

HOW CAN I FEEL Closer to GOD?

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

CHAPTER 1: IF GOD IS REAL, WHY DOESN'T HE FEEL REAL?

- ▼ Do you ever share the feeling of the student on page 7—that you know God is real, but you don't always feel that he is?
- ▼ What's the difference between knowing about someone and actually knowing them? Which of those best describe how we approach God?
- ▼ What was the advice given to Chris by his mother, and how did it work out for him? What would it look like for you to run the same kind of "experiment"?

CHAPTER 2: WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO GET CLOSE TO GOD?

- ▼ On pages 16-17 we read about the consequences of saying "no" to God's rule in our lives. What evidence can you see of those consequences in your life, in others' lives, and in the world around you?
- ▼ In your own words, how would you describe the way that Jesus has made it possible for us to know him?
- ▼ Do you agree that being an apprentice (rather than a follower or a student) is a good description of what it means to know Jesus now? Why is that word a good fit?

CHAPTER 3: WHY DOES IT ALL FEEL SO HARD, BORING AND POINTLESS?

- ▼ "The things people tell you are meant to help you grow closer to God—stuff like praying, reading the Bible, going to church—can feel pretty boring a lot of the time" (p 23). Does this statement reflect your reality?
- ▼ Have you ever started a new hobby, such as running or learning a musical instrument? How did it feel at first, as you formed the right habits? Did that change over time? When did you begin to see the benefits?
- ▼ "We all make time for what we most value." What things do you make time for?
- ▼ What things keep your brain busy and distracted when you do try to read the Bible?

CHAPTER 4: HOW DO I GET STARTED?

- ▼ What does Chris describe as “one of the Bible’s most mind-blowing promises” (p 32)? Does this promise feel real to you day by day? Why might that be?
- ▼ What did Jesus tell his friends to do when they were busy and overwhelmed (p 33)? Why would this be helpful?
- ▼ Does the suggestions from Chris on page 35-36 sound like something you could try? Why or why not? Give it a go now!

CHAPTER 5: HOW (AND WHY) SHOULD I PRAY?

- ▼ Can you identify with the frustrations on page 39: that God often doesn’t seem to answer our prayers, at least not in the way we would like? When have you felt like that?
- ▼ What difference does it make to approach God in prayer as *our Father*?
- ▼ What surprises you about David’s prayer from Psalm 22 on page 41? Have you ever prayed like this before?
- ▼ “Practising the presence of God” is explained on page 46. Talk through your day so far—when and where could you have praying in the ways that Chris suggests?

CHAPTER 6: HOW (AND WHY) SHOULD I READ THE BIBLE?

- ▼ What are some of the ways God has spoken to people through history? What is the main way that God speaks to us now?
- ▼ It can seem overwhelming to pick up the Bible and not know where to start. How does it help to remember that getting to know God is similar to building a friendship with someone?
- ▼ Why is it so helpful to meet with others as we try to work out what the Bible is saying? Do you have a chance to do that regularly?

CHAPTER 7: HOW (AND WHY) SHOULD I DO ALL THIS WITH OTHER PEOPLE?

- ▼ Other people can really help us continue on as Christians. Have you ever encouraged someone to keep going? Or been encouraged by someone else?
- ▼ If you're in a church or youth group, can you think of three people who have very different gifts which they use to bless others? Have a think about what your gift might be.
- ▼ On page 64, Chris recommends that we "go all in" at church. What does he mean, and does this seem realistic to you in your situation? Choose one way you could try going "all in" this Sunday.

CHAPTER 8: HOW MUCH TIME DO I HAVE TO SPEND ON ALL THIS?

- ▼ Draw a pie chart like the one on page 68 and add the categories of your life.
- ▼ How does it make you feel to hear that Jesus wants the whole pie and not just a slice? Overwhelmed? Unsure? Excited? Something else?
- ▼ Do you agree with Chris that being a follower of Jesus means to "become like Jesus"—not simply adding another category for Jesus on our pie chart? What will that look like on a practical level?

CHAPTER 9: HOW DO I FIGURE OUT WHAT GOD WANTS ME TO DO?

- ▼ What idea does Chris suggest we keep in our minds when we face tricky situations (p 74)?
- ▼ If you were in the same situation as is described on p 74-76, what would you do? Is that what Jesus would do too? Try working through a similar process with a decision you're facing, or have faced recently.
- ▼ What are three "checks" we can go through when making decisions (p 77-78)? Do you have people you know who can support you in this way, and who are they?

CHAPTER 10: SOMETHING BIGGER THAN OUR FEELINGS

- ▼ Can you see how your habits (like sleep, morning routine, technology) can have a big impact on your day and whether you feel close to God or not?
- ▼ The world sometimes tells us to trust our feelings and follow them. Why is this not always helpful when living as a follower of Jesus?
- ▼ On our “bad days”, when God seems far off, what should we do?
- ▼ Chris talks about the “caterpillar-to-butterfly” transformation he’s seen Jesus work in his life on pages 86-87. Have you seen any of this caterpillar-to-butterfly transformation in your own life or someone you know?