

THE CORE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH



PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

This participant's guide is meant to be used personally and communally to form your head, heart, and hands with discussion questions, response prompts and formational practices.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CHAPTER ONE: *AN OPENING APPEAL*

1. Goheen says many Christians' hearts and minds have been "shaped by the idols of Western culture more than by the Bible." In what ways do you see your own thinking or lifestyle more shaped by Western cultural values (e.g., autonomy, consumerism, political ideology) than by the gospel? What practices might help you be re-formed by Scripture?
2. James Ernest names a "massive discipleship failure caused by massive catechesis failure." How has the church's approach to teaching and discipleship contributed to this hollowness? What would a more robust model of catechesis look like in your church or community?
3. Goheen speaks of the church's need to live as a "missionary encounter" with its culture rather than being conformed to it. What's the difference between engaging culture and being captive to it? Can you think of an example where the church has failed at this and another where it has succeeded?
4. The chapter highlights how pastors have been attacked from both political sides for trying to faithfully apply Scripture. How should the church navigate deep political and ideological divisions without losing its gospel integrity or alienating its mission?
5. Early church catechesis sought to "renarrate" converts' lives through immersion in the biblical story. What would it look like for your community to intentionally "renarrate" people's lives today? How can the biblical story become the dominant narrative shaping your identity and daily choices?

CHAPTER TWO: *READING THE BIBLE AS JESUS DID*

- Jesus "opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45). How has your understanding of the Old Testament changed—or stayed the same—over time? What difference does it make to read it through the lens of Jesus' death, resurrection, and global mission?
2. Goheen compares Jesus' interpretation of Scripture to Holbein's painting, which requires a new angle to see the truth. Have you ever had a moment when a familiar passage of Scripture took on new meaning because you saw it from a new angle? What helped shift your perspective?
 3. Jesus teaches that the Old Testament points to both his suffering and resurrection (messianic) and the global preaching of repentance and forgiveness (missional). Why is it important to hold together both the person and work of Jesus and the mission of the church? Which of these have you tended to emphasize more in your faith or church experience?
 4. First-century Jews were stunned by a crucified Messiah and a mission that moved outward from Jerusalem. What aspects of the gospel still shock or surprise you? Where have we become too familiar—or too domesticated—with the radical nature of God's kingdom and mission?
 5. The Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 affirmed that Gentiles didn't need to adopt Jewish culture to follow Jesus. In what ways can churches today unintentionally require people to conform to cultural norms (e.g., class, race, politics) in order to "fit in"? How can we instead become a community that reflects the multiethnic, multicultural nature of God's kingdom?

PART ONE:

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

FORMATION PRACTICES

INDIVIDUAL PRACTICES

KINGDOM-CENTERED PRAYER

Pray through the Lord's Prayer daily, with emphasis on "Your kingdom come..." Name specific areas where you long for His reign.

PERSONAL SURRENDER RHYTHMS

Begin each day by praying: "Jesus, you are King. I submit this day, my work, and my relationships to you."

DAILY EXAMEN WITH KINGDOM LENS

Reflect at the end of the day: "Where did I notice the Kingdom breaking through? Where did I live as if I were in charge?"

MEDITATE ON ROMANS 12

- **FOCUS:** Jesus is King, and the gospel reveals His reign and our need for it.
- **READ:** Romans 1:1-6, Romans 1:16-25
- **BE STILL** (2 minutes): "Jesus, you are King. Help me see your rule more clearly today."
- **READ SLOWLY** (5 minutes): Read the passage again twice. Notice: What does this reveal about Jesus as King? Where do people reject God's rule?
- **REFLECT** (5-6 minutes): Ask "Where am I living under Jesus' kingship and where am I resisting it? Am I bold in the gospel or ashamed of it? What "lesser things" am I tempted to worship?"
- **RESPOND IN PRAYER** (2-3 minutes): "King Jesus, I surrender again. Rule in my thoughts, words, and actions today."

COMMUNAL PRACTICES

STORY NIGHTS:

Gather with a group and share testimonies of how God's reign is being revealed in everyday life (workplaces, families, neighborhoods). Eat together and celebrate God's work, asking the question "Where have you seen the kingdom?"

PRAYER WALKS OR COMMUNITY BLESSINGS

In a group, walk through neighborhoods or city blocks, praying for God's Kingdom to come in real, local ways. Use your prayers to bless the communities and neighborhoods you walk through.

