

New for this edition—an in-depth study guide

DUG
DOWN
DEEP

Building Your Life on Truths That Last

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A REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR *DUG DOWN DEEP*

You can use this guide, written by Thomas Womack, to help you sort out and deepen your thoughts and reactions to what you read, chapter by chapter, in *Dug Down Deep*. It's meant for your personal study or—even better—for a group setting, with others who are motivated to sincerely engage with the message of the book. We don't expect you to use every question; choose the ones that best fit your needs. Our hope is that these questions will spark lively and insightful discussion as you explore what it means to build your life on truths that last.

Chapter 1, "My Rumspringa"

1. On page 5 of this opening chapter, Josh recalls years past when he "didn't know or fear God"; he was void of "any driving desire to know him." How closely does that description match any period in your life? If you remember such a time, what other phrases would accurately describe your life in those days?
2. In his twenties, recognizing his "spiritual deficiencies," Josh played the blame game (pages 5–6). If you've ever done the same regarding your spiritual shortcomings, who did you blame, and why?
3. "I wasn't listening," Josh says (page 6) about the sermons he heard in his teenage years. From what you know of his story, why was that true? What caused it?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

4. In the church where he now serves as a pastor, Josh sees young adults who remind him of himself in high school—“church kids who know so much about Christian religion and yet so little about God” (page 6). If you were to get acquainted with some of those young adults, what would you want to ask them or say to them?
5. Josh’s friend Curtis talks about today’s “me-ology”—so many people thinking only of themselves (page 10). How extensively do you see that happening in our culture? Do you see it much in the people you know best? How about in yourself?
6. In various ways Josh emphasizes that how we view God has a forceful impact on every aspect of our lives (see especially pages 10–11). It’s a sweeping assertion. How do you react to it? Do you find yourself easily agreeing with him or not? What questions does this bring to mind?
7. On page 11, Josh makes his key point in this chapter: “We’re all theologians. The question is whether what we know about God is true.” Realistically and practically, how does a person determine whether his or her beliefs about God are accurate? How can people identify any personal misconceptions about God?
8. At the top of page 13, Josh quotes these words from God: “Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls” (from Jeremiah 6:16 in the Bible). What was your response to reading those words? Reflecting further on them, what do you find appealing or troubling or intriguing in those words?
9. “Every new generation of Christians,” Josh says (page 15), “has to ask the question, what are we actually choosing when we

choose to be Christians?” How would you answer that question? How might others answer it?

10. Ultimately, Josh says, “it has to be about a person—the historical and living person of Jesus Christ” (page 15). What’s the significance of using both these words: *historical* and *living*?
11. Josh talks here about the words *theology*, *doctrine*, and *orthodoxy*. How comfortable are you with using those terms as Josh defines them?
12. Look back at page 4. Josh wondered about the Amish teens who, after their rumspringa, decided to return to traditional Amish life. Instead of pursuing God, were they choosing “just a safe and simple way of life”? When can “safe and simple” be a good choice for life? When can it be a bad choice?

Chapter 2, “In Which I Learn to Dig”

1. Chapter 2 opens with the parable Jesus told about two builders. Josh mentions in particular (on page 18) the question Jesus asked as he started this story: “Why do you call me Lord but don’t do what I say?” Josh adds, “That question makes me uncomfortable because I can’t pretend I don’t understand it. And I feel that he’s talking to me.” What’s your response to that question from Jesus?
2. “It’s possible,” Josh says (page 19), “to base our confidence and trust—the very footing of our lives—on what is insecure and faulty. On shifting sand.” By contrast, imagine someone who “built” his or her life on a truly stable foundation. What would that person’s life look like, in your opinion? How would you describe it?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

