

Prologue

- **Opening Prayer**

Lord God, we come to you with open minds as we start another book study. Let it speak to us in a way that motivates positive change in our lives and helps us to live as the children you created us to be. In Your Son's holy name we pray. Amen.

- **Rachel Held Evans Bio**

- 1981-2019
- Spent late teenage years in Dayton, TN where the Scopes Monkey Trial occurred in 1925
 - 1925 – Tennessee Butler Act prohibited teaching human evolution
 - John T. Scopes accused of violating the Butler Act
 - Scopes wasn't actually sure he had taught evolution, but he intentionally incriminated himself in order to stage the trial
 - William Jennings Bryan prosecuted
 - Clarence Darrow defended
 - Scopes was found guilty and fined \$100, but the case was later overturned on a technicality (the jury should have decided the fine, rather than the judge)
 - Tennessee repealed the Butler Act in 1967
 - The Supreme Court ruled such bans as going against the First Amendment
- Worshiped as an Episcopalian
- Eventually denounced evangelicalism due to its association with the Christian right
- Worked as a newspaper journalist including a humor columnist for *The Herald-News* in Dayton
- Wrote six books, including *Inspired* and *A Year of Biblical Womanhood*, and maintained a Blog on faith issues
- Served on President Obama's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships
- Died in 2019 from encephalitis after being treated in the hospital for an infection

- **Video** [[YouTube "Keep the Church Weird – Rachel Held Evans \(talk\)" 0:00-3:52](#)]

- The term "weird" has been used in a variety of ways, often derogatory.
 - What does being "weird" mean to you?
 - In what ways is our local church weird, and how is it not?
- Would you agree that these days, we are looking less for "information" and more for "experiences"?
 - What are examples of experiences that have scratched this itch for you?
- Over the last decade, what progress have you seen, if any, in the way the church is reaching younger generations?
- Other reflections?

- **Prologue**

- "I'm not exactly what you call a morning person"
 - Is there a particular time of day when you feel most called to be close to God?
- Evans characterizes younger people as having been advertised to their entire lives, and therefore more capable of "smelling b.s. from a mile away." They're not looking for "hipper." They're looking for "truer."
 - Do you find the need for something "truer" a function of your age, your surrounding society, or something else?
- Evans talks about her discomfort when people pose her the question "So where have you been going to church these days?"
 - When's the last time this question was posed to you?
 - What alternative ice-breaking questions get posed to you these days?

- What might be a good opening question to introduce your faith to someone else?
 - “I am in the adolescence of my faith.”
 - How would you describe your current level of faith maturity?
 - How do the sacraments engage your senses (touch, smell, taste, hearing, sight)?
 - Baptism
 - Communion
 - Confession
 - Holy Orders
 - Confirmation
 - Anointing of the Sick
 - Marriage
 - Evans closes the prologue with the observation that “...even on days when I suspect all this talk of Jesus and resurrection and life everlasting is a bunch of bunk designed to coddle us through an essentially meaningless existence, I should still like to be buried with my feet facing the rising sun. Just in case.”
 - Do you identify with this sentiment?
 - Other reflections?
-

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Italics imply important points or example answers the leader can convey

Part I – Baptism

- **Opening Prayer**

Heavenly Father, as we think back on our baptism, we take joy in your inviting us to be part of your family. Help us to be open to your message to us in this hour and always. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

- **Video** [[YouTube “Keep the Church Weird – Rachel Held Evans \(talk\)” 16:22-20:52](#)]

- Have you ever witnessed a baptism out in nature? What was it like?
- Where do you think we're “getting in the way” of God's work?

- **Water**

- Name some examples of when water was used in the Bible to symbolize life. *Creation story, Moses in the basket, Moses calling water from the rock, Elijah calling rain during the drought, Jesus talking with Samaritan woman at the well, water gushing from Jesus' side after being pierced*
- Name some examples in today's world where water suggests life to you.

