

REAL LIFE STUDY GUIDE



QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

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BEFORE WE START

and

PROLOGUE:

Generations

1. In the introduction, Doug says: "We're just not sure what the kingdom is supposed to mean in our everyday lives." In what ways, if at all, do you relate to this statement? Why?
2. What do you think every Christian should be able to do? Why do you think people have a hard time living that out?
3. In what ways are evangelism and discipleship held together in your faith communities? In what ways have you seen them divorced?
4. Dallas Willard said: "In a pluralistic world, a religion is valued by the benefits it brings to its non-adherents." What do you think about this statement? Why?
5. In the prologue, Stephen faces the prospect of discipling a younger Christian named Jared. How would you feel if you were faced with a similar prospect?
6. As he discerns his call, Stephen wonders, "I know I'm not *supposed* to think this, but if we were *really* faithful to Jesus, wouldn't we all go into full-time ministry?" How do you feel about his statement?
7. Bridge outlines the spiritual question of the day for four generations:
 - Boomers (born 1943–60): *What is true?*
 - Xers (born 1961–81): *What is real?*
 - Millennials (born 1982–2002): *What is good?*
 - iGens (born 2003+): *What is beautiful?*

Which generation's question do you identify with most (even if it's not technically your generation) and why?
8. Given that millennials have the cultural attention, how would you answer their spiritual question of the day: *What is good?* In what way does the Christian faith bring good "in *this* world and not just in the world to come"?

PART 1: Skeptic

1. According to Bridge, what is the goal of a disciple? How did disciples in Jesus' day go about their training?
2. How does the view of discipleship in Jesus' day differ from views of discipleship today? What are the implications of these potential differences on Christian communities today?
3. How does Bridge define a skeptic? When discipling skeptics, what are you trying to do? Why is that important?
4. Think of people in your life who don't trust Christians or Christianity. Why do you think they—or you—have a hard time trusting Christians or the Christian faith?
5. In light of the spiritual question of the day, in what ways would building trust with boomers differ from building trust with Xers? How about Xers and millennials?
6. What is the difference between *relational* and *communal* trust? Why are both needed?
7. In what ways could you take the next step this week in helping build *relational* trust between you and a skeptic? A potential first step: Who could you approach to ask if you could hear their spiritual story, and then do your best to simply listen well?
8. Also, in what ways could you take the next step this week in building *communal* trust—credibility for Christianity as a whole—between a skeptic and the believing community?

PART 2: Seeker

1. How does Bridge define a seeker? When discipling a seeker, what are you trying to do?
2. What is the difference between “grace-heavy” and “truth-heavy” faith communities? Give reasons for why one of these descriptions best fits the style of your faith community.
3. Think of the people around you who trust a specific Christian or the general Christian and still are not Christians. Why do you think they have a hard time taking the next step of becoming a Christian?
4. In what ways can you humbly, winsomely—yet intentionally—invite or challenge seekers around you to take the next step of faith this week?
5. Bridge makes a case for being intentional with seekers to help them with next steps. Do you find her case convincing? Why or why not?
6. Bridge describes the process “God-watching” as we interact with our friends who don’t yet know Jesus. In what ways could you start being a “God-watcher” in not only your own life but also the lives of others?
7. In this story, Jared has an experience with God that leads him to give his life to Jesus before he would’ve called himself a Christian. In what ways can we help our friends experience God as a way to learn more about him?
8. If you can, identify someone who might be ready to hear the Big Story from you this week. What next steps will you need to take in preparing to share that story? If you can’t identify someone, for whom could you start intentionally praying so that you could have such an opportunity?

PART 3: Follower

1. In what ways do you expect God to speak to you in your everyday life? If you don't expect God to speak to you, why not?
2. To help discern what God might be saying, Bridge offers four questions:
 - Is it biblical?
 - What does the community say about it?
 - What would you do if fear were absent?
 - Does it display the fruit of the Spirit?

In what ways do you find her questions helpful? Which questions feel particularly important for you?

3. According to Bridge, what is the main thing that every follower of Jesus should be able to do? What do you think or feel about her answer?
4. How do other spiritual disciplines—such as praying, reading the Bible or being part of Christian community—fit into hearing God's voice? In what ways have your spiritual disciplines helped you hear God more clearly?
5. How does "obeying what we hear" affect our spiritual lives?
6. Speaking in broad generalities, Bridge describes the high point of church services in various faith communities:
 - Protestants/evangelicals: *the sermon*
 - Catholics/highly liturgical settings: *the Eucharist*
 - Charismatics: *musical worship or prayer ministry*
 - Millennials: *response*

Describe how your faith community falls into one of these categories, if at all.

7. Why is it important to debrief the way we respond to God's voice in community?
8. In what ways can you create spaces for people to hear and respond to God's voice this week? How would you help them debrief their experiences?

PART 4: Leader

1. Describe a time when you led something that did not go well. What did you need to make it go better?
2. In the story, Bridge gives a strong critique of Stephen's leadership: "You're babying him!" In what ways are we tempted to baby the people we are called to serve?
3. What is Bridge's definition of a leader? What does she think you should do to help a leader flourish?
4. What is the difference between *power* and *privilege*? What are we supposed to do with power and privilege?
5. In light of ministry, Bridge defines *power* as the resources needed and *authority* as the right to act. In what ways have you seen power given but not authority? In what ways have you seen authority given but not power?
6. Think of a potential leader you know. What power and authority could you provide for him or her this week?
7. In light of the *power* and *privilege* distinction, Bridge makes a case for ethnic identity development as a part of our faith journey. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
8. Leaders need to stay connected to Jesus. In what ways could you help *leaders* remain *followers*?

PART 5:
World Changer
and
EPILOGUE:
Next Steps

1. In what ways do your work and faith integrate well? What have you seen as the difficulties?
2. What is a world changer? How do you disciple a world changer?
3. In light of the spiritual question of the day, why is it important to have a world changer stage in our discipleship?
4. Bridge makes a case for reconciliation as a unique Christian contribution to the common good. In what ways do you agree or disagree with her argument?
5. Name examples of Christian world changers that you know, either historical or presently living. (If you can't think of any, describe what you'd love to see in a Christian world changer.) In what ways do their work and faith integrate well? What have you seen as the difficulties?
6. Bridge creates an equation to help equip world changers:

gifts + passions → calling

How could this be used to help others discern their calling?

7. In what ways can you identify gifts and passions in a rising world changer this week and then help that person envision a calling or vocation for broader impact?
8. Take some time to do listening prayer and ask God: Is there someone you want me to invest in? Ask what your next steps should be to disciple that person.