3. At the bottom of page 19, Josh defines what “being a Christian means.” Look back at what he states there. Which parts of his description would most closely match your life? Which parts less obviously describe you?
4. For understanding the Bible’s teachings, Josh commends the kind of effort that includes “thinking and reading and grappling with sometimes challenging truths” (page 20). What helps you the most to become mentally engaged in something to that degree?
5. “But the hardest work of all,” Josh goes on to say, “is putting the truth into practice.... Truth requires action.” Do you think that last statement is accurate? To what extent do you agree with it? Are some aspects of truth meant only for our minds and hearts?
6. On pages 21–29, Josh describes his experience of positive spiritual growth in the years after high school. How would you characterize what was going on in his mind and heart and life?
7. What events and experiences in this part of Josh’s story are similar to what has happened (or is happening now) in your spiritual journey?
8. What aspects of Josh’s personal story in this chapter are the most different from your experience?
9. Josh emphasizes (on page 30) that being personally drawn to Jesus in our hearts must be “the first and final motivation” as we explore the Bible’s teachings. But he adds, “We can’t know him and relate to him in the right way without doctrine” (page 31). Does a statement like that seem to make Jesus more attractive or less attractive? Why?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

10. Josh further defines doctrine (on page 31) as “the meaning of the story God is writing in the world. It’s the explanation of what he’s done and why he’s done it and why it matters to you and me.” For you personally, what are the most important things you sense and know already about “the story God is writing in the world”?
11. Tragic suffering is Josh’s theme on pages 32–33. When such hardship comes our way, he says, “firsthand knowledge of God’s character and love is the only thing that can hold us.” Throughout history many believers in God have said much the same thing about their suffering. But other people have pointed to such tragedies as an indication of God’s lack of love or power—or even as evidence for his nonexistence. What explanation can you give for such opposite reactions to suffering?
12. When someone lives out biblical doctrine “with joy and humility,” the result, Josh observes, is “beautiful” (page 33). He says it can also bring something into *your* life that’s “good and beautiful” and “firm and trustworthy.” To what extent do you believe this can be true for you?

Chapter 3, “Near but Not in My Pocket”

1. When you look in a mirror to check your appearance, what’s your typical expression? Describe your “mirror face” in a few words or phrases.
2. Josh suggests that “our overwhelming self-centeredness” causes us special difficulty in learning more about God. Do you think that’s true for most of us? Why or why not?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

3. Because of our self-centeredness, we often end up seeing God “in our own image,” Josh says (page 39). What examples of this have you recognized in yourself or in your friends?
4. Josh discusses the “Divine Butler” and “Cosmic Therapist” images of God (pages 40–41) and says these concepts mirror to some degree how he has viewed God. For young people especially, what would be particularly attractive about these perceptions of God?
5. On pages 41–42, Josh summarizes things the Bible tells us about God—things that reveal him to be “utterly and wonderfully different” from us. What would be the value and benefit to someone who clearly recognizes this distinctiveness about God?
6. Reflect again on that listing of some of God’s attributes on pages 41–42. Which help you the most to understand who God is and what he’s like?
7. Keeping in mind Josh’s story from his single days (on pages 43–44), describe some significant details in your background and circumstances that you’re sure God was always in control of.
8. Are you ever tempted to take God’s love for granted? In what specific ways do you think God wants us to recognize and appreciate his love?
9. Josh discusses (on pages 46–48) how God is “God-centered” and how this concept unsettled him deeply at first. Why can this be difficult for us to accept?
10. Josh explains on pages 49–50 that “God is both *transcendent* and *immanent*.” How would you express in your own words these seemingly opposite concepts?
11. Of God’s myriad qualities, which ones seem most awesome and amazing to you?

12. How clearly and strongly do you sense that God is personally inviting you to know him better?

Chapter 4, “Ripping, Burning, Eating”

1. “Does Scripture have the authority to tell us how to live?” Josh asks (page 55). What answers would your friends give to that question? If you pressed the issue with them, what reasons would they likely give for their answers? What do you think has influenced their perspectives?
2. Has your view of the Bible evolved over time? If so, what are some of the ways you’ve looked at the Bible in the past?
3. “The Bible presents itself,” Josh observes, “as a living communication from a personal God to the human race—more specifically to *you*” (page 55). What do you think he means by “living communication”?
4. Josh describes the Bible as “the foundation of every...Christian belief” (page 56). In what specific ways is the Bible the foundation of your beliefs about God? What other foundations are there for your beliefs, practically speaking?
5. Josh also states that apart from the Bible (“God’s Word”), “there is no genuine spirituality” (page 57). Many people in our culture today would disagree with that statement. But from Josh’s perspective, why is it a true declaration? And how true and applicable is it for you?
6. Recalling his own perceptions from childhood, Josh cites the “fairly common” view of the Bible as “a bunch of disconnected stories sprinkled with wise advice and capped off with the inspirational life of Jesus” (page 58). How closely does that match your impressions of the Bible, past or present?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