- **Believer's Baptism**

- [6] Evans describes her baptism by her father. Describe your baptism.
- What are your experiences with the concepts of “needing to be baptized to be saved” and/or “the age of accountability”?
- How do you feel about the practice of “rebaptism” (a.k.a., “Believer's Baptism”) conducted by Baptists and the Church of Christ, among others?
- [9] *“In baptism,” writes Will Willimon, ‘the recipient of baptism is just that – recipient. You cannot very well do your own baptism. It is done to you, for you.’ It's an adoption, not an interview.”*
- [13] Evans wondered why she didn't feel holier immediately after her baptism... “I hadn't yet learned that you tend to come out of the big moments – the wedding, the book deal, the trip, the death, the birth – as the exact same person who went in, and that perhaps the strangest surprise of life is it keeps on happening to the same ol' you.”
 - Do you agree, or have you experienced transformation in one of these “big moments”?
- [15] “At times I've tried to wring the waters of my first baptism [at an evangelical church] out of my clothes...But Jesus has this odd habit of allowing ordinary, screwed-up people to introduce him, and so it was ordinary, screwed-up people who first told me I was a beloved child of God”
 - What are your thoughts on churches which are not ideologically aligned with your Christian beliefs introducing people to Christ?
 - Who introduced you to Jesus?

- **Naked on Easter**

Video – second clip [[YouTube “Keep the Church Weird – Rachel Held Evans \(talk\)” 24:08-26:29](#)] - Evans reads from the Naked on Easter chapter up to the point of “...I am a beloved child of God and I renounce anything that says otherwise.”]

- Whom do you rely on to tell you *who you are*?
- In what ways do you find a sense of identity when you come to church or sit with God?
- Evans points out several ways that *demons* manifest in church, telling us the prerequisites for being children of God, for example when...
 - We sign the doctrinal statement
 - We help with the children's ministry
 - We tithe
 - We are married
 - We are good
 - Etc.
- What *demonic* prerequisites for our Christian identity have you seen our church environment pose, either intentionally or unintentionally?

- Which is harder for you to believe, that God raised Jesus from the dead or that God offers the grace to identify us as His children, regardless of our state? Why?
- **Chubby Bunny**
 - [28] Evans gives examples of youth group games including trust falls, Duck-Duck-Goose, musical chairs, dodgeball, Red Rover, sardines, and... Chubby Bunny.
 - What games do you remember playing in youth groups?
 - In hindsight, what are the pluses and minuses to these games?
 - Evans credits her youth group experience, and her leader Brian in particular, as providing affirmation of her, and her friends', identities.
 - In what ways did you find your youth experience as pressuring to conform vs. affirming who you already were?
- **Enough**
 - Evans tells the story of Andrew, a teenage boy she met at a conference. He was a devout Christian son of a fundamentalist preacher, and later came to understand he was gay. Andrew's new church family "adopted" him while he was estranged from his biological family.
 - How do you think God would have us act when faced with such a situation?
 - Andrew recognizes that baptism is done at the *beginning* of your faith journey.
 - What do you think we need before we're ready to be baptized?
- **Rivers**
 - Read Luke 3:1-18
 - [36] Evans applauds John the Baptist's radical nature in abandoning the temple life of his priestly father and its ceremonial bathing pools, instead embracing "free-flowing rivers."
 - How would you characterize John the Baptist?
 - Where in today's world might you see people like John the Baptist showing up?
 - Other reflections?

