

Reaching for the Invisible God
By Philip Yancey

Part I Thirst—Our Longing for God

Chapter 1: Born Again Breech

1. Pg. 14 *“In the end we concluded that God is far more central to our lives now than during our college days.”* Is this true for you? Why or why not?
2. Pg. 15 *“I know there is a God: I believe He exists, I just don’t know what to believe of Him.”* Write down your current beliefs about God.
3. Pg. 17 *“ – how do the cells of my body, ...carry around the splendor of the God of the universe in a way that leaks out for others to notice?”* In what way do the cells of our body carry the splendour of God? and In what way do you live out your awareness of that splendour in the world?
4. Pg. 18 *“How do I let you change me in my essence, in my nature, to make me more like you? Or is that even possible?”* Do you believe that God can change you?
5. Pg. 21 *“I know if my house caught fire, I would rush to save my journal. It’s my most valuable possession, a record of my relationship with God.”* What would you retrieve from your burning home that reminded you of your relationship with God?

Chapter 2: Thirsting at the Fountainside

1. Pg. 26 *“Reverence, submission, awe – the Orthodox convey these qualities superbly in worship, they admitted, but their God remains faraway, approachable only after much preparation and only through intermediaries such as priests and icons.”* Is reverence part of your relationship with God? What do you currently believe would constitute a “proper” relationship between people and God?
2. Pg. 27 *“Knowledge of God proceeds in an entirely different manner.”* Yancey says there is a difference between the way science accumulates knowledge and the way humans accumulate knowledge about god. Do you believe this statement? Discuss.
3. Pg. 28 *“It is always shocking to meet life where we thought we were alone. ‘Look out!’ we cry, ‘it’s alive.’”* What is your first memory of interacting with God?
4. Pg. 28 *“If God ... ‘did this,’ meaning all creation, in order that we might reach out and find him, why not make himself more obvious?”* Do you feel evidence of God is obvious or not, and why?
5. Pg. 30 *“Christians, in contrast, believe that God possesses all the qualities of personhood: unpredictable, relational, free, intelligent, emotional, sometimes cooperative and sometimes resistant.”* Do you agree with this description? Why or why not?
6. Pg. 32 *“But the sunshine was too bright, the air too clear, some residual skepticism in myself too sharp to make it possible to imagine ghosts among the apple trees or voices among the yellow jackets, and nothing like what I expected happened at all.”* Why do you think Buechner was unable to see a miracle?
7. Pg. 32 *“Although he came to admire the students’ fervency, it seemed to him at first that their God resembled a cosmic Good Buddy.”* What do you think about this statement? Is God a good buddy to you?

Part II Faith—When God Seems Absent, Indifferent, or Even Hostile

Chapter 3: Room for Doubt

1. Pg. 38 *“Something, though, keeps drawing me back to God. What? I ask myself.”* Do you feel that, in your lifetime, you have been drawn to learn about God? If yes, describe the calling. If no – think again...
2. Pg. 39 *“But we can pray. We got time, and we got faith. Some of us don’t sleep much anyway. We can pray all night if needs be.”* What do you believe about the efficacy of prayer?
3. Pg. 40 *“I see that faith comes in different degrees.”* And Pg. 41 *“We are not all shy or melancholic or introverted; why should we expect to have the same measure or kind of faith?”* Why do you think that people have such varying degrees of faith?
4. Pg. 41 *“I don’t know how the kind of faith required of a Christian living in the 20th century can be at all if it is not grounded on the experience of unbelief.”* Are you comfortable with the ongoing struggle with the experience of unbelief, or do you need absolute beliefs in order to be faithful?
5. Pg. 43 *“God had the perfect opportunity to address the problem of pain in his speech at the end of Job, the longest single speech by God in the Bible, yet avoided the topic entirely.”* Think about why the problem of pain was not addressed in Job...or was it?
6. Pg. 44 The paragraph beginning *“Hyper-Calvinists show what happens...”* describes God’s sovereign will. What is your understanding of the “judgement” of God?
7. Pg. 45 *“Jesus often made it harder, not easier, for people to believe. He never violated an individual’s freedom to decide, even to decide against him.”* Jesus didn’t try to force people to believe in his heavenly father. He lived by example and by witness to God’s power. What is the state of Christianity today – next to such a tolerant Jesus?
8. Pg. 46 *“More, the teacher concluded that God disagreed with his conclusion.”* Think about this statement. What does it say about the teacher?
9. Pg. 47 *“Faith means striking out, with no clear end in sight and perhaps even no clear view of the next step.”* Write your own definition of “faith.”