7. Josh speaks of the Bible's "story line...from start to finish" (page 58). He also quotes at length a description of this story line as given in the introduction to a children's book by Sally Lloyd-Jones. Look again at her words (quoted on pages 59–60). What elements in her description are most compelling to you?
8. From your perspective, why would it be particularly beneficial and enjoyable to recognize the Bible as a single, unified story?
9. Josh says that God's purpose behind all the Bible's stories and teachings is *relationship*—with us! (See page 61.) In what meaningful ways have you sensed that purpose coming from the Bible's pages?
10. Josh is confident that the Bible is fully trustworthy as God's Word (see pages 61–63). How valid are his stated reasons for such confidence?
11. What do you think it means to really "hear" God in the Bible, as Josh says in this chapter?
12. Josh emphasizes how much God has revealed to us in Scripture. Then he says, "The question is, will we listen? Will we obey when we don't like what the Bible has to say?" (page 65). What influences and convictions will determine your answers to that?
13. Josh describes the Scriptures by using three key terms on pages 68–69: *inerrancy*, *clarity*, and *sufficiency*. How do these terms relate uniquely to the Bible? Try expressing what they mean in your own words.
14. Think again of those three concepts explained on pages 68–69. Why would each be important in determining the authority the Bible has in a person's life?

15. Josh mentions (on pages 69–71) the prophet Jeremiah’s experience of “eating” God’s words. Does such an expression seem strange—or a good fit? How are those terms appropriate for describing our intake of Scripture?
16. “The Bible is the story of what God has done for us,” Josh says (page 72). How convinced are you that the Bible is the story of what God has done—and will do—for *you* personally? What questions do you have in your mind and heart about this?

Chapter 5, “God with a Bellybutton”

1. What do your friends think of Jesus? How do they view him?
2. What would you say are the most common ways that our culture views Jesus?
3. What has influenced your perspective of Jesus?
4. To learn more about Jesus from the Bible, Josh speaks of exploring (a) the *person* of Christ and (b) the *work* of Christ. These two approaches “are meant to be kept together,” Josh says. “You can’t grasp the significance of either without the other” (page 76). Would the same be true for studying any great person from history? Or is Jesus different in that regard?
5. Josh gives a brief biography of Jesus on pages 76–78. Was any of this new information for you? Which aspects of his biography do you view as most significant?
6. “Jesus Christ is the most famous, most powerful, most controversial and revolutionary figure in all human history,” Josh says (page 78). Do you think this will always be true or not? What historical figures or current celebrities might eclipse the fame and influence of Jesus in the future, in your opinion?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

7. Josh says that the question *Who is Jesus?* “divides the human race” (page 78). In what ways do you think that is true?
8. On pages 78–79, Josh mentions a few “false teachings” about Jesus that have sprung up over the centuries. Do any of these still get traction today? In what ways might some of them have particular appeal today?
9. Josh describes Jesus as being “fully God and fully man in one person forever” (page 80). Why would that be significant? Why would it be important to grasp?
10. On pages 80–82, Josh cites a number of scriptures to support the conclusion that Jesus is “truly God.” For you, which of these scriptures are the most helpful and the most influential in understanding Jesus? Which are the most remarkable and interesting? And what questions do they raise?
11. Josh says that God becoming man—in the form of Jesus—“is, without question, the greatest miracle recorded in Scripture” (page 82). In your own opinion, why is it so miraculous?
12. On pages 83–84, Josh again cites a number of scriptures, this time to support the concept that Jesus is “fully man.” Which of these help you the most in understanding Jesus? Which are the most intriguing and interesting to you? What questions do they raise?
13. Josh mentions our common tendency to want to “experience” Jesus but not to study Jesus (page 85). Can you relate? Why do you think this tendency is widespread?
14. Ultimately, Josh says, a “feeling-driven approach to Jesus... produces the opposite of what we actually want.” Citing the influence of his friend C.J., Josh goes on to say, “If you want to feel deeply, you have to think deeply.... True emotion—emotion