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Part II – Confession

- **Opening Prayer** – from page 79...
*Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us;
Favorably hear us, for your mercy is great.
Accomplish in us the work of your salvation,
That we may show forth your glory in the world.
By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord,
Bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection.*
- **Ash**
 - [44] Evans recalls the story of the Garden of Eden, saying the descendants of Adam knew “the difference between good and evil, yet they chose evil again and again in a violent quest to be like God.”
 - When do you see God-like aspirations being at the root of evil?
 - Read 1 Corinthians 15:47-49
 - What message do you draw from this? *Like Adam, we as mortals will still experience death. Like Jesus, we will experience heaven.*
- **Video** [[YouTube “Keep the Church Weird – Rachel Held Evans \(talk\)” 31:10-40:10](#)] up until the point where Evans says “...you’ll pick each other up and carry on.”
 - Why do you think (if you agree) that “people bond more deeply over shared brokenness than shared belief”?
- **Vote Yes on One**
 - [48] Evans describes her guilt when singing “Great is Thy Faithfulness” next to people who had experienced serious tragedy in comparison to her life. Yet their faith remained secure while she was questioning hers over “just a few pesky questions.”
 - Have you had similar feelings of guilt (or perhaps “faith inadequacy”) when questioning your faith?
 - Evans describes grievances which justified her not attending church “besides [her] own ugly doubt.”
 - What reasons have you used in separating yourself from a church? *Evans cites these examples:*
 - *Political jabs during announcements*
 - *Simplistic interpretation of Biblical verses*
 - *Violent and masculine theology*
 - *Equating Obama’s election with end times*
 - *Terrorists and victims alike were sent to hell if they weren’t Evangelical Christians*
 - *Jews at Auschwitz as well*
 - [51] Evans talks about a best friend who distanced herself due to Evans’ doubts
 - Have you lost friends due to your convictions?
 - *“Looking back, I suspect their reactions had less to do with disdain for my doubt and more to do with fear of their own.”*
 - To what extent do you believe fear drives Evangelical reactions to doubt?
 - [59] The chapter gets its title from church support for the Tennessee Marriage Protection Amendment (Proposition One) banning same-sex marriage. Evans admits she ignored her conscience and didn’t speak up. She eventually left the church “because [she] couldn’t pretend to believe things [she] didn’t believe anymore.”
 - What differences in belief have caused you to leave church groups?
 - What differences could cause you to do so in the future?
 - How do you determine when to speak up vs. just leave?
- **Dirty Laundry**
 - In the chapter, Evans highlights how churches are not always the best place for “honesty” among members, as opposed to organizations like AA.

- What are the characteristics of an environment that promotes honesty, transparency, and openness?
- How can our church better embrace these characteristics?
- Is there an inherent conflict between a diverse “big umbrella” environment, and one that promotes open sharing?

- **What We Have Done**
 - *Evans uses the first half of the chapter to list several historical abuses in the name of Christianity:*
 - *Roman Empire gladiator games after Christianity was adopted as the official religion*
 - *Christian crusaders massacring Arab occupiers of Jerusalem*
 - *The Inquisition*
 - *Martin Luther’s encouragement to burning Jewish synagogues*
 - *European treatment of indigenous population of the New World*
 - *Puritan decimation of Native American tribe*
 - *Trail of Tears*
 - *Slavery in America*
 - *White clergy urging MLK followers to withdraw from demonstrations*
 - *Bob Jones University ban on interracial dating*
 - *Uganda criminalizing homosexuality*
 - What historical events come to your mind when you think of Christian abuses to which you might similarly say “Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy”?
 - *Evans uses the remainder of the chapter to list historical praises of Christian behavior:*
 - *Saint Ambrose denying church entry to Emperor Theodosius until he repented from violence [since debunked by modern historians]*
 - *John Huss speaking out against the church selling indulgences*
 - *Teresa of Avila advancing monastic reforms*
 - *Jesuit priest Pedro Claver serving black slaves in Colombia*
 - *Anne Hutchinson teaching from the Bible in the Massachusetts Bay Colony*
 - *William Wilberforce pushing to abolish slavery in Britain*
 - *Ex-slave Sojourner Truth promoting American abolition of slavery*
 - *Friar Maximilian Kolbe took the place of a Jewish stranger at Auschwitz sentenced to die*
 - *MLK march on Washington*
 - *Rosa Parks*
 - What historical figures come to mind when you think of Christian behavior that prompts you to say “We give thanks”?