CHAPTER THREE: *WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?*

Goheen begins with a birth announcement, comparing it to the first-century meaning of “good news.” Before reading this chapter, how would you have described the gospel? How does Jesus’s announcement of the kingdom expand or challenge your understanding?

2. Jesus declared that “the kingdom of God has come near” (Mark 1:15), a message both thrilling and unexpected. What would be “good news” to the people around you today—your coworkers, neighbors, or family? In what ways is the gospel similar to or different from that?

3. Goheen shows how Jesus’s gospel announcement was both a fulfillment of Jewish hopes and a direct challenge to Rome’s claim to peace and power. In our time, what are the modern equivalents of “Caesar”—false sources of salvation, security, or peace? How does Jesus’s kingdom confront those powers?

4. The cross was not just a personal sacrifice, but a cosmic victory over sin, idolatry, and spiritual powers. How does seeing the crucifixion as a “new exodus” and spiritual battle deepen your understanding of the cross? What enemies does Jesus defeat?

5. The kingdom has come, but it’s not yet complete. We live in the overlap of the “present evil age” and “the age to come.” What does it look like to live as a citizen of God’s kingdom in a world still marked by brokenness? How do you experience both the joy and tension of this in your daily life?

RESPONSE

Is the Holy Spirit prompting you to engage with the Bible differently—as a story to live by rather than just study? What practical step might He be leading you to take (e.g., change in reading habits, prayer for understanding, memorization, etc.)?

CHAPTER FOUR: *THE TRUE CONTEXT OF THE GOSPEL*

1. “Any story we substitute as the context for the gospel will inevitably pervert the Christian faith.” What are some of the cultural or personal “frames” that people today use to understand the gospel? How have you seen the gospel’s meaning distorted by these smaller stories?

2. “If God’s plan is to take individuals (or perhaps just their souls) to heaven and then destroy the earth... that would hardly be healing.” How does viewing salvation as the restoration of all creation (not escape from it) change how we live now?

3. “When we minimize the scope of sin... we will reduce the scope of the gospel as well.” In what ways have you personally seen sin at work not just in individual actions, but in larger cultural systems or spiritual forces? How does this broaden your sense of what Jesus came to heal?

4. “The structure of the Christian faith is cosmic and communal as well as personal.” How does this fuller structure challenge the idea that Christianity is just about “Jesus and me”? What role does the church play in God’s plan of restoration?

5. “The good news is that God himself in the person of Jesus returns to his creation as King.” How would you explain the gospel to someone using kingdom language—not just personal forgiveness, but Jesus as King of a renewed world?

RESPONSE

Pray for non-Christians in your life.

CHAPTER FIVE: *THE WHOLE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL*

1. “There is no use in taking for granted that we all agree on the gospel that has been entrusted to us.” –René Padilla
How was the gospel presented to you growing up or when you first came to faith? Looking back now, what aspects of the gospel were emphasized—and what might have been left out?
2. “The cosmic map is drawn first, then we find our place on it by faith.” How does it shift your perspective to see the gospel not just as individual salvation, but as God’s plan to restore all creation? What’s one area of your life that would change if you lived out of that bigger story?
3. “If we portray sin only in personal terms, then substitutionary atonement is the obvious image. But Scripture speaks of sin as personal, structural, and cosmic.” What are some different biblical images of the cross that stand out to you (victory, new Adam, new exodus, etc.)? Why is it important to hold all of them together instead of focusing only on one?
4. “Grace is not opposed to effort. It is opposed to earning.” –Dallas Willard. How can misunderstanding grace lead to a faith that minimizes obedience and transformation? What does it look like in your life to actively participate in God’s grace—not to earn it, but to live from it?
5. “The good news is that God is restoring all the relationships in which we are created.” Think about your relationship with God, others, and the creation. Where do you see signs of restoration—and where do you long to see more healing?

RESPONSE: *CONFESSION*

What sin—personal, habitual, or relational—is the Holy Spirit inviting you to confess, grieve, or turn from today? How might He be leading you to seek healing or reconciliation?