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

that is reliable and doesn't lead us astray—is always a response to reality, to truth” (page 86). Which truths about Jesus trigger the strongest emotions for you?

15. “Jesus never asks us how we feel about him,” Josh states. “He calls us to believe in him, to trust in him” (page 86). What's your response to that?
16. On page 86, Josh transitions from the person of Jesus to the work of Jesus. How would you summarize this work, as Josh presents it on page 87? And what's so significant about this work?
17. The discussion goes cosmic on page 88 as Josh gets into God's highest purpose for the universe he's created. Again, how would you summarize this purpose as presented here? And how would you explain the significance of it?
18. Josh speaks of God's plan for dealing with mankind's sin (on pages 89–90). As Josh unfolds it here, what is crucial about the role Jesus plays in that plan?
19. Have you ever shared Josh's desire to go back in time to meet the man Jesus in person? If so, what prompted that desire in you?
20. Do you agree with what Josh says in the last paragraph of this chapter? Can you honestly say the same thing, word for word, about yourself? Why or why not?

Chapter 6, “A Way to Be Good Again”

1. At the beginning of this chapter, Josh tells the story of his dream and what led up to it. In what ways can you identify with Josh's experiences?
2. “Why did he have to die? What did Jesus accomplish through his death on the cross? What was happening as he hung there

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

between heaven and earth? And what effect does his death have on you and me today? What does it change?” Josh asks those deep questions at the top of page 98. After reading this chapter, what do you see as the best answers to them?

3. On page 99, Josh describes a vivid memory of when, as a young teenager, he realized, *I don't understand why Jesus had to die*. Can you recall a specific moment when you came to the same realization? If so, how did it affect you?
4. Why is the death of Jesus so huge in the historic meaning of Christianity? And what questions, if any, does this raise for you?
5. What is the meaning of the word *atonement* in this chapter? What does he mean by it, as far as you can tell? (See especially pages 98 and 102.)
6. On pages 100–101, Josh brings in “the Trinitarian nature of God” and why knowing about it is necessary for understanding what Jesus has done for us. How would you state in your own words the connection between the Trinitarian nature of God and Jesus’s sacrifice for us?
7. Why does Josh say it’s wrong to view Jesus on the cross as a “victim” (page 101)?
8. As Josh explains it on pages 102–4, what should each human being understand about his or her sinfulness and guilt? Do you accept and agree with the line of reasoning Josh presents here? What questions does it raise for you?
9. “We all want to think of ourselves as basically good people,” Josh says. “But we can believe that illusion only because we forget most of our past decisions and actions and thoughts” (page 106). How accurately does that describe you?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

10. On pages 106–8, Josh explores the sacrificial nature of the death of Jesus. It reflects “the principle of atonement through substitutionary death” (page 106). How would you explain in your own words what Josh is talking about on these pages?
11. Amir’s story from Khaled Hosseini’s novel *The Kite Runner* prompts this question from Josh: “Can any of us ever atone for our past wrongs like this?” (page 110). How would you answer that question? And how do you respond to Amir’s story?
12. On pages 111–12, Josh explains the theological doctrines of *penal substitution* and *propitiation*. What does he mean by these concepts? How helpful are they in understanding what Jesus has done, and in what way?
13. Josh closes this chapter with Jenny’s story (pages 113–15). In what ways can you relate to Jenny?
14. What does this chapter’s key phrase *a way to be good again* mean for you? What do you *want* it to mean? As you’re aware of how you’re responding in your mind and heart to the message of this chapter, try expressing your reflections and thoughts in a prayer to God.