Part II - Chapter 4: Faith under Fire

1. Pg. 53 *"We who follow in their path today may sometimes experience times of unusual closeness when God seems responsive to our every need; we may also experience times when God stays silent and all the Bible's promises seem glaringly false."* In your life have you find God's presence to come and go, or has it been a constant?
2. Pg. 55 *"For the believer, faith revolves around a crisis in personal relationship more than intellectual doubts. Does God deserve our trust, no matter how things appear at the time?"* Do you trust God? What form does that trust take?
3. Pg. 57 *"Did God arrange these incidents as tests of faith? To the contrary, I see them as spectacular demonstrations of human freedom exercised on a fallen planet."* Do you think that God arranges tests of faith? Why or why not?
4. Pg. 60 *"To backward-looking questions of cause, to the "Why?" questions, the Bible gives no definitive answer. But it does hold out hope for the future, so that even suffering can be transformed so that it produces good results."* When you read this, do you feel vulnerable or insecure? If tragedy strikes, how do you see your faith helping you to carry on?

Part II - Chapter 5: Two-handed Faith

1. Pg. 63 *“The Bible insists we live in the midst of unseen ‘powers,’ some devoted to good and some to evil.”* What is your understanding of “unseen powers?”
2. Pg. 65 *“We need love and mercy and forgiveness and grace – qualities only a personal God can offer.”* Do you agree? Comment please.
3. Pg. 66 Par. 2 re Columbine: In this paragraph God is referenced in many ways by many people from many points of view. What is your understanding of God’s part in this event?
4. Pg. 69 Top of page: How much of what you do is for “vainglory?” How would you feel if you could no longer do the things which the world identifies with their definition of who you are?
5. Pg. 70 Top of page: Why do you think that faith could be the “flip side” of depression?

Part II - Chapter 6: Living in Faith

1. Pg. 75 Top “...patience and hope keep faith alive during times that cast doubt in that belief.” Are you a patient person when it comes to your relationship with God? How do you think developing more patience would help you?
2. Pg. 76 Par. 3 “Remembering my relationship with God takes effort and intentionality.” On a sheet of paper, write a timeline/record of God’s participation in your life.
3. Pg. 78 Par. 1 “Surrounded by decay, we nonetheless hope for perfection, for a restoration of the cosmos.” Do you find within yourself a hope for perfection as described here?
4. Pg. 80 Last Par. “A record of God’s faithfulness in the past combines with hope in a better future for one end: to equip us for the present. As Tolstoy said, we have control over no other time.” How much does your past influence your present? How much does your future influence your present? What would it mean for you to live in the present moment?
5. Pg. 83 Par 3. The sisters who run the Home for the Dying in Calcutta are serene. What makes them serene in the midst of death and chaos? What spiritual practise will you start which might lead to an increase in your level of serenity?

Part II - Chapter 7: Mastery of the Ordinary

1. Pg. 85 *“What about the rest of us, who face to-do lists that never get done and live in a culture that conspires to drown out silence and fill all pauses?”* What methods do you use to avoid being quiet and spending time with God? Why do you avoid silence?
2. Pg. 86 *“Exercising faith in the present means trusting God to work through the encounter before me despite the background clutter of the rest of my life.”* This indicates that surrendering to a higher power and letting go of control is essential. How comfortable are you with doing these things?
3. Pg. 88 *“If you want to forgive your father but find yourself unable, act as if he is forgiven.”* Do you believe the words coming from your mouth effect life changes?
4. Pg. 90 *“We receive enlightenment only in proportion as we give ourselves more and more completely to God by humble submission and love.”* Do the enlightened people of whom you are aware embody “humble submission and love”? Does this statement ring true for you?
5. Pg 94 *“Occasionally we talk of our Christianity as something that solves problems, and there is a sense in which it does. Long before it does so, however, it increases both the number and the intensity of the problems. Even our intellectual questions are increased by the acceptance of a strong religious faith.”* Since you started examining your Christian faith, have you found your beliefs challenged? Has this helped or hindered you on your faith journey?
6. Pg 96 *“Cheery, problem-solving books offer a much more attractive road map today, but I cannot help wondering what we have lost along the way.”* What is your understanding of the “cheery, problem-solving” books of today? Have they helped you?

