

Two Paths: Discover the Way to Life

“Going the Extra Mile” Discussion Questions

“Going the extra mile” is an expression that means “doing more than required.” It comes from an old Roman law that allowed soldiers to require citizens to carry their packs for one mile, but no more. Jesus said if that happens, we should willingly take the pack a *second* mile to display God’s love to them. Imagine how surprised the soldiers would be!

The default position in my life is often to do the minimum needed. However, those who choose to follow Jesus are encouraged to do more and go farther. If you have chosen or are required to read this book, it may sometimes feel like work—a long mile of carrying a pack. However, if you want the most from this book, “go the extra mile” at the end of each chapter. These questions are designed for individuals or groups to think through the material and apply these principles to their lives.

Thanks for taking the time to read this book and join me on this trail. Now see if you can go a little farther.

Chapter One: Choosing Your Path

1. Look at the chapter titles for the entire book. How do you understand the path metaphor the author is using? Where do you think he is going with that metaphor?
2. Think about some of the less wholesome paths you’ve taken in life. What would it have taken for you to have chosen better paths at those times?
3. Read Proverbs 1:1–7.
 - What is the purpose of the book of Proverbs?
 - Why is the “fear of the Lord” a good thing? In what ways does that kind of fear keep us on the right path?
4. The author encourages us to ask, “Could I ever be considered a fool?” When are you at your most foolish? When are you most wise? What are the fundamental differences between a foolish and a wise person?
5. What does it mean that we learn from either wisdom or consequences? How do you see this playing out in your life today? What can you do differently?
6. Of the three ways God offers us wisdom—his Word, his Spirit, and his people—how would you rank them in terms of reliability to help you choose well? Which do you personally rely on the most? The least?

7. Why is grace so crucial on our journey with Jesus? In what ways is following Jesus about a relationship with him and not just a set of rules? Is it comforting to know that our journeys with Jesus will look different from one another's? If so, in what ways will they be different?

Chapter Two: Becoming Fit for the Trek

1. Describe your baseline spiritual health right now. Without doing anything differently, how is your relationship with God going, and how satisfied are you with your daily habits?
2. Think for a minute, or longer, about where your life is headed if you do nothing differently. If you continue down the paths you're following, where will they lead? Think in terms of relationships, habits, education, life goals, etc.
3. Read Proverbs 1:20–33. The author personifies Wisdom, saying it "*cries aloud in the street.*" What happens to those who ignore the call of wisdom?
4. When you think about God, what comes to mind? On what do you base your thoughts about God? Do you think of God as he has shown himself in the Bible, his Son, and creation? If not, why not? What is the alternative?
5. What do your actions or behaviors tell you about what you truly believe? Is this the same as what you think you believe or claim to believe?
6. Why does behavior change require thinking differently about things? Consider what you would need to believe to learn a new skill, such as video editing or piano. Do you think you can change your behavior without changing your beliefs? Why or why not?
7. What could you start now that would help you establish a healthy rhythm of following Jesus? How will you do that? Who will help keep you accountable?

Chapter Three: Traveling Light

1. What is the heaviest load you've had to carry somewhere? What was it like? What could have made it easier?
2. Is it sinful to be rich? Why or why not? What part do our heart, motives, and life's focus play in riches?
3. Which is worst: wasting money, talents, or time? Is it possible to be poor financially but rich in time and/or talent? Why does biblical stewardship include all three?
4. How does contentment affect our attitude towards riches? Are people more likely to be poor and content or rich and discontent? Why?

5. Reread the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:9–13. If we're focused on God's priorities, how should that affect our view of possessions and the use of time and talents?
6. Have you ever been generous and regretted it long-term? In what ways is generosity freeing?
7. Do you have possessions you could get rid of without significantly affecting your standard of living? What are those things? Why do you keep them? What do you think it would do for you if you could give them to others who would better use them?

Chapter Four: When the Going Gets Tough

1. Read Psalm 23:1–6. This well-known psalm metaphorically illustrates God leading us along paths, like a good shepherd leads his sheep.
 - What kind of paths and locations are mentioned in this psalm?
 - Why do the sheep fear no evil, even in the shadow of death or in the presence of enemies?
 - What perspective on evil and suffering does this psalm teach?
2. Think of the worst suffering you have endured. How would you describe it? Had you been able to write a lament, what words would you have used to describe your pain or sorrow?
3. What experiences of suffering have you gone through that make you better equipped to comfort others in their sorrows?
4. When we experience suffering, how is it helpful to remember that the followers of Jesus are his body? What does a body do when one of its members suffers?
5. What is it like to show genuine compassion for someone else by entering their suffering and walking alongside them in it? What difference does it make when someone else does that for you?
6. What does it mean to accept suffering *prematurely*? How do you get to a place where you can accept that God may not take your suffering away but will rather walk through it with you?
7. How do you see *hope* playing a role in your own suffering and in the suffering of others?

Chapter Five: Companions on the Road

1. Read Psalm 1. This beautiful psalm shows a stark contrast between the wicked and the righteous.
 - How does the righteous person become righteous?
 - How does the wicked person become wicked?
 - What is the end result for each?
2. What are the components of a good friendship? When have you been a good friend? When have you been a poor friend?

3. Reread Philippians 2:3–8. How should Jesus' example of sacrifice inspire us to likewise put the interests of others ahead of our own? Why is this so difficult?
4. Why do you suppose getting close to those close to Jesus can change how we act and live? Do you know of a godly person or two with whom you could spend more time? How will you approach them, and when?
5. Are you more of a thermostat or a thermometer? What kinds of influence do you tend to have on those around you? How can you improve this?
6. Are you more of a team player or someone who likes to go solo? What is the value of interdependence?
7. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9–12. What are the lessons here? Do you have people supporting you? Are you supporting others along their paths?