CHAPTER SIX: *CONTINUING IN THE GOSPEL*

1. Goheen identifies three common errors: we minimize sin, overlook its breadth, or underestimate its power. Which of these do you think is most common in our culture—or in your own life? Why is a full view of sin essential for grasping the good news of the gospel?
2. Goheen explains that ancient gods like Mars and Venus still hold sway today through modern idols—militarism, sex, consumerism, politics. Where do you see these powers most at work in our society? Which of these spiritual forces do you personally feel most tempted or shaped by?
3. Paul shows that Christ triumphed over the powers by the cross and launched new creation by his resurrection. How does this cosmic view of the gospel differ from a personal-only or “Jesus in my heart” version of Christianity? How might this change your daily perspective?
4. Colossians 2:6–7 calls us to be rooted (organic) and built up (structural) in Christ. What spiritual practices have helped you grow deeper roots in Jesus? Are there any rhythms or disciplines you want to develop further?
5. Devoted to Prayer. Paul calls us to be devoted to watchful, thankful prayer—like soldiers at their post. What would it look like for you to “stand your ground” in the spiritual battle through prayer? Are there any specific habits of prayer you want to begin, restore, or deepen?

PART TWO:

THE BIBLICAL STORY

FORMATION PRACTICES

INDIVIDUAL PRACTICES

NARRATIVE BIBLE READING

Use a reading plan or guided resource (like *The Drama of Scripture*) that tracks the grand story, not just isolated verses.

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION: IDENTITY IN THE STORY

Focus on one theme each week (Creation image-bearers, Fall & brokenness, Redemption in Christ, Future hope), journaling how that chapter redefines your life.

WEEKLY REFLECTION: "WHOSE STORY AM I LIVING?"

Ask yourself: "Am I living the dominant cultural story or the biblical one? What cultural stories am I drawn to?"

BLESS SOMEONE IN SECRET

Keep it simple with a note of gratitude or a gift card for coffee.

COMMUNAL PRACTICES

WHOLE-STORY BIBLE READING TOGETHER

Read large sections aloud as a community (e.g., Genesis 1-3, Exodus 1-15, Luke, Revelation 21-22), then reflect: Where are we in the story? Create a visual "timeline" of the biblical story. Invite community members to place their life moments within the broader narrative.

THEMATIC MEALS OR LITURGIES

Host meals centered on one part of the Story (e.g., a Creation-themed meal outdoors, or a Redemption meal during Holy Week). This is a great opportunity to invite non-churchgoers!

CHAPTER SEVEN: ISRAEL'S STORY: PART ONE

1. A Hindu scholar told Lesslie Newbigin: "The Bible claims to tell the true story of the world... nothing is comparable to it." Have you ever thought of the Bible as a story of the whole world before? How might this view challenge the way people often read it—as just moral teaching or spiritual advice?
2. Genesis 1-2 shows God creating a world of harmony, blessing, and purpose—with humans made in his image. What does it mean to be made in God's image? How might this shape how we view our work, relationships, or care for creation?
3. Adam and Eve's rebellion was "a catastrophic act of mutiny." What are some of the ripple effects of sin you see in our world today that reflect the broken relationships described in Genesis 3? How do we sometimes contribute to these distortions?
4. God chooses Abraham and his descendants to restore creation's blessing to all nations. How does the idea of being blessed to be a blessing challenge a self-centered view of salvation? What would this look like in your life or community?
5. Israel is called to be "a holy nation" and "a priestly kingdom" to embody God's justice and love. What are some specific ways the Torah shaped Israel to be different from the nations around them? How can the church today live as a distinct and attractive witness in our culture?
6. Moses closes Deuteronomy with a choice: life through obedience, or death through idolatry. In what ways do we still face this choice today—not just once, but daily? How do you sense God inviting you to trust him more deeply and walk in his ways?

