

REST & WAR.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Connect Group Leaders,

These questions are set up so that any group, no matter their stage of vulnerability, can comfortably discuss Pastor Ben Stuart's Rest & War. Some of the topics covered in this reading may lead the people in your group to confess or share sensitive information but the questions curated should keep conversation welcoming and appropriate. Our encouragement is that you gauge your group's transparency and use sound judgement to determine when to lean into a topic of conversation and when to guide conversation elsewhere. We pray this resource benefits you and your group tremendously!

The Community Team

CHAPTER 1

1. Pastor Ben begins Rest & War with a story about climbing up a mountain. He ends the story by talking about adaptation to changing atmospheres. His story is an analogy for life. Where is he going in mentioning this (p.6)?
2. Pastor Ben paints a rough picture of well-being in the United States in referencing statistics. He then asks the rhetorical question, "What's the answer?" What do you think the answer is? Are you hoping to decrease your media activity (p.8)?
3. Pastor Ben says he's calling readers to "battle and to build" then he says we need to know and understand Jesus first. Why is an understanding of the character of God of foundational importance in fighting for what matters most?

CHAPTER 2

1. Pastor Ben talks about how Jesus came to destroy something at the outset of Chapter 2. Does Ben's picture of Jesus as a HALO jumping SEAL look different from the one you had previously held? What did you previously have in mind when you thought about the character of Jesus?
2. Sometimes you can sense evil but most the time the strategies of our enemy go unnoticed. What makes it hard to believe in the reality of spiritual warfare?
3. Pastor Ben quotes Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn: "If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being." Do you sense this division in your own life or do you see a binary between "good" people and "bad" people?
4. Pastor Ben takes time in the second chapter to alert readers of the importance of participation in the battle. "We have not been set free from the fight. We have been set free for the fight," he writes. He goes on to say, "Your struggle may be one of your greatest assurances that you are alive." Try to unpack how struggle serves as evidence for saving faith.

CHAPTER 3

1. Pastor Ben points out through the story of his dog how a new identity leads to a new behavior. How have you seen life-change take place in your life or in the life of someone near to you, due to the realization of new identity?
2. Pastor Ben talks about his yard in how, at first glance, one might have thought that it had not been taken care of. However, that would have been far from the truth. He goes on to state, “Our assurance of salvation does not come from perfection, but from progress.” What does this story tell us about judging others and their behavior to determine if they are authentic believers?
3. Pastor Ben titles his book Rest & War because of the two-part approach to becoming more like Jesus: mortification and vivification. Christians both rest and wage war. What are you currently doing to move away from things that discourage intimacy with God? What are you currently doing to move toward things that promote intimacy with God?

CHAPTER 4

1. Vaguely speaking, what do you sense are some of your strongest general desires in life (i.e. companionship, success and accomplishment, peace, etc.)?
2. If you were to steal the Enemy’s ‘book’ on strategy and find your section, what would the Enemy have listed in that book as some of your deepest general desires (i.e. being wanted, gaining recognition, attractiveness, etc.)?
3. What discourages you the most? Or perhaps a similar question would be, what state of being leaves you most vulnerable?
4. Based off answering these three questions, how well do you know yourself? Are you aware of your inclinations or blindsided by them.

CHAPTER 5

***Chapter 5 is largely about temptation. If your group is not quite ready for an intimate vulnerability, then read and answer questions 1-5. If your group is already close and of the same sex, then feel free to answer questions 6-10.*

1. Is it wrong to be tempted? Think biblically about this topic and discuss as a group.
2. To what extent are Christians “broken” and “imperfect” people? Should Christians expect sin in their lives? There is room for disagreement here, so aim to have a biblically-backed conversation about the depravity of people.
3. The Church has been accused of being both legalistic and overly relaxed when it comes to sin. Where do you sense the Church is today? Is there currently a good balance between legalism and idleness in the Church?
4. What were you raised to think when it comes to sin and temptation? Looking back, do you see that any aspect of that upbringing was unhealthy and unbiblical?
5. Pastor Ben mentions Atomic Habits, a book by James Clear but there are lots of books and articles on combatting bad habits. From your reading and listening, is there anything you would add to Ben’s chapter on knowing yourself and knowing the strategy of the Enemy?

***If your group is already close and of the same sex, feel free to answer these:*

6. What bad habit or sin do you want to eliminate? If you are willing to be vulnerable, share with your group.

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7. Pastor Ben writes, “Take a moment to consider the circumstances in which you consistently compromise. Where are you? When is it? Who are you with? Have you allowed yourself to linger in dangerously isolated positions?” Answer these questions as a group.
8. For those in the group who have experienced improvement over time, what are some practical steps you took along the way to experience freedom from a particular sin?
9. Are there places you should no longer go? How can you move yourself to a more secure environment in moments of temptation?
10. If your sin has much to do with your environment, how will you redesign your environment to avoid entering into temptation?