- **Meet the Press**
 - Have you ever gone through periods like Evans and her husband where you unplugged from church?
 - What was your experience during that time?
 - What are your feelings when you hear of someone who has similarly “checked out” from church attendance?
 - [84] How do you think your unchurched friends view your church attendance (e.g., do they see you as “unthinking, uncritical drones just going through the motions to maintain [your] membership in the country club”)?
 - If you were to seek out a new church today, what would be your criteria?
 - [87] Evans describes cynicism as “a patient predator that suffocates hope, slowly, over many years.”
 - To what extent do you consider yourself a cynic when it comes to church?

- **Dust**
 - What do you think was the thing that kept the initial disciples together? *Evans proposes it was a shared sense of need*
 - Is that what holds us together as Christians?
 - Read John 8:1-11

- As Evans suggests, when you hear this story, do you typically identify most with Jesus?
 - [93] “Billy Graham once said, ‘It is the Holy Spirit’s job to convict, God’s job to judge, and my job to love.’”
 - What parts of this ring true (or not) for you?
 - Other reflections?
-

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Part III – Holy Orders

- **Opening Prayer**

Lord God, touch us this day with your Holy Spirit. We are grateful to be blessed with your constant presence, and ask that you empower us to touch the lives of others, spreading your love. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

- **Hands**

- [97] "There is power in touch – a connective energy, a bond."
 - Recall a time when you felt a powerful touch
 - What stories come to mind of Jesus touching with his hands? *Examples:*
 - *Touching eyes of blind man*
 - *Taking bread and fish and blessing them before the 5000*
 - *Washing disciples feet*
 - *[reverse] Stopping bleeding of woman*
 - *Healing slave's ear which was cut off*
 - *Healing the leper*
 - *Taking the hand of Jairus's daughter and raising her from the dead*
- What practices of the church involving touch are important to you, and why?

- **The Mission**

- Evans describes the early fervor behind their startup church, the Mission, and its eventual downfall.
 - What experiences do you have with similar startups?
 - Do you lean more toward celebrating the creation of such splinter groups -or- lamenting the difficult and frequently futile road they've chosen without the power in numbers and economies of scale of larger congregations?
 - [107] "the Mission was the first time I felt like an asset to the church instead of a liability"
 - Do you think you'd personally be more of an asset to a small or large church? Why?

- **Epic Fail**

- Do you agree that Christians are hesitant to discuss the church's failures? Why or why not?
- Survey of "What does 'church' mean to you?" [pre-create survey in mentimeter.com using the option for open ended responses]
 - [optional] Have participants vote on responses that resonate with them
 - Display the real-time results on a TV visible to all
 - What surprises or insights do you draw from the responses?

- **Feet**

- What acts of humility have you witnessed by Christian leaders?
 - *Jimmy Carter's hands-on approach to Habitat for Humanity*
 - *Mother Teresa's work with the sick*
 - Local pastors?
- [115] "the difference between the clergy and the laity is often perceived as more vast than it is"
 - What are the consequences of this perception?
- Other reflections?

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Part IV – Communion

- **Opening Prayer**

Heavenly Father, as we commune as your church, feed us this day with your holy inspiration. We thank you for giving us all we need to carry your Word into the world. Usher us forward in doing just that. In Your Son's holy name we pray. Amen.

- **Video** [[YouTube “Keep the Church Weird – Rachel Held Evans \(talk\)” 4:06-10:30](#)]

- What experiences do you have with serving communion?
- “This is not a table for the worthy. It’s a table for the hungry.”
 - In what ways do you get this sense when you receive communion in our services?
 - What aspects of participating in the sacrament of communion make it more meaningful to you?