Chapter 7, “How Jesus Saved Gregg Eugene Harris”

1. Do you have friends or acquaintances who are like Gregg Eugene Harris in some way? How are they like him? Are *you* like him in any way?
2. Why do you think the words of the “two Jesus freaks” had such an impact on Gregg, as described on page 118?
3. In your opinion, how appropriate and relevant are the phrases “living water” and “good news” in describing what Jesus has done? (Josh uses them on page 119.)

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

4. What do you see as the most important factors that shaped Gregg's childhood? How do they compare with the most important influences in your background?
5. From your perspective, what seems to be our culture's general understanding of what it means to "get saved"?
6. In your own words, how would you define God's grace?
7. On pages 125–26, Josh cites a number of scriptures to support the conclusion that we're all incapable of doing anything to bring about our salvation. Which of these scriptures are the most helpful for you on this topic? And what questions do they raise?
8. On page 126, Josh mentions a phrase Jesus used: "the poor in spirit." Josh explains it as "people who know they can't save themselves, people who realize their spiritual poverty and helplessness." To what extent does that describe the way you view yourself?
9. Josh says on page 126 that because God does all the work of making salvation possible for us, then "*no one* is beyond hope. . . . It means God can save anyone." Do you agree with his conclusion? Does it seem unfair in any way? Why or why not?
10. On pages 129–31, Josh writes about the doctrine of *regeneration*, or being "born again." As Josh outlines it, what does this involve?
11. Have you ever shared Gregg's desire to make yourself into a "good Christian" or even a "great Christian"? If so, what prompted this desire? How did you act on it? And how did it work out?
12. Josh speaks (on page 133) of a "heavenly calling" and says that it "distinguishes all genuine Christians." If Josh is right about that, what does that fact say about your own life?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

13. Have you ever felt God “chasing” you, as Gregg did? If so, describe that experience.
14. On pages 136–37, Josh speaks of repentance and faith as being “two sides of the same coin.” What does he mean by that? As you understand it, what is repentance? What is faith?
15. Two more theological terms pop up on pages 138–40—*justification* and *adoption*. What does he mean by them? How well do you understand them?
16. What surprises you most in Gregg Harris’s story?
17. Josh closes this chapter by reflecting on “how mighty God’s salvation really is” (page 142). Have you thought about that before? As you see it, what’s so “mighty” about the way God saves people?

Chapter 8, “Changed, Changing, to Be Changed”

1. After talking about “Dave,” the guy whose story was featured in the radio program, Josh asks (on pages 148–49), “Can you relate to Dave’s story?... Have you ever wondered why you still want to sin?... Does God really change people?” How would you answer those questions?
2. Josh introduces the theological concept of *sanctification* on page 149. What does he want us to understand about this term? How could you illustrate the process of sanctification to explain it to someone else?
3. “I think it’s safe to say that no doctrine is more practical than sanctification,” Josh states (page 150). What’s practical about it?
4. Josh offers “a big question” on page 151: “Why is this process of changing so stinking hard? Why is it so painful? Why do

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

- Christians still struggle with sin?” What help does Josh offer for answering those questions in the pages that follow?
5. Josh’s key terms on page 153 are *already* and *not yet*. What’s the significance of these words as they relate to this chapter’s topic?
 6. This chapter’s title—“Changed, Changing, to Be Changed”—reflects the three-part process that Josh explains on pages 153–54. How would you explain these three stages in your own words?
 7. How do you understand the concept of *indwelling sin* (or *remaining sin*), as Josh describes it on page 154? (See also pages 164–65.)
 8. Do the drawings and captions further your understanding of what Josh is trying to communicate? What specific help do they offer? What further questions do they prompt?
 9. Which of those nine illustrated points (pages 155–63) are the hardest for you to fully grasp?
 10. “We aren’t equally holy,” Josh writes (on page 165). “While one Christian is not more justified than another, some Christians are more like Jesus than others.” If that’s true, so what? What difference would it make to you?
 11. Josh then quotes this scripture: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12–13). What would obeying that scripture mean for you? How would you go about it?
 12. Josh says that our culture “has effectively pretended away sin” (page 166). Have you recognized this cultural tendency as well? In what ways do you see it?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

