is it about this method that nurtures this result?
21. What are the reasons we can expect to sense the presence of God in biblical congregational worship?

22. How does the author encourage us to develop “God Eyes”?
23. Why not close this session by praying the prayers of Spurgeon and Tozer found at the end of the chapter?

Chapter Five—“Do You Have a Growing Concern for the Spiritual and Temporal Needs of Others?”

1. How did Jesus demonstrate concern for both the spiritual and temporal needs of people?
2. How do Acts 4:33-34 and Galatians 2:10 describe the early church and the apostle Paul doing this?
3. What examples have you seen of Christians emphasizing evangelism at the expense of meeting temporal needs? Do those who denounce evangelical believers for this typically criticize reality or a stereotype?
4. What does imbalance in the other direction look like? Why is this an even greater error?
5. How might one’s spiritual gift influence their perspective in this matter? How might a person be tempted to excuse themselves from meeting certain kinds of needs based upon a misunderstanding of spiritual gifts?
6. What does the author mean when he says, “As we grow more like Jesus, we will see ministry to temporal needs not as competing with, but as complementary to meeting spiritual needs”?
7. Why does the author use the term “near-balance” when referring to how Jesus met people’s spiritual and temporal needs?
8. What is the foremost need of anyone, anywhere? What are some ways the Bible teaches this?
9. What does it mean to see people as Jesus did in Mark 6:34, “like sheep without a shepherd”? How can even focused, goal-driven, prosperous people be “like sheep without a shepherd”?
10. Do you think the author is correct when he says, “No one indwelt by the Spirit of Jesus can remain unfeeling toward either the temporal or the spiritual needs of others made plain”? Why or why not?
11. Why is awareness of a need not always the equivalent of a call to meet it?
12. Why did Jesus sometimes walk away from needs he could have met?
13. What does Christian history reveal about the church meeting both spiritual and temporal needs? What contemporary examples of individual believers, churches, or ministries are you aware of who are doing this well?
14. What has always been the church’s greatest demonstration of Christlike concern?
15. What does the author mean by referring to the Lord as the “Great Ophthalmologist”? What are both the initial and ongoing effects on our spiritual vision when he treats our eyes?
16. What does the author mean when he suggests that we look at our world through “need filters”? What difference might this make?
17. In John 13:1-17, what motivated Jesus’ willingness to meet the needs of “a dozen pairs of dirty feet”?

18. Would God have you see so many spiritual and temporal needs and meet none? What would he have you do? What's the next step?

Chapter Six—"Do You Delight in the Bride of Christ?"

1. Why does a Christian love what Christ loves? How does this relate to a Christian's view of the church? Why?

2. According to 1 John 3:14, what is one of the clearest tests of whether a person is spiritually alive, that is, someone who is born again?

3. Can a person with little or no involvement with the church pass the "love the brothers" test of salvation? Does church membership without church participation pass the test? Why or why not?

4. In Psalm 16:3, why did King David refer to God's people as "excellent ones"?

5. According to the Bible, who is a saint?

6. What does the author mean when he says, "Jesus is not a polygamist"?

7. Why is it inconsistent to say, "I love Christ's church, but not the people in it"?

8. How does the author summarize what it means to delight in "the saints in the land" (Psalm 16:3)? Can a person grow more Christlike if this description is not true of them?

9. Explain the author's statement: "Any true delight is always a willing delight." How does this relate to delighting in the bride of Christ?

10. Ultimately, why does a Christian delight in the company of other believers, even if they have little in common socioeconomically?

11. In order for our delight in the body of Christ to qualify as a mark of genuine salvation, must we experience some sense of elation at every encounter with fellow believers or in every worship service? Why or why not?

12. What is your response to the author's statement that, "God keeps the planet in motion because he has not finished the work of the church, that is, building the kingdom of his Son."

13. Is "the work of Christ's church the greatest, most soul-satisfying enterprise in the universe"? Why or why not?

14. Do you agree that "True delight must be expressed"? If so, how does this relate to delighting in the bride of Christ?

15. What are three examples of the beauty of Christ's holiness that you can identify in your local church?

16. How is your church stronger because of you? Are you willing to serve in places there that only God notices and smiles upon? Do you need to take the initiative and begin a ministry which no one else in the church has had the vision or gifting for?

17. How should 1 Corinthians 15:58 and Hebrews 6:10 strengthen your delight in the bride of Christ?

Chapter Seven—“Are the Spiritual Disciplines Increasingly Important to You?”

