

Not the Religious Type

1. Do you consider yourself to be the “religious type”?
2. Have you ever prayed a prayer like the author, Dave Schmelzer, prayed: *God, I don't believe that you're real. But if I'm wrong, today would be a terrific day to show me?* If so, what was the result?
3. Have you ever experienced what the author calls God's *hesed*? In what ways?
4. Can you relate to M. Scott Peck's stage theory? If you had to characterize your own spiritual journey, at what stage do you see yourself?
5. The author paints God's shocking generosity as a central theme in the Bible and in the lives of those who follow him. Is this your understanding of the rewards of faith?
6. If you were to compare your faith to that of other world religions, would you come to the same conclusion that the author did?
7. The author says that God is good, but religion is bad. Has this been your experience as well? Why or why not?
8. Discuss the author's illustration of bounded sets and centered sets. Which sets do you find yourself in?
9. What are the implications of recalibrating one's journey God's way?
10. Is there a central choice that we all must make between God and moral superiority? What effects does each one have on our lives?
11. There are so many ways to define joy. What is true joy, and how can it be found? In what ways is joy a call to stage 4?
12. The author says that the early church fathers and mothers “understood that the only way to make our way through religion gone bad was by the power and direction of the God that religion had left behind.” How can we apply this same understanding to our world today?
13. Do you believe that God still performs miracles today?
14. Have you ever sensed God speaking to you? How did you know?
15. Do you believe that you have a cosmic destiny? Describe what such a calling might entail and what kinds of things have led you down that path.
16. What kinds of adventures have you found waiting for you just outside your front door?
17. How important are people, exactly? What's the basis for your answer? And what are the implications of our answer?
18. In your experience, are there downsides to following God? Have you experienced seeming downsides that surprisingly proved to be just the opposite?

19. What impact, if any, does God have in the way your life *feels*, which, as the author says, can seem quite close to how your life *is*?
20. What are your thoughts regarding the author's picture of heaven's "prayer bowls"?
21. How do you come to terms with the awfulness of this world and the fact that sometimes God doesn't answer our prayers in the way that we want?
22. The author applauds rather than condemns the current group of atheist writers on some points. Why?
23. If Owen Barfield is right and our destiny is tied to our participation with something, what are you called to join with?
24. Do you see God as an intriguing, profound concept? Or does your view of God skew more toward an experience, a relationship, a God who's eager to guide and empower us? What are the implications of your answer?
25. Why is the idea of being a good person fundamentally defensive?
26. The author ends the book with this statement: *I think back to a friend who, when challenged that his experience with a responsive and active God was nothing more than a crutch, paused and then replied, "No, I reject that. I'm not sure 'crutch' can fully capture it. To me he's more like an iron lung."* Talk about what that picture represents and how it might apply to the God of *hesed*.