Part III – GOD: Contact with the Invisible

Chapter 8: Knowing God or Anyone Else

1. Pg. 103 *“I recognize that knowing ‘other minds,’ whether other persons or God, always requires an act of faith.”* Have you ever felt or heard what was on another person’s mind? What kinds of things can you intuit or sense? How do you suppose this is possible?
2. Pg. 105 *“Since God has no body, how can we perceive him? How can we communicate with God? Could it be that we possess the capacity for direct knowledge of God, meaning without reliance on the body and its senses?”* and *“Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.”* By Tennyson. How would you describe the “body” of God?
3. Pg. 106 *“According to the Bible, the greatest distinction between human beings is not based on race, intelligence, income, or talent. It is a distinction based on correspondence with the unseen world. The ‘children of light’ have that correspondence; the ‘children of darkness’ do not.”* Do you believe this to be the greatest distinction between human beings? Elaborate.
4. Pg. 107 *“Although we all have the capacity, our spiritual longing will remain unfulfilled until we make contact, and then develop the skills of spiritual ‘correspondence.’*” Do you think you are a spiritual correspondent with God? If yes, did that happen because you were “born again?” If no, do you desire that kind of relationship with God? How would you go about finding it?
5. Pg. 108 *“My relationship with Dr. Brand affected me deeply, in my core, on the inside. Yet as I look back, I can think of no instance in which he imposed himself on me or manipulatively sought to change me. I changed willingly, gladly, as my world and my self encountered his.”* Dr. Brand led by example, affecting Yancey to the core. In your personal relationship with God, what form does that correspondence take?
6. Pg. 110 *“The truth—that love is the ultimate and the highest goal to which men can aspire.”* Believing this, what kind of changes do we have to make to our lives and our way of living which would result in us becoming loving?

Part III -Chapter 9: Personality Profile

1. Pg. 113 *“In the Bible, life with God reads more like a mystery story, or a romance, than a theology text.”* Do you agree? Give your reasons either way.
2. Pg. 114 *“God is shy to intervene. Considering the many things that must displease him on this planet, God exercises incredible—at times maddening—self-restraint.”* Yancey refers to God has having some human characteristics: shyness, displeasure, fun, mystery, hiding, etc. Do you attribute these qualities to your understanding of God? Why/Why not?
3. Pg. 116 *“As I look back on God’s spectacular interventions in the Old Testament—Noah’s flood, the tower of Babel, the ten plagues of Egypt, the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions—I feel mostly gratitude for this quality of divine shyness.”* If God manifested all of the above “interventions” in Old Testament times, what kinds of manifestations is God responsible for these days?
4. Pg. 117 *“God is for me a seven-year-old daughter, slipping back across the grass, holding her breath in check, wanting once again to surprise me with a presence closer than I could ever have expected. ‘Truly thou art a God who hidest thyself,’ the prophet once declared. A playfulness as well as a dark mystery lies richly intertwined in that grand and complex truth.”* Where have you seen a playful God in the recent past of your life’s experience?
5. Pg. 118 *“I turned to God primarily because of my discovery of goodness and grace in the world: through nature, through classical music, through romantic love. Enjoying the gifts, I began to seek the giver; full of gratitude, I needed Someone to thank.”* List some other ways you know of that have enticed people to search out God.
6. Pg. 119 *“I see the same gentleness and refusal to coerce in the life of God’s Son. In dealing with people, he states the consequences of a choice, then hands the decision back to the other party.”* If the consequence of choosing always follows the choice, how will this realization affect your future actions? What might a decision not in line with God yield?

Part III - Chapter 10: In the Name of the Father

1. Pg. 123 *“God’s image shines through us most clearly in the act of creation—comprising the three stages of Idea, Expression, and Recognition—and by reproducing this act we may begin to grasp, by analogy, the Trinity.”* Think about something that you have created. Think about the process you went through in creating. Can you identify your stages of Idea, Expression, and Recognition?
2. Is it difficult for you to think about God as one Being expressed in three persons? Which part of the trinity is most difficult for you to understand or develop a relationship with: God, the Father, Jesus, the Son, or the Holy Spirit?
3. (From the Study Guide) What if Jesus walked the earth today? Would he be, in the words of pop singer Joan Osborne, “just a slob like one of us,” a stranger on the bus commuting home? Do these words offend you? What idea about Jesus do these words help to accurately convey?
4. (From the Study Guide) Why did the people of Jesus’ day have difficulty believing that the man they saw before them was the Son of God? If Jesus walked the earth today, do you think you would be inclined to recognize him? Why or Why not?
5. Pg. 130 *“The Old Testament stresses the wonder that this sovereign, holy God desires contact with his flawed creatures. God wants to relate to people”* How does it make you feel when you truly understand that God desires your company? Is it frightening or comforting?
6. Pg. 132 *“Jehovah behaves, instead, like a holy God trying desperately to communicate to cantankerous human beings.”* In the Old Testament God seems to desire communication with us and makes God’s presence known by various means mentioned in the chapter. Does God go to the same lengths to make God’s self known to us today?
7. Pg. 133 *“Sometimes God allows us to determine the intensity of his presence.”* How open are you to getting to know God? Do you want to see or feel God’s presence in your life?
8. Pg. 134 *“God had accommodated himself to his prophet in a soft voice almost like silence.”* How does God speak to you?