CHAPTER EIGHT: ISRAEL'S STORY: PART TWO

1. "The Bible claims to narrate the way the world really is." Goheen contrasts the Bible with fiction by saying it tells not a fantasy, but reality. What difference does it make to believe that the biblical story is the real story of the world? How would your life look different if you fully lived as if that were true?
2. Israel's life in the land is interpreted through the covenant—blessing for obedience, curse for rebellion. Why is it important to see Israel's story not as random ups and downs, but as covenantal cause and effect? How does that help us understand both God's justice and his mercy?
3. "Israel spirals ever deeper into rebellion." The book of Judges shows repeated cycles of sin, oppression, crying out, and rescue. How does this reflect patterns we still see today—in individuals, communities, or even in your own life?
4. Israel wanted a king like the nations, but God desired a king to mediate his rule. Why was Israel's desire for a king not the problem, but their kind of king? What does this teach us about leadership—and about the kind of leader we need in our lives?
5. The prophets spoke of judgment—but also of restoration, a new Davidic king, and a renewed creation. If you had lived in exile—disappointed, disillusioned, and disobedient—what would these promises have meant to you? How do they point forward to the gospel of Jesus?
6. The returned exiles felt like "slaves in the land you gave our ancestors" (Neh. 9:36). When have you felt this tension—where God's promises feel real, but not fully fulfilled? How can Israel's story of waiting shape how you trust God in the "not yet" moments of your own life?

CHAPTER NINE: *THE END OF THE STORY: PART ONE*

1. "How has the story told in the Old Testament reached its climax?" Why is it important to start with the question of how Jesus fulfills Israel's story instead of asking, "How do I get saved?" How might this reshape how you understand the gospel?
2. "The kingdom of heaven has come near... and yet it has not fully come." In what ways do you see signs of God's kingdom already breaking into the world? Where do you feel the tension of the "not yet"—waiting for his reign to be complete?
3. Jesus gathered the lost, the poor, the sick, the outsiders. Who were the surprising people Jesus welcomed? How does this challenge how we think about who belongs in the kingdom today—and who we're called to love?
4. "Power in weakness. Victory in defeat. Justice in injustice." Why is the cross such a shocking and central part of God's plan to restore the world? What difference does it make that Jesus won by laying down his life?
5. "Go and make disciples of all nations... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." According to Matthew, what does it mean to be a disciple? How does Jesus's call to discipleship challenge or inspire you in your everyday life?

CHAPTER TEN: *THE END OF THE STORY: PART TWO*

1. "Your life and the public life of your nation will be shaped by some story. I commend the story told in the Bible." What competing stories (like consumerism, nationalism, or secularism) shape people's lives today? How does the biblical story offer a different vision for your life and the world?
2. "The story they began is ours to continue." Goheen describes the church living in "Act 5" of the biblical drama. What does that mean? How might thinking of yourself as part of an ongoing mission change how you view your everyday life?
3. "The church is to be a kind of 'trailer' for the kingdom." What does it look like when a local church becomes a preview of the coming kingdom? What are some ways your community already does this—and what might need to change?
4. "Witness is as wide as life itself." How can Christians bear witness to Jesus in their daily work, relationships, and neighborhoods—not just through words, but through their way of life? Share an example of a person or community that does this well.
5. "Jesus did not give us a rigid model of mission to imitate... but invites us to continue his mission creatively in new contexts." What is one area of your life—work, school, neighborhood, or culture—where you sense God calling you to creatively live out the mission of Jesus?

CHAPTER ELEVEN: *THE URGENCY OF READING THE BIBLE AS A WHOLE STORY*

1. "If this biblical story is not the one that really controls our thinking... we shall become increasingly indistinguishable from the pagan world." What are some competing cultural stories (like consumerism, nationalism, or individualism) that shape how people view success, purpose, and identity? Which of these do you feel pulling at your own heart the most?
2. Goheen says many Christians treat the Bible as fragments—devotional nuggets, theological truths, moral rules. Have you ever approached the Bible this way? What changes when you begin to see it as one unified story rather than just a collection of disconnected teachings?
3. The Shakespeare analogy shows we're called to improvise our part in Act 5 based on the first 4 acts and the ending. How does this metaphor help you think about what it means to be faithful today? What does "faithful improvisation" look like in your workplace, neighborhood, or friendships?
4. "Mission is not just one more task of God's people; it defines us." What difference does it make to understand that you are sent as part of God's mission? What would change if you saw your whole life—school, work, parenting, rest—as part of that mission?
5. The ping-pong balls can't resist the cultural current without the larger biblical narrative. What practices (personal or communal) can help you more deeply "live inside" the biblical story so that you're not swept along by the powerful current of culture?

PART THREE:

GOD'S MISSIONAL PEOPLE

FORMATION PRACTICES

INDIVIDUAL PRACTICES

VOCATIONAL REFLECTION

Weekly journaling: How is my daily work part of God's mission? What small act of faithfulness might God be inviting me into this week?