13. As evidence for how we make light of sin, Josh points to the typical ways we apologize. We “pretend, blame, and excuse all sin away” (page 167). How have you observed this to be true, in your life and in others around you?
14. Keeping in mind the things Josh talks about in this chapter, what do you think is required to have a constructive, honest view of the sin in your life?
15. How convinced are you that God wants you to overcome the sin in your life? To the best of your understanding, how does God want you to do this?
16. In the matter of obedience to God and holiness in our lives, Josh says this: “Christian growth...has to be defined by becoming like Jesus. It has to be rooted in relationship to him. And it has to be built on real, Bible-rooted conviction” (page 170). What exactly does such conviction involve? Where does it come from?
17. “The Christian life is about putting on new behavior,” Josh writes, “clothing ourselves with Jesus himself” (page 171). Earlier in the same paragraph he says, “Becoming like Jesus isn’t just a matter of not doing wrong. It’s a matter of actively ‘doing’ righteousness. It’s pursuing obedience.” If this is what God is looking for in the lives of his children, then what kinds of questions should Christians ask themselves about their actions and behavior?
18. In your prayers do you often address God as “Father”? Why or why not?
19. What kind of Father is God to you? How does he help you understand more deeply that you’re his child?

20. Josh ends the chapter by stating that “sanctification is work. But it’s good work. It’s work enabled by the Holy Spirit. It’s the privilege of the redeemed. It’s the great honor of God’s adopted children to work to be like their Father.” What does that “good work” include for you in the immediate future?

Chapter 9, “I Believe in the Holy Spirit”

1. What are the most important beliefs you’ve formed about the Holy Spirit? Where did these beliefs come from?
2. In the opening pages of this chapter, Josh acknowledges that topics related to the Holy Spirit have been part of a decades-old controversy among many churches, leaving some people “with mainly negative impressions. This isn’t a healthy state of affairs,” Josh concludes. “Whenever we live some part of our faith in reaction to anything other than God’s Word, we become unbalanced and misguided. We shouldn’t neglect the person and work of the Holy Spirit just because other people have misrepresented him.” He goes on to say that choosing “to give careful thought and attention to the Holy Spirit” is “a decision to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ and a student of God’s Word.” Think about that. Is this a choice and decision that *you* want to make? If so, what is your motivation?
3. After reading Josh’s discussion on pages 179–80, how would you explain the Holy Spirit’s role in the Trinity?
4. According to the story from his past that Josh relates on pages 181–82, what prompted him to seek a better understanding of the Holy Spirit? What were the crucial elements in his experience? And how do these relate to your experiences and desires to better understand the Holy Spirit?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

5. Josh says that in looking back on his experiences in those years, he had “a very narrow understanding of how and why the Holy Spirit works in people’s lives” (page 183). What seemed to be narrow about it? How did it need to broaden and expand?
6. From his discussion on pages 184–86, how would you characterize Josh’s beliefs and convictions and attitudes about such spiritual gifts as tongues, prophecy, and healing?
7. On page 186, Josh speaks of the Holy Spirit as “a gift that infinitely surpasses” the greatest prayer request you could ever make to God. Why is the Holy Spirit such a surpassingly great gift to us?
8. Josh says on page 187 that “there is no such thing as normal or nonsupernatural Christian living. Every day of faith is a day of the supernatural work of the Spirit in our lives.” What encouragement do you find in that statement? What other reactions do you have to it?
9. How do you respond to Dan Wallace’s story that Josh relates on pages 188–89? Can you identify with him in any way? Why or why not?
10. Josh says that the Holy Spirit “works in our hearts, in our affections and emotions,” and that he “mediates the presence of Jesus Christ to us” (page 190). It is, he says, “wonderful, mysterious work” (page 191). To what extent can you say that the Holy Spirit has done this work in your heart?
11. Josh closes this chapter by emphasizing that “the ultimate aim of the Spirit’s encouragement, comfort, and help” is “to enable us to know and see the glory of the Savior” (page 192). How would you explain Josh’s point in your own words?