Chapter Six: When You Lose Your Way

1. Have you ever gotten lost and felt a sudden panic of not knowing your way back? If so, what was it like? If not, can you imagine what it would feel like to be completely lost?
2. Read Luke 15:11–32. Most of us are represented by one of three scenarios described in this parable. Which one of these would describe your life?
 - A rebellious son who needs to turn back to the Father.
 - A self-righteous son who needs to turn back to the Father.
 - A rebellious son who has repented and is enjoying fellowship with the Father.
3. Does knowing that God will forgive you make it easier to sin? Why or why not? What role should repentance have in the life of a believer?
4. Is there a danger that we will trample God's grace by taking it for granted? What does Romans 6:1–2 say about that?
5. What are the fundamental differences between sinning and making mistakes? Do you agree with the author that sin is sinful because it goes against God's character? Why or why not?
6. What do you think of the concept of failing forward? How can you use past failures to propel you forward to better things in the future?
7. Are faith and doubts complete opposites? Why or why not? When is it good to doubt? How do you know when to trust and leave your doubts behind?

Chapter Seven: Staying on the Path

1. Which is easier: staying on a path or re-finding a path once you've left it? Why?
2. What does it mean to keep our eyes on Jesus, "the light of the world"? What would your life look like if you focused on following Jesus daily? What would be different at work or school, during your leisure time, or with friends?
3. Reread Ephesians 4:17–19. In what ways do people who don't know Jesus walk in darkness? How do you see this spiritual battle for the mind occurring in your life? What are you doing to resist the enemy?
4. Have you been baptized? How does a physical baptism by immersion create a picture of what happened spiritually when you trusted in Jesus? What is stopping you if you haven't chosen to be baptized yet?
5. What is the difference between attending a church and being the Church? Given that the church is comprised of imperfect people, is it surprising that it can fail us? What is the purpose of the church? What can you do to make your church experience more positive?
6. How do spiritual disciplines help us stay on the path of righteousness? What are your spiritual disciplines? How can you get more joy from these?
7. If worship is giving back to God the best that he has given us, what are you offering him today? How can you make your life one of constant and consistent worship?

Chapter Eight: Helping Others Find the Trail

1. What did you think of the forest fire analogy? What were the three different responses to the emergency and what do they represent?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 1:18–25. Why do you think the gospel seems foolish to "*those who are perishing*"—those who have not received eternal life in Jesus? Does it make sense that God's wisdom would seem foolish to those who have rejected him? Why or why not?
3. Do you struggle with the Bible's insistence on the existence of hell? How do you reconcile your understanding of a loving God with a holy God who would torture those who reject him? Is there any place in faith to acknowledge a truth without fully understanding it? Why or why not?
4. What did you think of the analogy of warts, cancer, and God's wrath? Why is the good news so difficult to comprehend without the bad news? Is it possible to lead people to salvation without them understanding the bad news?
5. Practice explaining the gospel to someone using the Romans 6:23 diagram until you can do it without looking at the book. Memorizing Romans 6:23 will make this much easier!

6. Do you struggle with any of the three challenges the author named: *association*, *inconsistency*, or *unconvinced*? Share this struggle with someone else and discuss how to grow in that area.
7. Read 2 Timothy 1:6–8. When you are feeling “timid” or “ashamed” about sharing your faith (or fearful), what does God’s Spirit provide? How do we access that?

Chapter Nine: Adventuring with Purpose

1. Have you ever wasted a lot of time because you had no plan? What happened?
2. Why is it important to distinguish between your job, career, and vocation? What are the differences? Can you have a different vocation than your job or career?
3. Much of this chapter is about finding your vocation. Is there anything for which you have a God-given passion? How could you use your passions, abilities, and gifts to serve God?
4. The author suggests, “your ministry is the people around you at any given time.” Does that simplify the idea of ministry? Why or why not? What would it take to recognize the people around you as your ministry?
5. What did you think of Mrs. Gowan’s response to Roland Bingham? What does that say about her faith and understanding of God’s purposes? Is it better to *live* in disobedience or *die* in obedience?!
6. How would you define “success” in life? How is success connected to God’s will for your life?
7. If you had a “mission statement” for your life, what do you think it would be? In other words, how has God made you, and what do you think His purposes are for you in this life he has given you? Think and pray about this.

Chapter Ten: Heading for Home

1. Have you ever taken an unwise risk and later wished you hadn’t taken it? Have you ever not taken a risk and later wished you had taken it? Which is worse? What did you learn from those situations?
2. What do you think of approaching situations with the two questions the author suggested:
 - What is the worst thing that could happen if I do this?
 - What will I miss out on if I don’t do this?
3. What are the dangers of getting involved in a cause? What should you consider before doing so?
4. Are you passionate about any causes? How do they align with your understanding of God’s will for your life?
5. Practically speaking, how does a person “live by the Spirit”? How would you explain that concept to someone?

6. Do you think much about your final destination and what it will be like to come face-to-face with God? According to Philippians 2:9–11, there will come a day when every person will bow before Jesus. What will that day be like for you? Does that thought fill you with fear, delight, or something else?
7. What will you do this week and this coming year to ensure you're on the narrow road leading to life? What will you do to stay on that road? How will you help others find that road?