- **Bread**

- Bread and wine were staples of the diet in Israel. Bread was commonplace due to the pervasiveness of grain and Israel’s climate was perfect for growing grapes.
- *People have been baking bread for over 14,000 years. In 2018, a piece of bread was discovered in a Jordan archeological dig that established this – 4000 years prior than was originally thought. Bread is the simplest of foods, but requires a plethora of steps to produce.* See if the group can come up with the steps in making bread:
 1. *Till soil*
 2. *Sow seed*
 3. *Water plants*
 4. *“Bring in the sheaves”*
 5. *Separate the grain*
 6. *Grind to flour*
 7. *Mix with salt, yeast, and water*
 8. *Knead*
 9. *First rise*
 10. *Shape into loaves*
 11. *Second rise (proofing)*
 12. *Score the top of the loaf*
 13. *Bake*
 14. *Cool*
- See if the group can come up with the steps to produce wine:
 1. *Plant grape vines*
 2. *Harvest grapes*
 3. *Crush and press*
 4. *Ferment with yeast*
 5. *Clarify*
 6. *Bottle/age*

- **The Meal**

- [125] “The first thing the world knew about Christians was that they ate together.”
 - What are the characteristics of a meal that promote fellowship?
- Evans describes how the practice of the Eucharist changed under Emperor Constantine – introducing more pomp and ceremony to a previously simple shared meal.
 - In what ways might this have helped or hurt what Jesus envisioned?
- What are some of the different ways you’ve experienced communion?
- What do you find as essential to the practice of this sacrament?

- **Methodist Dance Party**
 - Evans enumerates many memorable meals she was served by Christians in her travels around the world.
 - What are some of your most memorable meals in the company of other Christians?
 - [135] “‘Food is a language of care,’ writes Shauna Niequist, ‘the thing we do when traditional language fails.’”
 - What truth do you draw from this observation?
 - When have you experienced food being a language of care?
 - [140] Evans comes to the conclusion that communion “is enough. It is always and ever enough.”
 - In what ways can you relate to this feeling?

- **Open Hands**
 - [143] “With giving, I can maintain some sense of power, some illusion of control. But receiving means the gig is up. Receiving means I’m not the boss of what comes into life”
 - In what situations are you more likely to enthusiastically receive?
 - When are you more reluctant to do so?
 - [144] Evans quotes Robert Farrar Capon – “Grace cannot prevail until our lifelong certainty that someone is keeping score has run out of steam and collapsed.”
 - Has grace prevailed with you yet? If not, do you think it will ever?
 - Evans gives several reasons why she needs the Eucharist (beginning each week with open hands, practicing letting go and letting in, quitting keeping score)
 - What reasons do you need the Eucharist?

- **Open Table**
 - Have you ever witnessed anyone like Sara Miles responding to an invitation to an open table before being formally attached to the church?
 - What does an “open table” mean to you? Are there any requirements?
 - How well do United Methodists practice the concept of an open table? (*The official invitation is to “all who love Jesus, who earnestly repent of their sin, and seek to live in peace with one another”*)
 - [151] Do you have similar reservations to Evans in sharing communion with people who are diametrically opposed to you politically? How do you get beyond this? *“The table teaches us that faith isn’t about being right or good or in agreement. Faith is about feeding and being fed.”*

- **Wine**
 - Read John 2:1-11
 - Why do you think Jesus protested in verse 4?
 - Why did he go ahead and change the water to wine?
 - [155] “we have such a hard time believing that God cares about our routine realities”
 - How much involvement do you think God has in your daily routine?
 - Evans describes the church “at its best” and “at its worst” in its approach to the sacraments.
 - When do you think the church gets the sacraments right? When do they miss the mark?
 - Other reflections?

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Part V – Confirmation

- **Opening Prayer**

Dear Father, like many things, your Holy Spirit is a marvelous mystery to us. Help us to be sensitive to its presence, hear our calling from it, and do your will through it. Through the power of the Spirit we pray. Amen.

