

Discussion Guide

Summer Reading for the Soul



Week One: Chapters 1-3

1. What is your most prized material possession? What can't you live without?
2. What are the basic possessions you would need for a decent life?
3. How would you finish the sentence: "You know you are too wealthy when..."?
4. Think of a time when you had a conflict within yourself as to whether to be prudent or generous. Which did you choose and why?
5. If you could design a perfect society, how would you balance the needs of the "haves" with the "have-nots?" What political solutions seem fair and workable?

Week Two: Chapters 4-5

1. What are some of your best strategies for saving money?
2. Read the scriptural stories about Job, the lilies of the field (Matthew 6:25-34), the rich young man (Mark 10:17-31), the widow's mite (Mark 12:41-44), and the rich landowner (Luke 12: 15-21). Which one speaks to you most compellingly? Do you have another favorite Scripture that guides what you consume?
3. What would be the easiest material possession for you to give away? What material possession would be the hardest for you to give away?
4. Do you have a system for giving stuff away or a regular place to which you can take clothing, furniture, etc.?
5. Books and electronics are often harder to give away than clothes. What criteria would you use for keeping books? How do you decide when a TV, computer, or phone has become obsolete for you but still might be useful to someone else?

Week Three: Chapters 6-7

1. What necessities do you typically carry when you leave home? Are there any adjustments you'd like to make in what or how much you carry?
2. Do you tend to be the kind of person who is ready for any emergency, or do you prefer not to be bogged down with supplies? Do you know some people of both types? What are the pros and cons of each approach?
3. What surprising or difficult experiences have you had when traveling away from home? How have they enriched you? How have they upset or challenged you?
4. Have you ever been the one in transition who needed a place to store stuff? How did you feel about asking for help?
5. Where do you draw the line between keeping family heirlooms or adult children's belongings versus just clearing it out? Have you determined a statute of limitation on how long you should keep others' stuff?

Week Four: Chapters 8-9

1. Do you have enough quiet and solitude in your life? How might you get it if you need more?
2. Which would be the hardest intangible for you to let go of: information (including technology), people, familiar places and ways of doing things, memorabilia?
3. What step could you take to tame too much information, to let go of trying to control other people, or to break a bad habit?
4. Just for fun, consider the six “days” of creation and pick one to omit. How would this impact the rest of the environmental balance?
5. How do you decide when to save money or when to go for convenience instead? How do you decide when to act according to your concern for the environment and when to do what is more convenient or expedient?

Week Five: Chapter 10

1. What's your biggest fear or worry about the future? Can you do something about it, or is it your habit to complain instead?
2. On a scale of 1-10—with 1 being “I’m usually in hurry” and 10 being “I’m usually a pretty laid-back procrastinator,”—where would you put yourself? How could you bring more balance to your use of time?
3. Who do you know who is the opposite of you in the areas of hurrying or worrying? What are the pros and cons of both styles?
4. Hurrying can rob us of the gift of spending leisure time with others. On whom do you need to lavish some time today?
5. What brings joy and contentment to your life? Plan to do one of those things within the next week.
6. What makes you laugh?

Week Six: Chapters 11-12

1. Have you ever made a difficult decision of conscience? What process did you go through?
2. What form does prayer take in your life? Are you satisfied with it? Do you need to change anything or spend more time connecting with God?
3. Do you think that you're smart enough, successful enough, remember enough? Can you accept your limitations?
4. Does the idea of death scare you? How do your thoughts of death influence how you live day by day?