PRACTICING HOSPITALITY (Solo or Household)

Intentionally invite someone into your home or life each week, not for networking, but as a way to join God's inclusive mission. Or invite someone different than you (another religion, political alignment, cultural background) with the intent to know and "see" them. Offer help where needed and let them do most of the talking. This is a good practice for not having the last word and holding your opinions unless asked.

COMMUNAL PRACTICES

MISSIONAL COMMUNITIES OR SERVE RHYTHMS

Organize rhythms of community service: mercy, justice, or hospitality—a shared mission rooted in presence. Craft and commit to shared missional habits as a community: e.g., monthly neighborhood service, quarterly outreach meals, etc.

"THIS TIME TOMORROW" SHARING

In small groups, ask: "Where will you be this time tomorrow? How can we pray for your witness there? What specific thing would you want God to do? How can you have courage to obey?"

INTERCESSORY PRAYER FOR THE CITY

Pray regularly for your neighbors, co-workers, schools, or city. Name places where you long to see God's mission advance. Ideally, your group can walk through the neighborhoods or areas you're praying over.

CHAPTER TWELVE: *THE MISSIONAL VOCATION OF GOD'S PEOPLE*

1. John Lennon imagined a world of peace and unity. The Bible offers a very different vision—one rooted in Jesus. What modern visions of a “better world” do you see influencing our culture today? How is the biblical vision of new creation different from Lennon’s “Imagine”?
2. “One is blessed to bring blessing to all; this defines the missional vocation of God’s people.” In what ways has God blessed you—spiritually, relationally, materially? How might you intentionally pass that blessing on to others this week?
3. “Since we live within the social context of the old humanity with its idols, our lives must show the contrast...” Where do you notice the contrast (or lack of contrast) between the way God’s people live and the culture around them? What idol or cultural value is hardest for you to resist?
4. “To know God is to acknowledge the Lord as the true God... [and] the ‘fear of the Lord’ is the faithful covenant response.” What does it look like to “know and fear the Lord” in your daily life? How is this different from just believing in God?
5. “We who follow Jesus are citizens of Zion, the new Jerusalem, a people living under the victorious rule of God.” Question: What would it look like for your church or community group to embody the values of God’s kingdom as citizens of Zion? Where are you already seeing glimpses of that?

RESPONSE:

Where is the Holy Spirit inviting you to actively participate in the church’s witness- whether through service, hospitality, sharing the gospel, or another way?

CHAPTER THIRTEEN:

THE MISSIONAL PEOPLE TODAY, PART ONE: THE SCATTERED LIFE

1. “The Church exists in its prime reality from Monday to Saturday... bearing the royal priesthood of Christ into every corner of His world.” - Lesslie Newbigin. How does this quote challenge the way you’ve thought about the church? What would it look like to see your everyday life—from errands to emails—as part of your priestly calling?
2. “If either of these focal points is neglected... it has fatal consequences for the church’s vocation.” Why is it essential that we not only gather on Sundays but also scatter with purpose during the week? Which of these two “focal points” do you personally find more natural—and which do you tend to neglect?
3. “Our vocations are a primary witness to the sovereignty of God.” What does it mean to live faithfully in your vocation—whether it’s your job, school, caregiving, or retirement? What’s one area where you see God inviting you to reflect his rule more clearly?
4. “Jesus Christ is the truth and the life... Yet if those words lack humility... we will not be heard.” Think of someone you know who doesn’t follow Jesus. What would it look like to speak the truth of the gospel with both boldness and humility in your relationship with them?
5. “Few things ‘speak’ more powerfully than sacrificial love in action.” What is one need in your community that God might be calling you to respond to with acts of mercy or justice? How might your group or church take one step toward it?

RESPONSE:

Where is the Spirit inviting you to embody the gospel more intentionally this week- in your workplace, neighborhood, or daily routines?