1. According to the introduction to this chapter, what are the means through which God sustains the “fire” of our spiritual lives?
2. In general, what are the biblical spiritual disciplines?
3. Why is it that we can expect to experience God through the rightly-motivated practice of the spiritual disciplines?
4. In the section where the author begins categorizing the spiritual disciplines in various way, what is meant by the terms “personal” and “interpersonal”? What are several examples of each kind?
5. Do you find that you are inclined more toward the personal spiritual disciplines or the interpersonal ones? Why is it important to engage in both?
6. Does the number of spiritual disciplines seem overwhelming? Illustrate how a person can be practicing six or more during the same, relatively brief (1) devotional time, and (2) worship service.
7. Why did the author find it important to reiterate that the disciplines we practice should be biblical ones?
8. What claim does the Bible make about the sufficiency of the disciplines found in Scripture? What are the implications of this?

What do we say to someone who says their soul isn’t getting what it needs from the biblical spiritual disciplines?

How do we respond to someone who insists they experience more spiritual benefit from a spiritual practice not found in Scripture than from anything else?

9. Why does the author say that, “A discipline neglected is a blessing unclaimed”?
10. Why is it important to understand that spiritual disciplines are practices and not attitudes, character qualities, or the “fruit of the Spirit”? How does the former relate to the latter?
11. What does it mean that “the spiritual disciplines are derived from the gospel, not divorced from the gospel”?
12. Why is the author so concerned for us to understand that the spiritual disciplines are the *means* to godliness? Explain how 1 Timothy 4:7 (“Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness”) shows this.
13. What does Hebrews 12:14 teach about striving for holiness?

What does this verse lead us to conclude about professing Christians, church members, or anyone else who is not striving for holiness?

Does this verse teach that what qualifies a person for Heaven is their striving for holiness?

What does qualify a person for Heaven?

14. What role does the Holy Spirit play in striving for holiness? What are some of the aspects of his work in this regard?

15. If, as the author states, the presence of the Holy Spirit within a person gives them a longing for holiness/Christlikeness/godliness, how do we pursue that purpose?
16. What are the practical ways by which we fulfill the command to “Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness”?
17. Is it true, as the author claims, that “All love craves intimacy—especially your greatest love”? If so, how does this relate to the theme of this chapter?
18. What is the most important lesson to learn from the diligence in the practice of the disciplines by the Pharisees in Jesus’ day and cultists in our day?
19. Explain what the author means when he says, “The spiritual disciplines are not by themselves the *marks* of Christlikeness as much as they are the *means* to it.”
20. What is the difference between a *legalistic* practice of the disciplines (like the Pharisees) and a *faithful* practice of them?
21. The author also warns of the danger of imbalance in practice of the disciplines. Describe what imbalance toward the personal spiritual disciplines looks like, and then imbalance towards the interpersonal ones. Why is imbalance in either direction dangerous?
22. Why is it easy in our culture to focus more on “efficiency” in the practice of the disciplines instead of Christlikeness?
23. Isaiah 61:3 refers to God’s people as “oaks of righteousness.” What are the implications of this term for our practice of the disciplines and our pursuit of Christlikeness?
24. What’s one action you could take regarding both the personal and interpersonal spiritual disciplines to show how they—and the pursuit of Christlikeness—are increasingly important to you?

Chapter Eight—“Do You Still Grieve Over Sin?”

1. Reread the opening quotation from Jonathan Edwards. Do you ever feel this way?
2. Why is it true that, “The closer you get to Jesus, the more you will hate sin”?
3. Was the apostle Paul exaggerating in 1 Timothy 1:15 when he called himself the “foremost” sinner in the world? Why or why not?
4. What did John Hannah mean when he said, “The closer one comes to Christ, in one sense the more miserable he becomes”? If this is true, doesn’t it disincentivize growing closer to Christ? Why or why not?
5. In what sense is the awareness of a struggle with sin and grief for sin a good thing?
6. Is A.W. Pink correct when he says, “It is not the absence of sin but the grieving over it which distinguishes the child of God from empty professors [of faith]”? Why or why not?
7. When does grieving over sin become sinful itself?
8. What gospel truths and Christian experiences are being neglected when a person is excessively introspective about sin?

9. Jesus said in Matthew 5:4, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” If this does not mean that we are to mourn our sin every moment, when are we to mourn? How does the example of the apostle Paul help us to understand the meaning of this?
10. Explain what the author means when he says, “Christians are *lifelong* repenters and lifelong believers.”
11. According to Jeremiah Burroughs, what is a common mistake regarding repentance, and what is the proper view?
12. Read 2 Corinthians 7:8-11, then define the apostle Paul’s term “godly grief” over sin.
13. What are the characteristics of “worldly grief”?
14. King David was a great sinner, and yet eventually God would refer to him as “a man after my heart” (Acts 13:22). How could God say this?
15. What does the author mean when he says, “A Christian’s grief over sin is the misery of a lover pining for what will be”?
16. Respond to Owen’s statement, “I do not understand how a man can be a true believer in whom sin is not the greatest burden, sorrow, and trouble.”
17. The author’s first recommendation for those who aren’t sure they grieve enough over sin is to be clear on the Gospel. Why do you think he put this first?
18. The gospel is the most important message in the world. It is the message we must believe in order to go to Heaven, so it is essential that we understand it clearly. If you are studying this book on your own, write a paragraph explaining the gospel as if you were going to send it in an email to an unconverted friend. If you are discussing this book with others, give a full-minute presentation of the gospel as if you were explaining it to someone near death and who was totally unfamiliar with the Bible or Christianity. If you cannot do this now, presumably after years of reading the Bible and hearing the gospel preached, can you be sure you were clear on the essentials of salvation when you say you believed?
19. Which of the author’s other four suggestions did you find most applicable?