Part III - Chapter 11: Rosetta Stone

1. Pg. 136 *“God’s perfect Expression was, scandalously, not what anyone could have come up with on their own.”*
(From the Study Guide) Try to envision what someone might look like today who is the “everyman” of our society—not widely respected or noticed, not in a position to influence the society at large, simply a member of the daily grind. What would this person look like physically? What kind of job might he have? What would his financial situation be? What would his living accommodations be like? Where in your city would he live? Who would be his companions?
2. Pg. 137 *“In person he reestablished the original link between God and human beings, between seen and unseen worlds.”* What or who was your first introduction to the unseen world of God?
3. Pg. 139 *“We can trust God because we trust Jesus. If we doubt God, or find him incomprehensible, unknowable, the very best cure is to gaze steadily at Jesus, the Rosetta stone of faith.”* What does trusting in God mean to you? What would you like it to be?
4. Pg. 140 *“If Jesus saw the need to pray, sometimes so urgently that he spent all night at it, so should I.”* Have you ever spent a night in prayer? What were the circumstances and how did you feel afterwards? Were your prayers answered? If you haven’t spent a night in prayer, what prompts you to pray?
5. Pg. 141 *“Indeed, Jesus chose to be born in poverty and disgrace, spent his infancy as a refugee, lived in a minority race under a harsh regime, and died as a prisoner, unjustly accused.”* Yancey said that Jesus chose to be born. Do you think that you chose to be born, or was that privilege only for Jesus? Discuss.
6. Pg. 144 *Bondi noted in contrast that the sisters seem not at all intimidated by Jesus. They do not submissively accept what has happened as the will of God but rather pour out their hurt and anger to Jesus.”* Are we supposed to be comfortable enough with God to yell and take our anger out on God? What is your style of relating to God?

Part III - Chapter 12: The Go-Between

1. Top Pg. 148 Umberto Eco has some conclusions about where Americans perceive their God. Where do you think Canadians see God?
2. Top Pg. 149 Yancey says a jolt of Recognition within himself recognizes the God without. List some of your points of God recognition.
3. Pg. 150 Thomas Merton says “*since our souls are spiritual substances and since God is pure Spirit, there is nothing to prevent a union between ourselves and Him that is ecstatic in the literal sense of the word.*” How does your spiritual connection with God manifest itself?
4. St. Paul writes “*the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.*” (Romans 8:26) What does the word “groans” tell you about the nature of the Holy Spirit? (Pg. 152 - bottom) In your life have you groaned in your need for help? What were the results of doing so?
5. Pg. 154 speaks about ways that the church can be a deterrent to people such that they reject God. What about your church attracts people? Are there ways in which your church turns people away?
6. Pg. 156 Christ lived a life connected to God. He left us knowledge of the Holy Spirit for inspiration and healing. Describe your connection with God? Do you see the possibility of that changing as you understand better how the Holy Spirit works in you?

Part IV: Union: A Partnership of Unequals
Chapter 13: Makeover

1. Yancey talks about his attempt to make himself over. He had some success with modifying his way of speaking and his handwriting, but when he looked inside himself, comparing his spiritual characteristics with the gifts of the spirit listed in Galatians 5:22, he had to admit failure. (Pg. 162 Par. 3) Read the list of spirit fruits and look inside yourself to see how successful you have been with inner change. What changes have you allowed God to make in yourself?
2. What are your fears when you think of handing your inner makeover over to God? At the bottom of Pg. 163, Yancey says “It begins with trust in God’s best for me, a confidence that God will liberate my true self, not bind it.” Do you believe the Holy Spirit can bring these spiritual gifts to you?
3. J.B. Phillips says (bottom of Pg. 164) “*if God loves us, who are we to be so high and mighty as to refuse to love ourselves?*” Have you spent time condemning yourself? Have you labelled yourself a hopeless case? Do you continue to pass judgement on yourself? What does it feel like? Why do you do it?
4. “*The real work of prayer is to become silent and listen to the voice that says good things about me.*” Have you spent time, as Henri Nouwen talks about on Pg. 166 “*listening to the blessing*”? If you have, what does it feel like? If you haven’t, set aside some time to sit in quiet and listen.
5. The story at the bottom of Pg. 166 gives us an image of God’s delight in us being similar to a baby’s delight at all he sees. Can you embrace the thought that you are loveable no matter what?...or do you feel uncomfortable and undeserving of such love?
6. Pg. 169 “*The visible world forces itself on me without invitation; I must consciously cultivate the invisible.*” How can we create space and willingness to have the Holy Spirit do his work in us?
7. On Pg. 171, Phillip Yancey describes his relationship with his depressed friend. In what ways do you see the Holy Spirit at work in this healing? How would you go about helping your depressed friend in need?

