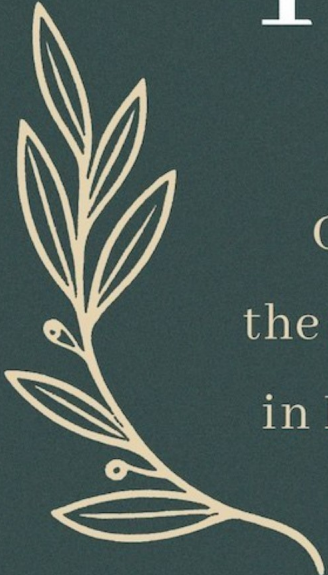




In Ordinary Time



Cultivating
the Seeds of Faith
in Everyday Life

— DISCUSSION GUIDE —

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SECTION ONE

A Better Story



- 1 *Fear and the Fourth Man*, *Uphill Both Ways*, *Lost and Found*, and *Are You Ready?* deal with fear and how we handle it. Can you recall a time when you were deeply afraid of something? How did you respond to that fear? Did things change? Was God present, or did he seem far away or nonexistent?
- 2 In *Two Tickets to Paradise* and *Forever 53*, the author contemplates death and eternal life. What do you imagine eternal life will be like? Where did that picture come from? Do you think that picture is accurate, or is there more to it? What does Jesus's declaration have to do with your life on earth today?
- 3 In *An Unresolved Chord*, the author confronts unanswered prayer and God's seeming silence during a difficult time. Have you prayed for God to do something that is unquestionably good and it hasn't happened? How did you feel? What did you do? Did God answer in a different way?

SECTION TWO

Voices



- 4 *(Un)welcome* and *Mirrors and Windows* deal with the voices that speak to us. What voices speak to you, shaping how you act and how you think about yourself and others? Whose voice is this — God's, the Enemy's, something else? How do you recognize the truth or a lie? Are there ways you can protect yourself against lying voices?

- 5 *In God We Trust* explores how God can be present in the most painful situations. Have you ever forgiven someone who was not sorry for something that was really awful? Have you ever seen someone else forgive something that seemed unforgivable? How was forgiveness possible in those situations?

NOTES

SECTION THREE

Jesus Is



- 6 *Jesus Is* and *To Die For* look at what it means for Jesus to be present with us. Can you think of a time when Jesus was real and present to you one on one? What happened? If you want to ask Jesus to be with you in that way, is there anything blocking you from asking Him?
- 7 *A Threefold Cord* talks about the ministry of presence. Have you experienced God's presence with you through others, or have you been that for someone else?

NOTES

SECTION FOUR

Private Lives



- 8 *Mighty Mouse and Me* and *The Flip Side* examine two sides of the same coin: Do we think we're powerful or powerless in the face of suffering? Have you ever confused serving someone with saving them? Have you ever felt paralyzed by the world's overwhelming needs?
- 9 *Love My Neighbor?* reminds us that God commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves, and challenges our definitions of neighbor in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. What is an example of this challenge you face in your daily life? How have you dealt with it? How could you ask God to better align your heart and your actions with his purpose in giving us this commandment?

NOTES

SECTION FIVE

The Public Square



- 10 *The Most Important Election of Our Lifetime* and *Who's Afraid of Election Day?* deal with navigating a divisive political landscape. Why do we seem eager to divide ourselves into tribes and assume the worst about others? What human quality (or lack) is at the core of this? Is there one concrete thing you can begin to do in thinking about or talking about people with different opinions or priorities that would please God?
- 11 *Meryl Streep Is a Pharisee and So Am I*, *Loss for Words*, and *Moments of Grace* look at how we handle conflict, especially in Christian community. Can you think of an instance where there was division within the church and it was handled poorly? When it was handled well? What made the difference? What would you ask God for when facing a situation where a brother or sister or entire congregation seems to have gone astray?



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