CHAPTER 6

1. According to Scripture, every command of God is good but not all are easy to trust. What are some of the most difficult things to believe are God’s good design for human flourishing?
2. What are some things you think very futuristically (downstream) about? What are some things you think very momentarily about?
3. Pastor Ben mentions a friend who kept a wall of “Solemn Warning.” Do you have people in or around your life who serve as a reminder as to what a person should avoid?

CHAPTER 7

1. How do you start the process of determining the source of something? Some people are more in touch with their emotions, inclinations, and personalities than others, so perhaps those people can best answer this question.
2. Do you see God’s commands as burdensome and restricting, beneficial and freeing, or something else?
3. What practical steps can a person take to get to a point where they desire something over something else? More specifically, how does a person get to the point where they desire obedience more than disobedience?

CHAPTER 8

1. At the close of Chapter 8, Pastor Ben asks, “Have you seen in yourself a propensity to reduce spirituality to a list of rules or activities?” Discuss this as a group.
2. Pastor Ben also closes by asking about “closest relationships.” What activities do you do to deepen the bond in those relationships?
3. What bad habits do you have (i.e. not getting enough rest, overindulging in social media, etc.) that compete against spiritual intimacy with God?

CHAPTER 9

1. What is the difference between anxiety and concern? If one extreme is to freak out and another extreme is to live an emotionless life, what is the biblical, healthy balance?
2. Martha was troubled about “many things” (Lk. 10:41-42). What good, common, normal things are you distracted and anxious about?

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3. Some people try to compare prayer to God, through Christ's word to modern meditation and mindfulness practices. How is Christian prayer different from non-Christian mindfulness and meditation? Pastor Ben touches on this on page 127.
4. Pastor Ben mentions how modern science is slowly coming to prove the ancient teachings of Jesus to be beneficial. What else evidences the validity of Scripture? In other words, what are people realizing today that supports the teachings in God's Word?

CHAPTER 10

1. How has your understanding of our reason for existence evolved? If someone were to ask you, "Why do you think we are on this planet?," what would you tell them?
2. Do you feel busy but unproductive? What from Pastor Ben's schedule and recommendations sounds like a good idea for your life?
3. Pastor Ben talks about his ability to tell people 'no.' Do you feel freedom and confidence to tell people 'no' or do you feel as though you have to explain your decision?
4. What is one thing that needs to be removed from your schedule to "cultivate and maximize your potential"? If not this, what needs to be added?

CHAPTER 11

1. Given that the Word of God is our instruction as to how to wage war and remain rested, how diligent are you in your study? How vital is study and investment in God's Word, from your perspective?
2. Pastor Ben writes, "weariness + isolation = failure." Are you weary, isolated, or both? If not, who in your life is both supportive and available?
3. Imagine you moved to a new city (perhaps you just did!). What would your step-by-step strategy be to gain community there?
4. Servitude cultivates community. Where can you begin serving – if you are not already serving – in effort to better cultivate community in your life?

CHAPTER 12

1. What is your history when it comes to the balance between laziness and overworking? Were you ever anything like the old-Ben that Pastor Ben talks about in Chapter 12?
2. Talk about how you have experienced the importance of recreation. How does everyone do in setting aside a day to rest, reflect, and enjoy God's blessings?
3. If anyone has a list of enjoyable activities, share about your frequency in setting aside time for these activities. Is anyone realizing how distanced you are from the things you love to do?
4. Take some time to articulate this phrase from Jonathan Edwards: "Resolved, to live with all my might, while I do live."

CHAPTER 13

1. Before reading this chapter, when you heard the word 'spirituality,' what came to mind? Talk about the difference between religiosity and spirituality.
2. What were your preconceived ideas about Who the Holy Spirit is? Can anyone reiterate the connection between breath and wind and the Spirit?
3. Given what you read in this chapter, what does it mean to live a "spiritual life"?
4. As Pastor Ben asks, "How do you feel about the fact that God wants to be as close to you as your own breath? Is this exciting? Comforting? Intimidating? Concerning?"
5. What questions do you have about the Spirit of God and authentic Christ-centered spirituality?

CHAPTER 14

1. If hearing from and walking with the Spirit requires a familiarity with God's Word, how likely are you to hear from and walk with Him?
2. Pastor Ben says that fire needs "fuel, heat and wind." He suggests that our spiritual lives also need the "fuel of God's Word in our minds" and the "heat of our affection for God" (208). Are either of these lacking in your life?
3. Pastor Ben places emphasis on the criticality of community and service. Are you currently a Door Holder at Passion City Church? Why or why not?
4. Pastor Ben says he prays the Augustinian prayer, "Command me, Lord, and give me what you command." What does Augustine's prayer mean?

CHAPTER 15

1. Pastor Ben ends by telling his audience, "You've got this. Because he has got you." If someone were to ask how much of the spiritual life is up to the individual and how much is up to God, what would you say? There is no complete, right answer to this but it is worth wrestling with.
2. A lot of this reading paying off boils down to application. Having finished reading this book, what is it, specifically, that you want to do? What are some habits you want to implement?
3. If striving is actually more of a problem for you than a solution, and you do not need to do different but be different, what truths about God do you need to meditate on? In other words, what do you need to inform your thinking and replace your former thinking.