Part IV - Chapter 14: Out of Control

1. Pg. 174 bottom. *“When an invisible spirit and a human being connect, strange things may happen. That prospect terrifies some people, embarrasses others, and captivates still others.”* Have you had an ecstatic spiritual experience? Describe it. How did it make you feel? Have you witnessed one? Describe it - how did you feel as the observer? Would you like to have one? Why or why not?
2. Pg. 177, Par. 2. *“Jesus never brainwashed anyone...He never imposed himself on another person but always left room for choice and even rejection.”* Have you felt the Spirit’s call in your life? How do you feel you have or have not responded to the call?
3. Pg. 177 Par. 3. *“James Houston describes the Holy Spirit as a “friend”.* Would you say you and God have a relationship of mutual affection and trust? Would you say that you and God have a relationship at all? Are you and God friends? (Taken from the 2008 Fall Retreat)
4. Pg. 178 Top *“The director told me he leads such retreats several times a year, and not once has a participant failed to hear God speak during the four days. We would remain silent, reading only what he assigned, committing to pray at least four hours per day.”* Reflect on the sample findings that Yancey lists at the bottom of page 178 and onto page 179. Find a quiet place, sit down with a pad of paper and pen and write what God might say to you if God dictated a spiritual action plan for your life. Take a good block of time somewhere you won’t be disturbed.
5. Pg. 181 C.S. Lewis concluded that being a practising Christian *“means that every single act and feeling, every experience, whether pleasant or unpleasant, must be referred to God.”* Do you believe this statement? How do you feel about it?
6. Pg. 184 *“Those who say that they believe in God and yet neither love nor fear him, do not in fact believe in him but in those who have taught them that God exists. Those who believe that they believe in God, but without any passion in their heart, without uncertainty, without doubt, without an element of despair even in their consolation, believe only in the God-idea, not in God.”* Miguel de Unamunto’s quote forces us to examine our faith. Think about this statement and reflect on your faith.

Part IV - Chapter 15: Passion and the Desert

1. Pg. 185 and 186. Henri Nouwen talks about his experience of prayer. Is your experience of prayer similar or different from his? In what ways?
2. Pg. 188 "*A relationship with an invisible God will always include uncertainty and variability.*" and "*As I look back over the giants of faith, all had one thing in common: neither victory nor success, but passion.*" Think of someone you know of either through history or personally - a person who has/had a passion for God. What motivates their passion? Are you passionate in your relationship with God?
3. Pg. 189 top "*One thing, however, blocks relationship: indifference. 'They turned their backs to me and not their faces,' God told Jeremiah, in a damning indictment of Israel.*" If prayers are offered for a person who is "*indifferent*" or who has turned their back on God, what kind of impact (do you think) might these prayers have?
4. The bottom of Page 191 speaks of Psalm 51, a passionately vulnerable letter written by David to God. Read Psalm 51. What is your understanding of verse 17? "*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*"
5. Pg. 194 "*We fall down, we get up, a pattern the Bible amply illustrated, as with David and Peter. God does require honesty, though. We dare not misrepresent ourselves to God, for by doing so, we close our hands to grace.*" The 12-step programs, such as AA, EmA (Emotions Anonymous), etc. require their people to: "*Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.*" Do you know someone who has been helped by a 12-step program? How has that person changed? Do you think Christians should follow a 12-step program? How honest could you be?
6. Pg. 195 Henri Nouwen "*looked within and found a badly wounded self. Gradually he came to see that the voice of God only speaks through wounded selves.*" Examine your life - how have you felt God's grace within your woundedness?

