

The Good and Beautiful Life Discussion Questions

There are more questions in this guide than we will have space for on our discussion night. Use them as a guide for your deepening thoughts as you navigate the book.

Pre-ambles Questions

1. Overall impressions of the book (rate 1-10)?
2. What were some of the things you most appreciated? Feel free to share a quote.
3. What was something you struggled or disagreed with? Feel free to share a quote.

Chapter 1

4. "Sin is always ugly, and genuine virtue is always beautiful. Sin leads to ruin; virtue to greater strength. And this is why everyone, even atheists, love Jesus. Jesus was pure virtue. He lived a good and beautiful life, which he is calling his apprentices to live" (pp.24-25). Describe in your own words what it means that Jesus lived a virtuous life.

Chapter 2

5. Prior to reading this chapter, if someone asked you, "What is the gospel Jesus preached?" how would you have answered? How does your answer compare and contrast to the author's answer on page 35?
6. If you were having a conversation with a friend who said, "I believe the kingdom of God is just a promised future, not a present reality," what would you say to help him or her see it as both a future promise and a present reality? (For help check pp. 41-42, paragraph beginning "There is no doubt that the kingdom of God has not been fully established.")

Chapter 3

7. In discussing Luke 6:20-26, the author says, "Jesus' stern warning is born of love. He knows that we try to find solace in our wealth and fulfillment in our bellies. And we confuse fleeting pleasure with joy. When all is well in the kingdom of this world, we are tempted to think we have no need of the kingdom of God" (p. 63)
Can you identify times when success led you away from or difficulties drew you closer to God? If you are comfortable, discuss these with the group.

Chapter 4

8. The author gives us multiple "false imperative narratives" (FINs) (p. 73).

Which FIN is most common in your life? How does it lead you to anger?

Chapter 5

9. What messages have you heard at church about sex? What has been implied about sex through silence?

Chapter 6

10. What messages have you heard at church about sex? What has been implied about sex through silence?

Chapter 7

11. In the section titled "Kingdom Jujitsu," the author explores the four teachings of Matthew 5:38-42. With this section in mind, discuss these questions.

- How does understanding Jesus' cultural context change your understanding of Matthew 5:38-42?
- The author discourages us from turning these teachings into law. Why is it tempting to make them into laws?
- How does living in God's kingdom make it possible to follow this teaching?

What struck you when you read the section titled "Love Your Enemies"?

12. Miroslav Volf describes the person in dwelt by Christ as "a rich self" and writes, "A rich self looks toward the future with trust. It gives rather than holding things back in fear of coming out too short, because it believes God's promise that God will take care of it.

Finite and endangered, a rich self still gives, because its life is "hidden with Christ" in the infinite, unassailable, and utterly generous God, the Lord of the present, the past, and the future." Describe in your own words why the one in dwelt by Christ is a "rich self."

Chapter 8

13. The author writes, "The world measures our worth on the basis of our appearance, production and performance which seem to be the only thing that counts. This narrative says, Your value is determined by others' assessment" (p. 139). Discuss ways we allow our value to be determined by others. How can we resist these patterns?
14. Have you ever caught yourself doing some good deed not for the sake of helping others but for the prize of praise? If you are comfortable, talk about it with your group.

Chapter 9

15. The author gives us a story to help illustrate kingdom economics, about a

time when he loaned money to an acquaintance (p. 162). If kingdom economics are real, how will you live differently after reading this chapter? As a group, brainstorm ways you can put into practice kingdom economics .

Chapter 10

16. The author differentiates worry and caution. Describe the difference.

17. In discussing Matthew 6:34, the author writes, "Jesus says that the kingdom operates only in the present moment. We can only live in the kingdom today. We can't live in it tomorrow. So worrying about tomorrow is a useless distraction. Just as we count on God today, we can count on him to-morrow. But we aren't in tomorrow, and never will be; we live only in the present, in today." (p. 180)

How does this differ from our culture's typical notion regarding tomorrow?

Chapter 11

18. The author takes a different approach to Matthew 7:7-11's ask, seek and knock (p. 193)? What is your reaction to his interpretation?

19. The author tells us that judging others comes from a desire to change others or a need to feel better about ourselves as beloved by God and living within God's kingdom. Have there been times you felt more connected to the kingdom of God and as a result were less judgmental? If so, discuss these experiences with the group.

Chapter 12

20. At the beginning of the chapter the author compares caring for his devotional life to tending a fire. What is your reaction to this illustration?

21. This chapter addresses two false narratives: (1) "What matters is having faith in Jesus, not having an ongoing relationship with him," and (2) "The only way to be a good Christian is to keep all the rules" (pp. 206-7). How have these narratives shaped your own faith journey?