

I Was Just Wondering!

Opening:

Introductions – Name, connection to the group, and please answer: What/where is the best place on God’s great earth for you? What have you experienced there? If you’ve never been there, when might you plan to go?

Prayer

Suggestions, some basic ground rules to remember in a small group

There is an art to listening. We respect one another’s opinions in a small group and listen carefully, so the speaker feels heard.

There is an art to sharing in a small group. We want to take turns and not monopolize the conversation. Try to speak from the heart and share openly and honestly.

There is an art to NOT gossiping in a small group. When someone shares something raw, personal, or difficult, it stays in the group. If not, trust is quickly squandered.

- 1) The world as God sees it — does that phrase merely express some foamy Romantic notion, or does it contain truth? The Bible gives intriguing hints. Proverbs tells of the act of Creation when Wisdom “was the craftsman at his [God’s] side... filled with delight day after day... rejoicing in his whole world.” *How do you see the world? Does your image differ from what God sees, do you think?* P10
- 2) Wildness is God’s underlying message to Job, the one trait his menagerie all share. God is celebrating those members of his created world who humans will never domesticate. Evidently, wild animals serve an essential function in “the world as God sees it.” They bring us down a notch, reminding us of something we’d prefer to forget: our creatureliness. And they also announce to our senses the splendor of an invisible, untameable God. *What do you think Yancey is getting at here?* P11
- 3) The heavens declare the glory of God, and so do breaching whales and pronking springboks. Fortunately, in some corners of the world, vast multitudes of creatures can still live and have a good time in God’s love. The least we could do is make room for them — for our sake and theirs. *Does this say anything to you about our world? If so, what?* P13
- 4) It was then I realized another essential meaning to the word mercy. A sense of creaturehood — huddling together in caves or bomb shelters or Chicago buildings — produces a feeling like joy only if we, the creatures, show “mercy” to each other. *How do you experience mercy in our world today? How do you show mercy?* P17
- 5) We are so little reconciled to time that we are even astonished at it. “How he’s grown!” we exclaim. “How time flies!” as though the universal form of our experience was, again and again, a novelty. It is as strange as if a fish were repeatedly surprised at the wetness of the water. *How do you understand the concept of time? What do you think time looks like to God?* P21
- 6) “Man is not a balloon going up into the sky, nor a mole burrowing merely in the earth; but rather a thing like a tree, whose roots are fed from the earth, while its highest branches seem to rise almost to the stars.” And Dostoevsky added, “Man is not an arithmetical

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expression; he is a mysterious and puzzling being, and his nature is extreme and contradictory all through.” *How do you relate to these ideas of man?* P24

- 7) Instinctually, animals mark the weak (the nerds?) for swift destruction; God commands us to value them. We hear that fulfillment comes not in the pursuit of happiness but rather in the pursuit of service. We respond to our most grievous failures not by covering them up but by repenting of them openly. When wronged, says the gospel, **extend forgiveness**, not vengeance. And don't hoard material things, but trade them all for the kingdom of heaven, a pearl of great price. *Evolutionary theory, is that how the world should operate? If not, why not?* P25
- 8) The Bible avoids fuzzy psychologisms and says simply to the stealer, “Steal no more,” and to the tempted, “Flee temptation.” The Bible challenges us to look upward, not inward, for counsel at moments of crisis. As Jeremiah says, “The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” *How do you relate to this sage biblical wisdom? Or do you relate to some other life philosophy?* P29
- 9) In a single sweep, **Chesterton has helped clarify the problem of pleasure**. For the unbeliever, the problem centers on the question of origin: From where did pleasure come? Chesterton searched all alternatives and settled on Christianity as the only reasonable explanation for the existence of pleasure in the world. Moments of pleasure are remnants, like goods washed ashore from a shipwreck, like bits of Paradise extended through time. *What is the problem with pleasure?* P34
- 10) Thus pleasure is at once a great good and a grave danger. If we start chasing pleasure as an end in itself, we may lose sight of the One who gave us such good gifts as sexual drive, taste buds, and the capacity to appreciate beauty. As Ecclesiastes tells it, a wholesale devotion to pleasure will, paradoxically, lead to a state of utter despair. *Secular society seems to have a high regard for pleasure. As you teach, share, and make yourself an example of Christ in the world, how do you reconcile the culture versus the Bible?* P35

Wrap-up

What worked or didn't work this week?

How can we improve our discussion and sharing?

Next week Part II - In the World

Where do political tyrants come from? Why does God let them inflict such evil on the world?

Does God love Americans more than Iraqis or Libyans more than Chinese?

From where did racial hatred come? Does it still exist today, and why?