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE MISSIONAL PEOPLE TODAY, PART TWO: GATHERED LIFE

1. "Worship is not an escape from the real world, but an entrance into the real world." In what ways does your church's worship reflect the true story of the world—the glory of God and the victory of the Lamb? In what ways might it reflect the consumer values of our culture?
2. "Sunday's worship is unto Monday's work." How has corporate worship shaped (or not shaped) how you live throughout the week—in your work, your relationships, your neighborhood? Can you think of a specific way that Sunday has impacted your Monday?
3. Inspired by Václav Havel's vision of "living in the truth," Goheen says the church is a "parallel society." What does it mean for the church to be a "parallel culture"? How can we faithfully live out the gospel without withdrawing from the world?
4. "You all must devote yourselves to prayer." What does it look like for a whole church to be devoted to prayer—not just individuals, but a praying community? What would need to change in your group or church to move toward this?
5. "Non-discipleship is the elephant in the church." -Dallas Willard. In what ways have you been formed (or not formed) for whole-life discipleship? What would it look like for your church to recover a more intentional, lifelong approach to formation?

PART FOUR:

MISSIONARY ENCOUNTER WITH CULTURE

FORMATION PRACTICES

INDIVIDUAL PRACTICES

MEDIA FASTING

Regularly fast from news or entertainment to recalibrate your cultural consumption. Reflect: "What stories am I being shaped by?"
Reflect weekly on something in culture (ad, movie, policy, trend), asking: "How does this align or clash with God's story?"

MEDITATE

Meditate on and work to memorize Philippians 4:4-9.

SILENCE & SOLITUDE

Practice solitude to develop discernment. Allow yourself space to listen for God's voice rather than cultural noise. Take an hour each week to walk and listen in silence.

COMMUNAL PRACTICES

CULTURAL CONVERSATIONS

Host regular discussions on various topics like art, politics, sexuality, or technology. Invite critical but gracious conversation rooted in Scripture.

PRACTICE COUNTER-FORMATION TOGETHER

Choose a cultural "lie" (e.g., we are what we produce) and create a habit that resists it (e.g., Sabbath from work and email).

CULTURAL STORY NIGHT

Pick a popular movie to watch together then discuss:

- What story is this telling us about identity, success, love, or meaning?
- How does it align with or challenge the gospel?
- What would a faith response look like?

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: *A MISSIONAL ENCOUNTER WITH WESTERN CULTURE TODAY*

1. "Christians will be torn between the two poles of sectarian withdrawal and assimilation." Where do you see the church today struggling with either withdrawal or assimilation? Where do you personally feel the pull to fit in with culture or to retreat from it?
2. C.S. Lewis's *The Silver Chair* is used to describe how the powers of culture can enchant us. Can you think of a cultural message or value that has "numbed" you to gospel truth—something that subtly shapes your desires, time, or identity? What would it look like to resist that spell?
3. "A missionary encounter is not adversarial... but loving, respectful, humble, and kind." How is a "missionary encounter" different from the common posture of culture war? Why is it essential that we engage culture as missionaries instead of as enemies?
4. "We are called to love our culture while hating its idolatry." What is something genuinely good in our culture that Christians can affirm? What is one idol in our culture that must be resisted? How can we do both at the same time?
5. Paul didn't reject the Roman household but transformed it by the gospel. What is one example today (e.g., business, education, entertainment, social media) where Christians need to discern both the creational good and the idolatrous twist? What would gospel-shaped faithfulness look like in that area?
6. "None of us naturally has critical distance from our own culture... we are swimming in water." Why do we need each other—and the global church—to discern cultural idols and resist syncretism? How might your group practice this kind of mutual discernment?

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: *THE STORY OF THE WEST*

1. "We bear Christ's name before the world... our way of life will bring either honor or disgrace to his name." What are some ways Christians today might unintentionally bring dishonor to Christ's name by conforming to culture? Where do you personally feel the temptation to "fit in" rather than live distinctively?
2. "Our past is sedimented in our present... we are doomed to misidentify ourselves, as long as we can't do justice to where we came from." -Charles Taylor. Why is it important to know the story of Western culture? How does this story continue to shape what we value, believe, and pursue in everyday life?
3. Goheen names six "modern gods": autonomy, rationalism, scientism, progress, technicism, and material prosperity. Which of these cultural idols do you think most influences your daily decisions or desires? How can the gospel confront and heal that influence?
4. "Science would assume the status of a messiah, an idol, a god, the light of the world." How has Western culture trusted science or technology to save us? Where have you seen this mindset in how people pursue happiness, justice, or meaning?
5. "True faith... will always seek to engage and reshape the world outside ourselves." How has the gospel shaped your public life—your work, politics, or community involvement? In what areas have you been tempted to keep faith "private"?