Chapter 10, “The Invisible Made Visible”

1. Josh mentions hearing on the radio about an atheist child who wondered why God didn’t “just appear and say, ‘Hello, I’m God. Believe in me!’” Josh said he laughed because he could relate to her question. But then he realized that if God did something like that, it would be “silly.” Do you agree? What would be silly about it?
2. This chapter’s title refers to God’s people—his children, Christians, the church. It’s through them, Josh says, that God “proves himself and displays himself” (page 197). Why do you think God chose such a strategy?
3. Josh says this is a hard concept for us to appreciate because of our frequent disillusionment and disappointment with God’s people. “Pushing past all this can be difficult. But we have to try” (page 197). Why, from Josh’s perspective, do we “have to try”? And to what extent do you agree with him?
4. At the bottom of page 197, Josh mentions several words used in Scripture for the church. How do these words demonstrate God’s care for his people?
5. On pages 198–99, Josh relates how he viewed his faith “in a very individualistic way” for twenty years, without much regard for the church. He suggests that his experience “describes a good number of Christians today, and they are abandoning the church.” Notice again his thoughts on the reason for this: “My guess is that a vast majority of Christians who have lost their vision for the church are like I was: they’ve never taken the time to study what the Bible says about God’s purpose and plan for the church. Instead, they’re living their lives guided by their feelings or experience. They’re pragmatic, so they’re focused

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

more on what ‘works’ than on what Scripture dictates. They’re consumers who approach church asking, ‘What’s in it for me?’” To what extent does that describe your attitude or your friends’ attitudes toward church?

6. On pages 199–201, Josh relates the biblical big picture of how Christians together fulfill God’s ancient promises to the forefathers of Israel. “The church,” he writes, “comprised of men and women from every nationality and ethnicity, is now God’s chosen people in the world. The church is how God makes himself known in the world” (page 201). What responsibilities do you think go along with this “chosen people” status for believers today?
7. Josh talks about his growing realization that “the journey of the Christian faith was supposed to be made *with* other believers” (page 203). Why would this be true about our spiritual journey? Why can’t we progress just as well on our own?
8. “So exactly what makes a church a church?” Josh asks (page 203). How does he answer that question? What are the essentials?
9. Another question from Josh: “Does it matter that we belong to a specific local church?” What’s the best answer to this?
10. Josh describes on pages 205–7 how he first threw himself into the life of a local church and the surprising things he discovered. What seem to be the most critical lessons he learned?
11. Josh says, “I can trace every example of growth and change in my life to the help of fellow Christians” (206–7). Is the same true for you, spiritually speaking? Do you expect it to be a true statement about you in the future?
12. Another Josh question: “What is God’s mission for his church?” (page 207). How would you answer that? What does God want to accomplish through his church?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

13. On page 208, Josh admits to being scared by the mission Jesus has given his church. What are his reasons for this fear? How logical are they, in your opinion? To what degree do you share those fears?
14. Also on page 208, Josh speaks of “a heart to reach the world,” while on the following page he mentions having a “consecrated” heart, one that’s inwardly set “apart for God’s use.” Are these ultimately the same thing? Why or why not?
15. Josh reminds us, “Jesus said that Christians are to be like salt and light in the world” (page 209). What does that mean to you?
16. Are you willing to think of yourself as a “missionary” for Christ to the people in your community? If that were true about you, toss yourself the questions Josh poses on page 210: “What decisions would I make about where I live or how much I need to live on? Where would I spend my time so I could form friendships with unbelieving people? What would I seek to learn about the culture so I could befriend and clearly communicate the gospel? What are the idols and false gods people are worshipping?”
17. Josh urges a “love-motivated mission” for the church, fueled by the love of God: “Only this love can compel us to lay down our lives caring for the poor, marginalized, and oppressed of the world. Only this love will give us the sustained courage to go into the world to speak the foolish, unwanted, yet saving message of a crucified Messiah. . . . Mission has to be the overflow of a love for God that aches to see others experiencing his grace, love, and compassion for people who are lost and destined for hell” (page 211). Think about your experience of God’s love through Jesus. What is that love compelling you to do? What is it about this love that draws you into serving others?

