



REFORESTING FAITH

Discussion Guide

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Discussion Questions

Part I: Laying the Groundwork (Chapters 1-3)

- In what ways has God used creation to teach you about “the nature of God and His love”?
Have you ever heard a sermon on trees?
- Would you agree that many Christians are “anti-trees”? Romans 8:22 says the “whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.” What have you seen, heard or observed that reveals creation’s frustration? Who do you see caring for these concerns – believers, unbelievers, both?
- Lady Bird Johnson inspired the youth of her day to care for trees (p 10). What would inspire the next generation to care for creation? How could you help make that happen?
- Nancy asked Matthew big questions: “What do you think is the biggest problem on earth? What are you going to do about it?” (p 12-13) How would you answer those questions?

- What was new to you about the factors that have caused trees to go missing from our faith (p 20-21)?
- Describe a time when your system of belief failed you (p 13-15). What bigger questions did this lead you ponder?
- What verses or events from the “Trail of Trees” (p 17-18) stand out to you? Why?
- “Without humans, trees would manage just fine. Without trees, people would perish”? Using the scientific evidence given (p 27-31) to support your answer, in “creation care” are humans caring for creation or is creation caring for humans?
- “Beside every bad decision in life, there is a good alternative.” (p 34) When has this been true in your life? “Was God too exacting (in Adam & Eve’s punishment)?” (p 37)

Part II: Seeds of Faith (Chapters 4-9)

- “The apple hasn’t rolled far from the tree.” What do you think “catching a glimpse of Cain in the mirror” means (p 45)? Has this ever affected your life in the past – or maybe right now?
- When have you “obeyed the Lord when you were the only one doing it?” What do you know about the stories of William Wilberforce, Dietrich Bonhoeffer or Corrie ten Boom? (p 46)
- What was new to you about the significance of trees in the lives of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - p 49-61)?
- What is the difference between approaching the Bible as an artist would and approaching it like an anatomist? (p 57) What would be the consequences of only using the approach you tend to take most often?
- How do you react to the miracle of Jacob’s stripped branches and Mrs. Rose’s healing miracle? (p 59-61) When have you seen God work a miracle? Why don’t we see this more often?

- In an ironic plot twist, Jacob's wooden staff protected the line of the Messiah. For what do you need the comfort of knowing that nothing can "subvert God's will"? (p 63)
- When was the last time you "paused to appreciate the glories of creation?" How do you think a pause would broaden your perspective about "what God is up to"?
- What stories do you know about yourself or others who have received a call into ministry? (p 71) How might knowing those stories magnify your understanding of God?
- What does the author mean by the phrase the "tree-God-Gospel connection"? (p 76) What evidence from the exodus of the Israelites out of Egypt does he give to support this connection?
- What have you "had to work to change in your life and character" to make things align with God's way? How can you "start small" in light of Judgment Day (p 78-79)?

- How would you address those who argue that Christians who care for creation are on a “slippery slope to worshipping trees?” (p 84) What do you see people “worshipping” today?
- What historic evidence does the author give that helps refute the argument that “all spiritual paths lead to the same place”? (p 88-89)
- Which one of the questions God asks Job resonates with you? (p 98-99) When have your circumstances “pulled up your hope like a tree” (p 96) and taught you to “love God simply for who He is, not for what He does”? (p 103)
- Why does the author believe that God used trees to teach humanity about time? (p 101) Describe a situation when you waited – or continue to wait – a long time for redemption.
- What is your favorite tree? Why? How would planting a tree with someone younger speak belief in their future? (p 109)

- What are the five benefits the author gives (bottom of p 110 – top of p 111) for the presence of trees in our cities? How could working with the environmentalists who plant trees in your city model God’s love? (p 113)
- When have you found common ground to work cooperatively with someone who operates from a differing worldview? (p 118)
- What would you say to someone who resisted creation care on the basis of “it’s all going to burn anyway?” (p 119) When have you stopped to listen to the heart of someone who cares deeply about stewardship of creation? (p 120)
- Why are you on earth?
- “What is the only thing you can do in your own backyard that makes the whole world better?” (p 122)

Part III: Fruit of the Tree (Chapters 10-13)

- The author conveys his emotions in listening to Handel's Messiah and compares the exquisite writing of Isaiah to fly-fishing. What story or song from Scripture moves your spirit or piques your curiosity?
- How do the prophecies given about the "branch of David" increase your faith? (p 130-131)
For what are you waiting on Jesus?
- What is the reason "Isaiah hints" at for the disappearance of trees from our theology? (p 133)
What difference does this change make?
- How do trees help effectively address the issues of poverty?
- What point is the author trying to make by including his conversation with his son about their personal superpowers? What superpower would you pick if you had just one? (p 137)

- The author draws out the intersections of the lives of the major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel) with trees. (p 129-141) What insight from these books was new to you?
- What “tree gifts” have you given to others? (p 144)
- Through His use of the tree metaphor, how was Jesus’ organic vernacular unique in His day? (p 148-151) How does the author use these examples of the tree metaphor to emphasize the importance of guarding the Scriptures as they were originally given? (p 151)
- What truth can we gain from the comparison (parable) of the “Solomon in all His glory” and the lily of the field? (p 153-159) How would you prioritize the following: man-made things, the Bible, and God’s non-human creation? Why?
- What “terms” did God use when He was attempting to explain the world to Job? (p 159) What difference do you think this perspective makes for your own difficult circumstances or the circumstances of someone you love?

- When have you “sought solace in the woods”? (p 159) What about that time reoriented your understanding of God or your situation?
- What was the “only thing that could kill Jesus”? Why? (See p 165; Galatians 3:13) What is offered to man through Jesus’ death? What happens in the lives of those who place their faith in Jesus?
- What words and actions did the “third person called from the tree” observe? (p 166-167) What difference did it make in his life? For whom do you need courage to share these same words and actions – that they might believe, too?
- How does the author use the concept of “hybrids” in nature to portray both the dual nature of Jesus (fully God-fully man) and the sin nature of man? (p 168-169)
- Who gets out of this life alive? (p 171)

- How does Jesus' death on the tree balance the equation of justice and mercy? What can you do if you do not understand this? (p 171-174)

- Why does the author call 1 Corinthians 13 "the framing square of Scripture"? (p 182-184)

How do trees in Scripture teach us to love God? (p 186) How do trees help us love our neighbors?

(p 187-188)

Epilogue & Conclusion

- Every chapter begins with a quotation. Which of these quotes stands out to you the most? Why?
- How did God use the hardships suffered by John Muir for good? (p 193-195) What speaks to you from Saint Francis' prayer? (p 197)
- Why did the author write this book? In your personal experience, did he accomplish his aim?
- What did you think about the title of the book? How well does it convey what the book is trying to say?
- How well do you think we are stewarding the trees?

- How well do you think we are protecting God's Word?
- How convincing were the author's arguments? Are these views controversial? Who would you say is on both sides of the controversy?
- How would you describe this author's contribution to your perspective, understanding or feelings about the importance of trees? What implications might your action to care for trees have for the future?