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: *THE SPIRIT OF POSTMODERNITY*

1. “Stand firm” is Paul’s repeated command in Ephesians 6. What pressures in today’s culture make it hard to “stand firm” in your faith? Where do you feel tempted to compromise, withdraw, or despair?
2. Postmodernism rejects reason as the defining trait of humanity and elevates emotion, intuition, and sensuality. In what ways do you see emotions, feelings, or desires being treated as the highest authority in our culture? How can Christians affirm the value of emotion without making it ultimate?
3. Postmodernism says identity is self-constructed—changeable and unconstrained, even by biology. How does the biblical story offer a better, more stable foundation for identity? What difference does it make in how we view ourselves and others?
4. The Enlightenment promised peace, progress, truth, and prosperity—and failed. Where do you see people reacting to the failures of modernism by rushing into new idols (e.g., identity, sexuality, power, rage, or relativism)? What would it look like to offer the gospel as a better hope?
5. “Biblical justice differs from both left-wing and right-wing visions of justice.” How does biblical justice differ from the visions of justice you see in our world today? What are some practices of justice and mercy your group or church could commit to?
6. “All of us share in sexual brokenness... boldness must be tempered by love and humility.” What would it look like to speak about biblical sexuality with both courage and compassion in your relationships, your church, or your workplace?

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: *THE SPIRIT OF ECONOMIC MODERNITY*

1. “What is the chief end of human life?” How would people in our society today answer this question? How do you see different answers to that question shaping your neighborhood, your workplace, or even your own heart?
2. Economic growth is often seen as a moral good in our culture. What are some of the ways we’ve been formed to believe that wealth equals the good life?
3. Goheen describes the economic story as an idolatrous “totalizing” vision. In what ways have economic values taken over areas of life like education, relationships, sexuality, or even faith? Can you name examples from your own experience or community?
4. Goheen says modern capitalism has both released life-giving potential and caused deep injustice. How should Christians hold these two truths together without falling into blind celebration or cynical rejection? What would a wise, faithful posture toward wealth and global economics look like?
5. Globalization has brought both opportunity and oppression. In what ways can we participate in the global economy as faithful Christians who reflect God’s justice and love? Is there a step you or your church could take to resist economic idolatry and pursue justice (e.g., spending habits, advocacy, business practices, generosity)?

RESPONSE:

How is the Spirit calling you to tangible acts of generosity, simplicity, or justice in response to the economic idols of our time?

CHAPTER NINETEEN: *THE SPIRIT OF CONSUMERISM*

1. "Consumerism is a religious spirit that dominates the waking lives of many twenty-first-century people." How has the story of consumerism shaped the way we think about life, happiness, success, or identity? Where do you see it influencing your own heart or habits?
2. "I can't get no satisfaction!" vs. "They have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water" (Jer. 2:13). Why is consumerism never able to deliver on its promises? How have you experienced this "broken cistern" reality in your own life?
3. "The key to economic prosperity is to create organized dissatisfaction." What are some specific ways our culture trains us to feel discontent? How do advertising, social media, and trends shape our sense of what we "need"?
4. Goheen names several: global inequality, environmental degradation, personal anxiety, and moral decay. Which of these consequences most burdens you—and why? What would faithfulness look like in response?
5. "Sacred consumption begins by delighting in God's good creation and is characterized by four virtues: gratitude, generosity, contentment, and stewardship." Which of these four virtues do you most long to grow in right now—and why? What is one practice that could help nurture that virtue in your life?
6. "Developing such virtues demands that we reflect on and exercise the spiritual practices, rhythms, and habits that will form us for an alternative way of life." What are one or two counter cultural practices your group or household could try together to resist consumerism and embody the gospel?

RESPONSE:

How is the Spirit inviting you to respond through simplicity, gratitude, or generosity to resist the pull of consumerism in your life?

CHAPTER TWENTY: *A CLOSING APPEAL*

1. "Offer your bodies as a living sacrifice..." What do you think it means to be a living sacrifice? What might this look like practically in your daily life, your work, or your relationships?
2. Do not conform to the pattern of this world..." Where do you feel cultural pressure to conform? What are some specific ways our culture shapes our views of success, identity, time, or even faith?
3. "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind..." What are the means God gives us for renewal (Word, Spirit, community)? Which one do you feel most shaped by right now, and which one might God be inviting you to lean into more?