Part IV - Chapter 16: Spiritual Amnesia

1. In the middle of Pg. 199, C.S. Lewis says “*I have felt, oh yes I have felt, times of wholeness, guilt-free peace, sweet communion, holy bliss. They are so rare, however, that I could probably record them all in one paragraph. I have learned not to strive to reproduce them, rather to put myself in a place where they can visit me, grace me.*” How can we put ourselves in a place where these grace moments can visit us? How do you do it - or can you do it?
2. On pg. 200, Yancey says, “*It amazes me how I can sail through my daily routine without giving God much thought or putting into practice what I write.*” How true of you is this statement? Is God a frequent part of your consciousness or more of an occasional or oft-forgotten thought?
3. Pg 201 “*How can the worshipful practice of pausing before a meal in gratitude devolve into ‘ThankyouforthisfoodAmen–Please pass the butter’?*” ...and yet when we’re in the presence of someone holy, our soul is transfixed by its presence. Why is it that ordinary moments become boring and uninspirational? What can we do about it?
4. Bottom of 205 tells about Frank Laubach and his efforts to keep God front and centre in his mind. Have you developed any routines or aids in keeping God more frequently in your mind?
5. The stories of Brother Lawrence and Frank Laubach on pages 204-207 talk about practising the presence of God. Do you find it plausible that someone could find God while washing dishes or doing day-to-day activities? Spend some time in God consciousness and write down what difference it made to working through the activity.
6. The box on page 208 quotes Meister Eckhart: “*The soul must long for God in order to be set aflame by God’s love; but if the soul cannot yet feel this longing, then it must long for the longing. To long for the longing is also from God.*” There is a difference between longing for the longing of God and asking for God to be present. Does the first yield longing and the second yield God’s presence? What experience of God would you ask for?

Part V - Chapter 17: Growth – Stages Along the Way – Child

1. Pg. 211 The first sentence in this chapter says “*I have known God’s presence and God’s absence, fullness and emptiness, spiritual intimacy and a dark void.*” In a sentence, describe your experience of knowing God.
2. Pg. 215 J.I. Packer states “*Often the start of their Christian career is marked by great emotional joy, striking providences, remarkable answers to prayer, and immediate fruitfulness in their first acts of witness; thus God encourages them, and establishes them in ‘the life’.*” When you were new to the faith did this describe your experiences? If not, how did your life of faith start?
3. Pg. 216 “*According to both Jesus and Paul, legalism represents another symptom of childish faith.*” What is the attraction of such a legalistic approach to the faith experience?
4. Pg. 217 “*A childish faith based on unrealistic expectations, legalism, and unhealthy dependence can work well for a while—until a person runs headfirst into a new reality...He was preparing them for a new reality that included resurrection, yes, but not before the necessary step of death.*” It seems that people are not so much afraid of dying as they are of living. Why would this be? What is your understanding of what is meant by “living” ...and what is meant by “dying”?
5. Pg. 218 Beuchner says that children know how to accept a gift. They receive gladly and unself-consciously. What kind of gifts does God offer us? Are you open to receive God’s gifts?
6. Pg. 219 Buechner says that children know how to trust. What do you understand trusting in God means? Did you participate in the Trust Project that Rideau Park undertook? If you did, what if any difference did it make in your life. If not, please pick up a brochure, or read it on the web and challenge yourself to learn how to trust in God.
7. Pg. 222 Ciszek says “*So it is we who must put ourselves in God’s presence, we who must turn to him in faith, we who must leap beyond an image to the belief—indeed the realization—that we are in the presence of a loving Father who stands always ready to listen to our childish stories and to answer to our childlike trust.*” What will you change in order that you put yourself in God’s presence and develop a trust relationship where one was missing?

Part V - Chapter 18: Growth – Stages Along the Way – Adult

1. Pg. 223 “*That adult relationship reveals, I believe, what God has always sought from human beings: not the clinging, helpless love of a child who has no real choice, but the mature, freely given commitment of a lover.*” Do you think, as Yancey indicates here, that God has wants?
2. Pg. 224 “*In any mature relationship, in fact, love sets the boundaries.*” How have you brought God into one of your relationships? How has the relationship benefited from this?
3. Pg. 225 “*We seek to please God, accept as our highest goal to know and love him, make necessary sacrifices—and in the process we ourselves change. Personal spirituality grows as a byproduct of sustained interaction with God.*” Is pleasing God of importance to you? Do you think God wants/needs to be pleased? Why or why not?
4. P. 227 “*More than anything else, he wanted to please his father and to emulate him; the lie pointed out how far he had to grow. ‘After that,’ said Arun, ‘I never told another lie.’*” How much does an earthly father resemble the heavenly father? In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different?
5. Yancey says on page 229, “*Love can never be forced. It flows out of fullness, not fear.*” If indeed God’s love flows out of God’s fullness, what responsibility does this place on us? Why do we fear that love relationship and hold it back from our hearts?
6. Pg. 229 “*Henri Nouwen calls this new identity ‘the inner voice of love,’ an indwelling reminder that frees me to act as God’s beloved, beyond the reach of human praise or blame.*” In what ways do you restrain offering your true opinions for fear of reaping others’ judgement? Are you a praise seeker? Do society’s opinions of you matter more than your loyalty to God matters to you?
7. Pg. 231 “*As I study people like Merton, Benedict, Francis of Assisi, John Wesley, Charles de Foucauld, Mother Teresa, I see in these disciplined souls not set-jaw determination but rather spontaneity and even joy. By investing their freedom in discipline, they secure a deeper freedom unavailable elsewhere.*” What type of discipline could you commit to practising in order that you may grow in closeness and relationship or communion with God?