18. The message Josh gives on page 212 is difficult. Listen to it again: “Jesus asks something much harder of his followers—something that takes much more courage and sacrifice. It’s a mission that requires divine empowerment. He tells us to die to ourselves and live for him. He tells us to lay down our lives in the service of people who often despise us. He tells us to fully engage in a world that wants to seduce us and that hates us when we resist. He sends his church to plead with a culture that loves its sin. Jesus asks us to die.” In order to commit your life to this kind of “slow death” for the sake of Jesus and his good news of salvation for the world, what will have to be true in your heart and mind?
19. On pages 212–14, Josh seeks out God’s definition of success for the church. Do you agree with the conclusion he reaches? How much does that conclusion match what “success” means to you?
20. After reading this chapter, what do you most want to hear from God and to talk with him about? Allow your thoughts and requests and questions to come together in brief sentences of prayer to God.

Chapter 11, “Humble Orthodoxy”

1. Josh observes, “Sometimes it seems like a lot of the people who care about orthodoxy are jerks” (page 218). Has that been your impression? What experiences prompted your answer?
2. “We all need to ask a vital question,” Josh says. “What will we *do* with the knowledge of God that we have?” (page 218). The answer, of course, will take our entire lifetimes to unfold. But what will the answer look like for you in the immediate future?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

3. Josh says we need both conviction and gentleness, both orthodoxy and humility (see pages 218–19). How are you growing in these areas? What are you learning about them? How is this changing you?
4. In this chapter Josh draws our attention to the book of the Bible known as 2 Timothy, “the words of a godly man who knows he is about to die” (pages 219–20). That godly man was Paul. What is the essence of these final words from Paul to Timothy, as Josh relates them in this chapter?
5. Josh reminds us, “We live in a world of truths and lies.” And he says, “There is nothing more unloving than to be silent in the face of lies that will ruin another person” (page 221). What lies in and from our culture do you need to be aware of and ready to expose and confront?
6. “Truth matters,” says Josh, “but so does our attitude. We have to live and speak and interact with others in a spirit of humility” (page 222). What can help you maintain this kind of humility?
7. Josh mentions the “inclination in every human heart to pursue knowledge to inflate the self rather than to glorify God” (page 224). What can you do to stay aware of this prideful tendency and to guard against it?
8. “The solution to arrogant orthodoxy is not less orthodoxy; it’s more” (page 225). What does Josh mean by that? If he’s right, what response from you could be wisely appropriate?
9. Josh reminds himself and us that “the humility we need in our theology is first and foremost a humility before God” (page 225). What is it about God and about you that makes that statement particularly true?

REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION GUIDE

10. We're urged again on page 226 to put truth into action. "Try to live it. Don't spend all your time theorizing about it, debating about it, or blogging about it. Spend more energy living the truth you know than worrying about what the next guy does or doesn't know. Don't measure yourself by what you know. Measure yourself by your practice of what you know." On that score, how are you measuring up?
11. "Here's a useful exercise," Josh suggests (on page 227). "Go back over the doctrines we've studied in this book, and think about the real-world, real-life implications of each truth for your life. What would it look like to live the truth of each one? What would change about your relationships, your words, your attitudes, and your actions?" Try following that suggestion for at least one or two of chapters 3–10 in this book, after first identifying and reviewing the key topic in each chapter. If you can, set aside time to do this for all those chapters.
12. Read again, on page 230, Josh's description of our anticipated experience in eternity. What are you looking forward to the most?
13. On this chapter's last page, we come to this paragraph: "Jesus said that an unshakable foundation for life is found only in knowing him, in believing his words and living by his truth. The most important question any of us can ask is, Am I building my life on who Jesus is and what he has done? Is my life built on the rock of a true knowledge of God?" In an unhurried way, talk about this with God your Father, and express to him what's happening in your heart and mind.