

# Seculosity Discussion Questions

## Pre-amble Questions

Overall impressions of the book (rate 1-10)?

What were some of the things you most appreciated? Feel free to share a quote.

What was something you struggled or disagreed with? Feel free to share a quote.

## Intro

Even though it's well documented that we never quite arrive at enough, the enoughness idea is still a tantalizing goal. What is the prize for arriving at enoughness that drives us to it, even if the goal is impossible?

## Chapter 1

Performancism, the idea that we are enough because of how much we accomplish, is at the heart of our busy life. Do you think there's a link between valuing ourselves based on our accomplishments and our universally busy lifestyle?

This chapter links the pressure to perform and the biblical idea of "works righteousness," where obedience to God's law earns God's love and favor. How might works righteousness lead to a life of anxious busyness?

## Chapter 2

This chapter spends time outlining "the soulmate myth." Have you ever seen the soulmate myth played out in your world? What did it look like?

## Chapter 3

One of the big news stories of 2019 was the "Varsity Blues" scandal, which uncovered a secret consultant industry that helped students get into big name US universities through illegal means. What might drive a parent to commit a felony to help their child succeed?

This chapter highlights the freedom that Emily Rapp experienced as a parent to her terminally ill infant son Ronan. Were you surprised to hear Emily describe caring for her son as "peaceful" and "blissful?" Why or why not?

## Chapter 4

The chapter highlights Ruth Schwartz Cowan's observation that labor-saving devices of the twentieth century—vacuums, dishwashers, laundry machines, and so forth—didn't reduce the labor of housekeeping but instead increased the standards for cleanliness. How has technology made life busier or more difficult for you?

One of the common accusations against smart technology is that it is distracting. Streaming video, music, podcasts, and other online entertainment saves us from

the indignity of boredom. If technology is a vehicle for distraction, what exactly are we distracting ourselves from?

### **Chapter 6**

In chapter 4, the book suggests that technology can help distract us from the difficulties of life. Were you surprised to hear that, for many, work can function in a similar way? How can work be an effective distraction from the difficult parts of life?

Blizzards are one of the natural occurrences that grind work to a halt. Have you ever experienced an outside force put an end to your work, like an unexpected power outage or natural disaster? Did you experience the same kind of freedom that the chapter describes?

### **Chapter 7**

This chapter highlights Oral Roberts University's erstwhile program to ensure that students couldn't graduate unless their Body Mass Index met a certain threshold. What did you make of that story?

Jesus fasted a number of times, but many of the most crucial episodes in the Gospels feature Jesus at feasts: the wedding at Cana, the feeding of the five thousand, the sinful woman who anointed Jesus's feet with her alabaster jar. He could make any meal into an image of the kingdom of God. Through these episodes of abundant food, how does Jesus address contemporary anxieties about food?

### **Chapter 8**

How do you deal with political anger? What are some of the ways you express your frustration with political systems?

"Moral outrage fills a psychological need" (p. 151). What did you make of Jonathan Haidt's research claiming that our moral values are based on subconscious and unarticulated stories? Of his six moral foundations, which ones are most attractive to you? Care/Harm, Fairness/Cheating, Liberty/Oppression, Loyalty/Betrayal, Authority/Subversion, Sanctity/Degradation.

### **Chapter 9**

The church often has a reputation as a place where good people go to get better, as opposed to a place where regular people find forgiveness. Has that been your experience? What did that look like?

The chapter holds up both personal piety and social change as avenues for secularity to manifest itself, ways for one to perform and find enoughness. Which

one are you most familiar with? What does enoughness look like in the Christian communities you've encountered?

"The secularity of Jesusland seeps in when church turns into yet another venue to establish our enoughness, rather than the only reliable place to receive it" (p. 168). How are "receiving enoughness" and "achieving enoughness" different?

### **Conclusion**

The theme of enoughness persists throughout the book. Why do you think people feel not enough? What is their thought process or fear that leads them to that conclusion?

The chapter suggests that conversations about death are helpful in tearing down secular expressions of religion. Think of some of the topics covered in the book. How does death put these secularities in perspective for you?