Part V - Chapter 19: Growth – Stages Along the Way – Parent

1. Pg. 236 “*First, we cry to be loved by a father and mother who can hold us in our weakness...Next, says Vanier, we feel an adult cry for a friend—someone with whom we can share our deepest secrets, whom we can trust without fear, whom we can love...Finally, we have a cry to serve those weaker than ourselves.*” In reading these three descriptions, where do you consider yourself to be located?
2. Pg. 237 “*We draw near to God in likeness when we give ourselves away. In fact, as Jean Vanier insists, we need this further stage as an essential part of spiritual development; it teaches what we might otherwise never learn.*” Consider your own life – is it easy to give yourself away? In what ways do you do so?
3. Pg. 238 “*In a healthy family, love comes without conditions. The son with a birth defect or the Down’s syndrome daughter merits the same love and affection as the star athlete and potential Rhodes Scholar.*” In looking back on your own upbringing, was love given unconditionally or were strings attached? If you grew up with conditional love, in what ways could unconditional acceptance have changed the person you are today?
4. Pg. 240 Read the story of Abbé Pierre teaching the beggars to help other beggars poorer than themselves. Is it a goal of yours to help others help themselves? If not, think of a way that you could initiate such a gift to others.
5. Pg. 241 “*As God entrusts us with more responsibility, the hardships may increase as well. Feelings of abandonment intensify, any sense of the presence of God fades, and temptations and doubts multiply.*” Do you believe this statement? If not, reword it into something that you understand as being true.
6. Pg. 242 “*Any relationship involves times of closeness and times of distance, and in a relationship with God, no matter how intimate, the pendulum will swing from one side to the other.*” and on pg. 243 “*If God grants us the freedom to draw close and pull away, should not God have that same freedom?*” In looking at the dry spells in your faith journey, do you feel that you withdrew from God or God withdrew from you?
7. Pg. 244 “*Love relinquishes control over others, lets go and bears the consequences.*” What form does the relinquishing of control take in your life? How are you able to live this kind of love? How is it working for you?
8. Pg. 245 Buechner says “*In other words, the life you clutch, hoard, guard, and play safe with is in the end a life worth little to anybody, including yourself; and only a life given away for love’s sake is a life worth living.*” This sounds harsh. Is it a legitimate comment?

Part VI - Chapter 20: Restoration: The Relationship's End – Paradise Lost

1. Pg. 251 "*The world is good. The world is fallen. The world can be redeemed.*" Write your own definition of "fallen" in respects to this world.
2. Pg. 252 "*From Augustine onward, Christian theology has insisted that what we call bad things are actually good things perverted.*" In what ways does society pervert the good?
3. Pg. 253 "*In the words of psychiatrist Gerald May, 'In reality, our lack of fulfilment is the most precious gift we have. It is the source of our passion, our creativity, our search for God. All the best of life comes out of our human yearning—our not being satisfied.'*" In what way has your sense of lack of fulfilment moved you forward to find and pursue your passion?
4. Pg. 254 The paragraph beginning "*In our own times...*" What does this say about our relationship with God?
5. Pg. 255 "*Redemption promises not replacement—a wholly new creation imposed on the old—but a transformation that somehow makes use of all that went before.*" How can we get ourselves out of this "fallen" state? What parties need to be involved in our world's redemption?
6. Pg. 257 last paragraph. What will you do to aid in the redemption of the world?

Part VI - Chapter 21: Restoration: The Relationship's End – God's Irony

1. Pg. 260 "*Violence and injustice should not surprise us for we belong to an age in which evil rules.*" Do you believe this statement? Why/Why not? How does it make you feel?
2. Pg. 263 "*I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances,*" wrote the apostle Paul from prison. Naturally he preferred comfort over agony and health over weakness (his prayer to remove the 'thorn in the flesh' proves that), but Paul had gained confidence that God could use circumstances both good and bad to accomplish his will." How content are you when your circumstances or those of your family are less than ideal? Do you have the same confidence Paul had that God uses good and bad circumstances to accomplish His will?
3. What do you think God's will is?
4. Pg. 264 "*As Mother Teresa insisted, poor countries are often spiritually wealthy, and rich countries spiritually impoverished.*" Where do you see the poverty of spirit of which Mother Teresa speaks?
5. Pg. 264 "*Many people find that a persistent temptation, even an addiction, is the very wound that causes them to turn in desperation to God, so that the wound forms a beginning point for new creation.*" Have you found this statement to be true in your life? Why/why not?
6. Pg. 265 "*God intends for human beings to be healthy and live with companions in pleasant and abundant circumstances. Anything else—poverty, loneliness, hatred, pain, sickness, violence, hunger—goes against God's intentional will for his creation.*" It seems we have moved very far away from God's original creation. How will this statement change your actions and prayers?