- **Breath**

- Read John 20:21-22 in any version and then in *The Message*
 - All versions seem to state these two verses quite similarly, but there's one subtle difference in *The Message*. What is it? *Jesus breathes *into* them rather than *on* them*
 - Why do you think Eugene Peterson changed this preposition?
- Evans discusses different things the Spirit is like:
 - Breath
 - Fire
 - A seal
 - Wind
 - Bird
 - Womb
- Which of these similes speak to you, and why?
- Are there other things to which you liken the Spirit? *River – always flowing, changing direction, carrying us, sometimes calm and sometimes raging*

- **Wayside Shrines**

- Evans discusses her stay at St. Bernard Abbey – a Benedictine monastery
 - How does a 3-day silent stay in a monastery sound to you, with speaking reserved to only worship and lunch?
- [168] During worship, Evans studies her fellow congregants to discern when to kneel, cross themselves, etc.
 - Have you ever had a similar “fish out of water” experience in worship? What was it like?
- [170] “I knew I’d just violated rule number one of conversational self-preservation: never tell a religious person you’re searching.”
 - How would you respond to someone who told you they were searching?
- [173] Evans reflects that after all her contemporary Christian experiences intended to make it cool, all she wanted was “a quiet sanctuary and some candles.”
 - Is sanctuary similarly important to you, and if so, in your mind, what makes a sanctuary a sanctuary?
- [178] Evans quotes Madeleine L’Engle – “the great thing about getting older is that you don’t lose all the other ages you’ve been” and then reflects that the same is true for churches we’ve attended in the past.
 - In what ways is this true for you?

- **Trembling Giant**

- What are your feelings toward the plethora of Christian denominations, and non-denominations, which exist today? Do you lament? Feel competitive? Celebrate?
- Are we any different in this respect from the other major religions?
 - What does this say about humans?

- **Easter Doubt**

- Video [[YouTube “Mike Slaughter interviews Rachel Held Evans on doubt” 6:14](#)]
- [187] Evans discusses her and others’ reactions to “Easter Sunday Christians”...
 - Nominal
 - Lukewarm
 - IndifferentWhat are your reactions?

- One doubt Evans admits to is thinking “What if we made this up because we’re afraid of death?”
 - What similar doubts have crossed your mind?
- **With God’s Help**
 - [190] “simply reciting the Apostles’ Creed on a given Sunday means drawing from every last reserve of my faith”
 - What goes through your mind when you recite the Apostle’s Creed?
 - How important is your own confirmation to you?
 - How important is confirmation with respect to your children?
 - [193] Lauren Winner tells the story of Julian, who was having doubts about the eternal promises made during confirmation. Her father, the pastor, replied “What you promise...is not that you will believe this forever. What you promise...is that this is the story you will wrestle with forever.”
 - How would such pastoral instruction be received by our congregation?
- **Wind**
 - Have a volunteer read Galatians 5:16-24
 - What do you think Paul means in verse 21 by “will not inherit the kingdom of God”?
 - *Evans points out that while we can’t see the Spirit, like the wind, we see its effects in the fruit of the Spirit*
 - Does the presence of the Spirit boil down to selfishness vs. selflessness?
 - Other reflections?

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Part VI – Anointing of the Sick

- **Opening Prayer**

Lord God, help us to be a healing church – ever sensitive to the needs of others, and rendering the loving care required to meet those needs. In Jesus’ holy name we pray. Amen.

- **Oil**

- [203] “the fragrance of a particular flower or the scent of a certain soap can suddenly flood a body with a memory”
 - What scents trigger memories for you?
 - Are there aspects of church with which you associate smells?

- **Healing**

- [207] Evans describes Claire’s story of losing her full-term baby and then felt the church didn’t struggle along with her in feeling forsaken.
 - Have you experienced the church “sitting shiva” in the face of loss?
 - Why don’t we do this more often?
- [208] “there is a difference between curing and healing”
 - Can you give examples of the church attempting to “cure” vs. “heal”?
- What do you think Evans means when she describes healing as a “willingness to wander” with someone going through grief?
- [211] Evans states that she’d never participated in a Christian conference as energized by the Spirit as she did at the Gay Christian Network conference.
 - What are your experiences with LGBTQ+ gatherings in worship?
 - Evans goes on to describe their open mic session to close the conference...
- [214] “I’m black. I’m disabled. I’m gay. And I live in Mississippi. *What was God thinking?*”
 - What do you think God *was* thinking when this man spoke up?
- [215] Pastor spoke who was formerly an antigay apologist who repented and whose son later came out.
 - Have you witnessed the type of forgiveness the conference attendees gave to him?
- [216] *Evans describes how LGBT Christians teach the church how to be Christian:*
 - *Tell the truth*
 - *Confess and forgive*
 - *Embrace neighbors*
 - *Sit shiva and await resurrection*