Chapter Nine—“Are You a Quicker Forgiver?”

1. Does everyone eventually have a “Patsy”? Why?
2. What do the verses Mark 11:25-26, Matthew 6:14-15 and Luke 6:37, where Jesus says “Forgive, and you will be forgiven,” *not* mean? Why not? What *do* these verses teach?
3. What does a true servant of God know from Matthew 18:21-35? Explain.
4. What is the difference between being *ready* to forgive and actually *extending* or *expressing* forgiveness?
5. After some horrific, mass-murder has occurred, why does the author claim that it is better for people to say, “We are ready to forgive those who are responsible” than “We forgive those who are responsible”?
6. How do the prayers of Jesus from the cross and of the martyr Stephen at this death illustrate the difference between being ready to forgive and verbalizing forgiveness?

7. When someone sins against a Christian, can the issue be settled unilaterally by either person? Why or why not?

8. How is God, described in Nehemiah 9:17 as “ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love,” the great example of being able to distinguish between being *ready* to forgive and *granting* forgiveness? Who are those God is “ready to forgive?” To whom does he grant forgiveness?

9. Who are those a Christian should be ready to forgive?

10. To whom should the Christian actually extend/speak forgiveness?

11. How can God be omniscient and yet say of his people in Jeremiah 31:34, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more”?

How does this apply to each of us as we forgive someone?

Does full forgiveness always imply full restoration in the relationship? Why or why not?

What does full forgiveness mean in situations where trust must be restored before there is a full restoration in the relationship?

12. Why does the author mean when he says that “the readiness to forgive might not always be won in a single, decisive battle”?

13. Is it likely that we’ll ever have to apply Luke 17:3-4? If so, how?

14. If you almost never think about an offense against you, is that conclusive proof that you have forgiven the offender? Why or why not?

15. Are you ready to forgive? Is there anyone you are *not* ready to forgive?

16. Do you need to initiate the process of forgiveness with anyone?

Why is this necessary even if you are responsible for only a very small percentage of the problem?

What is the difference between (1) apologizing, and (2) repenting and asking forgiveness?

17. How does the Bible call us to respond to most sins against us? What does this look like in daily life?

18. When is it necessary to initiate the process of forgiveness?

19. What should we do if time and circumstances have minimized or eliminated the opportunity for full reconciliation?

20. Why should we love forgiveness?

Chapter Ten—“Do You Yearn for Heaven and to Be with Jesus?”

1. What is it like when, as Paul writes in Romans 8:23, we “groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies”?

2. What kind of Christian groans like this? Why?

3. According to the author, a Christian's groanings and longings for "the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:23), "our heavenly dwelling" (2 Corinthians 5:2), and to be "at home with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8) are essentially desires for the same thing. What is it?
4. Re-read the quotation from C.S. Lewis' *Till We Have Faces*. Does Psyche give voice to the kinds of longings you have for Heaven? If so, in what ways?
5. Do you find more and more that the life you long for in Heaven seems more natural to you than the one you are living on earth? If so, what makes you say this? When do you most commonly feel this way?
6. What kinds of desires for Heaven can be expressed by non-Christians as well as Christians?
7. What kind of Heaven does the Christian long for? (See Revelation 4:8.)
8. How can a quadriplegic like Joni Eareckson Tada say that when she thinks of Heaven, she's looking forward to a heart without sin more than she's looking forward to her new body?
9. When people think of Heaven a "a better place," why do they consider it so? In Philippians 1:22-23, why did Paul consider being in Heaven "far better"? What are the implications of the two contrasting pictures of Heaven?
10. What should we think when people speak of Heaven with no mention of Jesus? Would you agree that Jesus is what makes Heaven to be Heaven? Why or why not?
11. In light of what we've read so far, is it wrong to have a deep longing to get married, have children, or do meaningful work? Why or why not?
12. What is "heavenly meditation"? How would you avoid thinking the same basic thoughts every time?
13. According to 1 John 3:2, what will all those do who groan with the anticipation of seeing the Lord? What does this mean?
14. Do you have the hope to "see him as he is"? How has it affected you? How are you "in the grip of the groan"?
15. How are you growing in Christlikeness because of your view of Christ's return?