Part VI - Chapter 22: Restoration: The Relationship's End – An Arranged Marriage

1. Pg. 271 *“God also pre-commits to me, promising a future and eternal life that will redeem the circumstances I now struggle with. God does not accept me conditionally, on the basis of my performance, but bestows his love and forgiveness freely, despite my innumerable failures.”* God’s relationship with us is like an arranged marriage. We have been chosen to be in relationship with God. How do you nurture this unconditional love relationship offered to you?
2. Pg. 272 *“Dorothy Sayers suggests another way of viewing god’s personal involvement with us. She points to the analogy of an artist, who ‘does not see life as a problem to be solved, but as a medium for creation.’ Perhaps, says Sayers, God has invested each of us with the freedom of an artist, allowing us to work with different materials.”* How can we separate ourselves from the idea that life is a problem to be solved if God is truly wanting us to be a medium for God’s creativity?
3. Pg. 273 *“Rather, God calls us to trust him and to obey—whether we live in affluence and success or whether, like some Christians, we spend our days in a concentration camp.”* What we read here indicates that God lives in every moment. If we live in fact in unity with God, what is so appealing to us that we earnestly turn away to follow our own leading?
4. Pg. 275 *“Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him.”* In God, all that seems important to this world is laughable and misguided. Do you have faith that God can turn our mistaken thinking around? What do you do that contributes to our idea of separation from God?
5. Pg. 276 *“Those who attempt to use God as a means of self-realization almost always come away disappointed. God has in mind something like the reverse: to use us, the least likely vessels of his grace, as his self-realization on earth.”* What does this paragraph say to you?
6. Pg. 276 *“I have become increasingly convinced that the crisis of the much-needed global responsibility is in principle due to the fact that we have lost the certainty that the Universe, nature, existence and our lives are the work of creation guided by a definite intention, that it has a definite meaning and follows a definite purpose.”* Do you believe that there is a benevolent intelligence behind the Universe?

Part VI - Ch. 23: Restoration: The Relationship's End – The Fruit of Friday's Toil

1. Pg. 279 *“Nothing irredeemable has happened to us or can happen to us on our way to our destiny in God’s full world.”* Does this statement give you reason to hope? How limited is God’s redemptive power? How limited is our own desire for redemption?
2. Pg. 280 *“Wilson wrote his fellow strugglers, ‘How privileged we are to understand so well the divine paradox that strength rises from weakness, that humiliation goes before resurrection: that pain is not only the price but the very touchstone of spiritual rebirth.’* Are you encouraged when you read that our difficulties are an opportunity for God’s hand to mould us into a new creation? What must we do to put this promised change into action?
3. Pg. 281 *“Good and evil, in the moral sense, do not reside in things, but always in persons,”* wrote Paul Tournier. *“Things and events, whether fortunate or unfortunate, are simply what they are, morally neutral. What matters is the way we react to them. Only rarely are we the masters of events, but (along with those who help us) we are responsible for our reactions....Events give us pain or joy, but our growth is determined by our personal response to both, by our inner attitude.”* Does this make sense to you? Think of something that you have judged to be good...or to be evil. Where did the thought come from which defines it as being good/evil?
4. Pg. 283 *Price credits the “now appalling, now astonishing grace of God.” A relationship with God does not promise supernatural deliverance from hardship, but rather a supernatural use of it.* How do we get access to that supernatural grace that comes from God?
5. Pg. 284 *“A story is being written, with an ending only faintly glimpsed by us. We face the choice of trusting the Author along the way or striking out alone. Always, we have the choice.”* Do you trust the Author or do you trust yourself? What choice have you made in your life?
6. Pg. 285 *“As Augustine expressed it, ‘God judged it better to bring good out of evil than to suffer no evil at all.’ The final result will prove worth the cost.”* Did our free will allow us to make of ourselves our own authority figure? If it did, what steps will you take to realign your authority figure with God rather than your ego?
7. Pg. 288 *“The poet Patrick Kavanagh describes the promise set loose at Jesus’ resurrection as ‘a laugh freed for ever and ever.’”* The laugh freed for ever and ever - what is the big joke from which the laugh comes?