- **Evangelical Acedia**

- Evans describes World Vision’s reversal on gay staff and her fellow evangelicals holding a failed intervention with her and her husband.
 - When has the church disappointed you in a way that made you consider breaking ties?
- [221] “Cynicism is a powerful anesthetic we use to numb ourselves to pain, but which also...numbs us to truth and joy. [Grief is healthy. Anger can be healthy.] ...numbing ourselves with cynicism...to avoid feeling those things is not.”
 - What are your thoughts on this?

- **This Whole Business With the Hearse**

- In the chapter, Evans poses that the death of church might be a natural step toward resurrection, and what the church needs.
 - In what ways might the death of a church be viewed in a positive light?

- **Perfume**

- Compare and contrast the two groups of disciples portrayed in the Gospel - the Twelve and the Women?
- [232] “The marginalized are always the first to comprehend death and resurrection.”
 - Do you agree, and if so, why might this be true?

- Other reflections?

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Part VII – Marriage & Epilogue

- **Opening Prayer**

Heavenly Father, help us to better appreciate your Kingdom in the many ways it manifests itself on the earth. In your Son's holy name we pray. Amen.

- **Crowns**

- The chapter presents several widely different marriage ceremony practices (red silk gown, married couple hoisted in chairs, bagpipes, formal attire, and an Orthodox crowning)
 - What are some of the most unique wedding practices you've experienced?
 - In your opinion, how did they add or detract from the ceremony?

- **Mystery**

- [240] "Like most Christian couples, our engagement and first year brought on an avalanche of Christian marriage books"
 - Was this true for you?
 - What sort of marriage advice did you receive, and from whom?
- Evans describes her marriage as not sticking to any script, but rather a "mystery."
 - What word might you use to describe marriage?
- [244] "what each of us longs for the most is to be both fully known and fully loved. Miraculously, God feels the same way about us."
 - What evidence do you see to support Evans's claim that God wants to be fully known and loved?

- **Body**

- Evans states that when we leave it to men to draw theological conclusions about a metaphorically feminine church, you end up with expected answers like "virgin" and "mother." She then goes on to give examples of how a woman might describe the church in terms of her body.
 - [especially for the female class members...] Did any of these resonate with you, and do you have others?

- **Kingdom**

- Why might Jesus have used "kingdom" so many times (126 in the Gospels) as opposed to "church" or something else?
- Jesus announced a Kingdom, and humans responded by creating a church.
 - Why did we pivot to creating a "church" instead?
- Do you view church as a human means to an end (the end being God's Kingdom) or a human failing to meet Jesus' intent? Why?
- Do you agree with Evans's claim that you can't be a Christian on your own, and if so, why?
- *Evans concludes that despite the church's messiness, its purpose is to point us to the Kingdom, and thus is sacramental. Further, anything made like the Kingdom is sacramental. The sacraments she covered in the book were:*
 - *Baptism*
 - *Confession*
 - *Holy Orders*
 - *Communion*
 - *Confirmation*
 - *Anointing of the Sick*
 - *Marriage*
- Are there other Kingdom-like practices that, to you, feel sacramental?

- **Epilogue – Dark**

- [258] *“Church is what happens when someone taps you on the shoulder and whispers in your ear, Pay attention, this is holy ground; God is here.”*
 - Other reflections?
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References for material:

- [Searching for Sunday](#)
(page numbers from the text are noted in brackets [#] preceding quotes or relevant passages; note that e-book page numbers can differ from hardcopy books, but should be close)
- [Searching for Sunday - Discussion Guide](#)

Italics imply important points or example answers the leader can convey